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TABLE OF CONTENTS

AGRICULTURAL SCIENCES

1. ***Zuza V.*** 11
ACTION AND APPLICATION OF SIGNALING MOLECULES IN MODERN CROP PRODUCTION
2. ***Дутчак О. В.*** 18
БІОЛОГІЗАЦІЯ СИСТЕМИ УДОБРЕННЯ ГРЕЧКИ ЗА ОРГАНІЧНОГО ВИРОБНИЦТВА
3. ***Косарчук С. О., Клепко А. В., Косарчук О. В.*** 21
СУЧАСНИЙ СТАН ЗАБРУДНЕННЯ МОЛОКА ^{137}Cs У НАСЕЛЕНИХ ПУНКТАХ РІВНЕНСЬКОЇ ОБЛАСТІ

BIOLOGICAL SCIENCES

4. ***Voroshylova N. M., Burlaka Yu. B., Kotov V. O.*** 24
CHANGES IN THE HEMOSTASIS SYSTEM IN PATIENTS WITH ACUTETRAUMATIC INJURIES TAKING INTO ACCOUNT THE SEVERITY OF HEARING DISORDERS AND THE TIME OF REFERRAL TO A MEDICAL INSTITUTION
5. ***Васильева Н. Ю., Главацька В. В.*** 28
ПОРІВНЯННЯ ПОСЛІДОВНОСТЕЙ ЗНАЙДЕНИХ РЕГІОНІВ CRISPR-CAS В ГЕНОМАХ ШТАМІВ РОДУ *BACILLUS*

MEDICAL SCIENCES

6. ***Rusnak I., Yaremchuk O., Akentjev S., Tsyntar T., Demchuk O.*** 30
KINESIOTHERAPY IN THE REHABILITATION OF PATIENTS WITH FASCIAL SPASMS AND TRAUMATIC INJURIES OF THE MUSCULOSKELETAL SYSTEM
7. ***Власенко В. Г., Кучеренко Б. Ю., Аносова В. С., Мацуга Д. С.*** 37
БОЙОВА ПСИХІЧНА ТРАВМА ЯК ДЕТЕРМІНАНТА УСКЛАДНЕНЬ ПІСЛЯОПЕРАЦІЙНОГО ПЕРІОДУ У ПОРАНЕНИХ: ПАТОФІЗІОЛОГІЧНІ ТА СУДОВО-МЕДИЧНІ АСПЕКТИ
8. ***Ємельяненко Є. Р., Лахно О. В., Цівенко О. І.*** 42
РОЛЬ ЛЕПТИНУ ТА ЛЕПТИНОРЕЗИСТЕНТНОСТІ В ЖІНОЧОМУ ОЖИРІННІ
9. ***Філюк І. О.*** 46
ПОРУШЕННЯ КОГНІТИВНИХ ФУНКЦІЙ У ПАЦІЄНТІВ, ЩО ПЕРЕНЕСЛИ COVID-19 В ЗАЛЕЖНОСТІ ВІД РІВНЯ ВАЖКИХ ЛАНЦЮГІВ НЕЙРОФІЛАМЕНТУ
10. ***Шевченко І. В.*** 52
ЗАХИСНА ДІЯ СУКЦИНАТІВ ЗАЛІЗА І ЦИНКУ НА МІКРОЕЛЕМЕНТНИЙ ОБМІН ЕМБРІОНІВ ЩУРІВ ЗА УМОВ ВПЛИВУ КАДМІЮ

PHARMACEUTICAL SCIENCES

11. ***Борисюк І. Ю., Смірнова Г. В., Мандзюк І. Я., Кайнов М. О.*** 56
ФАРМАКОЕКОНОМІЧНИЙ АНАЛІЗ РИНКУ ПРОТИЗАПАЛЬНИХ ПРЕПАРАТІВ В УКРАЇНІ

12. ***Кайнов М. О., Борисюк І. Ю., Смірнова Г. В., Мандзюк І. Я.*** 63
МАРКЕТИНГОВЕ ДОСЛІДЖЕННЯ РИНКУ АНАЛЬГЕТИКІВ ТА ЖАРОЗНИЖУВАЛЬНИХ ЗАСОБІВ

13. ***Мандзюк І. Я., Борисюк І. Ю., Смірнова Г. В., Кайнов М. О.*** 70
ДОСЛІДЖЕННЯ АСОРТИМЕНТУ ТА ДОСТУПНОСТІ ПРОТИГРИБКОВИХ ЛІКАРСЬКИХ ЗАСОБІВ

14. ***Молодан Ю. О., Смірнова Г. В., Мандзюк І. Я., Кайнов М. О.*** 75
МАРКЕТИНГОВИЙ ТА ФАРМАКОЕКОНОМІЧНИЙ АНАЛІЗ РИНКУ ПРОТИВІРУСНИХ ПРЕПАРАТІВ В УКРАЇНІ

15. ***Смірнова Г. В., Борисюк І. Ю., Мандзюк І. Я., Кайнов М. О.*** 81
АНАЛІЗ СУЧАСНОГО ФАРМАЦЕВТИЧНОГО РИНКУ АНТИБАКТЕРІАЛЬНИХ ЛІКАРСЬКИХ ЗАСОБІВ В УКРАЇНІ

TECHNICAL SCIENCES

16. ***Bondarenko Yu. V., Bilyk O. A.*** 87
USE OF COLLOIDAL BIOGENIC MAGNESIUM AND ZINC IN BREAD PRODUCTION

17. ***Chornyi O. S., Marynoshenko O. P.*** 93
GENERALIZED MATHEMATICAL MODEL "AM PROCESS – STRUCTURE – DEFECTIVENESS – EFFECTIVE MECHANICAL PROPERTIES"

18. ***Chyhur L. Ya.*** 98
APPLICATION OF ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE METHODS FOR MODELING AND CONTROL OF PHOSPHORIC ANHYDRIDE PRODUCTION PROCESSES

19. ***Chyhur L. Ya.*** 105
COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF ALGORITHMS FOR MONITORING THE TECHNICAL CONDITION OF PDC DRILLING BIT TYPE BASED ON MULTISENSOR DIAGNOSTICS

20. ***Mahlovana T.*** 111
A MULTI-SOURCE REMOTE SENSING FRAMEWORK FOR ENVIRONMENTAL HAZARD ASSESSMENT

21. ***Афанасов Г. М.*** 113
АНАЛІЗ ПРОЦЕСІВ ЗМЕРЗАННЯ НАСИПНИХ ВАНТАЖІВ

22. ***Вишинський Е.*** 115
МОБІЛЬНИЙ ДОДАТОК ЯК ЗАСІБ ПІДТРИМКИ САМОСТІЙНОГО ВИВЧЕННЯ ФІЗИКИ УЧНЯМИ ЗАКЛАДІВ ЗАГАЛЬНОЇ СЕРЕДНЬОЇ ОСВІТИ

23. ***Кебко О. В.*** 119
ОПТИМІЗАЦІЯ ОЧИЩЕННЯ ДОННИХ ВІДКЛАДЕНЬ НАФТОВИХ РЕЗЕРВУАРІВ

24. ***Омельченко С. В.*** 122
РОЗПІЗНАВАННЯ ЕМОЦІЙНОГО СТАНУ ЛЮДИНИ ЗА АУДІОСИГНАЛОМ ТА ВІЗУАЛЬНИМИ ДАНИМИ ОБЛИЧЧЯ
25. ***Романович Є. В.*** 129
ВНУТРІШНЬОВАГОННА ВІБРАЦІЙНА МАШИНА ДЛЯ ВИДАЛЕННЯ СИПКИХ ВАНТАЖІВ З НАПІВВАГОНІВ
26. ***Самченко Р. В., Кокошуєв О. П.*** 134
ДОСВІД ЗАСТОСУВАННЯ ГВИНТОВИХ ПАЛЬ ДЛЯ ПІДСИЛЕННЯ ФУНДАМЕНТІВ В УМОВАХ РЕКОНСТРУКЦІЇ (НА ПРИКЛАДІ ОБ'ЄКТА В М. ЗАПОРІЖЖЯ)
27. ***Суранов О. О.*** 136
ПІДВИЩЕННЯ ЕКСПЛУАТАЦІЙНОГО ПЕРІОДУ ГІДРОСИСТЕМ ШЛЯХОМ ПОРЦІЙНОГО ДОДАВАННЯ ВУГЛЕЦЕВИХ НАНОСТРУКТУР ДО МАСТИЛА

PHYSICAL AND MATHEMATICAL SCIENCES

28. ***Бунда В. В., Бунда С. О.*** 138
СТВОРЕННЯ ТА ФІЗИЧНІ ВЛАСТИВОСТІ ГІБРИДНИХ КОНТАКТНИХ СТРУКТУР «ВИСОКОТЕМПЕРАТУРНИЙ НАДПРОВІДНИК – ФОТО НАПІВПРОВІДНИК» ЯК ЕЛЕМЕНТІВ КРІОФОТОЕЛЕКТРОНІКИ

GEOGRAPHICAL SCIENCES

29. ***Yordanova P.*** 144
TOWARDS THE HISTORY AND CULTURAL-HISTORICAL HERITAGE OF THE VILLAGE OF BOZHENTSI: DOCUMENTS, PERSONALITIES AND INSTITUTIONAL MEMORY
30. ***Yordanova P.*** 162
CULTURAL AND HISTORICAL SITES OF THE GABROVO REGION AND THEIR CONTRIBUTION TO THE SOCIO-ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT OF THE REGION
31. ***Yordanova P.*** 172
SPATIAL STRUCTURE AND FUNCTIONAL ROLE OF CULTURAL-HISTORICAL HERITAGE IN THE SEVLIEVO REGION

ARCHITECTURE

32. ***Огоноченко П. Д.*** 182
АНАЛІЗ ТЕОРЕТИКО-ПРАВОВИХ ОСНОВ ІНТЕГРАЦІЇ УКРИТТІВ У ЦИВІЛЬНУ ІНФРАСТРУКТУРУ ЗА МІЖНАРОДНИМИ ПРАКТИКАМИ

PEDAGOGICAL SCIENCES

33. ***Брижак Н. Ю., Томинець О. В., Томишинець А. І.*** 185
УРОКИ «ДИЗАЙН І ТЕХНОЛОГІЇ» ЯК ПРОСТІР ТВОРЧОЇ ТА ПРОЄКТНОЇ ДІЯЛЬНОСТІ МОЛОДШИХ ШКОЛЯРІВ

34. ***Дудай М. І.*** 190
ЦИФРОВІ ВИКЛИКИ МОДЕРНІЗАЦІЇ МУЗИЧНОЇ ОСВІТИ

35. ***Єфремова А. Г.*** 198
СПЕЦИФІЧНІ ОСОБЛИВОСТІ РЕЖИМУ ХАРЧУВАННЯ ЗДОБУВАЧІВ ВИЩОЇ ОСВІТИ, ЯКІ ЗАЙМАЮТЬСЯ ФІЗИЧНОЮ КУЛЬТУРОЮ І СПОРТОМ

36. ***Єфремова А. Г.*** 202
ФОРМУВАННЯ ЗДОРОВОГО СПОСОБУ ЖИТТЯ У МАЙБУТНІХ ФАХІВЦІВ ЗАЛІЗНИЧНОГО ТРАНСПОРТУ В УМОВАХ ДИСТАНЦІЙНОГО НАВЧАННЯ

37. ***Єфремова А. Г.*** 206
ФОРМУВАННЯ ПРОФЕСІЙНО ВАЖЛИВИХ ФІЗИЧНИХ ЯКОСТЕЙ НА ЗАНЯТТЯХ З ФІЗИЧНОГО ВИХОВАННЯ У ВИЩИХ НАВЧАЛЬНИХ ЗАКЛАДАХ ТЕХНІЧНОГО ПРОФІЛЮ

38. ***Кокуть Я. В.*** 210
ФОРМУВАННЯ МОТИВАЦІЇ У ЗДОБУВАЧІВ ЗАКЛАДІВ ВИЩОЇ ОСВІТИ ДО ЗАНЯТЬ ФІЗИЧНИМИ ВПРАВАМИ

39. ***Лунячек В., Ведь Т.*** 217
ВИКОРИСТАННЯ ТЕХНОЛОГІЙ ШТУЧНОГО ІНТЕЛЕКТУ В ОСВІТНЬОМУ ПРОЦЕСІ МАГІСТРАНТАМИ СПЕЦІАЛЬНОСТІ 073 «МЕНЕДЖМЕНТ» (ОСВІТНЯ ПРОГРАМА «УПРАВЛІННЯ ЗАКЛАДОМ ОСВІТИ»)

40. ***Пахомова Н. В., Жванецька І. С.*** 221
МАТЕМАТИКА В ХІМІЇ: РОЗВ’ЯЗАННЯ ЗАДАЧ НА ВІДСОТКОВІ РОЗРАХУНКИ, ПОШУК МАСОВОЇ ЧАСТКИ РЕЧОВИНИ В СУМІШІ (З ДОСВІДУ РОБОТИ ОСВІТНЬОГО ЦЕНТРУ ДЕРЖАВНОЇ УСТАНОВИ «ШКОЛА СУПЕРГЕРОЇВ»)

41. ***Псьол С. В., Гнатенко Н. І.*** 228
МЕТОДОЛОГІЧНА МОДЕЛЬ ІНТЕГРАЦІЇ КОНТЕКСТНИХ СИСТЕМ ШТУЧНОГО ІНТЕЛЕКТУ У ФАХОВУ ПІДГОТОВКУ МАЙБУТНІХ ІНЖЕНЕРІВ

42. ***Сухомлин Б. А.*** 234
ДИДАКТИЧНІ УМОВИ РЕАЛІЗАЦІЇ ІНТЕГРОВАНОГО ПІДХОДУ В ПОЧАТКОВІЙ ШКОЛІ: ПІДХОДИ ДО КЛАСИФІКАЦІЇ

43. ***Шпанюк К.*** 239
СУПЕРВІЗІЯ ЯК МЕХАНІЗМ ФОРМУВАННЯ ДОСЛІДНИЦЬКОЇ ІДЕНТИЧНОСТІ ДОКТОРІВ ФІЛОСОФІЇ В ГАЛУЗІ ОСВІТИ У КНР

PSYCHOLOGICAL SCIENCES

44. ***Матуляк О. Д.*** 246
СОЦІАЛЬНО-ПСИХОЛОГІЧНІ ОСОБЛИВОСТІ БОЙОВОГО ЧЕРГУВАННЯ ВІЙСЬКОВОСЛУЖБОВЦІВ АВІАЦІЙНИХ БРИГАД ПОВІТРЯНИХ СИЛ ЗБРОЙНИХ СИЛ УКРАЇНИ В УМОВАХ РОСІЙСЬКО-УКРАЇНСЬКОЇ ВІЙНИ

45. ***Чернобай Л. С.*** 252
ФІЗІОЛОГІЧНА СТІЙКІСТЬ ЯК МАТЕРІАЛЬНИЙ СУБСТРАТ КОПІНГ-ПОВЕДІНКИ ВІЙСЬКОВОСЛУЖБОВЦІВ В ЕКСТРЕМАЛЬНИХ УМОВАХ

46. ***Яновська Т. А., Чорна А. О.*** 256
СТРЕСОСТІЙКІСТЬ ПСИХОЛОГА ЯК ФАКТОР ЙОГО ПРОФЕСІЙНОГО СТАНОВЛЕННЯ

SOCIOLOGICAL SCIENCES

47. ***Дорофєєва А. С.*** 262
ВОЛОНТЕРСЬКА ДІЯЛЬНІСТЬ ЯК ЧИННИК ФОРМУВАННЯ ГРОМАДЯНСЬКОГО СУСПІЛЬСТВА: УКРАЇНСЬКИЙ ТА ЄВРОПЕЙСЬКИЙ ДОСВІД

48. ***Ушакова С. В.*** 269
USE OF ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE IN THE TECHNICAL AND HUMANITARIAN SPHERES

JOURNALISM

49. ***Кирилова О. В., Бабич Є. О.*** 273
РЕПРЕЗЕНТАЦІЯ ВОЄННОЇ ДІЙСНОСТІ ТА АДАПТАЦІЯ РЕДАКЦІЙНИХ ПРАКТИК В УКРАЇНСЬКИХ ОНЛАЙН-МЕДІА: ДОСВІД «УКРАЇНСЬКОЇ ПРАВДИ» ТА УКРАЇНСЬКОЇ СЛУЖБИ «РАДІО СВОБОДА» (ЛЮТИЙ–ТРАВЕНЬ 2022 Р.)

50. ***Луцик М.-В. І., Гарачковська О. О.*** 276
ШТУЧНИЙ ІНТЕЛЕКТ ЯК ЧИННИК ТРАНСФОРМАЦІЇ ПОЛІТИЧНОЇ КОМУНІКАЦІЇ В СОЦІАЛЬНИХ МЕДІА

51. ***Холод Г. Я.*** 281
КОНТЕНТ РУБРИКИ «ПЕРЕД СЕАНСОМ» БЮЛЕТЕНЯ «НА ЕКРАНАХ КИЄВА» ЗА 1964 РІК

ART

52. ***Гаркавенко Д. В.*** 288
ЛАДОГАРМОНІЧНІ ПРИНЦИПИ В СИСТЕМІ ДЖАЗОВОЇ ТЕОРІЇ: ВИКОНАВСЬКИЙ ТА ТВОРЧИЙ АСПЕКТИ

53. ***Пайлодзе Нато, Абесадзе Нанули*** 292
ОРНАМЕНТ И ЦВЕТ КАК ОДИН ИЗ ВАЖНЕЙШИХ ПАМЯТНИКОВ ГРУЗИНСКОГО КУЛЬТУРНОГО НАСЛЕДИЯ

54. ***Фісун М. В.*** 301
ТВОРЧИЙ ПОРТРЕТ НАТАЛІЇ ЄЩЕНКО

POLITICAL SCIENCES

55. ***Kipiani M.*** 303
SECURITY MECHANISMS FOR SMALL STATES IN THE CONTEMPORARY INTERNATIONAL SYSTEM: THE ROLE AND CAPABILITIES OF INTELLIGENCE

PHILOLOGICAL SCIENCES

56. ***Hladkoskok L. H., Hladkoskok V. O.*** 314
THE ROLE OF MEDICAL ENGLISH IN TELEMEDICINE

57. ***Луценко Л. О.*** 319
МІЖКУЛЬТУРНИЙ АСПЕКТ ТВОРЧОСТІ ЕЛІЗИ ГЕЙВУД

58. ***Терещенко Л., Козюков Н. Д.*** 322
ОСОБЛИВОСТІ СЛУЖБОВИХ ЛИСТІВ

59. ***Терещенко Л. В., Маслов С. С.*** 325
ОСОБЛИВОСТІ КВАЛІФІКАЦІЇ ДОКУМЕНТІВ ЗА СФЕРАМИ ДІЯЛЬНОСТІ

60. ***Терещенко Л. В., Попова Д. Є.*** 329
ВИМОГИ ДО ОФОРМЛЕННЯ ОСОБОВИХ ДІЛОВИХ ПАПЕРІВ

ECONOMIC SCIENCES

61. ***Gurbanov Agil Abid, Ahmadli Nigar Taryel*** 333
SME DEVELOPMENT IN AZERBAIJAN: INSTITUTIONAL SUPPORT, DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION AND COMPETITIVENESS PERSPECTIVES

62. ***Krachok L.*** 347
HUMAN CAPITAL LOSSES IN UKRAINE UNDER WARTIME CONDITIONS: SCALE AND ECONOMIC CONSEQUENCES

63. ***Іваніцька Д. А., Осіпчук А. С.*** 350
РОЗВИТОК ІНДУСТРІЇ ГОСТИННОСТІ ЖИТОМИРСЬКОЇ ОБЛАСТІ

64. ***Ковальчук В. В.*** 354
МАРКЕТИНГОВІ ІНСТРУМЕНТИ УПРАВЛІННЯ РОЗВИТКОМ ЛОКАЛЬНИХ МЕРЕЖ АГРОБІЗНЕСУ

65. ***Пакуліна Г. С.*** 360
ДЕРЖАВНЕ УПРАВЛІННЯ СОЦІАЛЬНИМ КОМПЛЕКСОМ ЯК ЧИННИК ПОЗИТИВНОГО ІМІДЖУ УКРАЇНИ У СУЧАСНОМУ СВІТІ

66. ***Схаб К. Р., Лежепьокова В. Г.*** 368
ТЕНДЕНЦІЇ ФОРМУВАННЯ МІЖНАРОДНИХ ЛОГІСТИЧНИХ СИСТЕМ

67. ***Щебель А. І.*** 375
АДАПТАЦІЯ ІНВЕСТИЦІЙНОЇ ДІЯЛЬНОСТІ ПІДПРИЄМСТВ ХАРЧОВОЇ ПРОМИСЛОВОСТІ ДО СУЧАСНИХ ВИКЛИКІВ РОЗВИТКУ

LEGAL SCIENCES

68. ***Chkhitauri A.*** 382
THE POSSIBILITIES OF USING PRELIMINARY (INTERIM) PREVENTIVE REMEDIES FOR THE PROTECTION OF RIGHTS IN ADMINISTRATIVE COMPLAINT PROCEDURES

69. ***Mammadov Alijabbar Salman*** 392
THEORETİCAL FOUNDATİONS OF THE FORMATİON OF INTERNATİONAL E-COMMERCE AS A LEGAL INSTİTUTİON

70. ***Шинкар Т. І.*** 401
ЩОДО ПИТАННЯ «КОМПЕНСАЦІЇ» ВТРАЧЕНИХ ОСОБОЮ ІНФОРМАЦІЙНИХ МОЖЛИВОСТЕЙ ПРИ ОБМЕЖЕННІ ПРАВА НА ІНФОРМАЦІЮ

CULTURAL AND HISTORICAL SITES OF THE GABROVO REGION AND THEIR CONTRIBUTION TO THE SOCIO-ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT OF THE REGION

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Annotation: The purpose of this report is to examine the cultural and historical sites on the territory of Gabrovo district and to analyze their contribution to the socio-economic development of the region. The cultural and historical heritage of the Gabrovo region is extensive and diverse. Gabrovo and its surroundings are rich in monuments, museums and architectural complexes that testify to the Bulgarian Renaissance and the spiritual greatness of the Bulgarian people. The cultural heritage of Gabrovo region has a direct impact and contribution to the socio-economic development of the region. In recent years, cultural tourism has established itself as a key sector supporting the sustainable development of the local economy.

Keywords: Gabrovo, cultural and historical heritage, architectural complexes, socio-economic development.

Introduction: Gabrovo Region is located in the heart of Bulgaria, on the northern slopes of the Stara Planina Mountain, and represents one of the most significant cultural and historical regions of the country. The combination of picturesque nature, the spirit of the Bulgarian Renaissance and a rich cultural heritage turns the region into a kind of bridge between the past and the present. As part of the historical and geographical region of Central Bulgaria, Gabrovo has a unique appearance – a city of crafts, industry and humor, but also a city of cultural memory. Traditions, architecture and spirit are intertwined here, which have preserved the identity of the Bulgarian people over the centuries.

The purpose of this report is to study the cultural and historical sites on the territory of Gabrovo Region and to analyze their contribution to the socio-economic

development of the region. Research tasks include:

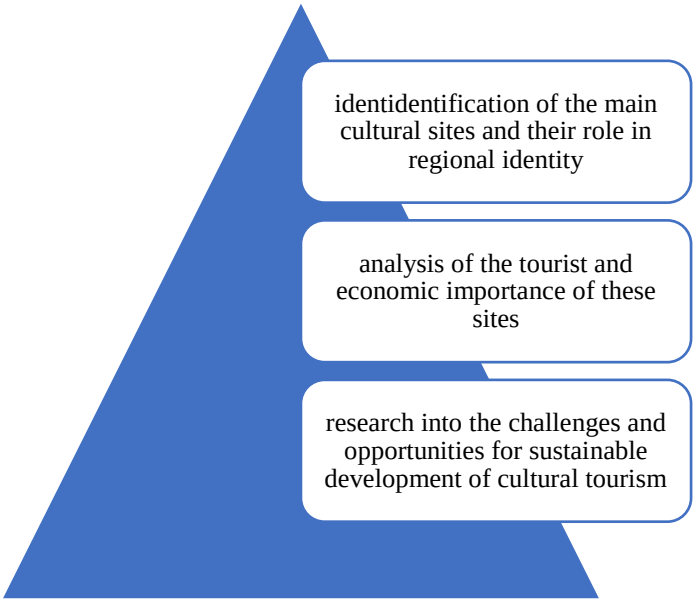


Fig. 1. Research tasks in the report

Source: from the author

The cultural and historical heritage of Gabrovo region is extensive and diverse. Gabrovo and its surroundings are rich in monuments, museums and architectural complexes that testify to the Bulgarian Revival rise and the spiritual greatness of the Bulgarian people. Among them, several symbols of national and international importance stand out. Such, for example, are:

1. Architectural and ethnographic complex "Etar" – created by the patriot Lazar Donkov in 1964, it is the first open-air ethnographic museum of its kind in Bulgaria. The complex recreates the architecture, lifestyle and crafts of the Revival era. Over 50 sites represent traditional houses, shops, workshops water facilities – mills, rolling mills, water wheels, wheelbarrows.

According to statistics, in recent years Ettar has been one of the most visited tourist sites in Bulgaria, with over 200,000 visitors per year. It is not only a museum, but also a vibrant center of traditional crafts – an International Fair of Folk Crafts is held here annually, which brings together craftsmen from all over the world and encourages cultural exchange. Exhibitions, celebrations of folk holidays, festivals, etc. are organized.

Table 1

Attendance of Ethnographic Museum "Etar"

Year	Number of visitors	Balance sheet
1970	432 000	Great interest
1980	552 350	Record number for the museum
1990	378 800	Sustained interest
2000	302 000	Decline but stable results
2010	226 070	Continuing decline, not good exposure
2020	102 000	Sharp, large decline due to the coronavirus pandemic
2024	405 120	Return of interest, saturation with appearances and events

Source: according to data from the Statistical Department of the Municipality of Gabrovo, 2025

2. House of Humor and Satire – Gabrovo

The House of Humor and Satire is a unique cultural institute, opened in 1972, and is a kind of "museum of laughter". The building houses collections of caricatures, humorous posters, sculptures and photographs, as well as organizing a number of international biennials and festivals and the not-so-famous Gabrovo Carnival. We believe that this institution contributes significantly to the image of Gabrovo as a "city of humor and longevity" and plays an important role in cultural tourism and international contacts.

3. Sokolski Monastery "Assumption of the Virgin Mary"

Located in the picturesque area near the Etara area, the Sokolski Monastery was founded in 1833 by hieromonk Joseph Sokolski. The monastery is a center of spirituality and enlightenment, and its architecture is a combination of traditional Bulgarian Renaissance style and exquisite details. The Sokol Monastery also has historical significance – during the War of Independence it served as a hospital, and today it is a popular place for pilgrimage tourism.

4. Dryanovo Monastery "St. Archangel Michael" and Bacho Kiro Cave

The Dryanovo Monastery, founded in 1206, has a long and turbulent history. It

has survived destruction and restoration over the centuries, becoming one of the symbols of the Bulgarian National Revival. It was a refuge for revolutionaries and is associated with the detachment of priest Khariton and Bacho Kiro – heroes of the April Uprising (1876). Nearby is the Bacho Kiro Cave – the first well-developed cave site in Bulgaria back in 1937, and in 1962 was declared a natural landmark. It is known for archaeological finds from prehistoric times. These two sites form a complete tourist route, combining nature, history and archaeology. The combined tourist routes monastery + cave increase the number of visitors to these sites, especially in the summer tourist season.

5. Revival houses and museum sites in the city and surroundings

In the center of Gabrovo and in the surrounding villages (Bozhentsi, Tryavna) there are many preserved Revival houses, converted into museums, e.g.:

- House-museum of Dimitar E. Gabrovski – the house is less well-known, it is managed by the Regional Historical Museum, Gabrovo. It does not have an official museum status.

- The Boy's House, House-museum "Petko and Pencho Slaveykovi", House-museum of Mitko Palauzov, etc.

- House-museum of Tsanko Dyustabanov – built by his father Hristo in 1810. It was located in Gabrovo, on Pazarya Street, which was later renamed Radetska Street. The building has three shops, with two floors of living quarters above them. The exquisite ceilings with wood carvings, walnut doors decorated with inlays and a large, multi-pointed star in the middle and half-stars at the ends of the room are impressive. The house was used as a community center and a theater hall. In 1872, it was a boarding house for students from outside the city, known as the "blue boarding house". In the memories of the old Gabrovo residents, we find that Vasil Levski, Stefan Stambolov, Georgi Izmirliev and other prominent members of the Bulgarian National Revival stayed in the house. Unfortunately, in 1912 the house was demolished. The Regional History Museum preserves only a panel from her door – a walnut board with inlays, as well as drawings and written descriptions by her contemporaries. Museum of Education – housed in the building of the first secular

school (1835). It was established in 1974. It is currently located on a small area in the western wing of the National Aprilovska Gymnasium, which is a cultural monument of national importance. The museum is responsible for presenting the development of Bulgarian education and training from the 9th century to the present day. The museum's collection contains over 180 thousand movable cultural values: textbooks, school equipment, seals, flags, photographs, etc. The reconstruction of a typical monastic school takes us back to the end of the 19th century and the methods of learning at that time. The museum is the only one in Bulgaria specifically dedicated to education and its development.

Bozhentsi Architectural and Historical Reserve, declared as such in 1964, is included in the List of 100 National Tourist Sites. The village has a history of over 600 years, having preserved its Renaissance character over the centuries with typical houses, courtyards, gates, stone slab roofs, cobblestone streets. There are restrictions on the construction of new buildings in the village. Some of the more interesting exhibits are: house-museum "Baba Raina", house-museum "Doncho Popa", the church "St. Prophet Elijah" f rom 1840, etc. The cultural heritage of Gabrovo region has a direct impact and contribution to the socio-economic development of the region. In recent years, cultural tourism has been established as a key sector supporting the sustainable development of the local economy. According to data from the National Statistical Institute and the Municipality of Gabrovo for 2024, the cultural and natural landmarks in the region are visited by over 300,000 tourists annually. The highest attendance is at Etarat, the House of Humor and Satire, Bozhentsi and the Dryanovo Monastery. The tourism sector provides employment mainly in small and medium-sized businesses – hotels, guest houses, restaurants and craft workshops. Local producers offer souvenirs, handmade products and traditional foods, which supports the sustainable development of rural areas. The budget and investments also reflect a good level, e.g.: the budget of the Municipality of Gabrovo for 2025 is ≈ 99,306,000 BGN. Within this budget, funds are provided for:

• large-scale reconstructions – House of Humor and Satire, a former textile college with transformation into the Center for Contemporary Art "Christo and

Jeanne-Claude".

• improvement of parks (in the "Mladost" and "Bazhdar" neighborhoods)

• design of a new central market, improvements in road infrastructure and water supply to small settlements.

The "Tourism" Program and the "Culture" Fund also show interest in social services in the region. Here we can point out the work of the Tourism Advisory Council, which adopted the tourism development program for 2025, with priorities: marketing, development of a marketing product, infrastructure, events, ecotourism. The Culture Fund supports co-financing of projects by local artists, organizations and initiatives focused on culture, traditions, crafts, industry and visions for the urban environment.

Table 2

Tourism infrastructure and revenues for the municipality of Gabrovo, 2024

Indicator	Value	Source/notes
Number of overnight stays registered compared to the previous year	52 805	An indicator of constantly growing interest and good employment in the tourism sector
Eating establishments within the municipality	43 бр. – registered	Serving tourists and locals
Accommodation – rooms, hotels, etc.	167 places	Availability of good capacity for the tourism market
Revenue from tourist tax in 2024	46 230	Good level of direct income for the municipality related to tourist flow
Expenditures for the implementation of the Tourism Program in 2024	32 300	Municipality investments in events, advertising and infrastructure

Source: according to data from the Municipality of Gabrovo, 2025.

In recent years, activities under projects with European funding have become increasingly promising. We will note some of them, with the greatest contribution to the socio-economic revival of the region: Project "REMO "Etar" – Museum for

Creative Cultural Tourism", funded under the OP "Regions in Growth" 2014-2020, with a value of about 10,497,161.15 BGN – completed stage. Project "Support for the development of a regional integrated tourism product in the municipalities of Gabrovo, Tryavna and Sevlievo" – value of 461,672.67 BGN with a share of the ERDF and partner contribution.

Gabrovo also has an important role as an educational center, thanks to the Technical University, as well as the activities of museums, libraries and cultural institutions. Many of the cultural and historical sites have an educational function – open lessons, student competitions and historical reenactments are held, which develop national self-awareness. The Technical University was founded in 1964 as a Higher General Technical Correspondence Institute. In 1972, it changed its name to the Higher Mechanical and Electrical Engineering Institute. In 2024, it celebrates its 60th anniversary, noting significant achievements in the field of education and scientific research. It offers innovative programs, such as the Drone Academy, which will start in 2025. Cultural events in Gabrovo promote social inclusion, civic activity and a sense of belonging. The Gabrovo Humor Festival and Carnival bring together thousands of participants, uniting generations and cultures. These events bring economic benefits, but also spiritual enrichment to the local community.

The initiative of several young volunteers of the Aprilov-Palauzov Regional Library, who over the course of a year photographed 60 sites from the cultural, historical and architectural heritage of Gabrovo, is very interesting. The best of the photographs were exhibited at an exhibition at the Aprilov-Palauzov Regional Library. A virtual album was created and provided to 17 schools in the city on e-media. Despite the good results shown, we will highlight important challenges and prospects. For example, the need to provide annual support for various cultural sites on the territory of the municipality is clearly outlined. The marketing and advertising strategy should follow the world level, deepening partnerships with more foreign tour operators. As can be seen, the cultural sector of Gabrovo faces a number of difficulties that can be grouped into two key categories:

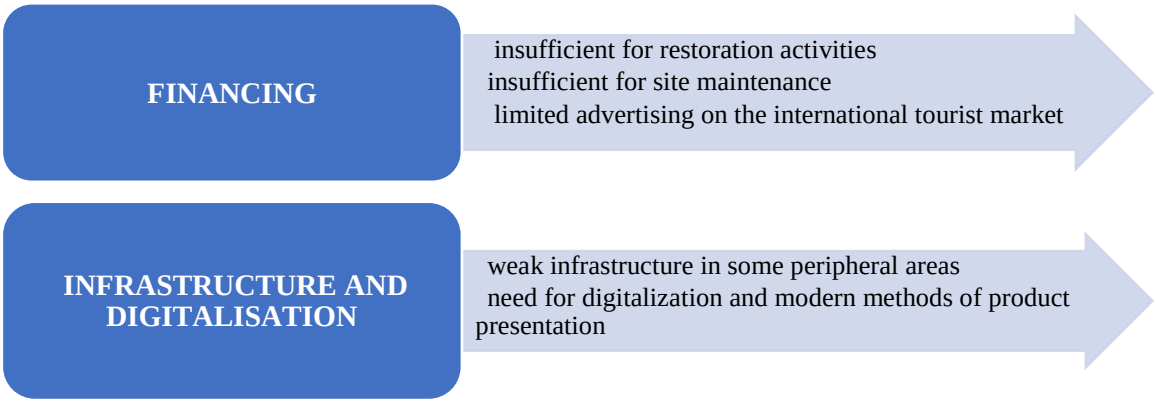


Fig. 2. Noted difficulties grouped into two categories

Development prospects include:

Attracting investments through European programs (such as the Cultural Heritage 2021–2027 Program);

Introducing interactive and digital exhibitions in museums;

Developing thematic routes – "In the Footsteps of the Revival", "The Road of Crafts";

Cooperation between municipalities, educational institutions and non-governmental organizations.

Conclusion

The cultural and historical heritage of Gabrovo region is a strategic resource for the socio-economic development of the region. It combines spiritual, educational and economic dimensions, creating prerequisites for sustainable tourism, increasing employment and improving the quality of life.

The cultural and historical sites in Gabrovo region are not only heritage, but also a driver of socio-economic development. They attract tourists, generate income, create jobs and improve the image of the region. The programs of the Municipality of Gabrovo – through the Culture Fund, the Tourism Program, European projects – are already yielding real results, but they also reveal the need for even more stable policies, modernization and innovations.

Improvements in infrastructure, advertising, event activities, as well as more efficient use of funds, can establish Gabrovo as one of the leading cultural and tourist centers not only in Bulgaria, but also in the region.

Gabrovo proves that the preservation of cultural memory is not only an act of preservation, but also of development. The traditions woven into the architecture, art and humor of Gabrovo are an integral part of the national identity. The support of cultural institutions, investments in infrastructure and digitalization, as well as international cooperation, can turn Gabrovo into one of the leading centers of cultural tourism in Bulgaria and the Balkans.

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