

Regional tourism from the perspective of the Danube strategy – iron gates region

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ABSTRACT

In the context of a global economy, the sustainable development strategy of Romania must emphasize the catalyst factors of economic and social change, in order to promote economic growth. At the same time, the strategy must be sufficiently flexible for the adaptation to shocks and change processes. The complex of negative factors (the status of the infrastructure, the outdated mentalities, the poor professional training, the long economic crisis, etc.), to which we may add a certain inertia or/and superficiality of some local public administrations regarding the meaning and the definition of local development of tourism, explains the difficulties dealt with by this sector, so dependent on the general status of the national economy. That is why the existence of a national program for the regional development of sustainable tourism is of maximum importance, being identified firstly with the priority objectives of some less evolved areas, which would revive their economy. In this context, the "Strategy of the European Union for the Danube Region" is beneficial for the Iron Gates Region - tourist micro-destination, representing a multinational program through which the European Community has proposed to reduce the delays - firstly economic - between the countries located on the superior course of the old river as well as of those located on its inferior course.

KEYWORDS

tourism, strategy, regional development, potential, heritage, destination, Danube Region.

JEL Classification

L8; L83; Q01; O2.

Introduction

One of the priority fields of the Strategy is Tourism and the revaluation of the natural heritage and of the cultural and historical inheritance through the development of specific infrastructure and intense promotion actions. Why this Topic?

Endowed with an especially varied, diversified tourist potential, due to the existence of some relief forms that are combined all over the territory, of a climate favorable for the practice of tourism almost all year round, of a fauna and flora potential rich in unique species and ecosystems in Europe, with natural factors adequate for treatments, with a cultural, historical and architectural reference heritage, developed along the old river Danube", the Iron Gates Region may be classified among the attractive tourist destinations from Romania and even from Europe.



Photo 1. Danube Region

In the next 10 years, the EU will focus on developing countries along the river and will provide tens of billions of Euros. We are not allowed to miss this opportunity.

Officially, it is called the “European Union Strategy for the Danube Region” and it is a large multinational, regional project, by which the European Community aims to reduce gaps – primarily economic – between countries on the upper old river and its lower basin.

That is between Germany, Poland, Croatia, Slovenia, Slovakia, Czech Republic, Austria and Hungary – on the one hand – and Serbia, Bulgaria, Romania, Republic of Moldova and Ukraine – on the other hand. Note that some countries are not yet EU members and are yet covered or may be involved in the implementation of the Danube strategy – that is, in fact, the challenge launched by the European community for neighboring countries. And, pay attention, not only local, regional or central authorities may be partners or generators of projects, as one might think at first glance, but also private organizations, such as companies, nonprofit foundations, NGOs, business associations, but especially schools, cultural or research institutions.

The four areas (pillars) proposed by the European Commission on which the Strategy focuses on are: connectivity (sustainable transport, energy networks, telecommunications), environmental protection and water management, risk management, socio-economic development (culture, education, research, tourism, rural development, internal market), and improving governance systems.

Problem Formulation:

The key challenge for Romania would be its maintaining between the main promoters of the creation initiative of the Strategy and including the Action Plan of as many priority projects as possible. This has imposed the supporting of the Government in the finalization process of the Strategy by developing and promoting national positions.

The strategy proposes the development of tourism and the capitalization of natural heritage and cultural-historical heritage by developing specific and intense infrastructure of promotion. The Danube is an important catalyst for creativity and intercultural dialogue, an inspiration and a connection between cultures and civilizations developed through trade, social and cultural relations, caused by its proximity. The full of history Danube region has undergone many changes over the past 20 years, both politically and economically; in the region there are still considerable disparities between Member States. The challenge we are facing is to accelerate the process to overcome these regional disparities, and in this context we consider that the Danube strategy is a worthy political innovation, an opportunity for countries to accelerate the benefits of integration, better using the funds existing at regional level.

Among the Danube states, Romania has the largest area of Danube basin (about 30 percent), the longest segment of the river (1076 km), and the Danube Delta, the second largest wetland in Europe, a unique ecosystem of international importance, declared a cultural heritage of humanity by UNESCO in 1991. Counties in the Danube region represent 30.1% of the total area of the country. In the region crossed by the Danube in Romania there are seven national parks.

The demographic context of the Danube region is the result of several trends that have accelerated over the past two decades – the region’s overall population decline, migration from rural to urban areas (with temporary counter-currents during periods of crisis or economic stagnation), the average life expectancy below national ones. The Danube region’s demographic picture is bleak – the population in the region’s counties has declined between 1992 and 2007, in most of them faster than compared to the total population of Romania, except for the counties of Constanta, Galati, Ialomita, where population decline was partially offset by positive net migration. In some counties, the population decline was very strong – decreases of 14.63% in Teleorman, 12.95% in Caras-Severin and 10.20% in Mehedinti.

Demographic trends in the Danube region (Source: INS, nov.2011, Mehedinti Department)**Table 1**

County	Population growth (in%, 2007 compared to 1992)	Life expectancy (in years, 2007)	Unemployment rate (in% at the end of June 2010)
Caraş – Severin	-12.95%	71.10	9.83%
Mehedinţi	-10.20%	72.02	12.36%
Dolj	-6.55%	72.18	11.35%
Olt	-9.09%	71.79	8.11%
Teleorman	-14.63%	72.07	12.11%
Giurgiu	-9.55%	71.24	8.27%
Călăraşi	-6.97%	71.54	8.61%
Ialomiţa	-5.09%	72.31	10.95%
Constanţa	-4.06%	71.83	5.45%
Brăila	-6.73%	72.92	7.86%
Galati	-4.14%	72.61	10.50%
Tulcea	-7.51%	71.86	7.56%
Romania Total	-5.58%	72.61	7.44%

Current economic context

General economic situation of the region finds its first reflection in the unemployment rate. Five counties had unemployment rates even above 10% - Mehedinti (12.36%), Teleorman (12.11%), Dolj (11.35%), Ialomita (10.95%) and Galati (10.50%). The negative social phenomenon of a high level of unemployment is aggravated by the fact that, according to NAE, some Danube region counties are ranked first in the country as a share of the unpaid unemployed persons: “The counties with the largest share of unpaid unemployed in the total number of unemployed are: Dolj (62.14%), Teleorman (61.41%), Vrancea (60.18%), Mehedinti (59.89%), Vaslui (59.43%), Iasi (58.49%) Covasna (58.02%) and Galati (55.05%)².

As for the Danube region share in the national economy (measured by the gross domestic product), we note the presence of significant economic intensions in the counties of Constanta (about 4-4.5% of national GDP), Galati and Dolj (2-2.5% of GDP), the contribution of other counties being much smaller – for example, the counties of Mehedinti, Giurgiu, Calarasi, Ialomita and Tulcea each represented less than 1% of Romania’s GDP (in 2006).

Freight transport on the Danube has registered a strong decline between 1990 and 1993, followed by a strong recovery by 1995. Romania’s Statistical Yearbook Data – 2008 shows that after 1995 freight transport on the Danube has stagnated at levels ranged from 13 to 16.5 million tons per year.

In addition, river transport of passengers experienced a sharp decline in the late ‘90s, from a level of 1.5-2.5 million passengers a year to 130-220 thousand passengers per year starting with 2000. In 2007, passenger river transport was only 0.06% of national total of passengers transported, even airlines carrying 15 times more passengers.

Road infrastructure in the Danube region is also relatively undeveloped compared to other regions in the country. Thus, according to statistical yearbook cited, the Danube region has in 2007 20,562 km of public roads, representing only 25.4% of all public roads in Romania. A more specific indicator showing the limitations of road infrastructure in the region is public road density expressed as number of kilometers of public roads per 100 square kilometers of territory. Except for Olt and Mehedinti counties, all other counties in the Danube region have a density below the national average.

² The statistics of registered unemployment on June 30, 2010, published by the National Agency for Employment (NAE) on July 26, 2010

Although the Danube region includes a significant number of tourist attractions, tourism infrastructure is still underdeveloped. The notable exception in this context is Constanta County, which, because of the seaside tourist pole, had in 2007, according to the Statistical Yearbook 2008, 121,717 accommodation places, i.e. not less than 42.9% of the total of accommodation in Romania.

In Mehedinti, part of the Danube Region, net use index of the accommodation capacity in 2007 was 29.5%, being at an absolute low level (compared with other parts of Europe) and in the tables below are presented statistical information about tourism accommodation in 2010 and 2011 (table 2, 3), or net use index of accommodation places (table 4):

Arrival main tourist accommodation structures of tourist accommodation, the types of tourist reception (source:INS,Nov.2011)

Table 2

Tipuri de structuri de primire turistică	2010					2011							
	aug.	sep.	oct.	nov.	dec.	ian.	feb.	mar.	apr.	mai	iun.	iul.	aug.
Total județ	6290	6325	4690	4017	3388	3152	2968	4543	3881	4534	5338	6013	6448
din care:													
Hoteluri	3874	3721	2629	2120	1674	1418	1728	2941	2480	2755	2900	3355	3749
Moteluri	324	211	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	234	-	-
Vile turistice	22	15	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Cabane turistice	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Pensiuni turistice	426	631	565	593	509	478	516	501	395	490	510	708	647
Pensiuni agroturistice	588	575	316	246	211	234	160	217	285	475	473	599	620

Main Overnight in tourist accommodation structures of tourist accommodation by type of reception tourist (source:INS,Nov.2011)

Table 3

Tipuri de structuri de primire turistică	2010					2011							
	aug.	sep.	oct.	nov.	dec.	ian.	feb.	mar.	apr.	mai	iun.	iul.	aug.
Total județ	17228	15492	11574	12170	8535	7021	8016	12754	8768	11288	12884	16987	15930
din care:													
Hoteluri	11642	9964	7643	7487	4816	3295	4865	9581	5765	7759	8589	11307	11101
Moteluri	623	342	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	346	-	-
Vile turistice	22	15	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Cabane turistice	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Pensiuni turistice	856	1269	1041	1548	1136	1081	1100	927	967	881	829	1077	924
Pensiuni agroturistice	1813	1613	961	932	600	657	565	436	582	938	968	1182	1402

Net use index of accommodation places (source: INS, Nov.2011)

Table 4
%

	2010					2011							
	aug.	sep.	oct.	nov.	dec.	ian.	feb.	mar.	apr.	mai	iun.	iul.	aug.
Total județ	36,5	33,8	26,1	29,3	20,0	20,9	23,5	32,2	21,5	26,9	27,5	36,9	34,9

In the Danube Strategy Romania's priorities are:

- Transportation – Providing a modern transport system on the Danube by creating a multi-modal transport system and creating an infrastructure based on new technologies and integrated transport, management, monitoring and information systems;

- Energy – Making the Danube region in a European energy corridor by sustainable and effective capitalization of local energy resources – conventional and renewable / non-conventional, by developing energy capacities of production, transport and storage, expanding access to energy distribution networks, and by eliminating energy poverty phenomenon in the region;
- Environmental protection – Including environmental protection in all investment ever since the phase of system design (“green knowledge intelligent systems”) and creating a management and control system of environmental factors (pollution reduction, removal of environmental damages in cases of natural disaster, biodiversity protection, preservation and expansion of woodlands, parks and green spaces in urban areas etc.).
- Research – Creating new research centers to develop new, innovative and environmentally friendly technologies;
- Tourism – Tourism development and capitalization of natural heritage and cultural-historical heritage by developing specific and intense promotion actions;
- Rural development – Modernization of agriculture and diversification of economic activities, other than agriculture, by the exploitation of environmental, natural resources (fisheries, forestry, biodiversity heritage, etc.), cultural heritage (traditions and professional experience gained).

SWOT Analysis

STRONG POINTS	WEAK POINTS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • key transit county between Banat and Muntenia; • border county that will benefit from proximity to Bulgaria, Serbia, and Western Balkan countries and will enter cross-border programs with these countries; • crossing the county by the Pan-European Corridor VII – “Danube” and the roads coming from Northern Europe and heading to the Balkans and South Europe; • high agricultural potential, with large areas of land that are suitable for fruit growing and viticulture; • existence in the county economy of a tradition of heavy and light industry; • existence of large hydropower resources only partially emphasized; • various natural resources and raw materials; • huge potential for tourism development (mountain tourism, sports tourism, ecumenical tourism); • the existence of qualified human resources in state of the art technology (software industry, computer aided design, etc.) • existence, especially in towns and cities, of a technical and material basis mainly on industrial sites that could be exploited; • the emergence and development from year to year of a university center that provides conditions for the establishment of a developed academic center, with potential for scientific research; • low cost of agricultural land and even urban land; • availability of local public authorities to develop public-private partnerships and implementation of socio-economic development programs at local, county and regional level in the perspective of European integration; • a varied landscape, an area well populated and relatively good infrastructure, backed by 150 km of electrified railway and 220 km of waterway; 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • serious problems with rural poverty in some areas of the county, poor social services, especially in villages; • environmental problems affecting water, air and soil; • lack of motorways in the region • poorly developed small ports; • lack of basic infrastructure in rural areas, which prevents industrial development outside cities; • natural decrease of population; • low entrepreneurial education; • chronic lack of funding and refinancing for agriculture and tourism
OPPORTUNITIES	THREATS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • high potential for development of services in the county 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • lack of facilities offered to foreign investors can further reduce the volume of investments;

<p>capital, but also in other cities;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • completion of the project “The county electronic system and expanding Internet as communication way for all county cities”; • association between farmers to increase profitability in agriculture; • the possibility to practice organic farming; • the feasibility of industrial parks in the county as well as technology parks; • the introduction of natural gas; • greater opportunities for tourism development, but also for cruise tourism on the Danube; • enhancing traditions, crafts and customs as a tourist product. • Danube strategy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • lack of an international airport in the area; • limited development of industry and lack of funds and resources for upgrading; • European environmental protection priorities may conflict with the interests of major industries (thermo-electric, chemical, heavy water, etc.) • many young people, well prepared, ready to migrate to big cities (Timisoara, Bucharest), but also in EU countries, USA, Canada; • migration of young people from rural to urban areas or to European Union countries with advanced agriculture; • EU enlargement will lead to competing of Romanian agricultural products with Community products, which will disadvantage certain sectors of agricultural production in the county; • industry still based on large industrial units with outdated technology and high energy consumption; • lack of consistency and stability in laws relating to SMEs; • fluctuating evolution of leu - Euro-dollar exchange rate.
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Problem Solution

Endowed with a very varied, diversified tourist potential and focused by the existence of mixed landforms throughout the area, a climate favorable to practicing almost all year round tourism, a rich fauna and flora potential in species and single ecosystems in Europe, with spa treatment natural factors, with a cultural-historical and architectural heritage of global reference, developed along the old river Danube, the “Iron Gates” region may fall among the attractive tourist destinations in Romania and even Europe.

The area’s access routes are the classic ones: road, railways, river transport. The area’s great lack is the absence of airways (the nearest airport is in Craiova at a distance of 111 km).

Due to the very varied natural and human potential, the forms of tourism that can be practiced in the county are diverse:

- Tourism traffic
- Spa (health) tourism
- Rest and recreation tourism
- Speleological tourism
- Scientific tourism
- Agrotourism
- Congress and meetings tourism
- Religious and pilgrimage tourism
- Cultural tourism
- Educational tourism
- Sports tourism

Besides the listed forms of tourism, the main attractions in the area are medieval objectives (Drobeta Roman Camp, Ruins of Trajan’s bridge, Medieval Castle Ruins, etc.).

To become an increasingly sought tourist destination, Orsova - Drobeta Turnu Severin area needs a more developed technical-material basis, especially in terms of leisure, which, in recent years, has become a very important motivation in practicing tourism.

Number of tourists arrived in recent years has grown, which means that the attraction for this county is growing, but they have not lodged for more than 2-3 days, although accommodation units are varied and numerous.

Arrivals recorded in tourist accommodation structures during 1.I - 28.II.2011 were 6120, an increase of 1314 (+27.3%) compared to the corresponding period of 2010.

Overnight lodgings registered in tourist accommodation structures during 1.I - 28.II.2011 were up 15037 in growing by 7153 (+ 90.7%) than in the corresponding period of 2010. The net use index of accommodation in the period 1.I - 28.II.2011 was 22.2%, up by 10.1% compared to the corresponding period of 2010.

The main measures which should be applied to achieve developed tourist activities in the Iron Gates area are:

- creating programs and funds for co-financing regional development projects,
- linking national programs with local and regional interest,
- expansion of communications in tourist areas, of efficient and modern transport,
- E70 road traffic growth, by making the Nadlac-Timisoara-Craiova-Turnu-Severin-Bucharest-Constanta highway, E-W highway
- Doubling the Bucharest-Timisoara railway which will facilitate the increase of the number of tourists in the area (on sections where implementation is possible, difficulties encountered will be in the Gura Văii – Orsova sector). As a result of the creation of this possibility, tourist trails will be built: mountain shelters, motels, bars, holiday villages, supply and maintenance bases, information points that will lead to the dynamism of weekend tourism, and of long distance tourism, being one of the most attractive areas for the route Central Europe-Balkan Peninsula-Middle East and especially on the Danube route.
- Use of natural and climate potential of the area by making auto and pedestrian accesses (Vodita, Bahna), belvedere points in panoramic view areas will be built, with attractive vegetation and relief (rest places, cabins, holiday cottages, catering units, etc.).
- Diversify of tourism offer by creating conditions for practicing water and mountain tourism, by arranging mountain trails in the Mehedinti Mountains, Mehedinti Plateau, Cerna Valley and Clisura Dunarii. Agrotourism practice is taken into account by organizing accommodation in private houses and also organizing cultural events, folk festivals, water shows, museums, exhibitions, etc.
- River passenger station planning, development of the Danube promenade and landing on the shores of the lake are also considered.
- Promoting regional tourism potential through participation in tourism fairs, through advertising campaigns,
- Preparing brochures with information about the area's tourism potential and suggestive images in this respect,
- Coverage of guesthouses, hotels, hostels in the area.

Agrotourism has great potential in the area. Villages, communes, landscape and climate surrounding them and the attractions listed in the previous chapters can lead to reviving the prosperous mountain tourism, not without reasonable improvements, in particular: access roads, food networks and livestock farming.

Villages and communes surrounding tourist areas are addressed tangentially, without a close perspective, this due to the lack of material support that can be provided for peasants for the construction and equipment of welcoming houses in which the tourist can enjoy all the comforts.

Virtually, tourist offer and advertising in the area is missing. The future will be to achieve this goal. Because of the area's placement, of the climate conditions, of its beauties, where mountains, plains, plateaus blend in harmony, makes this area one with a unique character for Central and Western Europe.

Besides its natural beauty, this area is circumscribed to the great objective, which is the Romanian - Serbian Hydropower and navigation system from Gura Văii to sip linking the two neighboring countries through the "Friendship Bridge", a friendship that has lasted for centuries. This bridge increases the number of Romanian and foreign tourists.

Due to permanent links between populations on both sides of the Danube, by the little traffic, have made and are making the area a cradle of friendship and collaboration, becoming yet another opportunity for international cooperation and launching into the international and global circuit of a less common offering.

A great opportunity for Romania and for the Orsova - Drobeta Turnu Severin region is the Danube strategy. Officially, it is called the "European Union Strategy for the Danube Region" and is a large multinational project by which the European Community aims to reduce gaps – primarily economic – between countries on the upper old river and its lower basin.

An important dimension to Romania's contributing in the implementation of the Strategy is the position of county and local governments, who were informed of this opportunity through the decentralized services of the ministries. Also, a significant component of Romania's contribution is the contribution of civil society organizations that were involved in the consultation process. Many of the counties bordering the Danube are some of the least developed in Romania economically (including Mehedinti County) and therefore the involvement of local authorities in the region could contribute to increased competitiveness and socio-economic revitalization of localities with growth potential.

Romania considers all four pillars of the strategy as being of equal importance. Therefore the objectives and proposed priority projects should be based on new technologies, so that the Strategy to be sustainable, to give priority to environmental issues and be based on innovation. As regards the involvement of states in the Danube basin which are not EU member states, this can be done by revitalizing *the Danube Cooperation Process*, launched in 2002.

The EU Strategy for the Danube Region should respond to the challenges facing the Danube region: reduce and attempt to eliminate economic and social disparities between different regions of neighboring countries, increase naval traffic, climate change, cultural diversity, environmental issues and biodiversity. In this respect, the European Union Strategy for the Danube Region is a platform for dialogue between States and an instrument for achieving long-term benefits, both at European, national and local level.

The strategy must be real, based on new technologies, innovation and investment, a strategy which, once implemented, would eventually lead to improved quality of life for all citizens in the Danube region.

Romania's priorities related to the Danube Strategy must be articulated on the four axes, must be considered of equal importance – connectivity, environmental protection, socio-economic development and improving governance. Strategy showcases new technologies, so that the Danube river to become a modern river highway, that benefits from intelligent systems based on the latest scientific knowledge, being able to effectively protect the environment and existing ecosystems.

The value added of the Strategy consists of strengthening interregional, cross-border and transnational cooperation, and capitalization of many disparate initiatives and projects that have already been initiated or are under implementation in the Danube region. The European Strategy concerning the Danube is an opportunity for balanced territorial development.

For the accurate capitalization of human and material resources provided by the macro-regions, concrete measures are needed, identified by proposed actions and projects within integrated development strategies, through the participation of all stakeholders and effective analysis organization, implementation and monitoring of activities designed to achieve sought objectives: prosperity, security, a clean environment, economic growth, social cohesion, access to information or encouraging partnerships for education and research.

For achieving connectivity and economic development objectives, a new vision, an approach based on new technologies is required that provides a "green", efficient and sustainable strategy.

In conclusion, the implementation of guidelines of the EU Strategy for the Danube region will lead to the development of a sustainable, stable and competitive macro-economic system, strengthening of institutional capacities and human resource development, sustainable use of natural resources in the

sense as not to exceed the affordability of the natural framework and new technologies – necessary conditions to support sustainable growth in the Danube region and hence in the Iron Gate area.

Visiting Orsova - Drobeta Turnu Severin area is like a history, culture and geography lesson without a teacher. All one has to do is look and listen carefully to the surrounding view. Nature majestically unfolds all around, and the age of places, so rich and quiet, will not leave one indifferent. One will want to be a part of this, will want to find out and give a try.

World Economic Forum provides a report on the competitiveness of Tourism in 2011 with a wealth of information related to countries in the world in terms of tourist but treats and issues such as: the impact of the crisis on human development, tourism or hospitality. Below we present a series of tables and figures with the help of which we will notice how competitive are the countries of South-Eastern Europe.

Tourism Competitiveness Index worldwide-comparison of 2011 and 2009

Table 5

Country/ Economy	2011	2009	
	Rank/139	Score	Rank/133
Greece	29	4.78	24
Croatia	34	4.61	34
Montenegro	36	4.56	52
Bulgaria	48	4.39	50
Romania	63	4.17	66
Macedonia	76	3.96	80
Serbia	82	3.85	88
Albania	71	4.01	90
Bosnia and Herzegovina	97	3.63	107

Source: *The Travel & Tourism Competitiveness Report 2011* © 2011 World Economic Forum

We note in this table that the only country that has experienced a decrease in top is Greece. Other countries have climbed an average of about 5 places in the top. This was due to the fact that each country in South-Eastern Europe has worked to promote the country as well and to develop tourism. Tourism in Greece, due to the complicated political situation has suffered greatly, so that tourists that they were in 2009 in Greece moved to countries such as Albania, Bulgaria or Romania.

The development of regional tourism must be part of the sustainable development of a country. This activity has a significant role in regional development with medium and long term effects.

The main objectives of regional development would be:³

- the characterization of the natural, economic, social, cultural and political framework;
- the definition of a general system of objectives in temporal succession and sectoral structure;
- the choice of methods and means of accomplishing the objectives;
- the establishment of the conditions of a cooperation with the area population.

Like in any other field of expertise, sustainable development of tourism is based on some principles, namely:

- the environment is the main element that supports tourism, so it must remain to the next generations;
- through practising tourism, there should be benefits for the environment, local communities and tourists;
- to establish a long term environment-tourism relationship;

³ Burtică, M., Benchmarks of strategies elaboration regarding territorial development, Current issues of regional development in Romania, Oscar Print, Bucharest, 2002, p.142

- the preservation of local characteristics;
- the finding of an equilibrium between the participants' needs (tourists, their hosts and the destination);
- the respect of the principles by everyone involved in the tourist activity and their liability.

By encouraging regional sustainable development of tourism one justifies the possible economic, social, cultural and environmental positive results.

Tourist countries must ensure their competitiveness in the long term so as to create a good perspective on the future. This includes defining a series of elements such as: diversification of services, respect for the environment and attracting customers, without which the future will no longer have a thriving tourist industry. We note that tourist countries face a number of risks and uncertainties that have a devastating impact on the tourism industry, namely: the current economic crisis, fluctuations, terrorist attacks, serious illnesses and many others. Alarming is the fact that these risks are increasingly more difficult to control by governmental policies and actions are becoming cautious almost unachievable.

Joining the EU means new challenges for the Romanian tourist companies, imposed by the Single Market requirements, but also creates new opportunities for development through access to financial assistance from the Structural Funds grant. Wishing to position the tourist destination Romania in the global tourism market is neither easy, nor impossible, but imperatively necessary, concerting the efforts in the region, respecting the principles of regionalization but also of competitive regional policies, in which tourism becomes a key factor of regional sustainable development.

Tourism development strategy in terms of maximizing its positive effects on regional growth and hence on national development assumes that the global economy value is created in the regions level as delimited geographical entities especially on geographical criteria, not as political and administrative structures, and economic growth is combined centrally and valued in accordance with economic policy and national legal system.

Conclusions

The impact created by the crisis on tourism should evolve from a tranquil threat management in a strategic opportunity for countries to see to be able to develop in such a way as to make some destinations attractive and competitive.”Recession generated a new type of market competition in accommodation and services for tourism, and the need to cover the losses incurred in the two years of downturn brought about steep discounts and cost control.

The marketing strategy for Romania proposes the doubling of the foreign visitors' number in 2015, compared to 2010, the increase of the arrivals in the accommodation units, up to 2.5 million in 2015. With a budget over 118 million euro , the marketing Plan proposed for the next five years (2012-2017) the specialization and diversification of the products and touristic services, the development of the six products key (rural tourism, parks and wild nature, health and wellness, active and adventure, circuits, city breaks) and the extension of the touristic season. “The marketing Plan sets the objectives that we must follow to get to a competitive destination in tourism. It is very important to understand that the plan must be implemented not only by the ministry but also by the local public authorities, and to the tourism industry” said the minister of Regional Development and Tourism, Elena Udrea.⁴

According to the minister Theodor Baconschi, Romania will coordinate three of the eleven areas with priority of the UE Strategy for the Danube Region. These are: naval transport, the promotion of the culture and tourism and the management of the environmental risks. “We have prepared a regional touristic brand project for the Danube that we will propose in the third priority frame – culture and tourism” said Udrea. She added that she has also in view the creation of a integrated market for the tourism in the region and the realization of some ciclotouristic routes which to cross all the Danube sttes.⁵

⁴ <http://www.ziare.com/udrea/ministrul-turismului/the-telegraph-printul-charles-si-elena-udrea-campionii-carpatilor-1134857>

⁵ <http://www.mediasinfo.ro/elena-udrea-si-brandul-turistic-pentru-dunare/2011/02/04/>

The figures are not showing an optimistic tendency, but the drop is significantly lower than in 2009 and investment projects have restarted throughout the country. International brands continued their expansion in Romania, convinced of the unexploited potential that exists there and occupancy rates in Bucharest, which is still the main destination for incoming and domestic trips, have revived slightly.

After two years of economic recession, the big picture of the hospitality market is characterized by improving occupancy determined by the decline in accommodation rates, several new hospitality outlets opening, ever more demanding customers than previous years and international hotel chains by passing Romania due to economic and political instability”.⁶

Another problem that deals with this report of the Economic Forum is how to develop the industry by the year 2015 hospitable.

The industry of hospitality is a business made by people for the people, a business within which a very small part of the people achieve a mass production, for the majority of the population. Of course, we do not only talk about the problem of hospitality, when we talk about this industry. However, this problem is one of the most important. In many cases, the atmosphere created in these places counts, together with a smile and a friendly greeting, which represent the elements determining the clients to come back. (Mazilu M, 2011).

In the context of a dynamic reality, the challenge is building adaptive capacity: the capacity to continuously renew spatially and economically to respond to (autonomously) changing circumstances.

The ability to renew when opportunities arise aims to guide fundamental changes, or transitions, to occur in a fluid manner. This involves a gradual process of continuous adaptation to changing circumstances, rather than a sudden inevitable collapse of one situation and the difficulty of picking a new one after such a collapse.

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