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Analysis of offered short-term accommodations in regions of the Slovak Republic, including the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic in comparison to the EU

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Abstract
This article focuses on analyzing the number of accommodated guests in short-stay accommodations offered through collaborative economy platforms in Slovakia compared to the European Union average. It also aims to identify regions in Slovakia that could be trendsetters in the European Union in the areas under study and examines the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on the number of accommodated guests in these regions. The analyzed data includes the number of accommodated guests in domestic and foreign short-stay accommodations through collaborative economy platforms in the period from 2018 to 2022.

Key words
accommodation, short-stay, collaborative economy, P2P

Information
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1. Introduction

In recent years, collaborative economy platforms in the tourism industry have experienced a significant increase in popularity, becoming competitors to traditional accommodation services. This phenomenon has also affected regions in Slovakia, with the Covid-19 pandemic in 2020 causing a significant decline in the number of accommodated guests on these platforms. The aim of this study is to analyze to what extent the number of accommodated guests in short-stay accommodations through collaborative economy platforms in Slovakia aligns with the European Union average and to identify potential trendsetters among Slovak regions in the European Union. Additionally, we will focus on examining the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on the number of accommodated guests in these regions.

Collaborative platforms in the tourism industry have experienced a significant surge in popularity in recent years. These online platforms enable individuals to share their accommodation capacities with others, providing opportunities for more affordable and authentic travel experiences. Despite their growing appeal, questions still remain regarding their impact on the traditional accommodation sector and tourism as a whole.

2. Theoretical background

The sharing economy refers to benefiting from idle capacity by providing temporary access through an online platform for people who need it, in which both the supply and demand side are consumers (Ranjbari, Morales-Alonso and Carrasco-Gallego, 2018). The rise of the sharing economy significantly impacted the tourism and lodging industry, leading to notable changes in several key fundamentals. Several scientists examined models based on the sharing economy, such as destinations, travel equipment, the duration and quality of stays (Bremser and Alonso-Almeida, 2017), and the price of stays was explored by Wang and Nicolau (2017). However, previous studies on the sharing economy mainly focused on certain issues, such as trust and reputation (Ert, Fleischer, and Magen, 2016), sustainability problems (Ranjbari et al., 2019), insurance (Ranjbari, Shams Esfandabadi, and Scagnelli, 2019), and others.

2.1 Collaborative economy

The origins of the collaborative economy can be traced back through history, with its roots found in practices like barter trade. Barter involves a form of sharing based on reciprocity, where goods and services are exchanged without involving money. This system fostered social interactions within societies and built relationships between providers and recipients. The sharing economy, known by various names like on-demand economy, we-conomy, gig economy, access economy, participative economy, or collaborative economy, shares this fundamental characteristic.

Felson and Spaeth (1978) define collaborative consumption as the basis for the collaborative economy. These historical practices and the emergence of the collaborative economy have significantly influenced consumer behavior, reshaping the original perception of collaborative consumption.

Dredge and Gyimóthy (2017) provide a comprehensive examination of the evolution of terms and approaches related to the sharing economy concept. Within the contemporary notion of collaborative consumption and the broader functioning model of the collaborative economy, another important term comes into play: "peer-to-peer."

The term "peer-to-peer" is utilized in various contexts, encompassing the peer-to-peer economy, a peer-to-peer business model (Bauwens et al., 2012), peer-to-peer markets (Einav et al., 2016), peer-to-peer trading, peer-to-peer networks (Gansky, 2010; Karlsson & Dolnicar, 2016; etc.), and peer-to-peer platforms (Wirtz et al., 2019).

2.2 Factors influencing the selection of P2P accommodation.

Existing research indicates that several factors, including attitude, enjoyment, familiarity, and trust, play a crucial role in shaping customer satisfaction and loyalty in the peer-to-peer (P2P) setting. These factors have been explored in previous studies conducted by Mao & Lyu (2017), Möhlmann (2015), So et al. (2018), and S. B. Yang et al. (2019). Since these factors revolve around the customer's perception and are associated with emotional, psychological, or intrinsic responses to the P2P accommodation experience, they are classified as push factors.

In the context of P2P accommodation literature, attitude primarily refers to customers' positive evaluation of P2P accommodations, as evidenced in studies by Amaro et al. (2019) and Mao & Lyu (2017). A wealth of evidence in the sharing economy context suggests that customers' favorable attitudes towards their P2P accommodation choices lead to higher satisfaction levels and significantly influence their behavioral intentions, such as the intention to reuse the service and engage in positive word-of-mouth recommendations (Hamari et al., 2016; Wang & Jeong, 2018).

eWOM

Electronic Word of Mouth (eWOM) refers to any online words, discussions, or statements about a product, service, company, or object that can be accessed through the internet. This concept plays a significant role in shaping customers' behaviors, especially in the context of social network sites. When it comes to services, which are intangible in nature, customers often face difficulty in assessing their quality before consuming them. As a result, they rely on eWOM available on the internet to gather information and make informed buying decisions. Positive eWOM can increase the likelihood of a purchase, whereas negative eWOM can decrease it (Sotiriadis and Van Zyl, 2013). Cheung et al. (2009) suggested that eWOM has an impact on customers' beliefs, consequently influencing their perceived value of a product.

Price sensitivity

Previous research has presented varied outcomes regarding the impact of price sensitivity on consumer perceptions of products or services. In a study focused on tourists' evaluations, Masiero and Nicolau (2012) discovered that price sensitivity plays a complex role in influencing tourists' choices. On the other hand, Erdem et al. (2002) observed that price sensitivity can affect brand credibility, with the attractiveness of an accommodation being influenced by its price level, especially for consumers who are sensitive to price considerations.

Familiarity

Familiarity in the context of P2P services arises when consumers have previous experiences with such services, which helps minimize perceived uncertainty, as highlighted in the study by Möhlmann (2015). When individuals understand how P2P services function, it can lead to increased satisfaction and loyalty due to reduced uncertainty and transaction costs, as observed in research by Möhlmann (2015) and S. B. Yang et al. (2019). Past studies suggest that consumers who are more familiar with P2P services tend to exhibit more positive attitudes and higher loyalty towards using P2P accommodations, as demonstrated by Mao & Lyu (2017).

Trust

Prior research conducted by Möhlmann (2015) and Wang & Jeong (2018) confirms that trust plays a crucial role in reducing perceived risks between guests, hosts, and other unknown guests. As a result, reduced perceived risk leads to increased satisfaction levels and higher levels of loyalty among customers (Möhlmann, 2015; S. B. Yang et al., 2019).

Service Quality

Service quality at hotels is important as tourist accommodation is a central contributor to visitor satisfaction at host regions (Singh 2006). According to the European Commission (2003), hotels constitute the most significant tourist service affecting the quality of tourism in the destination. Furthermore, hotel sector maturity is identifiable in the diversity of establishments, markets segments, service variety as well as the growingly discerning customers (Briggs et al. 2007).

Service quality has received considerable attention from researchers and managers for its compelling influence on customer satisfaction and profitability (Seth, Deshmukh and Vrat 2005). Perceptions of service quality may be influenced by market structures, client behaviours or management (Meyer, Ch. et al. 1999). There have been five paths in customer service quality research, namely:

- concept and nature;
- measurement;
- how to improve service quality;
- effects on consumer behavior; and
- strategic implications (Pérez, Abad, Carillo and Fernández 2007).

Airbnb has been considered as one of the most prominent examples of the peer-to-peer (P2P) online platforms in the sharing economy by many scholars (Ju et al., 2019; Lee, Yang and Koo, 2019). Airbnb provides the opportunity to anyone who has spare space in their property to host potential guests worldwide, usually with cheaper prices and the possibility of being in contact with the local community (Guttentag, 2013)

2.3 Accommodation in Slovak republic during Covid-19

Tourism is a significant contributor to many regional economies. However, during the Covid-19 pandemic, the tourism industry experienced a rapid decline. In 2020, it accounted for only 1.45% of Slovakia's Gross Domestic Product (GDP), compared to 2.86% in the record-breaking tourism year of 2019. The pandemic

also led to a 7% decrease in the number of people employed in the tourism sector, with the most significant job losses occurring in the food services and sports/recreational services (ŠÚSR, 2022).

During the first year of the pandemic (in 2020), both Slovaks and foreign visitors spent only 2.1 billion euros on trips within Slovakia and abroad, which was less than a third of the expenditures made in the pre-pandemic year of 2019 when participants in tourism spent nearly 6.8 billion euros. Domestic tourism experienced the lowest year-on-year decline, at 60%, and accounted for the most substantial portion of internal tourism spending, reaching 1.2 billion euros. This figure represents the expenditures of domestic visitors who traveled within Slovakia (ŠÚSR, 2022).

Due to the pandemic restrictions and limitations on international travel, the expenditures of Slovak citizens on trips abroad (outbound tourism) decreased significantly, dropping by 84% to 344 million euros. At the same time, foreign visitors coming to Slovakia (inbound tourism) spent 579 thousand euros, 65% less than in 2019. The majority of the visitors' expenditures within Slovakia (both domestic and foreign) were allocated to accommodation and food services (45.3% of expenditures) . The average expenses per trip also decreased, especially for trips with overnight stays compared to day trips within domestic, inbound, and outbound tourism. Residents of Slovakia traveling within the country saw the highest decline in average expenses, spending 50 euros less per trip on average, representing a 25% decrease in average expenses per trip. The smallest decline in average expenses per trip occurred again in domestic tourism, specifically for day trips by Slovak residents within Slovakia, where average expenses decreased by 7.4% (ŠÚSR, 2022).

3. Methodology

The analysis carried hereunder in this paper focuses on identifying trend in guest nights spent at short-stay accommodation offered via collaborative economy platforms in Slovak republic in the years 2018 to 2022. We focus on answering following questions:

- Do guest nights spent at short-stay accommodation offered via collaborative economy platforms in regions of Slovak republic copy that of average of European Union?
- Is at least one of regions of Slovak republic trendsetter in European Union in terms of the issues surveyed hereunder?
- Has any of Slovak republic regions suffered from Covid 19 pandemic?
- Has any of Slovak republic regions recovered from Covid 19 pandemic situation if suffered downfall?

EU 27 countries variable is defined as countries who are members of European Union since 2020, meaning Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Czechia, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, and Sweden.

We are analysing data for the years 2018 to 2022 including. EU 27 regions in this paper are defined by Nomenclature of territorial units for statistics (NUTS), which is a hierarchical system for dividing up the economic territory of the EU and the UK, namely NUSTS 3 (small regions for specific diagnoses) with 1166 regions (Commission Delegated Regulation 2019/1755 of 8 August 2019 amending the Annexes to Regulation (EC) No 1059/2003 of the European Parliament and of the Council on the establishment of a common classification of territorial units for statistics (NUTS), 2019)

To answer set up research questions, our analysis uses general scientific methods of economic analysis, comparison method (used in assessing the level of using internet banking in the regions of Slovak republic), as well as methods of generalization, systematization, synthesis, analogy, and classification. These methods were used for their clarity and informative value they bring to analysed issue.

4. Results

To answer our research questions, we first look at guest nights spend at short-stay accommodation offered via collaborative economy platforms spent by all guests. Most nights spend at short stay accommodation offered via collaborative economy platforms in EU has been in observed period in Spain. In years 2018 and 2019 it has been in region of Barcelona, which has been taken by region of Malaga in the rest of the observed period. In Covid years 2020 and 2021 there has been a dramatic fall from almost 12.7 million to just as little as over 4.5 million, which rose to 7.8 million in 2021 and not yet fully recovered almost 2.5 million in 2022 nights.

Table 1: Guest nights spent at short-stay accommodation offered via collaborative economy platforms (all guests)

TIME	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
max region	Spain - Barcelona	Spain - Barcelona	Spain - Málaga	Spain - Málaga	Spain - Málaga
max	12,027,974	12,670,272	4,632,223	7,811,753	12,499,121
ø EU region	385,824	444,266	235,698	315,420	474,817
Slovakia	1,671,300	2,238,277	1,434,840	1,074,106	1,976,647
Bratislava region	483,373	746,060	258,782	216,750	442,207
Trnava region	53,813	74,919	46,122	54,484	90,338
Trencin region	30,097	40,803	33,021	37,214	53,906
Nitra region	44,247	56,681	35,791	30,725	56,873
Zilina region	493,589	566,262	446,093	270,061	546,671
Banska Bystrica region	150,260	192,533	185,013	140,194	214,663
Presov region	337,105	415,940	336,692	229,442	404,249
Kosice region	78,816	145,079	93,326	95,236	167,740
ø SK region	208,913	279,785	179,355	134,263	247,081

Source: Authors own work based on the Eurostat primary data

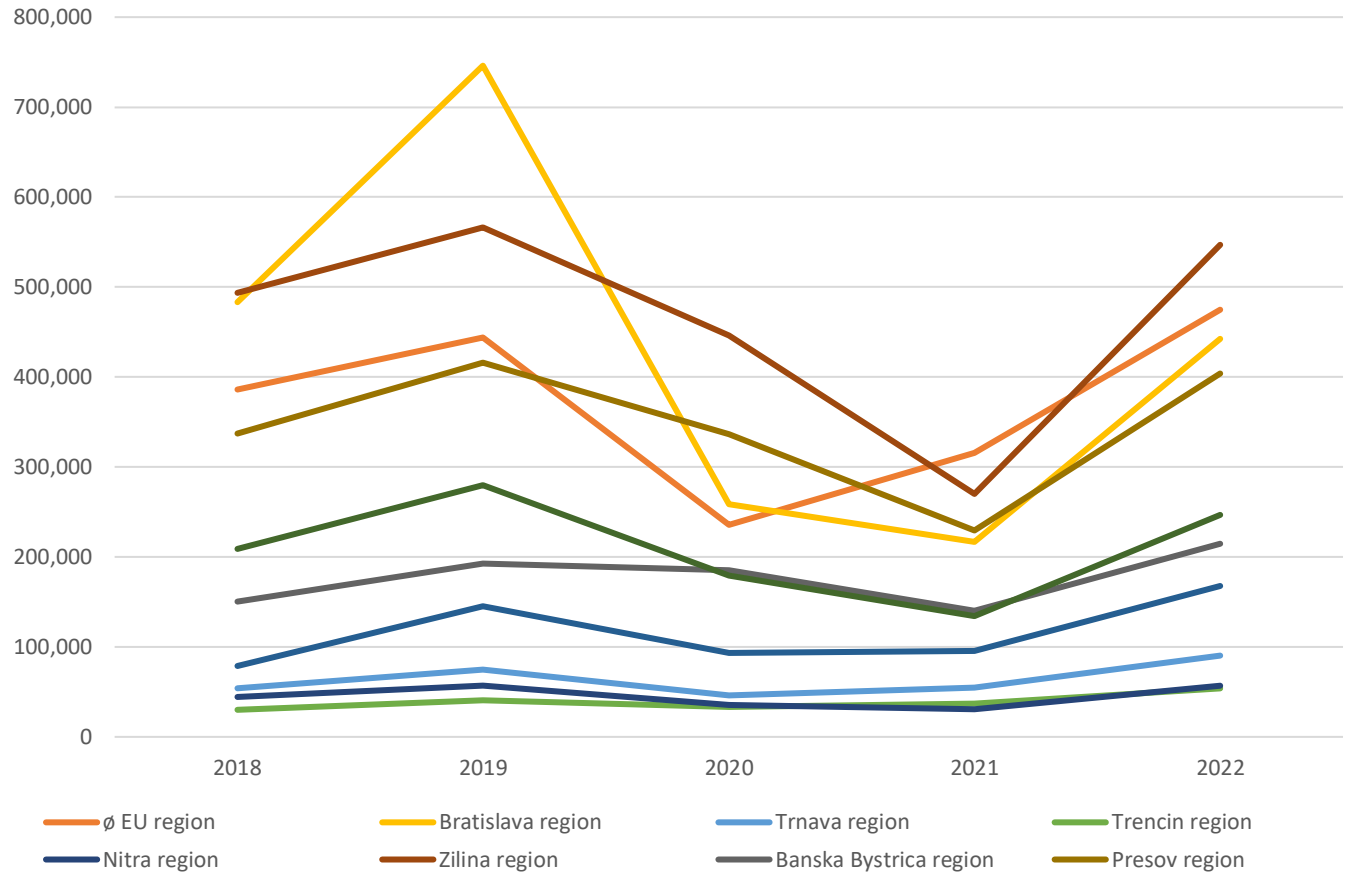

Figure 1: Guest nights spent at short-stay accommodation offered via collaborative economy platforms (all guests)

Source: Authors own work based on the Eurostat primary data

By observing Slovak republic as a whole, it is not as popular among guests ordering accommodation offered via collaborative economy platforms as most popular region in EU. However, the average region in EU has 385,824 nights spend in 2018, 444,266 in 2019, just 235,698 nights in 2020, 315,420 nights in 2021 and 478,817 nights in 2022, which is surpassed by at least some of Slovak regions. In 2018 and 2019 average EU region is surpassed by Bratislava region and Zilina region. In 2020 average EU region is surpassed by Zilina region, Presov region and Bratislava region. In 2021 none of Slovak regions has surpassed average EU region and in 2022 just Zilina region surpassed EU average region. In all Slovak regions we observe drop in ordered nights via collaborative economy platforms in pandemic years 2020 and 2021 and following rise in 2022.

One of the probable causes of drop in ordered overnight stays during pandemic could be the travelling restrictions between countries. If so, there should be drop in nights spent among foreign guests, but not domestic guests. To assess if so, we analyse following Table 2 and 3 as well as Figure 2 and 3.

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Table 2: Guest nights spent at short-stay accommodation offered via collaborative economy platforms (domestic resident guests)

TIME	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
max region	Spain - Alicante/Alacant	Spain - Málaga	France - Var	Spain - Alicante/Alacant	Spain - Alicante/Alacant
max	2,416,033	2,940,307	2,490,956	3,705,253	3,393,764
ø EU region	120,348.128	145,571.29	135,804.22	174,510.11	185,345.36
Slovakia	413,950	566,529	671,317	674,742	709,464
Bratislava region	60,023	93,943	81,555	87,439	93,042
Trnava region	11,198	17,313	21,011	27,275	25,238
Trencin region	15,471	20,485	24,059	29,220	31,417
Nitra region	16,934	22,206	20,447	20,183	25,469
Zilina region	112,946	138,920	185,235	189,008	188,145
Banska Bystrica region	73,401	95,401	122,663	118,655	130,876
Presov region	97,065	127,475	158,016	141,451	149,808
Kosice region	26,912	50,786	58,331	61,511	65,469
ø SK region	51,744	70,816	83,915	84,343	88,683

Source: Authors own work based on the Eurostat primary data

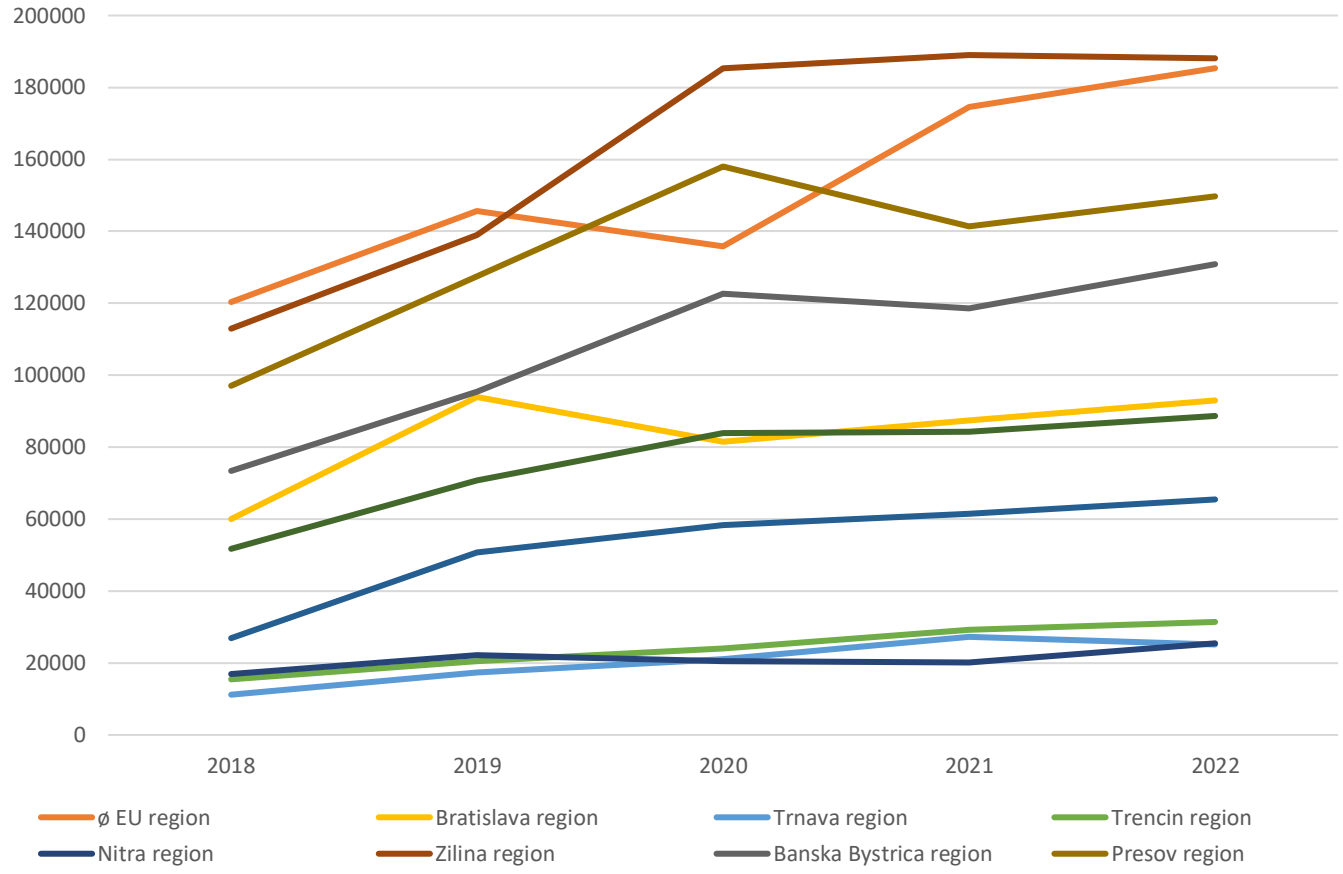

Figure 2: Guest nights spent at short-stay accommodation offered via collaborative economy platforms (domestic resident guests)

Source: Authors own work based on the Eurostat primary data

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Most guest nights spent at short stay accommodation offered via collaborative economy platforms spent by domestic resident guests has in 2018 Spain region of Alicante, in 2019 Spain region of Málaga, in 2020 French region of Var and in 2021 and 2022 Spain region of Alicante. Domestic resident guests have been influenced in premiant region just in first pandemic year of 2020. That also applies to average EU region. In whole Slovakia, there has not been a decrease in observed period at all. However, in case of regions of Slovakia there has been decrease in 2020 for the regions of Bratislava and Nitra. Afterwards in 2021 there is a decrease in Presov region and Banska Bystrica region, in 2022 just Trencin region has slight decrease.

Table 3: Guest nights spent at short-stay accommodation offered via collaborative economy platforms (foreign restident guests)

TIME	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
max region	Spain - Barcelona	Spain - Barcelona	Portugal - Área Metropolitana de Lisboa	Croatia - Splitsko-dalmatinska zupanija	Portugal - Área Metropolitana de Lisboa
max	10,938,612	11,598,645	2,871,218	5,583,929	9,210,795
ø EU region	263,436	296,254	97,852	138,844	286,680
Slovakia	1,257,350	1,671,748	763,523	399,364	1,267,183
Bratislava region	423,350	652,117	177,227	129,311	349,165
Trnava region	42,615	57,606	25,111	27,209	65,100
Trencin region	14,626	20,318	8,962	7,994	22,489
Nitra region	27,313	34,475	15,344	10,542	31,404
Zilina region	380,643	427,342	260,858	81,053	358,526
Banska Bystrica region	76,859	97,132	62,350	21,539	83,787
Presov region	240,040	288,465	178,676	87,991	254,441
Kosice region	51,904	94,293	34,995	33,725	102,271
ø SK region	157,169	208,969	95,440	49,921	158,398

Source: Authors own work based on the Eurostat primary data

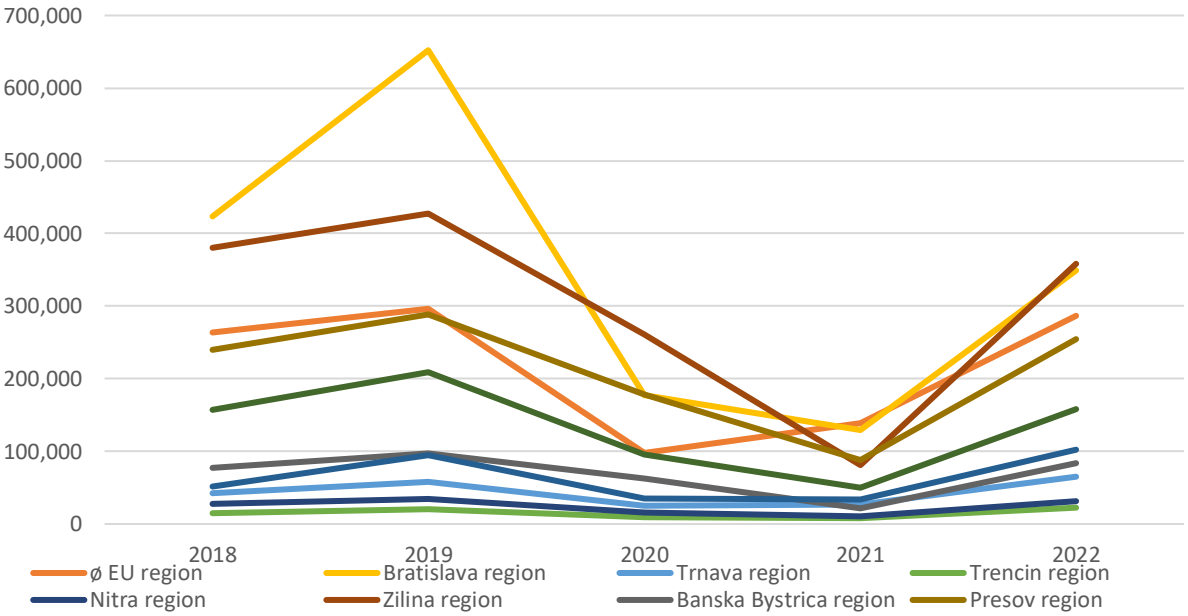

Figure 3: Guest nights spent at short-stay accommodation offered via collaborative economy platforms (foreign restident guests)

Source: Authors own work based on the Eurostat primary data

On the side of foreign resident guests that spent nights at short stay accommodation offered via collaborative economy platforms, there has been dramatic downfall of number of nights spent in case of premiant regions. In years 2018 and 2019 lead Spanish region of Barcelona with 10.9 and 11.6 million nights spent. In 2020 leads Portugal region Área Metropolitana de Lisboa with just 2.87 million nights spent. In 2021 leads Croatian region Splitsko-dalmatinska zupanija with just 5.58 million nights spent and in 2022 leads Portugal region Área Metropolitana de Lisboa this time with 9.2 million nights.

In case of average EU 27 region, we can observe similar development of rise in 2019 according to 2018 and very significant drop in 2020 to a third of nights spent by foreign guests and rise in 2021 to little more than half of nights from year 2018 and rise in 2022 to little less count of nights than in 2019.

Slovak average region shows different development in terms of another decrease in number of nights spent by foreign guests in 2021. In 2022 there is a rise to numbers of 2018, however not to pre-pandemic 2019 heights.

If comparing Slovak regions to average EU 27 region, in 2018 and 2019 Bratislava region and Zilina region exceeded average EU 27 region. In 2020 Presov region exceeded average EU 27 region as well as Bratislava and Zilina regions. In 2021 none of Slovak regions surpassed average EU 27 region and in 2022 Bratislava and Zilina region surpassed average EU region again.

5. Conclusion

Our analysis of guest nights spent at short-stay accommodation offered via collaborative economy platforms has shown, that just like European market on this field, Slovak regions have suffered as well by Covid 19 restrictions. We broke down analysis to guest nights spent at short-stay accommodation offered via collaborative economy by domestic guests and guest nights spent at short-stay accommodation offered via collaborative economy by foreign guests. Comparison showed almost no downfall respectively decrease in guest nights spent at short-stay accommodation offered via collaborative economy by domestic guests in Slovak republic during pandemic, just slight stagnation in regions of Bratislava, Presov and Nitra. However, analysis showed high decrease, even downfall in guest nights spent at short-stay accommodation offered via collaborative economy by foreign residents.

Regions in Slovakia, mostly popular among the foreign resident suffered downfall, namely Bratislava region, Zilina region and Presov region. These regions tend to be above average in Slovak republic. Bratislava region and Zilina region tend to be even above average of EU 27 region.

There is none of Slovak regions that could be a trendsetter in European measure. However, before pandemic years 2018 and 2019 there has been a trend of rise, and there is a rising trend after hitting the bottoms in 2021. However, none of Slovak regions have fully recovered to pre-pandemic counts of guest nights spent at short-stay accommodation offered via collaborative economy.

To fully answer the question of post-pandemic recovery there is a need for further observation and more stimuli to recover. There is another question worth of further research, that is why after first pandemic decrease in 2020 comes another decrease in 2021 in Slovak regions?

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