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TOURISM IN THE CENTRE REGION, BETWEEN STATISTICAL COORDINATES AND MASTER PLAN TARGETS

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Abstract: *The Central Region Development Strategy has as its principal objective the balanced development of the Centre Region through economic growth, the utilization of existing natural resources and the protection of the environment. Depending on the proposed objectives, the Centre Region must obtain funds for Regional projects included in the Regional Development Plan. Realising funding of these projects will greatly contribute to achieving the objectives set out in the Europe 2020 strategy.*

Key words: *development strategy, Master Plan, statistical coordinates*

1. Introduction

Tourism is considered one of the most profitable sectors of economy, which is constantly developing. The tourism industry is the second in world trade, after the oil industry, which is the world's leading employment creation.

Tourism has become an important economic activity today, and in many countries it is the main source of income, for example in France, Italy, Switzerland, Spain and Austria, which is doing the "export of tourist services".

At the same time, tourism also offers jobs in other fields such as transport, and related activities of accommodation and forms of tourists' service.

Tourism is a positive correction factor, which provides a necessary alternation between periods of intense work and active recreation. Passive recreation is less practiced as people are looking for active recreation during holidays: excursions, walks, horseback riding, spa treatments.

2. Tourism Regulation Institutions in Romania

Tourism is the activity sector that engages in multiple services and activities in all branches of life. In this case, tourism cannot be limited to the activity of a single government department. For this reason, in tourism several activity sectors work in close coordination between the various departments and organizations that have

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tourism as their main activity. At the level of national economy for tourism activities, there must be coordination between representatives of local and Regional government bodies.

The following tourism associations operate in Romania:

- ANAT: National Association of Tourism Agencies;
- ANTREC: National Association of Ecological and Cultural Rural Tourism;
- The Federation of Romanian Tourism Employers;
- Association for the Promotion and Development of Seaside Tourism;
- FAPT: Federation of Tourism Promotion Associations;
- OPTBR: Organization of Spa Tourism Employers;
- FIHR: Federation of Hotel Industry in Romania;
- RCB: Romanian Convention Bureau; National Association of Conference and Exhibition Organizations in Romania;
- NTA: National Tourism Authority.

The presentation of Romania on the tourism website is poorly perceived on www.romaniaturism.com. It is not as well-represented as the one of other competing countries.

3. Infrastructure for Tourist Sights

Infrastructure is the most important factor in choosing tourist destinations.

Romania and, implicitly, the Centre Region suffer from the insufficient development of transport infrastructure as well as the inadequate maintenance of the roads and rail network, especially the secondary roads, which is an important obstacle to the development of tourism.

The tourist accommodation infrastructure (hotels, motels, lodges, pensions, campsites, etc.), the accommodation and meal services offered, the quality of the staff working in tourism are of undoubted importance in the choice of the tourist destination. Also, the location of the accommodation units in relation to the tourist objectives and their accessibility influences the choice of the potential tourists.

Last but not least, cultural and folk events (festivals of music, theatre, film, folk festivals, etc.) can attract a large number of tourists. These events may be added to various leisure programs, designed by businesses providing accommodation or other entities involved in tourism.

4. Tourism Development Strategy in the Centre Region

The main purpose of the development strategy in the Centre Region is the balanced development of the Region.

The development strategy includes the following elements:

- urban development,
- increasing the competitiveness of the economy,
- the development of rural areas,
- developing human resources,

- protection of environment,
- the development of tourism.

The Centre region has a significant potential for natural, human and economic resources.

The Centre region has a variety of landforms with many tourist attractions. The main tourist attractions in the Centre Region are:

- resorts of national interest: Covasna, Predeal, Baile Tusnad, Sovata,
- resorts for winter sports: Predeal, Poiana Braşov, Păltiniş.
- cultural tourism: Sighişoara, Alba Iulia, Sibiu, Braşov, Râşnov, Feldioara, Făgăraş.
- spa tourism: Sovata, Covasna, Băile Tuşnad, Borsec, Malnaş-Băi, Ocna Sibiului, Red Lake
- agrotourism: Bran-Moeciu area, Rimetea, Corund, Întorsura Buzăului, the area of Săcele
- the nature reserves: the Narcissus Glade in Dumbrava Vadului, the Reci Mestecăniş, Cheile Trascăului, Lake Sfânta Ana, Tinovul Mohoş.
- national parks: Piatra Craiului National Park, Cheile Bicazului-Hăşmaş, and
- natural parks: Bucegi, Mureş Defile.

Due to this tourist richness in the Centre Region, the Regional Strategy will support the development of tourism by development of routes, access routes in areas with high natural tourism potential. The infrastructure of spa resorts (wellness, spa) will be restored.

Between 2014 and 2020, it is intended to continue supporting investments aimed at expanding and modernizing facilities for practicing various sports in the Region.

For the development of cultural tourism, actions for the restoration and preservation of buildings of historical and architectural value are supported.

5. Results and Discussions

5.1. European Projects to Finance the Promotion and Development of Tourism

The OFF TO SPAS project, funded by the U.E. through the EASME Agency, has an international character for the following reasons: seven partners from four countries participate. The project coordinator is Pannon University and the consortium consists of: Hévízi Turisztikai Nonprofit SRL, Zala County Council, Tourism Development Association in Covasna County, Covasna County Council, AGE Platform Europe AISBL, and Travel Specialist Group Sweden AB.

The project aims to develop transnational spa tourism products for seniors in those Regions where it is possible to increase the demand for water and wellness offers. A study tour was held in Covasna County, where members of senior clubs and a travel agency participated, so those who are opinion makers and can promote the tourist offer in the area.

The study tour participants had the opportunity to visit Dr. Benedek Géza Hospital, to get to know the Covasna method, they even had a general medical consultation followed by moffets, treatment baths, a visit to Mercury Hotel and Căprioara Hotel in Covasna, Grand Hotel Bálványos, Apor Baths and the sulphurous grotto from Turia.

Feedbacks received were generally positive, but many people have doubts about the healing effect of moffets (due to radon).

Promotional activities include: fairs, exhibitions and other promotional events.

A new component of tourism is agrotourism, which is not capitalized to its maximum potential, because the processes in agriculture are inefficient.

Appropriate measures for rural development and, implicitly, agrotourism development are LEADER funded projects coordinated by PNDR, for example with sub-measures:

4.1 - Investment in agricultural holdings;

4.1 a - Investments in fruit holdings;

4.2 - Investments in the processing / marketing of products from the fruit sector;

6.1 - Support for the installation of young farmers;

6.4 - Investments in the creation and development of non-agricultural activities;

7.6 - Investments associated with the protection of the cultural patrimony.

These sub-measures and not only, have had positive effects on rural development. However, sub-measure 6.4, which would have had more significant effects on the development of agrotourism, was non-financed (https://portal.afir.info/informatii/generale_pndr_investitii_prin_pndr_zona_iti_delta_dunarii_sm_4_3_zona_iti).

The teams AM, PNDR, AFIR and APIA working in a team managed to absorb over 3.3 billion euros of European funds in 2017 (<http://www.pndr.ro/informari/item/301-conferinta-pndr-2014-2020-in-sprijinul-agriculturii-si-dezvoltarii-rurale-din-romania.html>).

5.2. Natural attractions in the Centre Region

The Centre Region overlaps geographically, largely with the nucleus of the ancient Dacia state, namely the Transylvanian historical province, often disputed over time between Romania and Hungary. Thus, ethnic diversity and hence cultural and religious diversity are characteristics due to the tumultuous history of Transylvania. Hungarian influences are particularly felt in the Szekler Land (also known as the "Mineral Waters Land"), which includes the counties of Harghita and Covasna, as well as a part of Mureş County, where the Hungarian population is the majority in many areas. The specific elements of the Centre Region's ethnography are found in many local museums, mainly in the counties of Sibiu, Braşov and Harghita.

Table 1

The main natural resources in the counties of the Centre Region

County	The main natural resources in the county
Alba	The main resources are the non-ferrous metallic resources: gold, silver, copper, lead, zinc, salt, construction rocks: marble, sand, gravel, limestone, methane and wood;
Braşov	The most important resources of the county are: mineral waters, chlorosodic and salty, sand deposits. Building rocks: basalt, sand, limestone and wood.
Covasna	The main natural deposits are lignite, carbonated mineral waters, bicarbonate, iodobromate, sulphurous and ferrous. There are building rocks: andesite, sand, gravel, clay and woody resources.

Harghita	The main resources are the building rocks: andesite, basalt, marble, sand, gravel. The county also has ferrous and non-ferrous ores, carbonated mineral waters, moss and wood.
Mureş	The county has deposits of methane gas, over 60% of the national production; salt, mineral springs and wood, and construction rocks: volcanic rocks, gravel, and sand.
Sibiu	It has important deposits of methane gas, salt, chlorosodic mineral waters and construction rocks: limestone, marble, gravel.

Source: *Analiza socioeconomică pdf* – www.adrcentru.ro

Resources in the Centre Region are currently under exploitation: methane gas, construction rocks, wood, mineral waters. In the future there are initiatives to exploit non-metallic resources in the Apuseni Mountains.

5.3. Economical Situation of the Centre Region

The Centre Region has a share of 11.6% of the total population of Romania and has an area of 34,100 km², representing about 14.2% of the country's territory (http://www.adrcentru.ro/Document_Files/Capitolul%20.%20Analiza%20socioeconomica_ye9t6s.pdf).

Significant mineral resources in the area have played an important role in the Region's economic development in the past. In the Middle Age, the economy grew with the emergence of guilds in major urban centres: Braşov, Sighişoara, Sebeş, and Sibiu. In the second half of the 18th century, in Transylvania, modern manufactures emerged, which led to the development of the Region.

From the second half of the 19th century, the first railways were built, which led to the modernization of Braşov and Sibiu.

The main industrial branches in the Region are: machine building industry, building materials, metalworking, wood, textile and food industry.

After the Revolution, the industry experienced an economic downturn, property shifting, economic restructuring, and loss of sales.

In the years 2000-2001, the economy grew considerably, thus in 2005 only in the Centre Region, 573 million euros were invested through foreign investment (http://www.adrcentru.ro/Document_Files/Capitolul%20.%20Analiza%20socioeconomica_ye9t6s.pdf).

The services sector has an important role in GDP formation, as the activity in this area has seen significant increases.

A new component of tourism is agrotourism, which is not capitalized to its maximum potential, because the processes in agriculture are inefficient.

5.4. Targets - Potential

If the objectives proposed in the Master Plan for the Development of National Tourism are to be implemented, it is estimated that until 2026, the number of foreign tourists

will reach 15,485 million persons (http://mdrl.ro/_documente/turism/studii_strategii/masterplan_turism_balnear.pdf).

Table 2

Target for the arrival of foreign tourists during 2006-2026

Origin	2006 (‘000)	2011 (‘000)	2016 (‘000)	2021 (‘000)	2026 (‘000)
EU	2.803	3.777	4.990	6.569	8.642
Non-EU-states in Europe	2.886	3.428	4.022	4.663	5.340
North America	164	235	337	484	695
Israel	62	89	128	184	263
Japan	14	23	37	60	86
Others	108	155	222	319	459
Total	6.037	7.707	9.736	12.279	15.485

Source: Estimated Master Plan data

Expenses of foreign tourists will probably grow eightfold by 2026, to 7.7 billion euros (http://mdrl.ro/_documente/turism/studii_strategii/masterplan_turism_balnear.pdf). Expenses of domestic tourism are estimated to increase nearly four and a half times to 8.3 billion euros in the same period (http://mdrl.ro/_documente/turism/studii_strategii/masterplan_turism_balnear.pdf).

Table 3

Target for Alien Expenses in 2005-2026

Year	Expenses of foreign visitors (million euros)	Expenses of foreign visitors (million euros)	Expenses of foreign visitors (million euros)
2005	877	1.878	2.755
2011	1.726	2.385	4.561
2016	2.947	4.058	7.005
2021	4.798	5.914	10.712
2026	7.740	8.329	16.069

Source: Estimated Master Plan

http://mdrl.ro/_documente/turism/studii_strategii/masterplan_turism_balnear.pdf

Table 4

Turnover from tourism relative to GDP

	2005	2011	2016	2021	2026
GDP in Romania (billion euros)	79,3	106,1	142,0	181,3	231,3
Total income from tourism (billion euros)	2,755	4,561	7,005	10,712	16,069
Income from tourism (% from GDP)	3.5	4.3	4.9	5.9	6.9

Source: Master Plan Estimates

http://mdrl.ro/_documente/turism/studii_strategii/masterplan_turism_balnear.pdf

Romania's total tourism contribution to GDP is estimated to increase to 6.9% by 2026, according to the National Bank of Romania, Ministry of Public Finance and Master Plan Estimates (https://ec.europa.eu/commission/priorities/jobs-growth-andinvestment/investment-plan-europe-juncker-plan_en).

6. Conclusions on the Economic Development Plan of the Centre Region

In the Centre Region, the quality of life will depend on the level of infrastructure development, the development of public units, the level of education and the health of the population. Currently, the infrastructure requires consolidation, expansion and modernization, the existing one being very old.

The areas proposed in the 2014-2020 Regional Strategy are: development of transport infrastructure, urban development and metropolitan areas, rural development by supporting cultural activities, professional qualification of the human resource.

The highest priority is to support the urban development of cities with a high degree of development, as well as of the less developed cities affected by economic restructuring. The developed cities have a positive impact on neighboring cities and communes, with a major impact on the economic development of these areas.

Small and medium-size towns in the Centre Region face difficulties in the process of sustainable development due to the economic restructuring. After the years '90s, new rural cities, with a population of up to 10,000 inhabitants, appeared in the Centre Region.

A priority of the Centre Region involves supporting areas and poor neighbourhoods, stimulating the establishment of university centers in large cities. The development of the Centre Region includes the modernization of the infrastructure, of the educational units and of the medical units.

Another direction to increase the quality of life is to set up green spaces for recreation, to promote green cities.

A particular priority is to support projects aimed at developing competitiveness, research and innovation at Regional level.

These strategies can be achieved through projects to ensure the development of technological and industrial parks, the establishment of clusters, business centres, business incubators, agro-industrial support and improvement of resource management by increasing economic performance.

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