

## **Tourism and Sustainable Development**

### **The Rural Tourism: Great Potential, Low Development.**

#### **Case Study: The Rural Tourism in Bulgaria and Romania**

**Romeo-Victor Ionescu<sup>1</sup>, Gabriela Marchis<sup>2</sup>**

**Abstract:** The paper deals with an analysis of the European tourism. We operated during 2000-2010 time period, and we analysed the specific indicators of the tourism in Romania. Romanian tourism is low developed and depends powerfully on domestic demand. Neither the myth of the rural tourism in Romania is not real as long as the infrastructure is lamentable and the services are shoddy and expensive. Practically, the international touristic flows in the country are still low and mainly for business purposes. An optimal solution for Romanian tourism has to be focused on three elements: macroeconomic sustainable development, public financial support and a new touristic management approach, as well. The conclusions of the paper are followed by pertinent graphics, maps and diagrams.

**Keywords:** comparative country studies; project's evaluation; infrastructure

**JEL Classification:** O220; O570; R19

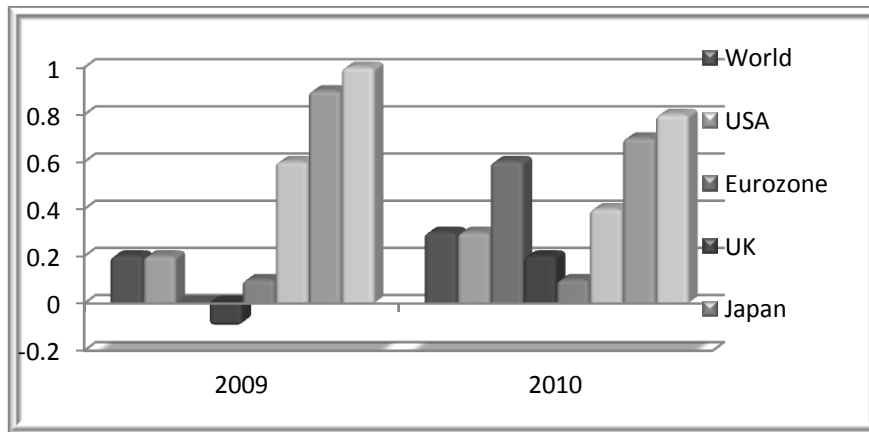
### **1 Introduction**

The current global crisis began in 2007 and achieved the peak in 2009. The forecasts of world economic growth are not enthusiastic for 2010. Moreover, the specialists use only short-time forecasts. As a result, the growth of the most important world economies reveals a worst situation in 2010 (European Travel Commission, 2010).

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<sup>1</sup> Professor, PhD, Danubius University of Galati, Faculty of Economic Sciences, Romania, Address: 3 Galati Blvd, Galati, Romania, tel: +40372 361 102, fax: +40372 361 290, Corresponding author: romeo.v.ionescu@univ-danubius.ro.

<sup>2</sup> Senior Lecturer, PhD, Danubius University of Galati, Faculty of Economic Sciences, Romania, Address: 3 Galati Blvd, Galati, Romania, tel: +40372 361 102, fax: +40372 361 290, e-mail: gabrielamarchis@univ-danubius.ro.



**Figure 1. The forecasts growth of the most important world economies (%)**

*Source: (European Travel Commission, 2011)*

Tourism is a typical cross-cutting industry. Services for tourists involve a variety of economic branches: hotels and other accommodation, gastronomy (restaurants, cafes, etc.), the various transport operators and also a wide range of cultural and recreational facilities (theatres, museums, leisure parks, swimming pools, etc.).

In many tourism-oriented regions the retail sector also benefits considerably from the demand created by tourists in addition to the one of resident population. Romania ranked the last position in the EU in the latest world tourism competitiveness report (WEF, 2011). Our country has the rank 63 from 139 countries around the world. The most attractive countries related to the tourism development are Switzerland, Germany, France, Austria, Sweden, UK, USA, Canada and Singapore. Bulgaria is on the 48th position, outmatching Poland, Slovakia, Lithuania and Romania. The European countries which have a worst rank than Romania are: Albania, Georgia, FYROM, Serbia, Ukraine, Armenia, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Moldavia. The top was made using specific indicators as: the business environment, infrastructure, human, cultural and natural resources, and tourism regulations.

## 2. Method and Methodology

The research aims to realise a comparative analysis between the latest two EU member states regarding the economic environment which supports the rural tourism development. In this respect our comparative analysis is followed by diagrams and pertinent tables which perform the statistic databases and support the idea and the conclusions of the paper. On the other hand, the results of the comparative analysis are quantified using the multiple linear regressions. The

resultative dependent variable is the evolution of the tourism destination and the factorial variables are the road infrastructure investment and the average level of the wages in both countries. Our research availed, as a methodological tool, the SPSS Program (version 17). This statistic program helped us to quantify all the data and information that we use in order to accomplish this research.

### **3. The International Tourism's Trends**

Tourism is an important and fast-evolving economic factor in the European Union, occupying large numbers of small and medium-sized businesses. Its contribution to growth and employment varies widely across the EU regions. Particularly, in rural regions, usually peripheral to the economic centres of their countries, tourism is often one of the main sources of population income and a prominent factor in creating and securing an adequate level of employment.

EUROSTAT has been collecting data on the development and structure of tourism since 1995, pursuant to Council Directive 95/57/EC on the collection of statistical information in the field of tourism. This includes data both on accommodation capacity and its utilisation and also on population travel behaviour. The travel behaviour data are, however, only available at national level. In contrast, the data collected on accommodation capacity and its utilisation is also available by region. Inside the Triad, the recovery is greater in the USA and EU (Eurozone) while Japan faces a decrease. On the other hand, the emerging Asia economies, including the greatest two - China and India, become the new engine of the world economic growth. The short-time indicators of the global activity, trade and businesses are still historical low in almost all national economies. The great level of the world inventory and overweight capacities, together with the forecasts connected to the demand decrease, talk about new contraction of industrial output from the beginning of 2009. It is important to mention that some countries, which faced the crisis earlier, performed a decrease of the stocks (USA), while others registered a new growth in the latest months (Japan).

The statistical survey reveals that the managers recoiled and waited to a low demand. This can be translated into low investments and low employments on short term, which stimulates a second round of demand decrease. In the current economic climate the advanced economies are still affected because of the decline of banking sector and house market, which decrease the residential investments.

In our view, the growth of saving rate in USA and some EU Member States give us just a few hopes to support the national demand on short time. It is obvious that the revenue effects are greater in the developed economies than in those developing and the decrease of the financial assets grow the pressure on the consumers demand. The situation of labour markets grew worse during 2009-2010 and the

employment will decrease substantially, while the unemployment rate will grow (Ionescu R, 2010).

At the beginning of 2010, the European and Japanese economies recovered slowly, while USA and the emergent market economies will grow faster, but less than the long-time average. In our opinion, this recover depends on the political measures which will be implemented, the confidence of companies and on the improvement of credit restrictions and trade fluxes, as well.

China had the best position of the emergent economies in 2010. It had a great number of political interventionist measures, in order to face the challenge of the current global crisis. In 2008, for example, the foreign reserves achieved 1.95 thousands of billions USD, the debts were relative small and the fiscal stimulus were efficient. As a result, the average rate of growth in China was 6.1% in 2009. The problem is if the Chinese economy growth will be enough to support the economy of Asia as whole.

The trade exchanges in the most important partners of the EU grew significantly. In the candidate countries, it decreased by 3.5% in 2009 and it decreased by 2% in 2010. The main contributor will be Turkey. The private consumption and the foreign demand decreased in 2009, and the evolution in 2010 was not so good.

In the potential candidate countries, the economic growth slowed by 2.5% in 2009, according to the decrease of the world demand. These countries were affected by the decrease of liquidities, but the foreign financing conditions wasted during 2009-2010.

The Russian economy grew by 5.6% in 2008, decreased by 3.8% in 2009 and grew again by 1.5% in 2010. The unemployment rate achieved 10% in 2009, twice greater than in 2008. Russia makes the process of adapting to the world trade conditions, which resulted from the decrease of rare materials. This caused a decrease of reserves (by 1/3 from the summer of 2008 till nowadays) and a depreciation of the exchange course (by 1/3 from November 2008 till nowadays).

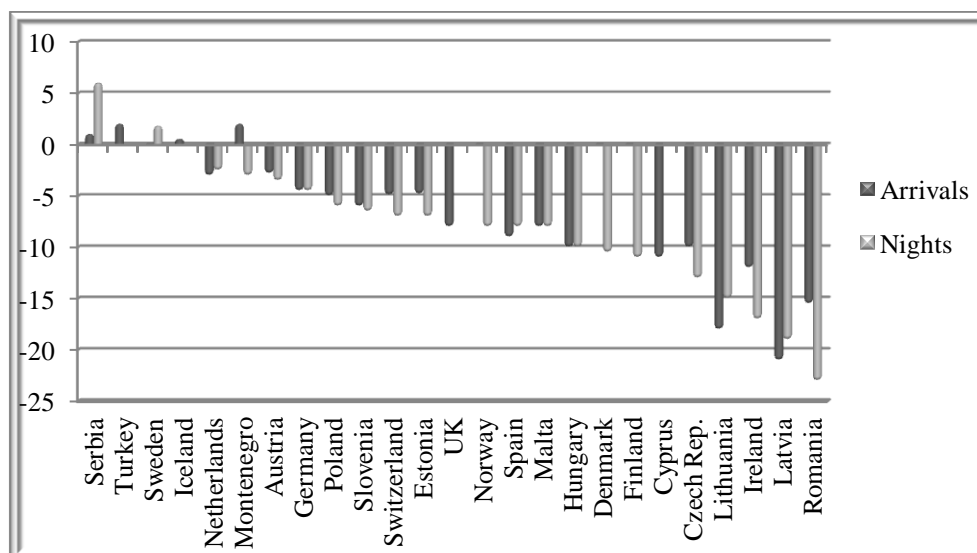
The recession covered all EFTA states in 2009. It was implemented by the foreign sector, excepting Island, where the national currency collapsed and generated the economic crisis. The Switzerland economy faces to one of the deepest recessions in its history. The GDP decreased in 2010.

Even that the forecasts differ between countries, the world disequilibrium will not decrease on short time. The economic situation would stabilised at -3.7% of GDP in USA. China will not be able to decrease its current surplus and Japan will not be able to stabilise the revenues and to cheapen imports, in order to support the surplus of the current account.

The surplus will decrease significantly only in the oil export countries, excepting Saudi Arabia, which will be confronted with a significant deficit of the current account.

In 2010, EU outpaced a moderate deterioration from the relative equilibrium position. Moreover, we have no reason to think about a recovery in the average annual economic growth rates for 2010 and 2011.

Putting in connection these results, we can conclude that this economic situation affected the evolution of international and national flows of tourists. Thus, the international arrivals in Europe felt by 1.1% in the fourth quarter of 2009, compared with the same period in 2008. This decline in Europe was accompanied by a decline of 0.5% in the Americas and increases in Asia Pacific (5.2%), Africa (8.0%) and Middle East (9.8%).



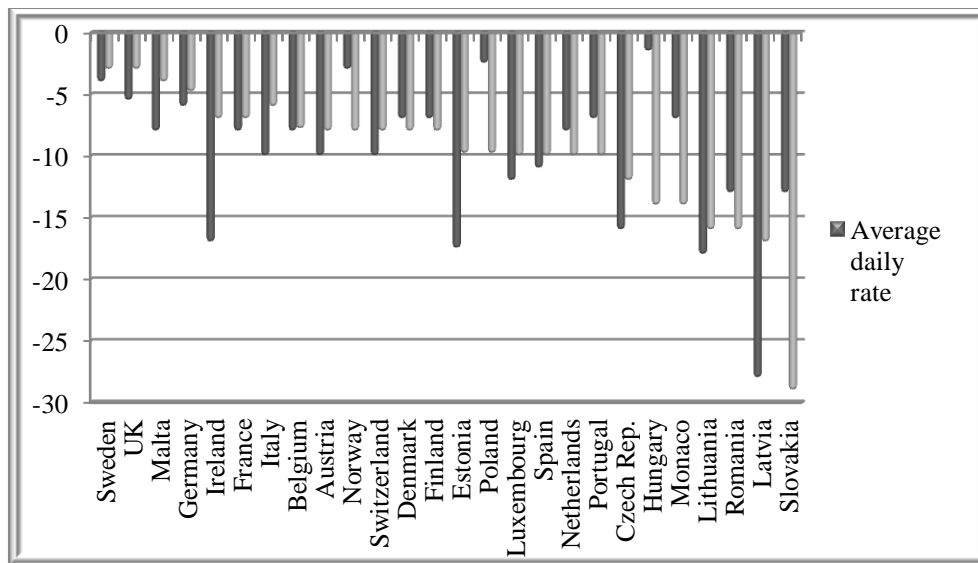
**Figure 2. The international arrivals and nights in European destinations in 2010 (%)**

*Source: www.tourmis.info*

#### 4. Romanian vs. EU Tourism

If we consider the international arrivals and nights in European destinations, we can observe that Romania had the worst position in 2009 (see figure 2). Difficult situations have Lithuania, Ireland and Latvia, as well. Therefore, the economic recession can be associated with a tendency to take holidays at home or in the neighboring countries. This phenomenon is greater in those countries in which the crisis impact is greater, but the savings of households are still enough. Finally, it is important to recognize that Romania is not such a country because the economic

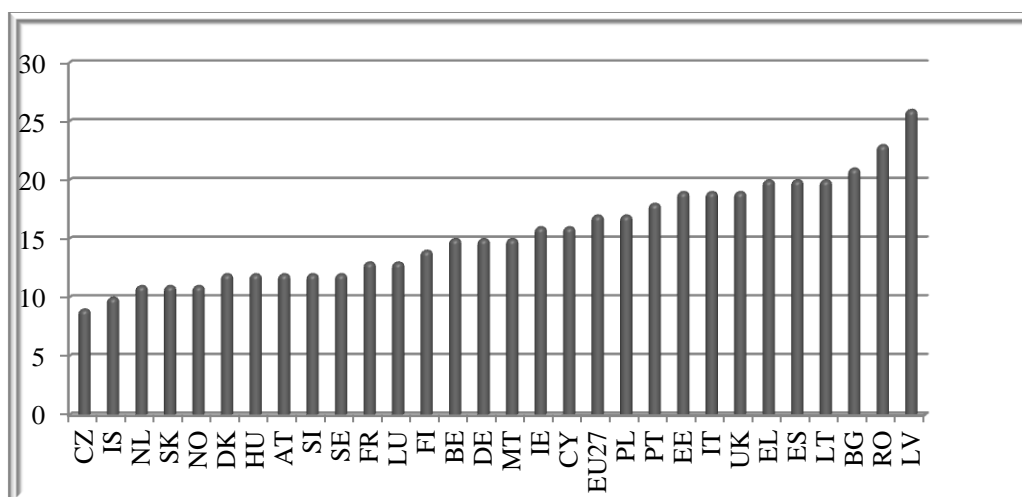
situation of the households is too bad to consider tourism as a priority. Moreover, the tourists spent less. As a result, in 2009, the corporate travel was more seriously affected than leisure travel. We can notice that the demand for hotels remains weak in 2010, with inevitable effects on revenues. The smallest declines in occupancy are reported by UK and Sweden. Malta, Belgium, France, Italy and Germany are relatively well, but Lithuania, Romania, Latvia and Slovakia registered the worst situation (see fig. 3).



**Figure 3. Hotel performance in European destinations in 2010 (%)**

Source: <http://www.strglobal.com>

An important element which affects the international and national tourists' flows is the risk of poverty. For example, 17% of EU citizens were at risk of poverty in 2008. (Wolff P., 2010). The risk of poverty masks considerable variation between Member States. 11 Member States have a greater risk of poverty than EU27 average, Romania being on the second position (23%), after Latvia (26%). Countries with high level of poverty risk are: Bulgaria (21%), Lithuania, Spain and Greece (20%), UK, Italy and Estonia, Portugal and Poland. The lowest risk of poverty rates are recorded by Czech Republic (9%), Iceland (10%), Netherlands, Slovakia and Norway (11%). The surprises come from UK and Italy, which register high risk of poverty rates, even that they are old Member States (see fig. 4).

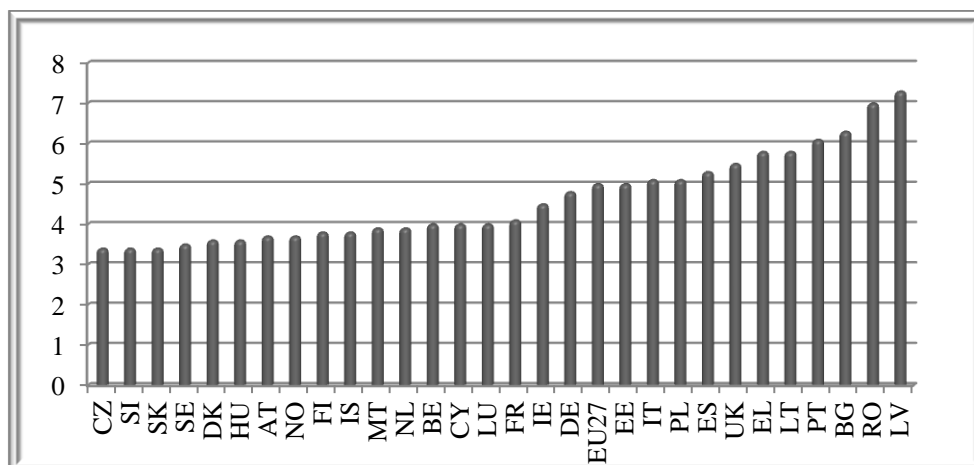


**Figure 4. Risk of poverty rate (%)**

Source: Eurostat (*ilc\_ov1a1*, *ilc\_ov1a2*)

[http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/cache/ITY\\_OFFPUB/KS-SF-10-009/EN/KS-SF-10-009-EN.PDF](http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/cache/ITY_OFFPUB/KS-SF-10-009/EN/KS-SF-10-009-EN.PDF)

The risk of poverty is greater for children than the rest of the population. Child poverty rates ranged from 9% in Denmark to 33% in Romania and 26% in Bulgaria. There are data showing that the risk of poverty for people aged 65 or more is greater than the rest of the population. It ranged from 4% in Hungary and 5% in Luxembourg to 30% in UK, Bulgaria and Estonia, 49% in Cyprus and 51% in Latvia. The risk of poverty for the people aged 65 or more is 26% in Romania (see Table 1). Viewed from another perspective, there are great disparities between the higher and the poorest revenue in EU member states, especially in those which joined EU in the latest two waves. Unfortunately, Romania has the second poorest ratio between the greatest and the poorest revenue (7 times). The inequity in the income distribution has the high level in Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia, Bulgaria, Poland and Romania (see fig. 5).



**Figure 5. Income share ratio**

Source: Eurostat (ilc\_ov2)

**Table 1 The poverty rate by age group (%) in 2010**

	Total population	Children (0-17)	People aged 18-64	Elderly (65 and more)
EU27	17	20	15	19
BE	15	17	12	21
BG	21	26	17	34
CZ	9	13	8	7
DK	12	9	11	18
DE	15	15	15	15
EE	19	17	15	39
IE	16	18	14	21
EL	20	23	19	22
ES	20	24	16	28
FR	13	17	13	11
IT	19	25	16	21
CY	16	14	11	49
LV	26	25	20	51
LT	20	23	17	29
LU	13	20	13	5
HU	12	20	12	4
MT	15	20	12	22
NL	11	13	10	10



AT	12	15	11	15
PL	17	22	16	12
PT	18	23	16	22
RO	23	33	20	26
SI	12	12	10	21
SK	11	17	10	10
FI	14	12	12	23
SE	12	13	11	16
UK	19	23	15	30
IS	10	11	9	15
NO	11	10	11	15

Source: Eurostat, 2008.

Material deprivation rates complement the social exclusion picture by providing an estimate of the ratio of citizens whose living conditions are severely affected by a lack of resources. This element affects directly the tourism fluxes.

The lowest material deprivation rates are in Luxembourg (4%), the Nordic countries, Netherland and Spain (10% or less). The highest material deprivation rates are in Bulgaria and Romania (50%), Hungary, Latvia and Poland (30%).

In most countries, the material deprivation rates are higher for children than for whole population. The material deprivation rates are higher for the elderly than for whole population in Bulgaria (22%) and Latvia (15%), while it is the same with the children in Romania (58%).

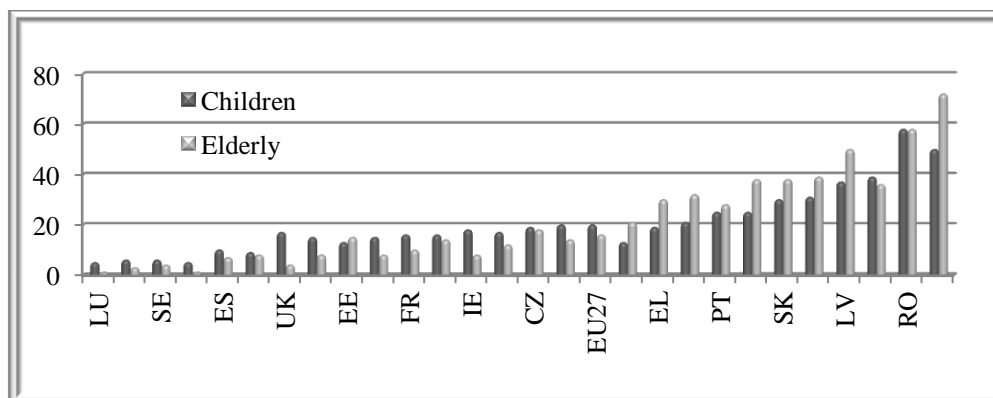


Figure 6. Material deprivation rate (%)

Source: Eurostat (ilc\_sip8)

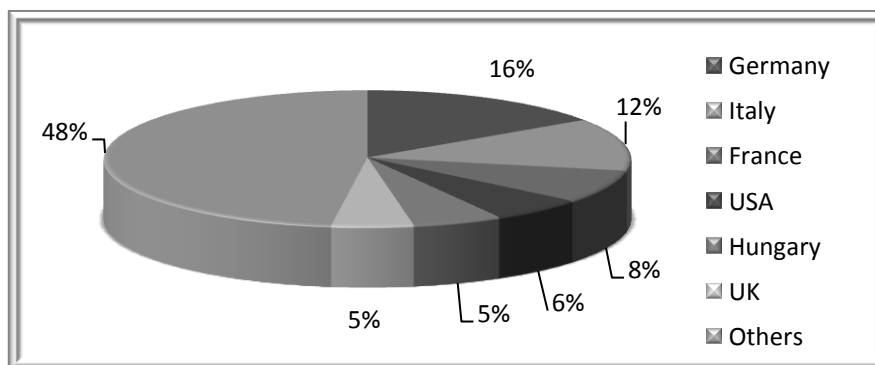
As a result, it can be noticed that Romanian tourism is not well developed and it depends heavily on domestic demand. The most international tourism flows in our country are not so big and are mainly for business purposes.

**Table 2 Main tourism indicators in Romania (%)**

Indicators	2000	2008
Share of international nights in the country as a proportion of total international nights in the EU27	0.2	0.3
Share of international tourism receipts in the country as a proportion of total international receipts in the EU27	0.2	0.4
Share of nights spent by EU25 residents as a proportion of total international nights in the country	56.0	67.8
Proportion of international tourism nights compared with total tourism nights in the country	12.2	17.1
Proportion of international tourism receipts in GDP	1.0	1.1
Ratio of international tourism receipts to expenditure	84.0	100.0

Source: Eurostat, 2008

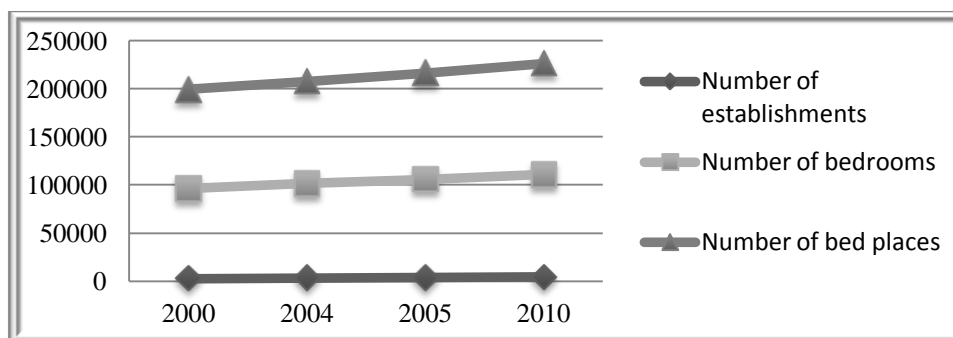
The main tourism markets in Romania are Germany, Italy, France, USA, Hungary and UK. In 2008 they covered 52.2% of the nights spent by non-residents as percentage of total nights. Unfortunately, we only talk about business tourism in Romania, the number of “classic” tourists being still very low. In our opinion, Romania is an emerging country of destination and origin of tourism. The Romania tourism activity profile is connected to economic development. As a result, we can determine the tourism intensity as a ration between tourist nights and resident population. It was 0.9 in 2008. The number of Romanian tourists 15 years and over was 3,152,000 in 2008, representing 17.3% of total population. The tourism expenditure and receipts in 2008 were approximately equal: 1034 million Euros, respectively 1033 million Euros.



**Figure 7. Main tourism markets in Romania (%)**

Source: (Eurostat, 2008)

The characteristics of the tourism supply in hotels and similar establishments in Romania are presented in figure 8.



**Figure 8. Main tourism markets in Romania (%)**

*Source: (Eurostat, 2008, p. 88)*

During 2000-2008, the annual average occupancy rate of bed places in Romania was 21.9%, the peak month being August and the maximum value recorded being 54.3% in 2004. In 2008, the Romanian tourism demand was covered by domestic tourists (82.9%) and foreign tourists (17.1%). An average value of the holiday trips was 1-3 nights for domestic tourists and 4+ nights for abroad tourists.

## 5. Rural Tourism Development and Its Economic Impact

The rural tourism is a relative new direction for tourism. In Romania, along with the adhering process into EU, the reform and the globalisation, lead further to new forms of tourism, which represent endless opportunities for making money. As a result, the rural tourism had an excellent opportunity to flourish. Rural tourism is based on the use of sites' own advantages. Of course, the rural tourism development process in Romania is still at the exploratory stage and it is inevitable to face different kinds of problems, but overall, the prospect is still considerable.

The results of our analysis confirm that there is a strong link between rural tourism progress and the development of village living environment, rural folk culture, rural scenery, agricultural production and its natural environment-based tourism activities. In our view the cumulative effects consist in a propagation of villages of natural and cultural objects for tourism attraction and tourism activities. Last but not least, we believe that eco-tourism areas belonging to a village of human object for tourism activities attraction fall within the scope of cultural tourism. Therefore, rural tourism can include tour of rural environments and rural folk cultural tourism.

Rural tourism began in France and United States. Its initial development is the development of a space holiday choice. The development of rural tourism has embarked on the track, showing strong vitality and increasing potential for development. The vast majority of rural tourists enjoy a lower price level of consumption, lower grade of travel services and lower levels of spiritual experience in the tourism area. Overall, the current demand for rural tourism is becoming increasingly multifaceted. It covers diverse characteristics of tourist travel development trend and cultural tourism on the environment, closely integrated multi-functional, complex rural tourism, an increasingly strong demand for the product. The rural tourism is a connotation of a great variety of tourism activities. In other words, different regions, different groups of rural tourism products will have a certain demand, so the face of rural tourism development and construction of the overall tourism consumer market would be based on individual needs at different levels. The rural tourism has a great impact on local communities.

In Romania, the village is the basic component of the rural space. On the other hand, there are different rural communities, but rural tourism can be the engine of rural areas development. The rural tourism can produce benefits in the rural areas, because it supports the sustainable use of natural, cultural and historical traditions. The local gastronomy is important, as well. All these elements are able to realise a touristic brand able to express notoriety and to ensure a sustainable development. As a result, it is necessary to implement a long-term development strategy, connected to other strategies (infrastructure, agriculture, environment), which will be able to support a significant economic growth. Moreover, the development of traditional activities (handicraft) and the superior valorization of ecological food can become key elements of the welfare, development and the solution for maintaining cultural identity.

## **6. What Europeans Can Find Out about the Rural Tourism in Romania and Bulgaria?**

When a potential tourist looks for a rural tourism destination, the first impression about Romania is not good. On the same dedicated international site related to the rural tourism, the differences between the Romanian and Bulgarian sites are significantly. There are at least three kinds of differences, connected to general presentation, information volume and number of possibilities.

The Romanian site indicates that rural tourism existed before 1990, but not in an organized way. Romanian legislation improvement in the field is presented as a necessity not only to develop the rural tourism, but “to diminish the black rural tourism market” or to eliminate “the great number of demands for accommodation classification and the insufficient number of inspectors from the Ministry of Tourism”. Practically, a potential tourist can easily observe that the rural tourism in

Romania faces to a lot of problems. A comparative analysis with the Bulgarian site is not favorable for us. The Bulgarian site stated in a different style: "rural tourism and farm tourism started its development in Bulgaria in the mid 90's. Rural tourism and farm tourism in Bulgaria concerns villages which in most cases have preserved their traditional outlook and genuine rural atmosphere (a famous example is the village of Momchilovtsi in the Rhodope region)". Certainly, it is something else, comparing to Romania. The unpleasant surprises continue when the same tourist can find only a single dedicated tourism organisation (ANTREC) for Romania, its site and only information about the French/Dutch 'Operations Villages Romanian', which has a "booklet with 18 addresses in Transylvania and Maramures (info available by phone or via Dutch, French and Romanian specific antennas)". The last part of the Romania's site is dedicated to the rural tourism training organisations.

The Bulgarian site talks about a very good and elaborated network of national parks existing in Bulgaria and gives the governmental web address.

According to the rural tourism marketing organisations, the same site talks about seven organisations, not one as in Romania: BARET - Bulgarian Association of Rural and Ecological Tourism, BAAT - Bulgarian Association of Alternative Tourism, Pirin Tourism Forum Varosha Quarter, Stara Planina Association, Bourgas Regional Tourism Association, Varna Tourism Chamber and Rhodopi Regional Association. These organisations are connected to specific touristic regions from Bulgaria and have their own webpage with all necessary information.

Putting in connection the results of our study, the first conclusion is that Bulgaria offers more information about its rural tourism capacity than Romania. The problem is that the Internet is the most used tool by the potential tourists. These tourists can decide their destination only from the dedicated sites, and Romania is not on a good position.

## **7. Comparative Analysis of Economic Factors which Support the Rural Tourism in Romania and Bulgaria**

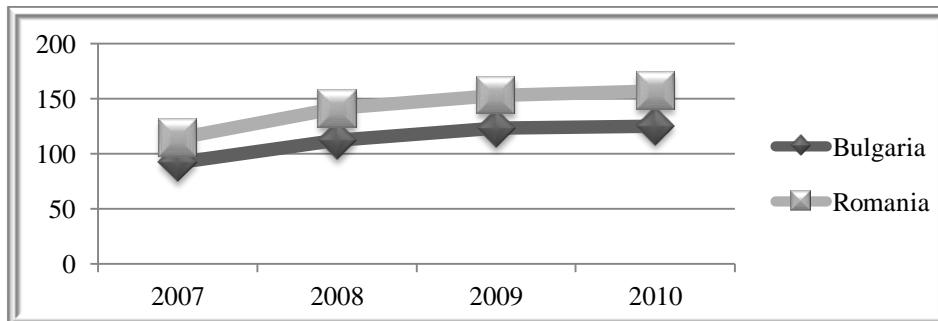
In order to analyze the rural touristic potential of Romania and Bulgaria, it is important to point out those factors which may develop or stop the rural tourism in both countries. These important factors are: the road infrastructure and the wage level. The rural touristic destinations are accessed using the road infrastructure, which has to provide an easy access to all touristic locations. The Romanian government is, as usual, very optimistically when announce that 400 km highways will be operable by the end of 2011. Nowadays, the main connections with the rural tourism locations are made by the national roads. In 2010, 621 km of national roads were rehabilitated. The government objective for 2011 is another 261 km of

rehabilitation roads, which cost 170 million Euros. The most important rehabilitation in 2011 is Petrosani-Simeria (80 km). The problem is that this road which will be finish in 2011 is a road already travelled. The works began in 2003 for two sections: Petrosani-Baru and Hateg-Simeria. The section Baru-Hateg started on November 2007. These sections directly support the access to some interesting rural tourism locations. The sections of highways and national roads which will be finish in 2012 are made by foreign companies. Comparing, in 2010, Bulgaria already had 459 km highways. Bucharest-Constanta and Timisoara-Arad highways will be finish in 2011. Constanta auto belt of 32 km is planned to be finish by the end of 2011. It will be realise under the highway standards, in order to streamline the road traffic on the Bucharest-Constanta highway and on Tulcea-Vama Veche road connection. The value of the contract is about 437 million lei (without VAT). If these projects will be finished, Romania will implement the 4<sup>th</sup> Pan-European Way in 2015. The problem is that the Sibiu-Pitesti section (117 km) is still “highway in preparation” and it was not brought to the hammer. But the Ministry of Transports declared that the 4<sup>th</sup> Pan-European Way is a priority for Romania. The road infrastructure is important in order to support the access to the rural touristic locations and regional development, as well. A great part of this sum is assigned to CNADNR. In 2010, CNADNR benefited of 1.7 billion Euros (Neferu A., 2011). In 2011, the Ministry of Transports’ investment budget is about 2 billion Euros. Cernavodă - Medgidia section (19 km) is made by the French company: Colas. The second sector of the same highway, Medgidia-Constanta, is made by the Italian company: Astaldi and by the German company: Max Boegl. By the end of 2010, the Ministry of Transports announced that Romania will have another 243 km of highways until 2012. Romania has 314 km of highway now: Bucharest - Pitesti (111 km), Bucharest - Cernavoda (151 km) and Campia Turzii - Gilau (52 km). This means 145 km less than Bulgaria. Other four sections of highway will be finished by 2012: Suplacu de Barcau - Bors (64 km), Moara Vlasiei - Ploiesti (42.5 km), Bucharest - Moara Vlasiei (19.5 km) and Deva – Orastie (32.8 km). The problem is that the government is not able to coordinate the works’ completion. In 2008, the Romanian government promised 1000 km of highway until 2012 and at the beginning of 2011, Romania had only 314 km. The key issue is if Romania will be able to finish the difference of 686 km until 2012? On the other side, the highways will be made by section and not as a whole. Therefore Romania will not have an East-West or a North-South highway able to cross the country in 2012.

Our neighbour, Bulgaria, has a different approach about the road infrastructure. This approach is related to the high growth of motorized vehicles’ number and the road transports’ development, as well. Thus, the density of Bulgaria’s road network is close to the average density in EU countries, but in terms of highways, this country lags significantly behind. This is why the Bulgarian government is focused on an important road infrastructure plan: the construction of seven motorways,

seven highways, and two bridges over the Danube and a new tunnel under the Shipka pass in the Balkan Range (Harizanova T., 2011). The achieving of these construction projects will allow Bulgaria to reach the average EU level of road infrastructure. The Bulgarian highway plan is related to cross-European transport networks and it is focused on the link between the strategic geographical destinations in the country. The first highway (Trakia) connects the Adriatic and the Black Sea, as a section of a greater road link: Central and Eastern Europe and Asia and the Near East via the port in Burgas. Other highways will create the links between Sofia and the Black Sea, Bulgaria, Turkey and Greece (Maritsa highway) or will redirect the cross-European transport corridors (Lyulin highway near Sofia). There are other highways projected to be implemented until 2020.

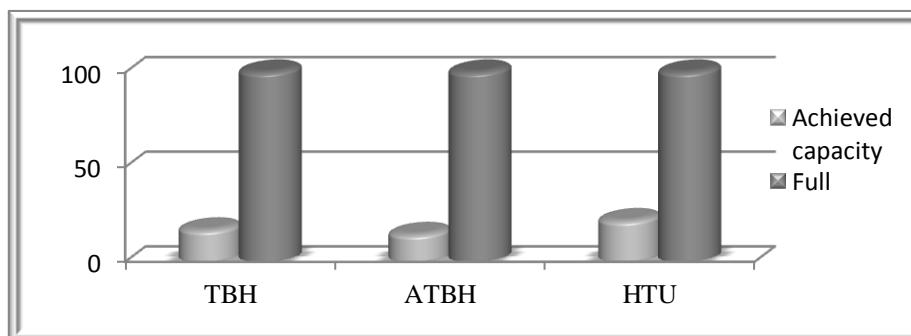
The most important conclusion, resulted from this comparative analysis with Romania, is that the Bulgarian approach is better than Romanian. Bulgarian government succeeded in constructing highways which are also priorities for European Commission. Viewed from another perspective, Bulgaria succeeded in accessing EU funds for these highways under the Operational Programme Transport 2007-2013. And maybe the most important thing is that the Bulgarian government succeeded into a maximum cooperation with EU, which covers experts, new models of management and a higher quality, a different strategy and a huge employment. This is the way on which Bulgaria will receive the support from the European Commission, the Jaspers initiative, the European Investment Bank, the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development, and the World Bank. The second part of our comparative analysis is favorable to Bulgaria. This country has a better evolution of road infrastructure, more pertinent projects and a better EU support. The rural tourism cannot be promoted and developed under a weak road infrastructure, even if nature, the natural landscapes, is more fabulous in Romania. We attempt through this study to analyze the evolution of wages level in both countries. The main idea is that the domestic rural tourism has to be greater than the foreign one, and this kind of tourism is accessed having money. The minimum gross wages across the EU varied from 123 Euros per month in Bulgaria, 157 Euros in Romania and 1642 Euros in Luxembourg. In six member states, the minimum wages is 10 times greater than in Romania: UK, France, Belgium, Netherland, Ireland and Luxembourg (FedEE, 2011). The evolution of the minimum wages in Bulgaria and Romania is presented in figure 9.



**Figure 9. Minimum wage's trend in Bulgaria and Romania (Euros)**

*Source: (Czech, 2009, p. 2)*

Our first impression is a positive one for Romania, where the minimum wage is greater than in Bulgaria. On the other side, this optimistic point of view came up against two problems. First is that the minimum wage in Romania represents only 33% of the average wage. As a consequence, Romania is ranked on the last position across the EU, worse than Bulgaria. The second problem is that the costs of rural tourism services in Romania are greater comparatively with Bulgaria. Deepening and expanding financial crisis triggered the tourism as a whole across the Europe. Romania and Bulgaria faced the great difficulties in order to pass the recession impact on tourism, including rural tourism, as well. However, Bulgaria was able to find better solutions in order to support the tourism activities. As a result, Romania had the greatest decrease of the nights spent number in the EU in 2010 (-7.1%). Meanwhile, Bulgaria achieved a growth of 6.6% in the same year. Moreover, Romania is the member state with the lowest number of nights spent by non-residents (18%), while Bulgaria achieved 70% (NIS, 2010). According to the Romania National Institute of Statistics, the tourism position was worst in 2010 related to 2009. Moreover, the net use indices of the tourists' accommodation capacity in use, for rural tourism' type of establishments are not good (see fig. 10).



**Figure 10. The net use indices of the tourists' accommodation capacity in use (%)**

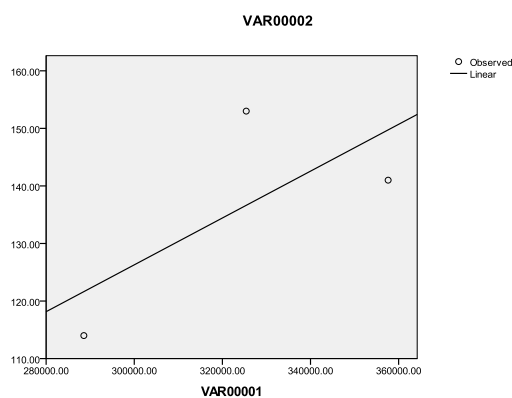
*Source: (National Institut of Statistics, 2010, p. 41)*



The capacity was only 16.6% in tourist boarding houses (TBH), 14.2% in agro-tourism boarding houses (ATBH) and 21.5% in house-let – type units (HTU) in 2010.

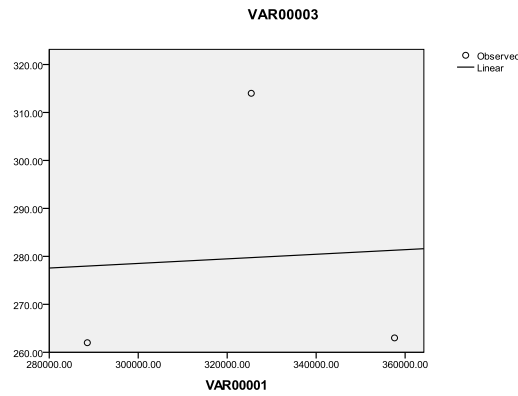
### 8. Modeling of Rural Tourism Impact in Romania and Bulgaria

The cumulated effect of the above information on rural tourism development is quantified using the multiple linear regressions. The resultative dependent variable is the evolution of tourism destination and the factorial variables are the road infrastructure investment and the average level of wages in both countries. This information is operated under the dedicated software SPSS17. The Pearson correlation coefficient between the evolution of the tourism destination and the factorial variables is 0.69 and the determined ratio  $R^2$  (square multiple correlation coefficient) is 0.471. The regression analysis covers the capacity in agro-tourism boarding houses (VAR 00001), the minimum wage (VAR 00002) and the highways' development in km (VAR 00003).



**Figure 11. The correlation between the minimum wage and the capacity in agrotourist boarding houses (2007-2009)**

According to figure 11, the impact of the minimum wages on the rural touristic capacity is powerful in 2009, maybe as a result of the crisis' effects.

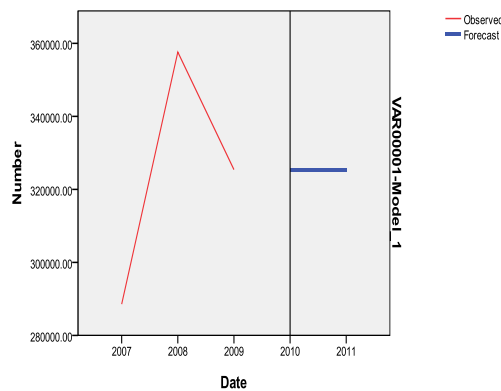


**Figure 12. The correlation between the minimum wage and the highways' development in km (2007-2009)**

Figure 12 presents the correlation between the capacity in agro-tourism boarding houses and the highways' development in km. The correlation is weak. This means that the highways are less important for the rural tourism development as the national and rural ways.

In order to complete our analysis we realised a forecast scenario for 2010-2011. The forecast was made for 2010 because there is no information for this year, and the last European quarterly report about tourism uses very few information about tourism in 2010 (European Travel Commission, 2011).

The results of the forecast scenario are presented in figure 13.



**Figure 13. The rural tourism forecast in Romania (2010-2011)**

The results of this analysis confirm that, by the end of 2011, important changes in rural tourism evolution won't be recorded. Practically, the Romanian rural tourism

will further be confronted with a powerful competition from other countries, like Bulgaria, Turkey or Greece.

## 9. Conclusions

It is important to point out that the statistical definition of tourism is broader than the general accepted definition. It encompasses not only private travel but also business travel. This is primarily because it views tourism from an economic perspective. Private travelers and business travelers have broadly similar consumption patterns. They both make significant demands on transport, accommodation and restaurant services.

Providers of these services are not so interested whether their customers are private tourists or on business. On the other side, tourism promotion departments are keen to combine both aspects by emphasising the attractiveness of conference locations as tourist destinations and they give particular prominence to this in their marketing activities (Eurostat, 2009). Nowadays, tourism is a result of the economic development more than of the natural landscapes. As a result, Romania main challenge in tourism is how to develop tourism under restrictions of economic slowdown, bad infrastructure and low financing. Europe is still confronted with to the recession effects and, therefore, tourism can be a solution to regional sustainable development, especially for those areas which benefit by beautiful landscapes and authentically traditions. An important change in rural tourism is the way in which the consumers buy trips. The latest online analysis of the European tourism market forecasted that more than one third of tourism market will be cover by online consumers (PhoCusWright, 2010). Hence, the potential tourists consult the web pages, in order to obtain information about the rural tourism. The web pages related to Romanian rural tourism are not attractively and do not give enough information about the rural tourism locations and their gateways.

Romania road infrastructure is worse than Bulgarian and the access to the locations is more difficult. Finally, it is important to recognize that Romanian households' revenues are not able to support the rural tourism development.

The results of this research highlight that even if rural tourism is an activity strongly affected by the economic recession, it has no deadline for its powerful development.

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