

COVID PASS – IMPACT ON TOURISM AND TOURISM WORKERS AND EMPLOYMENT IN TOURISM

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Abstract

The pandemic in the past, more than two years, various reactions of the countries of the world to the protection of people from pandemics, etc., have had a huge impact on the life we have known so far. The introduction of covid passes a year ago, as another reaction to the suppression of the pandemic, has provoked a very large number of discussions that have remained without a clear epilogue so far. However, the introduction of covid passes has had the greatest impact on tourism and related activities (air and road transport, especially international) in every possible sense - restricting travel, and movement in general. This situation inevitably affected employment in the sector and introduced a number of difficulties, in addition to all those that already existed before the pandemic period. The authors of this paper draw a parallel between trends in tourism in general and employment in tourism and catering etc. before the pandemic and throughout, with special reference to the period after the introduction of covid passes.

Key Words: *covid passes, employment in tourism, tourist development*

JEL classification: *D89, E24, I18, J00, J70, K23, K31, Z32*

Introduction

In order to fully understand the current state of tourism as an economic activity, and thus try to assume what far-reaching consequences a pandemic may have on this activity, we must first take a glance at the available statistics at the global level.

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However, in addition to the above, it is necessary to search for possible other reasons that may not have directly contributed to the presented statistics, but may have influenced the given figures to have a negative trend for tourism and related activities for longer than necessary.

Figure 1: *International tourist arrivals 2021*



Source: *UNWTO* (2022), www.unwto.org

According to the report of the United Nations from 2020, it was determined that “tourism generated 7 percent of global trade, employed one in every ten people globally and – through a complex value chain of interconnected industries – provided livelihoods to millions of people in developed and developing countries. As borders closed, hotels shut and air travel dropped dramatically, international tourist arrivals” (United Nation, 2020, p. 2). Also, according to the report of the World Tourism Organization and its comparative data, it is determined that “tourism grows 4% in 2021 but remains far below before pandemic levels. Global tourism experienced a 4% upturn in 2021, compared to 2020. However, international tourist arrivals were still 72% below the pre-pandemic year of 2019, according to the latest UNWTO World Tourism Barometer.

The first 2022 issue indicates that rising rates of vaccination, combined with easing of travel restrictions due to increased cross-border coordination and protocols, have all helped release pent up demand. International tourism rebounded moderately during the second half of 2021, with international arrivals down 62% in both the third and fourth quarters

compared to pre-pandemic levels. The pace of recovery remains slow and uneven across world regions due to varying degrees of mobility restrictions, vaccination rates and traveler confidence. Europe and the Americas recorded the strongest results in 2021 compared to 2020 (+19% and +17% respectively). Meanwhile, Africa saw a 12% increase in arrivals, though this is still 74% below 2019. In the Middle East arrivals declines 24% compared to 200 and in Asia and the Pacific were still 65% below 2020 levels, as many destinations remained closed to non-essential travel” (World Tourism Organization, 2021).

Based on the above data, it can be sensed that both data and statistics concerning employment in tourism show a large number of people who lost their jobs due to the pandemic, etc.

COVID PASS - official reasons for introduction and conditions for acquisition

Since they were obligatorily introduced, and even in the period when they were only discussed, covid passes have started an avalanche of discussions and debates that are still going on. However, the state, with its monopoly of force derived from the Constitution and other legal regulations that protect citizens from infectious diseases, introduced them, without prior discussion. Not only at the national level, but also at the international and global level, the example of the European Union that had a completely equal approach. To this can be added the highly synchronized censorship in the cyber world (social networks), where all publications, which were considered contrary to official data, were deleted and where there was no place for intellectual discussions, but decisions were made under the veil of "science must be trusted".

In the constellation of global oscillations of science development, classification of science and scientific research, the scientific problem of research is posed: the knowledge of scientists, researchers, intellectuals about the classification of science as a scientific paradigm, about modern methodology and technology of scientific research is below the scientific-existential minimum (Lasić-Lazić, 1996).

From the analysis of definitions of the term science, it can be concluded that the opinions of some scientists on the concept of science are not identical, but that there are no significant differences between them, and that they all have in common that it includes a system of cognitive facts,

phenomena, principles, data, information, theory, laws and the law on the objective reality of nature and society. Science has the fundamental task of discovering the truth, that is, determining the legality of natural and social phenomena (Lelas, 1990).

“Accordingly, it could be said that science is a system of systematized and argued knowledge, ie a system of cognitive facts, concepts, principles, data, information, theories, laws and laws in a certain historical period about objective reality (ie nature and society) until came through the application of objective scientific methods, which have the basic purpose and goal of understanding the laws and laws of the past, present and future of natural and social phenomena and maximizing the effectiveness of human practice” (Peličić et al., 2016, p. 19).

Why should we write about this in the 21st century? If the majority is denied the right to ask questions, and the innate feature of reconsideration, then all decisions made in this way must be criticized, regardless of their actual value. One of the unfinished discussions is certainly the vaccination against covid 19, which was aggressively promoted by "believing in the profession", and that previously there was a large number of scientific papers showing (in) transparency of the development of vaccines - 2021, only 12% of documentation it was available to the public in connection with the interrogation (Tanveer et al., 2021), with a very high number of side effects, which are by no means negligible. Denying a mature discussion, for whatever reason, can only provoke resistance to the imposed rule, as well as natural caution among the professional and scientific public and countless "conspiracy theories" among the general public, which can result in confusion, mistrust and much wider negative consequences. The same goes for censorship, which is getting wider and sharper. So, for example, a photo about the side effects of the covid 19 vaccine was circulating on social networks, which was soon downloaded from the official website (World Health Organization, 2022) and now there are side effects of vaccines, but on a much smaller scale, although about a million more than when the table below was published.

Figure 2: *Side effects of vaccines through the years*


World Health Organization

VigiAccess was launched by the World Health Organization (WHO) in 2015 to provide public access to information in VigiBase, the WHO global database of reported potential side effects of medicinal products.

Vaccine or Drug Name	Total ADRs	Years
Mumps vaccine	711	1972-2021
Rubella vaccine	2,621	1971-2021
Ivermectin	5,705	1992-2021
Measles vaccine	5,827	1968-2021
Penicillin nos	6,684	1968-2021
smallpox vaccine	6,891	1968-2021
chloroquine	7,139	1968-2021
tetanus vaccine	15,085	1968-2021
Hydroxychloroquine	32,641	1968-2021
Hepatitis A vaccine	46,773	1989-2021
Benzylpenicillin	51,327	1968-2021
Rotavirus vaccine	68,327	2000-2021
Accutane	70,719	1983-2021
Vancomycin	71,159	1974-2021
Hepatitis B vaccine	104,619	1984-2021
Polio vaccine	121,988	1968-2021
Meningococcal vaccine	126,412	1976-2021
Ibuprofen	166,209	1969-2021
tylenol	169,359	1968-2021
Aspirin	184,481	1968-2021
Pneumococcal vaccine	234,783	1980-2021
Influenza vaccine	272,202	1968-2021
Covid-19 vaccine	2,457,386	2020-2021

www.vigiaccess.org

Source: World Health Organization, <http://vigiaccess.org/>

If, for a moment, we ignore the discussions that preceded the introduction of covid passes as one of the possible responses to the pandemic (Škorić & Jovanović, 2021), we can approach the analysis of official information on how a person can acquire the right to issue it.

According to official data from the European Union (EU), the conditions for its issuance are:

1. Vaccination certificate (where it does not apply to all existing vaccines and from 1 March the validity period differs for some recognized vaccines in the EU)
2. Test certificate - short duration and
3. Confirmation of past illness (positive antibody test) (The EU's digital certificate on COVID | European Commission (europa.eu) (28 February 2022)).

It was previously first introduced on March 17, 2021 in 7 EU countries, in order to gradually spread throughout Europe (EU Digital COVID Certificate: Secure EU infrastructure, interoperability and open source at the heart of the EU Gateway | European Commission (europa.eu) (28 February 2022)).

At first glance, it may seem that everything does not have a greater impact on tourism than on other activities. However, it is tourism and tourism employees that are most affected by mandatory covid passes. How?

Following the example of the EU, in the Republic of Serbia, covid passes were introduced somewhat later (October 2021) as an obligation for all visitors to closed catering facilities, first from 10 pm, and from November 2021 from 8 pm. Their validity until the writing of this paper has not been revoked. Therefore, if the catering facility is open after 8 pm, employees and guests must have a valid covid certificate. However, who checks if the guests have it? Employees again. Three possible reasons for getting it raise the issue of discrimination again, at least financial ones (because the covid pass is free if you are vaccinated, and it is paid and lasts shorter when tested) (Škorić & Jovanović, 2021). With that in mind, employees are not in an enviable situation at all. Without intending to open a debate on the justification for the introduction of covid passes, it is enough to write absurd data that vaccines do not protect against infection and spread of disease, and sometimes even more severe forms of the disease, and the nonsense of introducing this type of response led protests across Europe and the world, which are still in progress.

Where are the tourism workers in all this?

Trends in the employment of workers in tourism, even before the pandemic, were very different, often occasional and temporary, and so on (Škorić & Jovanović, 2018), and with measures introduced by states to prevent the spread of the virus, they have become even more unstable and

insecure. The so-called leasing of workers, very popular since the beginning of the 21st century, in addition to perhaps an increase in actual employment, has had some negative consequences, mainly for employees. Namely, in practice, many employers have decided to hire workers through leasing, ie hiring workers, in order to circumvent the rather strict and restrictive provisions of the Labor Law, especially those related to the termination of employment contracts. The hired employees practically concluded an employment contract with the Temporary Employment Agency, while they work in the premises of another employer who rents them from the Agency (Škorić & Jovanović, 2018).

However, immediately before the beginning of the pandemic, a law was passed in the Republic of Serbia which introduced the field of hiring employees into the legal framework with various protective provisions resulting from shortcomings in the previous period (Law on Agency Employment, "Official Gazette of RS" no. 86/2019). What has been changed by this law compared to the previous period is that hiring employees cannot circumvent the provisions of the Labor Law ("Official Gazette of RS" No. 24/2005, 61/2005, 54/2009, 32/2013, 75/2014, 13/2017 - CC decision and 113/2017, 95/2018 - authentic interpretation). The Law on Agency Employment was adopted following the example of the Convention on Private Employment Agencies, No. 181 of 1997 of the International Labor Organization and Directive 2008/104 / EC of 19 November 2008 on work through temporary employment agencies (L 327 / 9), where Article 5 is especially important, which prescribes the right to equal treatment of employees of the temporary employment agency in relation to employees of temporary workers (Frenzel, 2010, p. 119). The Law on Agency Employment, with its provisions, introduced a certain order in this so-called gray zone of employment of workers, and thus workers in tourism and related activities.

Without intending to go into details about the law itself, we will refer to the most important terms from the law, which are also crucial for all changes that these provisions introduce into the legal system and the labor market of the Republic of Serbia.

The temporary employment agency is a company or entrepreneur registered with the competent authority in the territory of the Republic of Serbia, which establishes an employment relationship with the employee for his temporary assignment to the employer in the territory of the Republic of Serbia for work under his supervision and management. The

conditions for the establishment and operation of the Agency are relatively strict and must be respected. Otherwise, her work permit is revoked (Article 2).

The assigned employee is a natural person who is employed by the Agency in accordance with the Labor Law, and who is assigned to the employer for the purpose of temporarily performing work under his supervision and management. His position at work cannot be less favorable than the position of a comparable employee with the employer of the beneficiary. In other words, their working conditions, at the very least, should be equalized, in accordance with the law (Article 2).

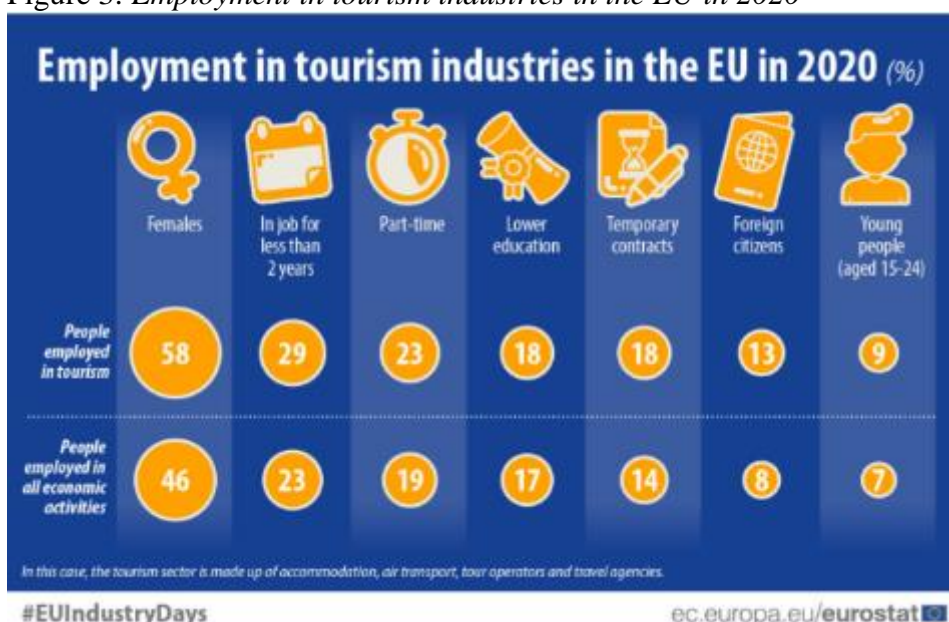
The beneficiary employer is a legal entity, entrepreneur, ie representative office or branch of a foreign person registered in accordance with the law on the territory of the Republic of Serbia, state body, autonomous province body and local self-government unit, unless otherwise specified by the Law on Agency Employment. Under his supervision and management, the assigned employee temporarily performs tasks. As can be seen, the employer can be a natural and legal person, as well as a domestic and foreign person, regardless of whether his activity takes place in the public or private sector. It is important that it is registered on the territory of our country (Article 2).

The comparative employee is an employee who is employed by the employer of the user who performs or would perform the same tasks with regard to the required degree and type of education, i.e. the level of qualifications and special knowledge and skills, i.e. competencies, complexity, responsibility, work experience and other special working conditions (Article 2). If the employer of the user does not have a comparable employee, the assigned salary cannot be determined for the assigned employee in the amount lower than the salary of the employees of that employer in the same level of education, i.e. in the same level of qualification. In other words, the salary of the assigned employee should not be less than the salary of his colleagues who perform the same or similar jobs with the beneficiary's employer, with the same or similar qualifications (Kulić & Škorić, 2020, p. 114).

If we return to the engaged workers in tourism, the provisions of this law also apply to their engagement. But if we refer again to international sources that record a decline in employment in this industry, official statistics of the Republic of Serbia in the last quarter of 2021 recorded an

increase all activities by 1.6% compared to the same period in 2020 (Announcement (stat.gov.rs) (28 February 2022)). As far as catering and tourism are concerned, at this moment it is not possible to find official data on the current number of employees in the Republic of Serbia, so that a parallel can be found with the period before the pandemic. Also, such statistics are not available in the EU, but it is stated that this activity is most affected by harsh anti-pandemic measures and there is an analysis of data that do not show the total number of employees, but the percentage of employees by gender, education, age, etc. versus those employed in economic activities.

Figure 3: *Employment in tourism industries in the EU in 2020*



Source: *Products Eurostat News - Eurostat (europa.eu)*

Post-pandemic crisis and domestic tourism - a problem or an opportunity?

Two years after the official declaration of the world pandemic, a new problem, both economic and political, is emerging. Pressed precisely by economic reasons, many European countries are giving up measures to combat the pandemic, and so, for example, Slovenia removed covid19 from the list of quarantine diseases in February 2022. (Slovenia relieves restrictive measures: These are new conditions for Serbian citizens (espresso.co.rs) (28 February 2022)). Austria, as one of the EU countries that

had the strictest conditions for both its citizens and foreigners entering the country (mandatory vaccination and mandatory quarantine for unvaccinated citizens, etc.), has opened its borders since February for those who have proof of vaccination, test or proof of past illness, where each has its own period of validity, while transit through the country is free with proof that immediate exit from the country is provided (Bundesministerium, 2021).

Even media campaigns and the promotion of vaccination are much less present since the armed conflict in Ukraine began, and the subject of interest has shifted from the field of health care to the field of economics and politics. This fact alone has made all the measures that have been introduced, which still exist, new strains of viruses, health care, etc., very debatable and even more criticized.

Although statistical data on the exact number of employees in tourism and catering are not available for the pandemic years (2020 and 2021), data on tourists (domestic and foreign), number of overnight stays and use of services, etc. are available. According to them, tourism in Serbia has started to use all the advantages it has always had. The promotion of various attractions, rural and spa tourism, as well as the non-introduction of strict pandemic measures as in other European countries, have made this activity at least slightly mitigate the catastrophic consequences of the pandemic. Thus, tourist visits in 2021 are on the rise compared to 2020, although they are still lower when compared to the before pandemic period (2019).

Table 1: *Tourist visits in 2019, 2020 and 2021*

Indicator	Data	Period	REPUBLIC OF SERBIA									SERBIA NORTH			Beolgrade Region			Region of Vojvodine			SERBIA SOUTH		
			Tourists			IN TOTAL	Domesti	Foreign	IN TOTAL	Domesti	Foreign	IN TOTAL	Domesti	Foreign	IN TOTAL	Domesti	Foreign	IN TOTAL	Domesti	Foreign	IN TOTAL	Domesti	Foreign
			IN	Domesti	Foreign																		
Tourist arrival	number	2019	3689983	1843432	1846551	1820005	489189	1330816	1258348	201770	1056578	561657	287419	274238	1869978	1354243	515735						
		2020	1820021	1374310	445711	599702	299101	300601	330897	101633	229264	268805	197468	71337	1220319	1075209	145110						
		2021	2591293	1720054	871239	1036246	431116	605130	607873	147845	460028	428373	283271	145102	1555047	1288938	266109						
	number	2019	184.4	139.9	270.5	202.2	121.6	267.3	203.5	90.5	267.2	199.3	160.2	267.7	170	147.9	279.1						
		2020	91	104.3	65.3	66.6	74.3	60.4	53.5	45.6	58	95.4	110.1	69.6	110.9	117.4	78.5						
		2021	129.5	130.5	127.6	115.1	107.1	121.5	98.3	66.3	116.3	152	157.9	141.6	141.3	140.8	144						
Overnight stays	number	2019	10073299	6062921	4010378	4081176	1298672	2782504	2696832	524529	2172303	1384344	774143	610201	5992123	4764249	1227874						
		2020	6201290	4936732	1264558	1693181	918433	774748	928233	330530	597703	764948	587903	177045	4508109	4018299	489810						
		2021	8162430	5732833	2429597	2808272	1181667	1626605	1628288	390294	1237994	1179984	791373	388611	5354158	4551166	802992						
	stays	2019	157.1	122.2	276.2	195.6	122.5	271	204.4	102.9	268.2	180.4	140.7	281.2	138.5	122.1	288.7						
		2020	96.7	99.5	87.1	81.1	86.6	75.4	70.3	64.8	73.8	99.7	106.8	81.6	104.2	103	115.2						
		2021	127.3	115.5	167.3	134.6	111.5	158.4	123.4	76.6	152.9	153.8	143.8	179.1	123.8	116.7	188.8						

Source: *Republican Bureau of Statistics*, www.stat.gov.rs, (28 February 2022).

As far as the tourism is involved, as one of the industries that has suffered the most damage from the COVID19 virus pandemic, there was the question: could covid passes be good for its recovery or will it set it back even more. In the past period, we have certainly seen that covid passes have not been fully introduced, as planned a year ago. The answer to the question above depends on the rules that were applied and it depended of the observed country.

“If we look back on the lack of rural tourism development in Serbia so far, this, although difficult situation in the world and in our country, could actually be a chance to develop this area” (Škorić & Jovanović, 2021, p. 494).

“Rural tourism could be observed from several aspects, which to some extent affect it. These aspects usually have economical, ecological, cultural or institutional nature. Indicated importance of rural development, with all its possible benefits (in economic terms) for the local population, region and country, cannot be at the expense of sustainable development” (Škorić & Jovanović, 2017, p. 416).

“The rich natural, cultural and historical diversity of the Republic of Serbia creates exceptional conditions for the development of rural tourism, as well as the placement of the wide offer for different segments of demand in the tourist market. Rural tourism has a large potential, because this segment of offer provides significant opportunities. The rural area, which makes up more than 85% of the territory of the Republic of Serbia, has about 43% of the population in about 42% of households that are directly or indirectly related to agriculture. Considering the natural and cultural diversity of the region, rich resource base of tourist attractions, preserved surroundings and thousands of agricultural households, the Republic of Serbia has all the conditions for the development of rural, and other special forms of tourism related to the rural area” (Škorić & Jovanović, 2017, p. 419-420).

“Cohesion between globalization processes, emerging technologies and increasing competitiveness through lowering prices of tourism services is the basis for the emergence of new tourist destinations in developing regions and a new chance for international tourism” (Vujović et al, 2012, p. 43). “In this context, tourism is a mechanism for stimulating the economic development of certain regions where tourism potentials exist or can be created. Bearing in mind that in the Republic of Serbia, industry and other commercial sectors are not equally developed in all parts of the

country, it is clear that tourism should be used as a basic instrument for achieving the prosperity of different regions” (Jovanović, 2020, p. 198).

“The legal framework of the Republic of Serbia in the field of tourism is the basis for the development of tourism and related industries. According to the Tourism Development Strategy of the Republic of Serbia for the period from 2016 to 2025, the weaknesses of the tourism in the Republic of Serbia arise from the incoordination and inactive role of local authorities, which affects competitiveness in this field” (Jovanović, 2020, p. 198).

Conclusion

A year ago, the debate on covid passes went from complete approval to a completely different extreme - their criticism, discriminatory elements, which were argued by legal regulations and the legal system. However, in addition to that, they began to be used as one of the responses to the pandemic and as a form of protection of the population from infectious diseases. However, their application, at least in Europe, has not expanded beyond the conditions for entry into the country and closed spaces, and most of all from closed spaces in catering. Therefore, this activity has suffered and still suffers a lot of pressure, both on its employees and on the visitors of these facilities.

As time went on and economic factors came to the fore, as well as political and civic public pressure on policy makers, the effect of covid passes did not expand, although there were many attempts to make their application universal, as a permit to see a doctor, to enter in any administrative body, going to school or college, etc. Perhaps this was contributed by the fact that, with the emergence of new strains of the virus, it has been proven that neither vaccinated persons, nor those who have contracted the virus are immune to new strains, and that they can also become ill again, spread the virus etc. Therefore, all the reasons that served as solid arguments at the very beginning of the introduction of covid passes have been refuted over time, and discussions on human rights and discriminatory aspects of the document itself have come up again.

The Republic of Serbia has been less restrictive on this issue, and lately there has been talk of their complete abolition, under the pretext of a stable epidemiological situation, although the number of newly infected is not negligible.

The only country in our neighborhood that resisted the introduction of covid passes was Bosnia and Herzegovina, where, absurdly, was the lowest number of newly infected that has been registered daily compared to all other countries that duly introduced covid passes and all other measures according to the recommendations of the World Health Organization.

As far as tourism, as an activity, is concerned, it will take a long time for this activity to return to the before pandemic period. Also, after this, the political and economic problem may also have a reflection on tourism, given that any major shock in the field of finance, economy and politics greatly affects this activity.

One of the special conclusions, which could be universally valid for every activity and every sphere of life of modern man, could be that the power of the media, online and cyber world, global exchange of information (which can be true, half-true, and often false) has grown so much that few of us are aware of what the media can do in the hands of the wrong interest groups and how much the level of manipulation of the general public is already present, and therefore how dangerous it can be for all, but as well for each of us individually.

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