



Tourism Development and Promotion Project

**WESTERN BALKANS CROSSROADS OF CIVILISATIONS
REGIONAL UMBRELLA IDENTITY**

- KEY STORYLINES -

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Sarajevo

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1. BRIEF OVERVIEW OF THE CONCEPT

Concept of the Western Balkans Crossroads of Civilisations regional umbrella identity was developed under the Triple P Tourism Project in 2018¹ with the aim to define the framework for development of an overarching shared regional umbrella identity, which will promote the rich and diverse common cultural heritage of the WB6 region, spearhead the repositioning of the WB6 region in international travel market and contribute to better visibility of WB6 economies in the European and worldwide tourism markets, at the same time supporting the environment conducive to development of high quality services and products and essential tourism infrastructure at tourist destinations.

By developing unique cultural tourism products/itineraries, the WBCoC aims to attract tourists to the region and through improved cooperation among the key stakeholders from culture, tourism and related industries contribute to increased spending at locations and extended stay of visitors in the region itself, thus positively contributing to economic development, growth and jobs creation in the region.

The Concept identified core points of historic overlap that can justify the claim and developed basic guidelines for the selection of sites that communicate the heritage of the WBCoC. Further, the tentative list of sites and locations throughout WB6 has been established.

Sites of cultural significance are quite often far from each other or lack proper communications. The WBCoC umbrella identity is designed as a network, an archipelago of cultural heritage monuments/sites not necessarily connected sequentially or physically. It presents a pool of cultural and natural heritage points for creation of market-oriented, tailor-made itineraries for specific groups of tourists².

This structure allows tourism sector stakeholders (travel agents, tour operators) and even individual travellers to pick up the cultural and natural heritage, and intangible heritage elements and create their itineraries that will meet their expectations. On the other side, this structure provides opportunities for single monuments/sites that might not have enough pulling power to generating a profitable and attractive tourism product to become part of a larger itinerary, thus creating a far more powerful, attractive and profitable product. This will generate opportunities for the inclusion of many services and products in the cultural tourism products, thus generating jobs, and contributing to economic development and a better life for the local population.

The main products of the WBCoC are regional cultural itineraries which will provide high quality and authentic cultural experience for visitors. The core of each cultural experience is **storytelling**.

2. STORYTELLING OF THE UMBRELLA IDENTITY

¹ RCC. Final Concept of the Western Balkans: Crossroads of Civilisations Regional Umbrella Identity Development, December 2018.

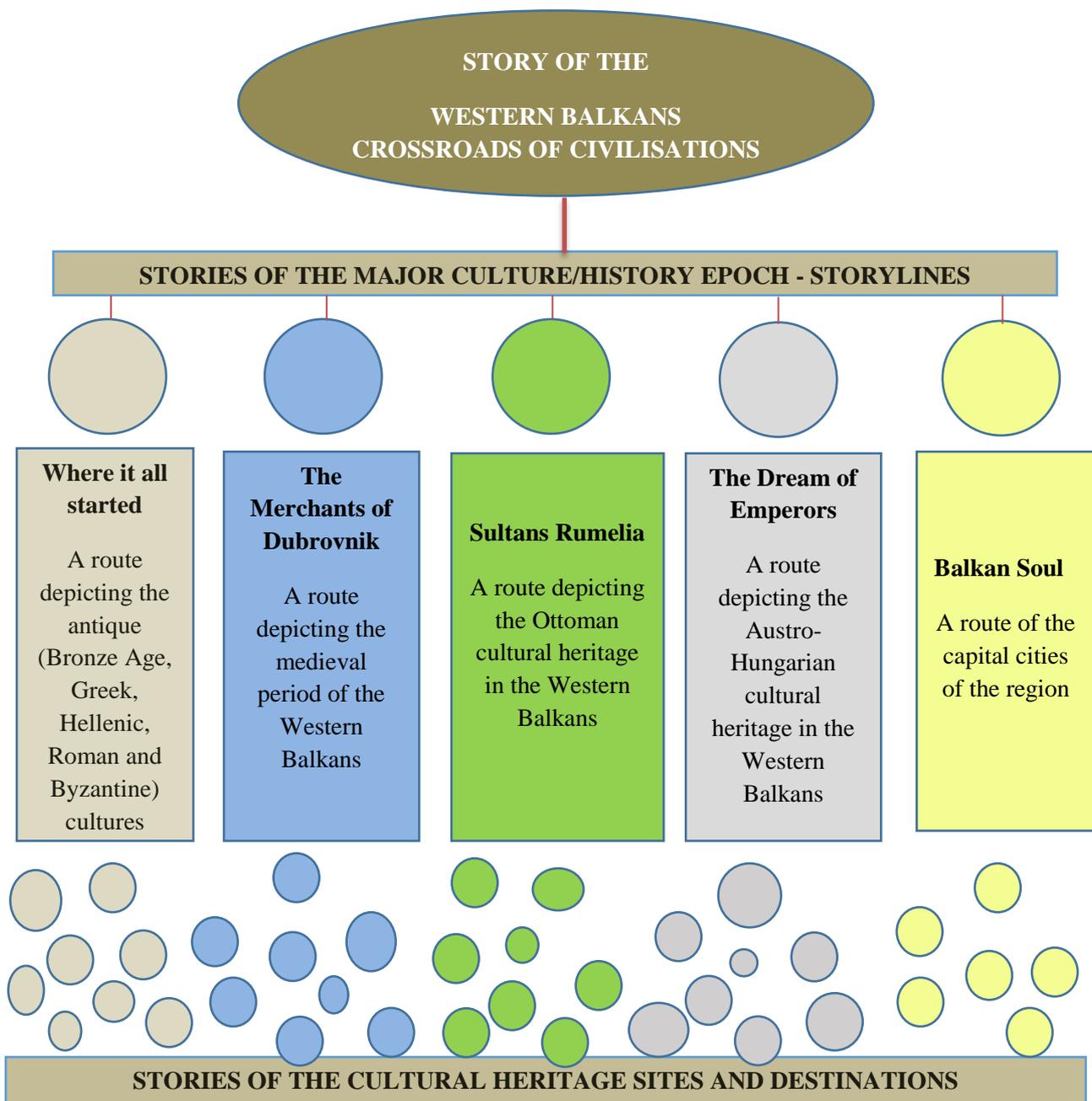
² The archipelago of monuments/sites is presented in Map 1 in the Final Concept.

The storytelling of the Western Balkans Crossroads of Civilisations regional umbrella identity is designed on three levels:

1. **The first level** tells the main story of the Western Balkans as a Crossroads of Civilisations.
2. **The second level** depicts the stories of the main cultural/historic epochs, which are presented **in five main storylines or themes**.
3. **The third level** includes the stories, legends, and myths of the cultural heritage sites, which are proposed to be included under the WBCoC umbrella identity.

The architecture of the WBCoC is presented in Exhibit 1 below.

Exhibit 1: Architecture of the WBCoC umbrella identity storytelling



This architecture of storytelling allows visitors, tour operators and travel agents creation of unique, tailor-made itineraries, which will meet the expectations of each particular target group of visitors.

The overall story and five main themes storylines are presented below.

2.1. Main Storyline - WESTERN BALKANS: CROSSROADS OF CIVILISATIONS

The Western Balkans represents a bridge between East and West. Placed between the Danube River and Adriatic Sea, set in the breath-taking scenery of the Dinaric Alps, which hides Europe's deepest canyons, glacial lakes and last remaining virgin forests, the Western Balkans was always a meeting place, a crossroad of civilisations.

It is where Ancient Greece and Rome meet. It is the region where the Roman Empire splits. It was the border between western Latin and eastern Greek cultures of Middle Ages. It was the border of three Empires: Ottoman, Russian and Austrian, and three religions: Christian Catholic, Christian Orthodox and Muslim.

For the West this region was where the Orient began and for the East a gateway to Europe.

The legacies of numerous emperors, kings and sultans were only superseded by the number of armies which passed through its valleys and gorges, fields and mountains. Those armies didn't just leave stories and legends of glorious battles. They also left marvellous acts of architecture, engineering and art.

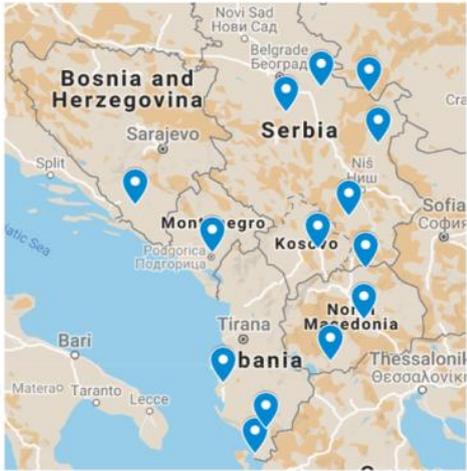
This region represents a true crossroad of civilisations, where in an area of rich and turbulent history, numerous cultures and three religions have met to create a distinct cultural identity, unique in Europe. This uniqueness is definitely a result of intertwining of numerous cultural influences, but with a constant touch of local particularities, shown numerous times in history, from Illyrians to present day.

It is no wonder that it is almost impossible to find a cultural heritage site in the region that won't hold several other cultural layers below it. If it is a Roman temple, there is probably a Greek and Illyrian one below it. If there is an Ottoman fort, there are probably Venetian, medieval, Byzantine and Roman remains underneath.

This is a region where cities founded by figures of legends, which were built, destroyed and rebuilt for uncountable times bear witness to all the winds which shaped the Old Continent. Every village and town, every church and mosque hide numerous tales, legends and myths of 3000 years of history. This makes Western Balkans one of Europe's most unique cultural regions.

2.2. Five KEY STORYLINES

2.2.1 STORYLINE 1: WHERE IT ALL STARTED

<p style="text-align: center;">WHERE IT ALL STARTED</p> <p style="text-align: center;">A route theme depicting the antique (Bronze Age, Greek, Hellenic, Roman and Byzantine) cultures</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">  Buthrotum  Old City of Antigonea  Apollonia  Daorson  Ulpiana  Duklja  Heraclea Lyncestis  Stobi  Kokino  Gamzigrad  Viminacium  Caricin grad Iustiniana Prima  Arandelovac  Lepenski vir 	
<p>The route includes sites of cultural heritage which depict the most prominent cultural elements of the Bronze Age, first Illyrian states, Greek colonies, Greece-Illyrian fusion, Roman Empire and early Byzantine Empire.</p>		
Economy	Site	
ALBANIA	Apollonia, Butrint, Antigonea	
BOSNIA & HERZEGOVINA	Daorson/ Stolac	
KOSOVO*	Ulpiana	
MONTENEGRO	Doclea, Risan, Budva	
NORTH MACEDONIA	Heraclea Lyncestis, Stobi, Kokino	
SERBIA	Gamzigrad, Viminacium, Iustiniana prima/Caričin grad, Arandelovac, Lepenski vir	

Storytelling - Places where history began

Beginning of history is often shrouded in myths and legends. Tales from ages long ago tell stories which are woven into the fabric of Europe. The Western Balkans is a place where the great civilisations of antiquity left their mark, and impassable mountains protected their remains from millennia which have passed.

Besides legends and myths sometimes the very earth preserves traces of civilisations we didn't know existed. At **Lepenski Vir** you can find one of the oldest settlements in Europe, whose beginnings can be dated up to 9 millennia BC. We don't know the name of the people who inhabited Lepenski Vir, but we know the name of people who came after them, the Illyrians.

The remains of Illyrian Iron Age forts and cities are scattered all around the region. But two of them stand out. The mighty fortress of **Daorson**, and the port city of **Risan**, the capital of the Illyrian pirate queen Teuta. Even though the Illyrians created their own states, culture,

* This designation is without prejudice to positions on status, and is in line with UNSCR 1244 and the ICJ Opinion on the Kosovo declaration of independence

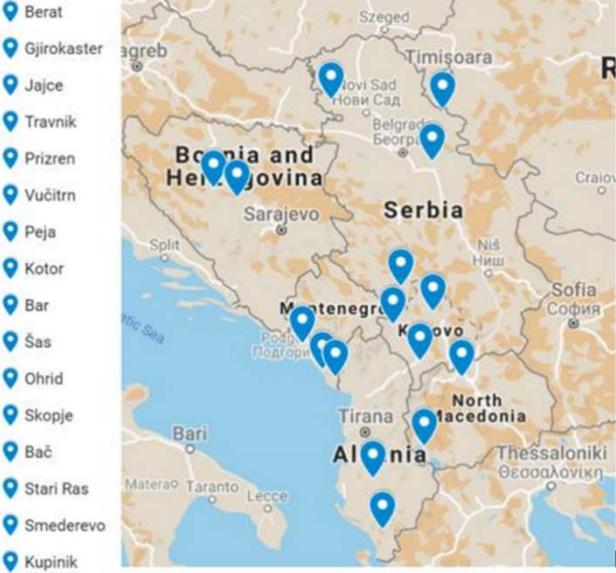
cities and technologies were influenced by their more advanced neighbours from the south, the Greeks.

Quite early colonies of the Greek cities sprang on the coast of the Western Balkans. Most of the coastal cities in the region today connect their foundation to these times and figures of legends. Such is the town of **Budva**, which was founded by Cadmus, the first hero of the Greeks, founder of Thebes and brother to Europa. Numerous coastal towns and villages cherish legends of this hero and of his final resting place.

Going from legend to history, in the Western Balkans you can find the remains of numerous Greek cities, most prominent at the sites of **Butrint and Apollonia**. All of the Illyrian and Greek sites show the cultural fusion of these two civilisations. A little to the east, another ancient culture developed, Macedonia. Here we can find **Heraclea Lyncestis**, a town founded by Philip II, the father of Alexander the Great. Even if it was a border town, it provides an insight into the world of a civilisation which conquered the East.

While the Western Balkans was experiencing the cultural growth of the Hellenistic period, a new power was rising in the West. It took the Romans almost 2 centuries to conquer this region, and when they did, they created architectural wonders which could be seen all across Europe. At **Ulpiana, Stobi, Doclea, Gamzigrad and Viminacium** you can get a glimpse of the might of the Roman Empire and their way of life. Finally, as antiquity made way in Western Europe for the Middle Ages, the Eastern Roman Empire, today known as the Byzantium, survived. The Byzantine Empire will have a profound influence on the Middle Ages in this region, but an insight into the time when it was in its full glory during the reign of Emperor Justinian can be seen at Caričin grad or better known as **Iustiniana prima**.

2.2.2 STORYLINE 2: THE MERCHANTS OF DUBROVNIK

<p style="text-align: center;">THE MERCHANTS OF DUBROVNIK</p> <p style="text-align: center;">A route theme depicting the medieval period of the Western Balkans</p>	
<p><i>The route shows the main sites created by the medieval states in the region. The theme revolves around the voyage of a Merchant from Dubrovnik through the region, as in the Middle Ages the tradesmen from this city were present in all corners of the Western Balkans. Also, a lot of the Medieval era of the region is known because of the documents kept in the archives in Dubrovnik. The route is designated to show the influences of Latin Catholic West and Greek Orthodox East in the formation of the medieval Slavic and Albanian states, as well as their eventual fall under the Ottoman Empire. The role of the Venetian Republic will also be represented.</i></p>	
Economy	Site
ALBANIA	Berat, Gjirokastra, Kruje
BOSNIA & HERZEGOVINA	Jajce, Travnik
KOSOVO*	Prizren, Vushtri/Vučitrn, Peja/Peć
MONTENEGRO	Kotor, Bar, Svač
NORTH MACEDONIA	Ohrid, Skopje
SERBIA	Bač, Stari Ras, Smederevo, Kupinik

Storytelling - Travelling between Rome and Constantinople

When the Roman Empire split in the 4th century into its Western and Eastern part, they became cultural zones of what will become western Latin Catholic and eastern Greek Orthodox. As the border of these two new Christian worlds went straight through the Western Balkans, the region found itself in a struggle for the dominant influence between Constantinople and Rome.

The culture of the first Slavic and Albanian medieval states was profoundly influenced by this strive creating a mosaic of Christian heritage influenced by both sides. This is especially seen in religious architecture where Catholic and Orthodox churches and monasteries alike, besides being built in the dominant styles of the time, cherish the elements of the other sides, with a local touch. Being on the border of Empires often meant conflict, so the local rulers, more often fighting between each other than foreign invaders, built strong fortresses on top of inaccessible hilltops. In this violent border region full of canyons and impassable mountains and forests, quite often only one group of people had the freedom to go as they pleased. Those were the merchants from the Republic of Dubrovnik. They had their representatives on all courts and market places in the region, never caring much for the wars as long as their business continued.

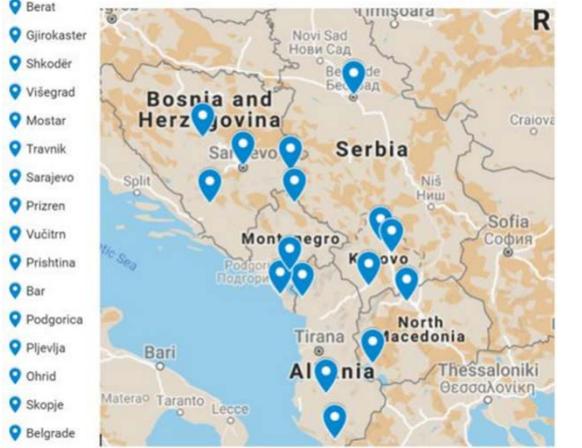
In their travels of the medieval world of the Western Balkans, they would visit port cities, such as **Kotor**, with its cathedral from the 9th century, or important market places, such as **Prizren** and **Skopje**. They would trade in towns in the shadow of strong fortresses, such as **Berat** and **Kruje/ Gjirokastra**. They would see important Catholic pilgrim sites such as the now-dead city of **Svač**, or **Ohrid** from where Christianity and literacy spread among the Slavs.

During their travels through the rugged terrain of the Balkans they would see massive migrations of sheep-herders in the spring and autumn, while trying to get to one of the rare bridges over strong mountain rivers, like the one in **Vushtrri/Vučitrn**. Going through the dense forests they would ever so often stumble upon a monastery or a church built on a secluded place to protect from attackers and to be in touch with nature, in line with the old Slavic tradition. One of these churches will be near an ancient fortress, called Old Ras, a place where the first medieval Serbian principality will be created, a principality which will eventually rise into an Empire. Finally, the merchant would witness the constructions and fall of mighty forts in **Smederevo** and **Jajce**. These forts would be the last stand of local princes and kings in a futile attempt to defend against the onslaught of the new and mighty Ottoman Empire.

2.2.3 STORYLINE 3: SULTANS RUMELIA

SULTANS RUMELIA

A route theme depicting the Ottoman cultural heritage in the Western Balkans



The Ottomans were present in the region from the late 14th until the early 20th century. During that time the Ottoman Empire went from one of the most important world powers to being the “Sick man” of Europe. Still, the Ottoman Empire had a profound influence on the development of culture in the region. The title comes from the fact that in the Ottoman administrative division the Western Balkans region was for a long time under Rumelia Elayet (Beylerbeylik of Rumelias the highest administrative division). The name Rumelia comes from the Turkish (lands of the Romans) meaning they took it from the Romans (Byzantium) or it was a part of Rome.

Economy	Site
ALBANIA	Berat, Shkodra, Gjirokastra
BOSNIA & HERZEGOVINA	Višegrad, Mostar, Travnik, Sarajevo
KOSOVO*	Prishtina/Priština, Prizren, Vushtri/Vučitrn
MONTENEGRO	Podgorica, Pljevlja, Bar
NORTH MACEDONIA	Ohrid, Skopje
SERBIA	Belgrade, Niš

Storytelling - Beauty of the Orient in Europe

The Ottoman Empire held the Balkans for five centuries. It conquered these lands when it was still a power on the rise, strengthened its grip during the centuries while it was the world’s most powerful Empire, and left as a “Sick man of Europe”. Still, its cultural influence in the region, which they called Rumelia or the land of Romans, is hard to ignore. And by this, we don’t just mean the beautiful architecture the sultans' architects left us, but also an unmissable influence in culture, music, food and the way of life.

Almost every city in the region has some Ottoman mark left on its appearance. Of course regional political and trade centres experienced the most of the urban development during this time, and have the most to show. Craft and trade neighbourhoods with their specific urban architecture, public buildings, bathhouses, clock towers and mosques still cherish that feeling of a busy oriental town. Quite often these landmarks are dedicated to sultan or major event in Ottoman history.

Most of the current regional capitals have neighbourhoods with a strong Ottoman influence. But you'll find entire towns such as **Vushtrri/Vučitrn**, **Prizren**, **Gjirokastra**, **Berat** and **Travnik** preserved as regional centres. Some towns, such as **Shkodra/Škoder**, were the largest urban settlements in this part of Europe during the Ottoman times. You'll find marvellous examples of Ottoman culture in coastal towns such as **Bar**, where the mosques lean on Venetian fortresses and olive trees. There are hidden jewels, like the mosque in **Pljevlja**, which has the highest minaret in the Balkans.

The Ottoman Empire has always been the society of traders, so it's no surprise that towns sprawl around important market places and market places sprawl around bridges. Two of these bridges, in **Mostar** and **Višegrad**, became the subject of stories in world renowned literature.

Not by accident, the story of Ottoman Rumelia always starts or ends in Sarajevo. A city whose name in Ottoman Turkish means the "Governor's castle" or "Saray" was constructed by the first Ottoman governor of Bosnia, and soon became one of the most important economic and cultural centres of Ottoman Europe. Who would have guessed that this once-bustling trade town would have such importance in European and world history?

The Ottoman Empire didn't just bring a new layer of culture to the region, depicted in Islamic fate and oriental style of architecture. Mixing with the local population, it created a universe of tales and songs that speak and sing of love, adventures and travels to the greatest city of that time, Istanbul.

2.2.4 STORYLINE 4: THE DREAM OF EMPERORS

THE DREAM OF EMPERORS

A route theme depicting the Austro-Hungarian cultural heritage in the Western Balkans



In its expansion the Hapsburg monarchy reached the shores of rivers Sava and Danube by the beginning of 18th century. They tried to create a permanent presence in the region south of these two rivers, but besides some short-term victories, they only succeeded after 1878 and the occupation and later Annexation of Bosnia and Herzegovina. By this time the Empire changed its name to Austro-Hungarian Empire. This region was a goal to conquest (a dream) for many Emperors and Empires. They considered it vital for further expansions (in Austro-Hungarian case to the East). The tensions and competitiveness over this region were one of the reasons WWI started here.

Economy	Site
BOSNIA & HERZEGOVINA	Trebinje (Forts around Trebinje), Mostar, Sarajevo
MONTENEGRO	Kotor
SERBIA	Subotica, Novi Sad (Petrovaradin)

Storytelling - The dreams of Emperors

The Balkans was always a bridge that everyone who wanted to pass from west to east or vice versa had to cross. But the rugged mountain terrain of this region quite often presented a challenge for armies which wanted to go through here. More than once, this region became a borderland of different Empires which dreamt of using the Balkans as a staging ground for their ambitions of expanding forwards west or east.

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occupation, and later Annexation of Bosnia and Herzegovina. By this time the Empire changed its name to the Austro-Hungarian Empire. Unlike the Ottoman, the Austro-Hungarian Empire remained in the region for just a couple of decades, even if its political and cultural influence started much earlier. Still, this was enough to leave a permanent mark on the region.

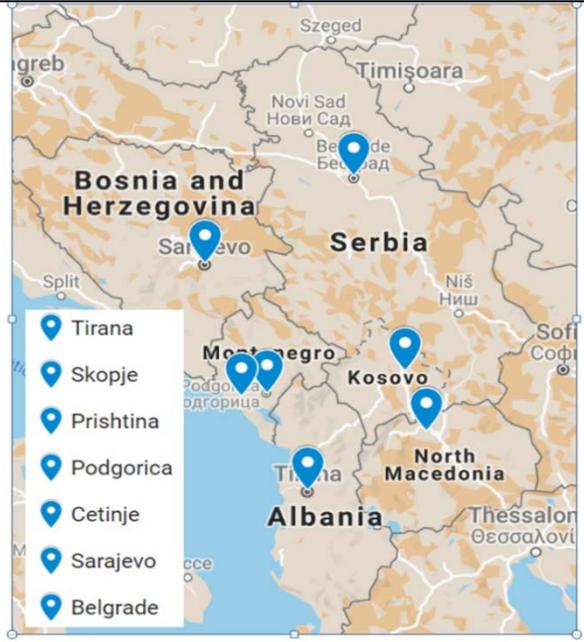
The Western Balkans was the southern frontier of the Empire. The main pray, the ever so weak Ottoman Empire, was to the south. Also the newly formed independent nations of Serbia and Montenegro were pressing on the borders. Rugged terrain, unstable border and a population not willing to follow the strict rules of the Monarchy's administration apparatus meant that there was always a strong presence of the military in this region. It was accompanied by the construction of massive fortresses, such as the one in **Petrovaradin**, or systems of fortifications, as those around **Kotor** and **Trebinje**.

The military was followed by an equally disciplined administration. Quite soon the life in the territories north of Sava and Danube, such as Subotica, mimicked the daily town life of any other town or city in the Empire. It was life set on fast industrialisation and progress. The same thing happened in the towns which were once under the Venetian rule.

But the towns and cities which for so long have lived under the traditional life of the Ottoman Empire faced more difficulty in adapting. Nowhere the unlikely fusion of architecture, daily life and mentality were more noticeable than in **Sarajevo**. The famous hajj station, full of bazaars and mosques, became the centre of industrialisation, technical and architectural innovation. The effort of the Austro-Hungarian Empire to integrate this region was nowhere more visible than in the efforts to construct a railway and to connect the region with other parts of Central and Eastern Europe. Still today the remains of these railway lines can be seen as a symbol of an effort of an industrial nation to tame the rugged terrain.

Austro-Hungarian Empire was a stark contrast to the Ottoman Empire. Its arrival in the time of national awakening created friction. This friction was destined to create a spark in the place where the contact of different cultures was the most visible. Unfortunately, at the time, no one knew that this spark could start one of the greatest conflicts in history.

2.2.5 STORYLINE 5: THE BALKAN SOUL

<p>THE BALKAN SOUL</p> <p>A route of the capital cities of the region</p>	
<p><i>Capital cities of regional economies are a perfect example of crossroads of civilisations as all the cultural elements in the mentioned economies or even the region can be seen in the architecture, culture and atmosphere of these cities.</i></p>	
Economy	Site
ALBANIA	Tirana
BOSNIA & HERZEGOVINA	Sarajevo
KOSOVO*	Prishtina/Priština
MONTENEGRO	Podgorica or Cetinje
NORTH MACEDONIA	Skopje
SERBIA	Belgrade

Storytelling – Balkan Soul

In various parts of the region, a visitor can experience and enjoy different aspects of its long and rich history. Such a rich culture doesn't just give a sense of national pride, but has also influenced different aspects of contemporary culture in the region, which are now part of everyday life.

Nowhere elements of that culture can be more seen than in the contemporary capitals of the region. Cities which are centuries and even millennia old sometimes don't have that much to show due to a number of devastating wars or natural disasters, which have destroyed their cultural heritage. But in their streets, in the music and food, you can recognise all the various influences of civilisations long gone.

The capital cities are a melting pot of cultural influences from all regions and somehow that mix always has a similar taste.

In the shadows of ancient forts, constructed and devastated numerous times by numerous conquerors, there is an old town with a market place or bazaar, a Catholic and Orthodox

church and a Mosque. Quite often there is a stone bridge, a clock tower or a fountain and all of them have numerous stories.

On the tables of coffee shops sits Turkish coffee and wine from vineyards grown in the surrounding area since the times of the Romans or Greeks. There is olive oil from the 2000-year-old olive trees and variations of food from most cuisines from central Europe and the Mediterranean.

There are stories of locals who went and did great deeds in Vienna, Rome and Constantinople/Istanbul. But most of all there is a unique mixture of different European cultures, with a touch of Orient and local specifics, all placed in this small region, at the Crossroads of Civilisations.