

**HARGHITA COUNTY INTEGRATED TOURISM  
STRATEGY FOR THE PERIOD  
2020-2027**



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## **I. THE RELATIONSHIP OF HARGHITA COUNTY'S INTEGRATED TOURISM STRATEGY WITH TOURISM POLICY AND REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT POLICY**

### **1.1. ASPECTS ON SPATIAL PLANNING AND TOURISM DEVELOPMENT**

An important aspect is that the ideas of development through private and public investments can be implemented by observing the provisions on spatial planning and urban planning.

For the elaboration of the strategy, we must highlight laws of particular importance that refer to different sections of the **National Territorial Plan (NTP)**, as follows:

- Law No. 363 of 21.09.2006 for the approval of NTP - Section I - Transport networks
- Law No. 171 of 04.11.1997 for the approval of NTP - Section II - Water
- Law No. 5 of 06.03.2000 for the approval of the NTP - Section III - Protected Areas
- Law No. 351 of 06.03.2001 for the approval of the NTP - section IV - the network of localities
- Law No. 575 of 22.10.2001 for approval of PATN - Section V - natural risk areas

There are elaborated and pending, in the form of law, sections of the National Territory Planning Plan - NTP:

- the national territorial plan - section VI - the infrastructure for tourism
- the national territorial plan - Section VII - Education Infrastructure
- the national territorial plan - Section VIII - rural areas.

The elaboration of the tourism strategy of Harghita County took into account the provisions of the draft laws and the analyzes included in the grounding study regarding the Harghita County and the neighboring counties (region 7 - center: Covasna, Braşov, Mureş; regiunea 1 – nord-est: Suceava, Neamţ, Bacău).

**The National Territorial Plan**, in accordance with Law 350 of 06.07.2001 on Spatial Planning and Urban Planning, has the character of director and represents the synthesis of medium- and long-term sectoral strategic programs for the entire territory of the country. The provisions of its sections are obligatory for the other landscaping plans detailing them (the zonal and County planning plan).

The County Territorial Plan (CTP) has a character character and represents the spatial expression of the socio-economic development program of the County. Its provisions are binding for the other landscaping and urban planning plans detailing them.



The Zonal Territorial Plan (ZTPs) - they have the role of a director and they are done in order to solve specific problems of some territories, which can be composed of communal and / or urban TAU (Territorial Administrative Units) (Inter-Communal Territorial Plan, Inter-City Territorial Plan), from parts of some counties, or counties (Inter-County Territorial Plan), from several counties, being regional entities (Regional Territorial Plan). Urbanistic documentation (Urbanistic General, Area and Detail Plan) for urban and rural settlements regulates the use of land and the conditions for occupying them with constructions, transposing locally the provisions of NTP, CTP, ZTP, having the role of specific regulation, with rules applicable to cadastral parcels, mandatory grounding elements for issuance of urbanism certificates.

Territorial development legislation can support development policy, but it can also be a barrier to phenomena, unwanted developments, temporary and definitive building bans. In addition to planning territory for tourism purposes, emphasis should be placed on state control in the field of construction, involving the use of land under their own potential. This is impossible without a complex development concept, grounded in analyzes and strategies.

In order for tourism to become a performing sector in the County's economy, the investments necessary for the sustainable valorization of natural resources and cultural heritage must be considered.

The sources of funding can be provided from different funds, if the investment needs and organizational actions are inventoried and included in a tourism development strategy. Financial instruments are provided within ROP - Regional Operational Program 2014-2020, through Priority Axis 7: Diversification of local economies through the sustainable development of tourism; as well as Priority Axis 6: Improvement of regional infrastructure infrastructure. (put the source)

The tourism development strategy structures the County's tourism policies, presenting the analysis of the current situation of the tourism development conditions in the County. Its implementation by decision makers and executors at County and local level will be possible by making decisions on the projects in the field of the County council, as well as by stimulating the investment and organizational projects at the level of the towns and villages, especially in the case of the resorts tourist attractions of national or local interest on the protected areas located outside the Territorial Administrative Units (TAU). Preparing public projects simultaneously with encouraging private investment should take into account the requirements of the Applicant's Guide for each major area of ROP intervention. The documentation for the grant applications compels compliance with the spatial planning and urban planning regulations, along with the economic and technical feasibility criteria.

Not all tourism development conditions imply investment in construction, the tourism development strategy should not be confused with tourism infrastructure investment programs, which are complemented by other decisions such as human resources, marketing, awareness of the importance of tourism in pully, etc. The tourism development strategy becomes a conceptual



framework with a manageable character only if it is approved by the decision-makers and will be implemented through the proposed measures. Implementation of the strategy must be accompanied by regular monitoring and evaluation of the steps and taking of new organizational, regulatory and investment decisions.

## **1.2. THE TOURISM DEVELOPMENT POLICY FRAMEWORK**

The County tourism policies must be based on tourism policy with national and international connections and regional development policy. At national level, both public policy areas are exposed to changes in electoral cycles, even if governmental attributions in these areas have a natural continuity, successive government programs can even bring about essential changes. Romania's international commitments represent milestones for each governance mandate and are a continuation factor for long-term or medium-term strategies and programs. Due to these considerations, we present below some aspects of the international and national context of tourism policy and regional development.

### **1.2.1 INTERNATIONAL GLOBAL CONTEXT**

The world's most well-known international tourism organization is the World Tourism Organization (WTO-UNWTO), which is a specialized agency of the United Nations (UN) and functions as a global forum on tourism policy issues and a source of know-how in this field. It has a central and decisive role in promoting the development of responsible, sustainable and accessible tourism, paying particular attention to developing countries.

The WTO includes 160 full member states, 6 associated members and over 400 private, educational, associative and public affiliates. Romania is a founding member of the WTO since 1975, with full rights. WTO has developed several position papers, guides, and manuals for sustainable development in the field.

WTO encourages the implementation of the Global Code of Ethics for Tourism (CGEPT), which was adopted by the General Assembly of the WTO in Santiago (Chile) in 1999, to ensure that member countries, tourism destinations and tourism businesses maximize their positive economic, social and cultural effects, while minimizing negative social and environmental impacts. The Global Code of Ethics for Tourism is made up of a set of principles presented in 10 articles. These principles need to be known and adopted by Member States, tourism companies as well as by different institutions, communities directly or indirectly interested in tourism, as follows:

- tourism's contribution to mutual understanding and respect between peoples and societies
- tourism as a vehicle for individual and collective implementation
- tourism, a factor of sustainable development





- tourism, a user of the natural heritage of humanity and a contributor for its enrichment
- tourism, an advantageous activity for host communities and countries
- the obligations of the participants in the act of tourism
- the right to tourism
- freedom of touristic movement
- the rights of workers and entrepreneurs in the tourism industry
- implementing the principles of the Global Code of Ethics for Tourism

The principles of the Code are taken over to a certain extent in the Romanian tourism legislation and partly in the EU Structural Funds financing schemes for the development and promotion of sustainable tourism (according to the requirements stipulated in the Applicant Guidelines). Other issues, however, remain in the field of recommendations, voluntary commitments, not imposed by legislation. Adoption and implementation of the Code's principles and recommendations will materialize by disseminating "Best Practice" information through awareness of the traveling public, tourism entrepreneurship and central and local public administration bodies.

The implementation of the Global Code of Ethics for Tourism in Harghita County can be the theme of a special study, based on the detailed knowledge of the County tourism actors, their attitudes and behavior, both on the supply side and on the demand side.

Being a County inhabited mostly by communities belonging to the Hungarian minority in Romania, Harghita County acquires the special importance of the provision in item 1 of article 1: "... the participants in the tourism development and the tourists themselves will respect the social and cultural traditions and practices of all peoples, including those of minorities and indigenous peoples, and will recognize their value. " At the same time "... host communities on the one hand and professionals on the other will become familiar with the tourists visiting, respecting, interested and knowing their lifestyle, tastes and preferences, learning and the training brought to the knowledge of the professionals contributes to hospitality "(Article 1, point 4).

Although most of the principles formulated in the Global Code of Ethics A for Tourism are viable through national tourism legislation in relation to the related environmental, spatial, social and cultural policies, external relations, etc., during implementation, the role of the County level is highlighted as a level coordination of local public administration, especially with respect to Articles 3, 4 and 5. They have as a common responsibility the responsibility for the sustainable valorisation of natural and cultural heritage, through proper planning and exploitation of the sensitivity of ecosystems or of traditional culture. It is remarked that the heritage tourism resources imply both rights and obligations specific to local communities, and especially in the



case of protected elements it is necessary for the local population to be able to benefit economically from their presence by creating opportunities business and jobs.

In the context of the implementation of the Code's principles, co-operation between public and private stakeholders is needed, which should recognize the role of international institutions, including the WTO, then non-governmental organizations with competence in the development and promotion of tourism, protection of human rights, the environment or health, respect for the principles of international law. In order to interpret the Code in the event of disputes between the sector's interests, the World Tourism Ethics Committee was created.

Of course, WTOs activity is very extensive, its programs are carried out through specialized committees and regional commissions, concretizing in the organization of conferences and seminars, research and dissemination of information, elaboration of publications on the international tourism market trends, formulation of recommendations to the governments of the member states , international organizations, tourism companies, etc.

Support actions for National Tourism Authorities come under the concerns of the WTO that also works through regional committees, including the European Commission (<https://europe.unwto.org>). Its mission is to serve the Member States in meeting the high standards of tourism policy and governance by setting up appropriate content in WTO programs that are in line with common tourism policy objectives such as development, climate change mitigation, employment work and other UN Millennium Development Goals, as well as the use of tourism to support the objectives of other public policies.

The activities of the Commission for Europe of the WTO are aimed at assisting Member States in developing strategies in the context of turbulent markets, using tools addressing consumer quality and satisfaction issues, preparing and implementing programs on value creation, technology innovation, human resource development and leadership, capacity building for public officials, redesigning processes in the public sector, new products, etc.

WTO affiliated members are grouped into three councils, depending on their core business profile: Business Council, Travel Destinations Council, Education and Science Council. WTO's work programs include a series of seminars, workshops, conferences on various themes, debates, publishing of publications, all of which contribute directly or indirectly to influencing public policies with effect on various aspects of tourism. Among these are the programs for increasing competitiveness, coordination in destination management and marketing, poverty alleviation, education and knowledge management, market research and promotion, risk and crisis management, tourism statistics and tourism account, sustainable development.

Another world-class organization is the World Tourism and Travel Council (WTTC - WTTC - <https://www.wttc.org>), being the forum of business leaders in the tourism industry. It is made up of the general directors of the largest tourist companies. It activates in order to recognize tourism as one of the largest industries in the world, contributing to the employment of more than



350 million people and generating about a. 15% of global GDP. The strategic framework for ensuring that tourism works in the interests of everyone is published under the title Blueprint for new tourism. This document promotes tourism and travel as a partnership to integrate public and private efforts, with the result of meeting the needs of local economies, authorities and communities, whose business is based on:

- the recognition of tourism and travel as a top priority by governments
- business that balances economies with people, culture, and the environment
- common concern for prosperity and long-term growth.

WTTC invites all stakeholders to join the Blueprint call for action and commitment to building new tourism that benefits benefits around the world. The recommendations of the document are structured in three parts to the governments, the private sector and the co-operation among them.

Proposals for governments to facilitate the development of the sector are as follows:

1. long-term tourism planning at national and regional / local level
2. create a competitive business environment that overcomes inflation-generating taxation, guarantees transparency and offers more attractive corporate property rules
3. ensuring the substantiation of policy and decision-making with statistics and quality information
4. bringing new professionalism, financing and coordination into promotion and marketing, employment and improvement needs, regional / local infrastructure and policy
5. the development of human capital required by the T&T sector (Tourism and Travel). Governance should drive investment in human resources through education and bringing authorities closer to industry to facilitate planning ahead for future needs. An online and easily accessible online market monitoring network can link trusted market information with employment data.
6. liberalization of trade, transport, communications, ease of barriers to travel and investment
7. building consumer and investor confidence in safety and security
8. promoting diversification of products that expand demand
9. planning the expansion of sustainable tourism in line with the nature of the crops
10. investing in technological advances to facilitate safe and efficient T&T development, such as satellite navigation systems.

In the opinion of the Blueprint for new tourism authors published by WTTC, such an agenda allows the exploitation and support of opportunities in a broader spectrum of T&T



businesses, developing a range of quality products, but also ensuring that tourist flows respect natural and built heritage, as well as local interests. For the private sector tasks, Blueprint exposes the following:

1. extending markets while promoting the protection of natural resources, local heritage and lifestyles
2. develop professional careers, education, employment relationships, promote smaller firms, increase environmental consciousness, contribute in a way to reduce the gap between the rich and the poor
3. a sensitive supply of traditional tourist products and the imaginative diversification of products that reduce seasonality and increase incomes
4. improving the quality of tourism products and services and the price-quality ratio by increasing consumer choices
5. agreeing on quality standards and their implementation at all levels and in all areas, including training of staff
6. transferring industry skills and best practices that broadly broaden benefits in an effective way
7. more and more sophisticated and accurate measurement of the sector's own business activity to substantiate strategic business decisions
8. more effective communication between T&T and government at strategic and local level.

The cumulative effect of the envisaged measures will be a shift to a T&T that continues to serve the needs of the private sector, while embracing broader interests of countries and communities in which it operates. Along with the ones presented for the government and the private sector, specific tasks are emerging, which can only be achieved through a wider cooperation. These include:

1. linking good practices in tourism development with regional business policies, transport, human resources, environment, infrastructure and rural development
2. public-private partnerships for the joint preparation of sustainable master plans for destinations or holiday regions, too demanding for a single company or state authority
3. creating processes propelled locally for consultation, participation and continued benefits of stakeholders
4. restructuring national administrations for tourism as public-private partnerships
5. avoiding the dangers of excessive, unplanned development and setting environmental policy objectives



6. human resource development and effective skill planning through planning and legislation that avoids residence-based or other requirements
7. collaborating in information requirements for public sector analysis and policy-making
8. security work jointly with the completion of private sector mechanisms with actions from the authorities
9. developing trust in all aspects of mutually reinforcing efforts.

New tourism offers the reward for economic activity that raises the quality of life and offers new opportunities for self-reliance and local prosperity. Reward can be won by all countries that rise to the challenges of integrating T&T industry needs with national policies.

### **1.2.2 EUROPEAN CONTEXT**

Through the process of association and then accession to the European Union, Romania expressed a system of values, principles consistent with the values, principles and objectives of the European community, the European character of the Romanian democracy being in the process of becoming by adopting both at the level of central and local public administration of European practices of public policy formulation.

Community tourism policy in the EU has been rather tough, since the Commission's initiative to launch the Philoxenia program in 1996 was doomed to failure because of the divergent views of member countries on the need for community policy, especially on multi-annual funding for development programs. The process called Tourism and Employment, however, formed the framework for tourism policy. Starting with a conference organized by the EU Presidency and the European Commission in 1997 on Employment and Tourism: guidelines, the High Tourism and Employment Group of Experts from the Member States was set up, whose report entitled European Tourism: A New Partnership for jobs has prompted the European Commission to identify measures to implement its recommendations. Following the conclusions of the European Council of 21 June 1999, the European Commission and the Member States agreed to set up four working groups that dealt with the analysis and debate of the main themes proposed by the Council. The four working groups, along with the fifth working group set up at the beginning of 2001, presented their reports by the end of 2001 (Working Group A - Facilitating exchange and dissemination of information, especially through new technologies, Working Group B - Improving training to increase skills in the tourism industry; Working Group C - Improving the quality of tourism products; Working group D - Promoting environmental protection and sustainable development in tourism; Working group E - Managing the impact and use of Information Technologies and Communications in the tourism sector), the recommendations of which have been integrated into the European Commission's Communication No.665 of 13.11.2001 entitled: Working together for the future of European tourism - COM (2001) 665 final / 13.11.2001).



Following the announcement of the measures in this press release, a new Commission communication entitled "Basic orientations for the sustainability of European tourism - COM (2003) 716 final / 21.11.2003" was drawn up, which outlined the need to achieve the consistency of the various EU policies and measures that affect the sustainability of tourism and the competitiveness of the sector.

The reform of the Lisbon Strategy in February 2005 meant focusing the EU's efforts on two major tasks, achieving stronger and more sustainable economic growth and creating more quality jobs. In this context, the European Commission published a new communique in 2006, entitled: A renewed tourism EU policy: towards a stronger partnership for European Tourism. – COM (2006) 134 final / 17.03.2006. In this release, the European Commission announced the development of a tourism document, Agenda 21 and based on the February 2007 report of the Sustainable Tourism Group, launched a new communique entitled Agenda for a sustainable and competitive European tourism. – COM (2007) 621 final / 19.10.2007. This communique outlines the objectives for the sustainability of European tourism and the challenges of it, the framework for action, the principles for achieving competitive and sustainable tourism, the role of stakeholders in the sector and the Commission.

The outlined principles are as follows:

- integrated and holistic approach - taking into account all the impacts of tourism during the planning of its development
- long-term planning - taking into account the needs of future generations, sustainability of development
- speed and pace of development tailored to the character, resources and needs of host communities and destinations
- involving all stakeholders in the decision-making process
- using the best knowledge available - sharing information on trends, impacts, skills needed for tourism throughout Europe
- risk minimization and management - precautionary principles, prevention of undesirable effects through preliminary assessment
- reflection of impacts on costs - the polluter pays principle, prices must reflect the real costs of consumption and production
- establishment and observance of limits on requesting the support capacity of places, reception destinations avoiding overcrowding and overloading
- to undertake a continuous monitoring of development, based on sustainability indicators and intervention in case of non-compliance.



All these principles are taken up and integrated into EU tourism policy, with the Commission setting its own role and sector stakeholders in joint action for the continued development of tourism. The Agenda for Sustainable and Competitive European Tourism outlines a voluntary and continuous process that involves governance at different levels (local authorities, destination management organizations, regions, Member States) and the European Commission, alongside business, tourists, education and research, trade associations, consumers, NGOs and international organizations. Implementing the Agenda is possible by respecting the principle of subsidiarity and bottom-up action, engaging local interests that have the competence and power to act in the voluntary implementation of the Agenda. Through its report, the Sustainable Tourism Group has created the framework of responsibilities and roles specific to the different stakeholders, and they are invited to accept them. The Agenda guides the Commission's future tourism activities and other policy areas that impact on tourism and its sustainability. It will cooperate with neighboring countries with the EU and support developing countries by boosting EU foreign direct investment and joint ventures in tourism. This document highlights four important aspects of the EC role:

1. mobilizing actors to produce and share knowledge

EC organizes a conference and conducts research to raise awareness on challenges such as facilitating travel for young people, the elderly and people with special needs, social and accessible tourism initiatives, and working methods applicable at local or regional level. The Tourism Learning Area Guide supports the involvement of knowledge-based institutions in the consensus-building framework aimed at improving the performance of SMEs and the human potential in the tourism sector at the destination level. EC focuses on knowledge-makers of sustainability and competitiveness, that public and private observers research universities and institutions, on the other hand, facilitates cooperation and promotion of formal and non-formal educational services. Encourages mobility through training and transnational placement, exchange of methods, training patterns and content, integrating the principles of sustainability into training programs. It supports alliances between different types of tourist destinations (eg rural, coastal, mountainous, urban) to share good and bad practices in destination management. Promoting good practice, eg. aspects of approaching seasonality, can contribute to the sustainability and competitiveness of tourist destinations. The European Tourism Forum organized annually provides a platform where all tourism stakeholders can exchange experiences and strengthen collaborations. In order to know better and faster how European tourism evolves, it is necessary to collect and deliver statistical and geographical data, information needed to monitor the challenges, key changes that are important for SMEs that are influenced by seasonality and employment. Within this action line, the EC also invites international organizations (WTO, UNEP, UNESCO, etc.) to contribute to the realization of the European Agenda.

2. promoting excellence destinations





EC continues to implement the European Destination of Excellence pilot project (EDEN project), which promotes European emerging destinations. Provides support for destinations where tourism development is done in such a way as to ensure social, cultural and environmental sustainability. Each year a special theme is chosen (eg rural destinations, ecotourism, etc.) and the winning destinations are facilitated for the creation of European networks allowing the transfer of successful models. Promoting these good practices also encourages other destinations in adopting sustainable tourism development models. The EC collaborates with the European Travel Commission (ETC) and the national tourism authorities in promoting destinations by launching the [www.visiteurope.com](http://www.visiteurope.com) portal.

### 3. the mobilization of EU financial instruments

The EC recognizes the need for financial support to foster the implementation of the Agenda. EU Member States and regions already have the possibility to fund projects through the European Regional Development Fund (see Axis 5 of the Regional Operational Program launched in Romania for the period 2014-2020). Sustainable and innovative tourism practices are labeled as priority criteria in the objectives of different European financial instruments and programs: the ERDF, the European Social Fund, the European Fund for Rural Development, the European Fisheries Fund, the Seventh Framework Program for Research, Technological Development and Demonstrations, the Leonardo da Vinci program, which introduces a specific measure for practitioners and young people in vocational education, as well as a project for the analysis and development of qualifications in the tourism sector. The Competitiveness and Innovation Framework Program supports the competitiveness of European SMEs. The EC will facilitate the dissemination of information on how to use EU financial instruments for tourism sector interests.

### 4. bringing sustainability and competitiveness to the forefront of Commission policies

European general policies, such as the environment, transport, employment, research, etc. can have a strong influence on the sustainability of tourism by helping to catch up with key challenges. The EC takes into account the specific needs of different territories. Mountain areas require a prospective rural development policy that integrates the conservation requirements of this particular natural environment as well as the sustainable well-being of its inhabitants, recognizing the need to protect the natural heritage of these often vulnerable areas. Rural areas invest in tourism in order to diversify their economy, for which economic growth, employment and sustainable development is needed. Rural areas offer attractive opportunities to live and work in these, having a particular role as reservoirs of natural resources and high-value landscapes. This involves ensuring coherence and synergies between Community policies and preserving the environment and preserving rural space. Tourism contributes to sustainable development and urban areas by improving business competitiveness, responding to social needs and protecting the cultural and natural environment. Urban destinations to be successful in all these areas require a





global approach based on the principles of sustainable development, recognized and supported by public policies at different levels, including the European one.

Another aspect of European tourism policy is the existence of the European Travel Commission ([www.etc-corporate.org](http://www.etc-corporate.org)), an international organization that gathers 39 countries (from the European Union: Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Cyprus, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Romania, United Kingdom, Czech Republic, Slovak Republic, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Hungary, other countries: Croatia, Georgia, Switzerland, Iceland, Monaco, Montenegro, Norway, San Marino, Serbia, Turkey, Ukraine) in Europe, specifically the national organizations / authorities in the respective countries. ETC is an organization responsible for promoting Europe as a tourist destination in markets outside Europe (North America and Latin America, Asia). The ETC's mission is to build the value of tourism for all European countries through cooperation in sharing good practice, market research and promotion. The ETC's main objectives are to promote Europe as an attractive tourist destination, to support NGO members in sharing knowledge and working together, to equip industry partners and others interested in informative materials and easily accessible statistics on European tourism. In this context, its activities include public relations, consumer advertising on select markets across the world (USA, Canada, Japan, Latin America, China), trade promotion, market research, professional development for members through seminars, exchange of experience, contacts with other relevant agencies (WTO, OECD, Tourism Unit of the General Directorate for Enterprise of the European Union Commission). Together with the useful information from the ETC publications, it is very important to participate in the articulation of the European policy in the field of sustainable development and increase the competitiveness of the tourism sector. Among the promotions, it is noted that the creation and management of the [www.visiteurope.com](http://www.visiteurope.com) website.

The Committee of the Regions (<http://cor.europa.eu>) is a political body of the European Union representing regional and local communities, which was created to give regional and local communities the opportunity to get involved in EU legislation drafting, Europe closer to its citizens and to encourage the application of the principle of subsidiarity and to create a meeting place where representatives of regions and cities can share their experience and be able to interact with the European institutions. Of the 27 national delegations, Romania has one with 15 members. The CR activity is carried out through the following specialized committees:

- COTER - Committee on Territorial Cohesion Policy
- ECOS - Committee on Economic and Social Policy
- DEVE - Committee on Sustainable Development
- EDUC - Committee on Culture, Education and Research
- CONST - Committee on Constitutional Affairs, European Governance and the Area of Freedom, Security and Justice



- RELEX - Commission for External Relations and Decentralized Cooperation
- CFAA - Committee on Financial and Administrative Affairs.

Among them, tourism is in the focus of the Commission for Sustainable Development (DEVE), which adopts specific opinions following the preparation of the opinion by a rapporteur. Within the EU, the Council, the Commission and the Parliament may ask the Committee of the Regions for an opinion when it considers it necessary. The Committee of the Regions may adopt own-initiative opinions at its own discretion. The Committee of the Regions may decide to adopt an opinion on areas where the European Economic and Social Committee (EESC) has been consulted and for areas where specific regional and local interests are involved. Along with the opinions given for the decision-making processes in the formulation of the tourism policy, it is worth mentioning the elaboration of studies and publications, of which the best known is the one entitled: Sustainable Tourism as a Factor Among European Regions. CoR Studies e-6/2006, Brussels. This document includes a series of recommendations on the formulation of tourism policies at different territorial levels based on sustainability and competitiveness requirements.

Another European organization, but not limited to the EU, is the Assembly of European Regions ([www.aer.eu](http://www.aer.eu)) - an independent network of European regions and the largest interregional cooperation organization across Europe, representing 270 regions from 33 countries and 13 interregional organizations. It should not be confused, but with the Committee of the Regions, an institution within the EU. AER's mission is to promote the principles of subsidiarity and regional democracy, to increase the political influence of the regions within the European institutions, to support the regions in the process of European enlargement and globalization, to facilitate cooperation throughout Europe.

In the AER structure, tourism falls within the competence of the Economic and Regional Development Committee, being one of the main issues, and the sustainable development of sustainable tourism is highlighted among the political priorities of 2009. There are concerns about the adoption of environmental quality standards in tourism (Assembly of European Regions (1998) Environmental Quality Standards in Tourism. Lillehammer – [www.aer.eu/en/publications/other\\_publications.html](http://www.aer.eu/en/publications/other_publications.html)) as well as for contributing to the definition of guidelines for promoting sustainable tourism in cooperation with other European bodies and institutions. ARE's tourist network has also been set up with its own Internet information and popularization portal (<http://www.aertourismnetwork.org/home.html>). On the other hand, the ARE work group for sustainable tourism has been formed.

Regions have to implement sustainable / sustainable policies for economic, social and environmental development for their communities. More recently, tourism is recognized as an invaluable means of appreciating local initiatives and eco-development. All these initiatives contribute to the development of communities and can attract visitors bringing economic growth and jobs, so AER is concerned with supporting members in building sustainable tourism practices, developing 4 initiatives to this end:



- AER web portal for sustainable tourism, which aims at promoting effective sustainable tourism quality regional strategies
- partnering with the International Social Tourism Bureau by signing a partnership agreement that allows both organizations to co-operate with the development of long-term projects
- overseeing tourism sustainability through mentoring visits by international experts to assess a region's tourism policy. This helps regional authorities improve their performance by gaining experience from the example of others.
- supporting the INTERREG IVC project proposal entitled "Peer Reviews for Sustainable Eco-Regions via Europe" where ARE is the project leader from a consortium of 14 partners, including Alba County in the Center region.

As a member of the AER, Harghita County, there are opportunities to engage in international partnerships, contributing to the transfer of knowledge, the adoption of best practices in the field of sustainable and competitive tourism policy.

Besides the mentioned bodies of course, there are other forms of international cooperation, both for governmental bodies, as well as for the actors of public and private institutions, for NGOs, and especially for the various businesses of the tourism sector (hoteliers, spa tourism, conferences, ecotourism, rural tourism, package tour operators, guides, etc.), we have only highlighted what we think can best shape public-private relations in tourism policy.

Information on the latest statistics on tourism in the European Union (EU). Data extracted in December 2017. Most recent data: Eurostat additional information, Main Tables and Database. The next update of the article: July 2019 [https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=Tourism\\_statistics/en&oldid=427921](https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=Tourism_statistics/en&oldid=427921) Tourism plays an important role in the EU due to its economic and employment potential work, as well as due to its social and environmental implications. Tourism statistics are used to monitor not only EU tourism policies but also EU regional policy and its sustainable development policy.

In 2014, one in ten enterprises in the non-financial sectors of the European economy belonged to the tourism sector. In these 2.3 million enterprises, approximately 12.3 million people were employed. Employees of businesses in tourism related sectors accounted for 9.1% of persons employed in the total non-financial sectors of the economy and 21.5% of persons employed in the services sector. Tourism sector revenues in total turnover and value added at cost factors were relatively lower, the tourism sectors accounting for 3.7% of turnover and 5.6% of the added value of the non-financial sectors of the economy.

### **Main statistical results**

One-third of all EU-28 accommodation places are concentrated in France and Italy. It is estimated that more than 608 thousand tourist accommodation establishments were active in the EU-28 in 2016 and that together they have provided more than 31 million accommodation places



(see Table 1). Almost one third (32.2%) of all EU-28 accommodation places were concentrated in only two of the EU Member States, namely France (5.1 million accommodation places) and Italy (4.9 million places of accommodation), followed by the United Kingdom, Spain and Germany.

**Table no.1.** Accommodation structures in 2016 at European level

# Tourist accommodation establishments, 2016

	Number of establishments (units)	Number of bed places (thousands)	Nights spent by residents and non-residents (millions)
<b>EU-28 (*)</b>	<b>608 400</b>	<b>31 319</b>	<b>2 873.0</b>
Belgium	8 210	368	36.9
Bulgaria	3 331	328	25.2
Czech Republic	9 168	717	49.7
Denmark	1 136	418	31.9
Germany	50 152	3 336	388.9
Estonia	1 454	59	6.2
Ireland	3 145	200	31.1
Greece	34 665	1 241	101.9
Spain	48 701	3 516	455.0
France	30 047	5 134	404.8
Croatia	83 233	987	77.8
Italy	178 449	4 943	402.9
Cyprus	785	84	15.3
Latvia	759	47	4.4
Lithuania	2 686	77	7.0
Luxembourg	432	64	3.0
Hungary	4 436	446	29.3
Malta	184	43	9.0
Netherlands	8 950	1 370	106.2
Austria	20 619	1 001	118.0
Poland	10 509	749	79.4
Portugal	4 171	568	66.0
Romania	7 028	326	25.3
Slovenia	3 260	113	11.1
Slovakia	2 755	184	13.9
Finland	1 368	253	20.3
Sweden	4 187	802	57.2
United Kingdom (†)	84 580	3 944	295.6
Iceland	1 111	44	7.8
Liechtenstein	91	2	0.1
Norway (‡)	2 555	255	33.0
Switzerland	41 319	681	50.4
Montenegro	-	-	11.3
Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (¶)	441	43	1.7
Serbia (¶)(§)	987	102	6.6
Turkey (¶)	-	-	133.9

(\*) Estimate made for the purpose of this publication, based on available data.

(†) Nights spent by residents and non-residents estimated using monthly data.

(‡) Number of establishments and bed places: 2015.

(¶) Number of establishments and bed places: 2014.

(§) Nights spent by residents and non-residents: 2015.

Source: Eurostat (online data codes: tour\_cap\_nat and tour\_occ\_ninat)

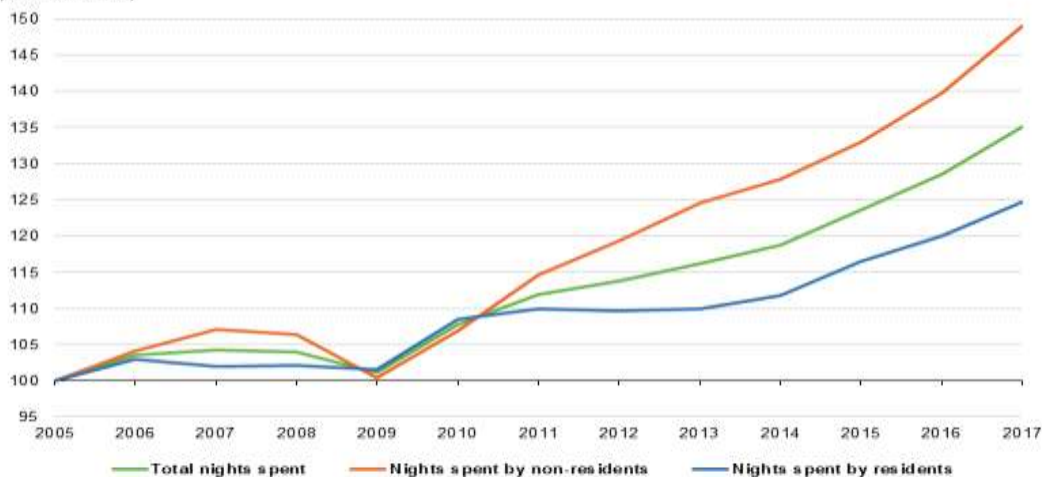
Source: Eurostat ([tour\\_cap\\_nat](#)) and ([tour\\_occ\\_ninat](#))

In recent years, the number of nights spent in tourist accommodation structures has generally been on the upward trend.

**Figure no. 1** - Trends in nights spent in tourist accommodation establishments within the EU-28, 2005-2016 (index 2005=100)

### Trends in nights spent at EU-28 tourist accommodation establishments, EU-28, 2005-2016

(index 2005=100)



Note: EU-28 aggregate estimated for the purpose of this publication, using the latest available data for the EU Member States. Because of methodological improvements for some Member States data from 2012 onwards are not entirely comparable with previous years (this can affect the estimation of the EU-28 aggregate).

Source: Eurostat (online data code: tour\_occ\_ninat)

eurostat

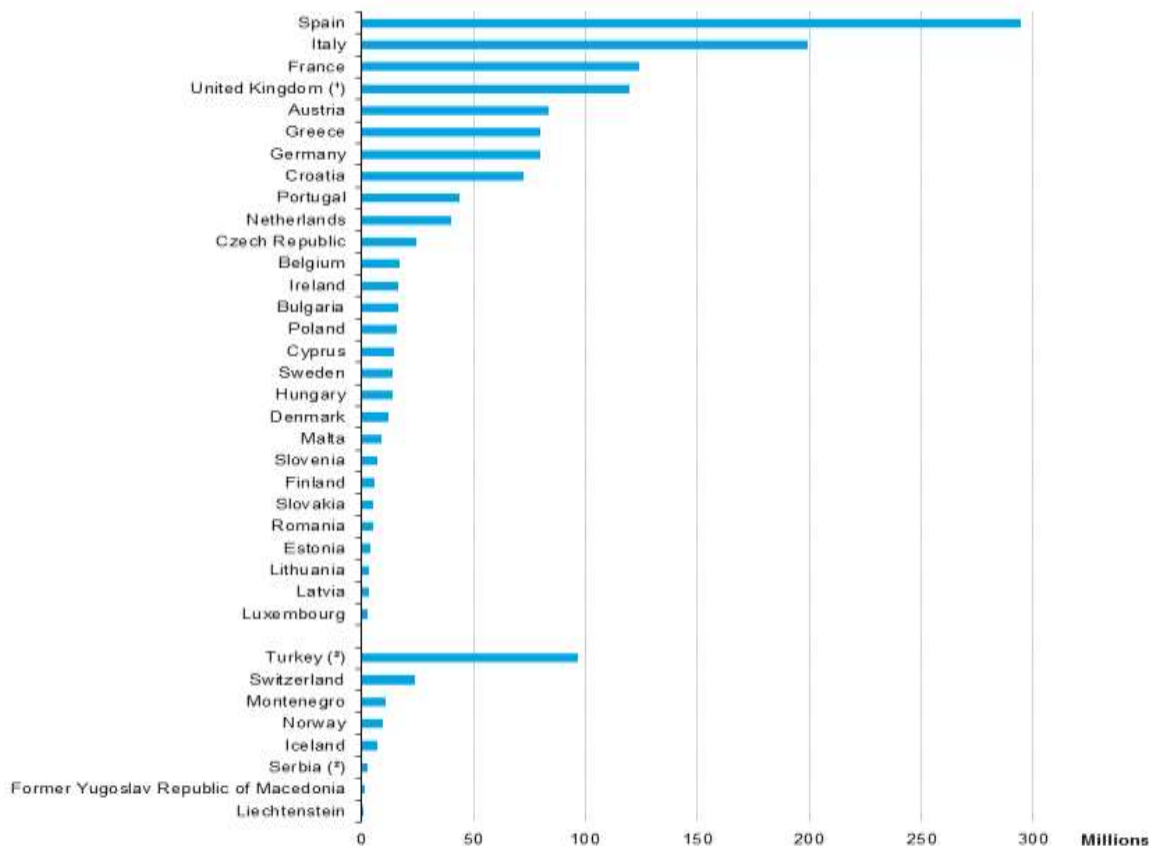
Source: Eurostat ([tour\\_occ\\_ninat](#))

However, there was a short-term decrease in the number of nights spent in tourist accommodation establishments in 2008 and 2009 as a result of the economic and financial crisis: the number of tourist nights in the EU-28 decreased by 0.6% in 2008 and with another 2.0% in 2009. However, in 2010, the number of nights recovered and reached a peak of 2.9 billion nights in 2016, up 3.0% compared to 2015.

**More than half (55.7%) of the total number of nights spent by non-residents in the EU-28 were spent in Spain, Italy, France and the United Kingdom**

In 2016, Spain was the main tourist destination in the EU for non-residents (people traveling outside their country), with 295 million nights spent in tourist accommodation establishments, accounting for 22.2% of the EU-28 total see Figure 2 and Figure 3).

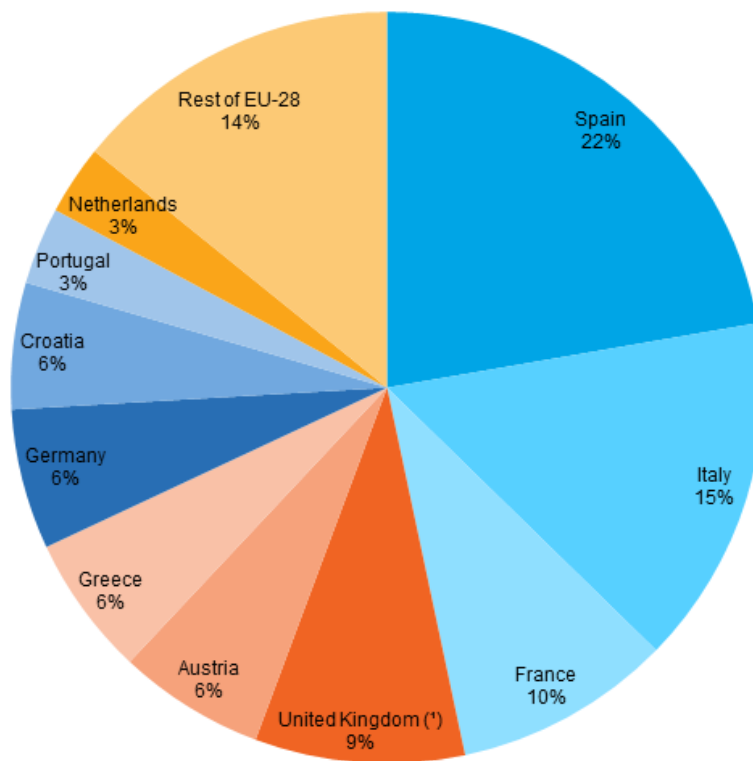
**Figure no. 2 - Tourist Destinations - nights spent in tourist accommodation establishments, 2016 (Million Nights spent in that country by non-residents)**



(\*) Estimated using monthly data.  
 (\*) 2015 data.

Source: Eurostat ([tour\\_occ\\_ninat](#))

**Figure no. 3** - Percentage of nights spent in tourist accommodation facilities in EU-28 by tourists traveling outside their country of residence, 2016 (% of all nights spent in EU-28 tourist accommodation establishments)



Note: EU-28 estimate made for the purpose of this publication, based on available data.  
 (\*) Number of nights spent estimated using monthly data.

Source: Eurostat ([tour\\_occ\\_ninat](#))

Of these 295 million nights spent in Spain, over 7 out of 10 concentrated in three regions: the Canary Islands, the Balearic Islands and Catalonia.

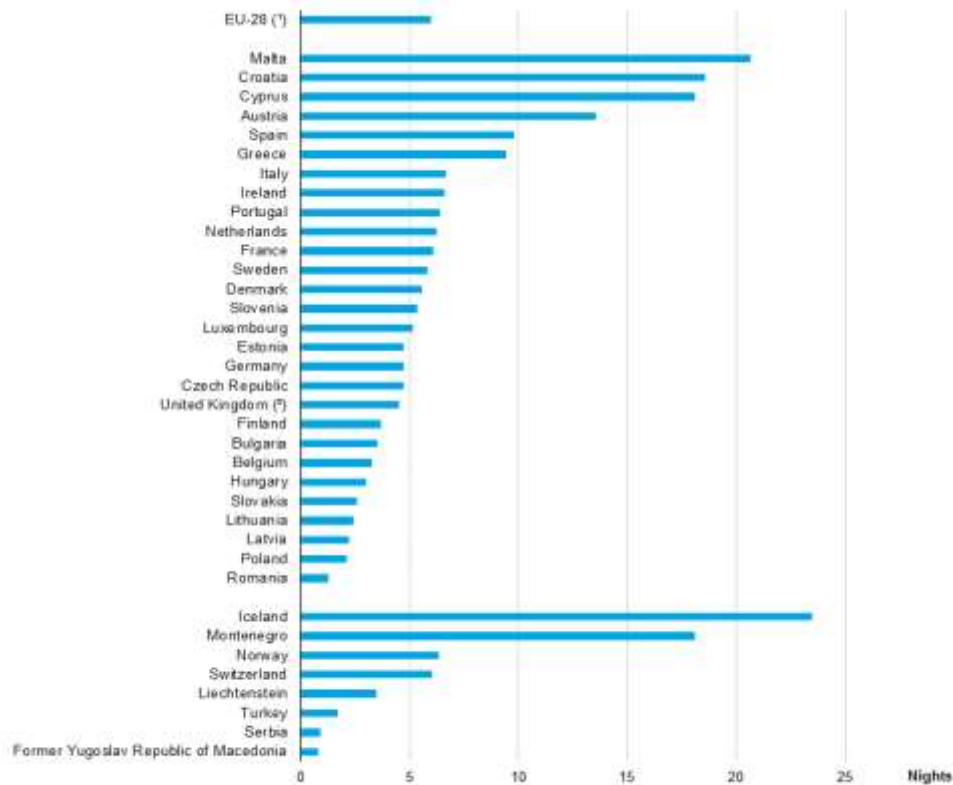
At the EU level, the top four most popular destinations for non-residents were Spain, Italy (199 million nights), France (124 million nights) and the United Kingdom (119 million nights, estimate based on monthly data for 2016), which together accounted for more than half (55.7%) of the total number of nights spent by non-residents in the EU-28. The least sought-after destinations were Luxembourg and Latvia; for the interpretation of these figures, account should be taken of the size of those Member States.

The number of nights spent (for residents and non-residents) can be analyzed in perspective by reference to the demographic dimension of each country, thus achieving an indicator of tourism intensity. According to this calculation, in 2016, Mediterranean destinations such as Malta, Croatia and Cyprus, as well as Austrian and Alpine destinations represented the



preferred tourist destinations in the EU-28 (see Figure 4); in terms of tourist intensity, Iceland and Montenegro have also been popular destinations.

**Figure no. 4 - Tourist intensity, 2016 (nights spent by residents and non-residents in tourist accommodation structures per capita)**



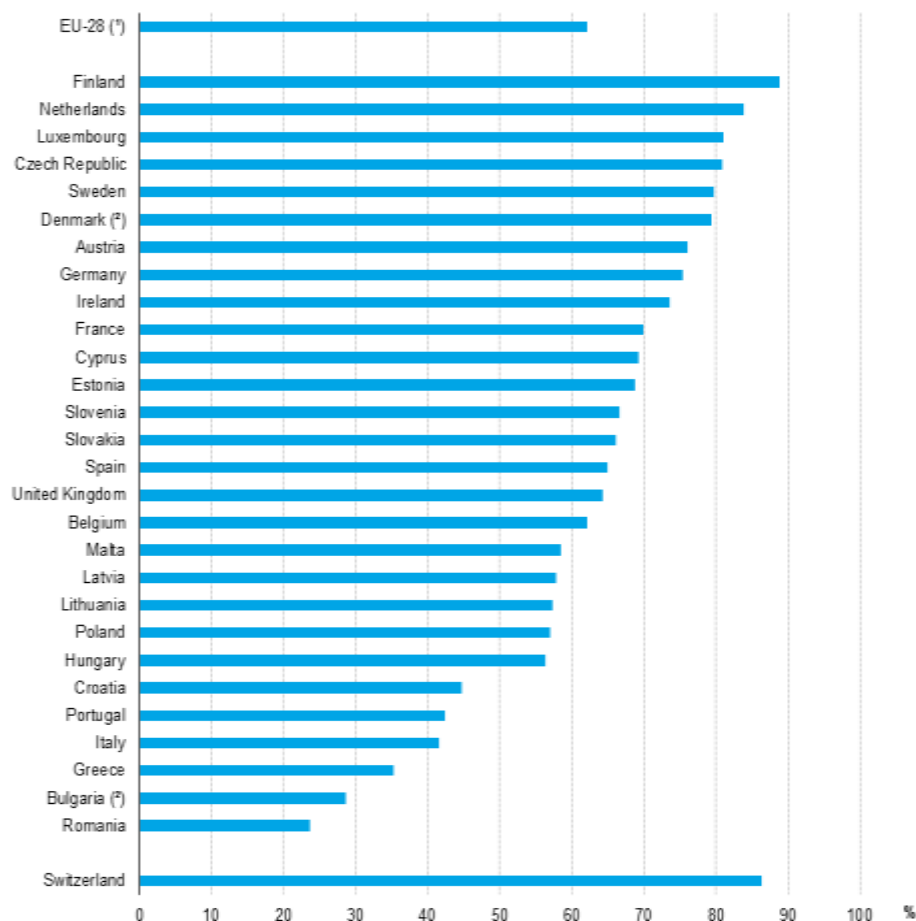
(\*) Estimate made for the purpose of this publication, based on available data.  
 (†) Number of nights spent estimated using monthly data.

Source: Eurostat ([tour\\_occ\\_ninat](#))

### 62% of EU residents participated in tourism, making 1.2 billion travels

It is estimated that 62.1% of the EU-28 population aged at least 15 years participated in personal tourism activities in 2016, that is, these people had at least one personal tourist trip during the year. Also, large differences can be observed between EU Member States as the participation rate ranged from 23.7% in Romania to 88.9% in Finland (see Figure 5).

**Figure no. 5 - Percentage of the population participating in tourism, 2016 (% of the population aged at least 15 years)**



(\*) Estimate made for the purpose of this publication, using the latest available data for the EU Member States.  
 (†) 2015.

Source: Eurostat ([tour\\_dem\\_tttot](#))

Residents (aged at least 15 years) in the EU-28 made about 1.2 billion touristic trips in 2016 for personal or business purposes. Of the total number of trips made, the majority (58.0%) were short trips (see Table 2), while three-quarters (74.4%) of the total trips were domestic destinations, the rest being abroad.

**Table no. 2.** Tourist trips of residents (aged 15 or over), 2016

	Number of trips (thousands)			Breakdown of all trips by destination and duration (%)				Share of the population (aged 15+) taking part in tourism trips for personal purposes (%)
	All trips	Short trips (1–3 nights)	Long trips (4+ nights)	Short domestic trips (1–3 nights)	Long domestic trips (4+ nights)	Short outbound trips (1–3 nights)	Long outbound trips (4+ nights)	
EU-28 (*)	1 210 105	702 030	508 075	50.7	23.7	7.3	18.3	62.1
Belgium	16 033	6 367	9 666	11.2	7.1	28.5	53.2	62.0
Bulgaria (*)	3 589	1 867	1 722	46.8	36.4	5.2	11.5	28.6
Czech Republic	33 066	20 193	12 873	56.1	25.7	5.0	13.3	80.8
Denmark (*)	33 290	24 560	8 730	62.5	10.8	11.3	15.5	79.3
Germany	255 648	134 491	121 157	43.9	20.5	8.7	26.9	75.4
Estonia	4 593	3 634	959	64.6	6.2	14.5	14.7	68.7
Ireland	13 503	8 016	5 487	43.9	8.7	15.5	31.9	73.6
Greece	5 559	1 616	3 943	26.9	60.7	2.1	10.2	35.2
Spain	145 473	102 292	43 182	67.4	23.5	3.0	6.2	65.0
France	196 010	103 358	92 653	49.6	38.4	3.2	8.8	69.9
Croatia	4 541	2 514	2 027	35.0	29.5	20.4	15.2	44.6
Italy	57 586	30 441	27 144	47.3	34.5	5.5	12.6	41.6
Cyprus	2 635	1 432	1 204	42.8	9.3	11.5	36.3	69.3
Latvia	4 321	3 387	934	64.0	7.0	14.4	14.6	57.7
Lithuania	4 507	2 794	1 713	47.1	9.6	14.9	28.4	57.3
Luxembourg	1 607	619	989	0.8(u)	(u)	37.7	61.1	80.9
Hungary	18 099	12 204	5 895	49.6	16.7	17.9	15.8	56.3
Malta	704	339	365	29.6	4.6	18.5	47.3	58.5
Netherlands	42 657	21 574	21 084	40.1	17.3	10.4	32.1	83.8
Austria	23 561	12 980	10 581	36.1	14.9	19.0	30.0	76.0
Poland	54 887	28 744	26 143	48.3	31.1	4.0	16.5	57.0
Portugal (*)	15 785	10 889	4 895	65.4	24.2	3.6	6.8	42.4
Romania	17 305	10 743	6 562	61.2	32.7	0.8	5.3	23.7
Slovenia	4 573	2 673	1 900	29.3	8.3	29.1	33.2	66.6
Slovakia	9 823	6 118	3 705	50.0	18.5	12.3	19.2	66.2
Finland	38 953	28 881	10 071	61.8	14.7	12.3	11.2	88.9
Sweden	42 383	29 328	13 055	61.5	17.5	7.7	13.3	79.8
United Kingdom (*)	159 414	89 976	69 438	49.9	17.3	6.6	26.2	64.3
Switzerland	20 234	8 689	11 545	20.7	10.8	22.3	46.2	86.3

(\*) Estimate made for the purpose of this publication, using the latest available data for the EU Member States.

(\*) Share of the population (aged 15+) taking part in tourism trips for personal purposes: 2015.

(\*) Number of trips: 2015.

(\*) Number of trips: 2013.

Source: Eurostat ([tour\\_dem\\_tttot](#)) and ([tour\\_dem\\_totot](#))

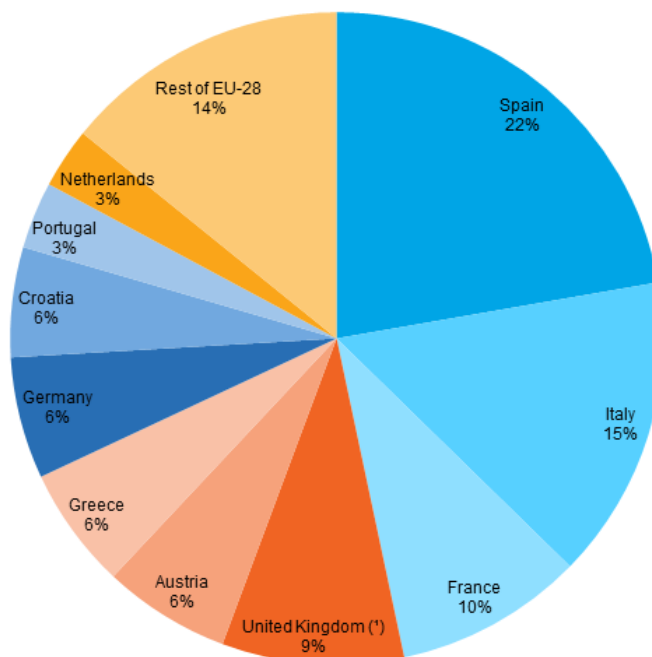
In some EU Member States, more than half of the total number of tourist trips made in 2016 were to destinations abroad; these countries are Luxembourg, Belgium, Malta and Slovenia (as well as Switzerland). On the other hand, less than 10% of the trips made by residents in Romania and Spain were abroad. These figures seem to be influenced both by the size of the Member State and by its geographical location (for residents of smaller countries and residents of countries in northern Europe, there has been a stronger trend of traveling abroad) .

EU residents have preferred to travel in the summer months, with nearly one in four trips taking place in July or August.

**More than half of the total number of nights spent abroad by EU-28 residents targeted residents in Germany and the United Kingdom**

Estimates indicate that EU-28 residents spent 2.6 billion nights on holiday abroad in 2016 (see Figure 6).

**Figure no. 6** - Percentage of nights spent abroad by Europeans, depending on the country of residence of the tourist, 2016 (% of nights spent abroad by EU-28 residents)



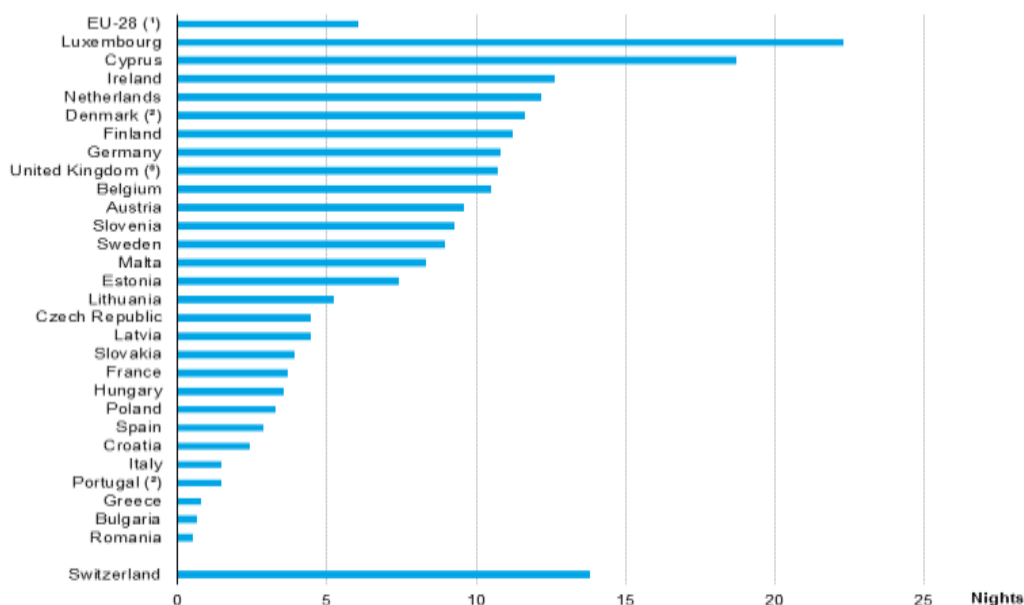
Note: EU-28 estimate made for the purpose of this publication, based on available data.  
 (\*) Number of nights spent estimated using monthly data.

Source: Eurostat ([tour\\_dem\\_tntot](#))

German residents spent 771 million nights on trips outside Germany in 2016 and UK residents spent 564 million nights abroad (data for the United Kingdom since 2013); residents of these two EU Member States accounted for more than half (51.3%) of the total number of nights spent abroad by EU-28 residents.

Taking into account the size of a country's population, Luxembourg was the EU Member State whose residents spent most of the night abroad per capita (an average of 22.3 nights in 2016), followed by Cyprus (18.7 nights). At the other end of the spectrum, residents of Romania, Bulgaria and Greece spent on average less than one night abroad in 2016 (see Figure 7).

**Figure no. 7** - Country of origin for travel abroad, 2016 (average night spent per capita at least 15 years old)



(\*) Estimate made for the purpose of this publication, using the latest available data for the EU Member States.

(\*) 2015.

(\*) 2013.

Source: Eurostat ([tour\\_dem\\_tntot](#)) and ([demo\\_pjanbroad](#))

### German residents spent the most on international travel

The economic importance of international tourism can be measured by analyzing the proportion of revenue generated by international travel relative to GDP; these data come from balance-of-payment statistics and include both business trips and leisure trips. In 2016, the EU Member States with the highest GDP shares of tourism revenues were Croatia (18.6%), Cyprus (13.7%) and Malta (13.2%), the figures confirming the importance of tourism for tourism these countries (see Table 3).

**Table no. 3.** Income and expenditure generated by balance-of-payments travel, 2011-2016

Travel receipts and expenditure in balance of payments, 2011–2016

	Receipts			Expenditure			Balance (million EUR) 2016
	(million EUR) 2011	(million EUR) 2016	Relative to GDP 2016 (%)	(million EUR) 2011	(million EUR) 2016	Relative to GDP 2016 (%)	
EU-28 (*)	86 767	112 299	0.8	87 031	89 054	0.7	13 246
Belgium	9 154	10 492	2.5	14 804	17 514	4.2	-7 122
Bulgaria	2 609	3 285	6.8	647	1 227	2.5	2 058
Czech Republic	5 822	5 703	3.2	3 435	4 447	2.5	1 256
Denmark	4 887	6 373	2.3	7 209	8 283	3.0	-1 910
Germany	27 930	33 818	1.1	61 685	72 085	2.3	-38 267
Estonia	897	1 345	6.4	579	1 048	5.0	297
Ireland	3 010	4 685	1.7	4 817	5 619	2.0	-934
Greece	10 505	13 207	7.6	2 266	2 006	1.2	11 201
Spain	44 711	54 650	4.9	12 483	17 437	1.6	37 223
France	39 334	38 301	1.7	32 029	36 464	1.6	1 837
Croatia	6 608	8 627	18.6	832	853	1.8	7 774
Italy	30 881	36 358	2.2	20 584	22 547	1.3	13 811
Cyprus	1 835	2 489	13.7	942	1 061	5.9	1 428
Latvia	553	783	3.1	549	628	2.5	155
Lithuania	943	1 090	2.8	616	913	2.4	177
Luxembourg	3 497	3 669	6.9	2 715	2 545	4.8	1 124
Hungary	4 243	5 121	4.5	1 781	1 954	1.7	3 167
Malta	911	1 307	13.2	239	369	3.7	938
Netherlands	9 230	12 697	1.8	14 836	16 336	2.3	-3 639
Austria	14 267	17 400	4.9	7 531	8 799	2.5	8 601
Poland	7 580	9 908	2.3	6 055	7 204	1.7	2 704
Portugal	8 146	12 680	6.8	2 974	3 849	2.1	8 831
Romania	1 019	1 568	0.9	1 408	1 930	1.1	-362
Slovenia	1 974	2 190	5.4	818	854	2.1	1 337
Slovakia	1 745	2 483	3.1	1 567	2 023	2.5	460
Finland	2 745	2 467	1.1	3 502	4 692	2.2	-2 225
Sweden	7 316	11 407	2.5	10 048	13 083	2.8	-1 676
United Kingdom	27 610	37 413	1.6	40 055	58 396	2.4	-20 983
Iceland	-	2 173	11.9	-	1 146	6.3	1 027
Switzerland	12 359	14 692	2.4	9 884	14 826	2.5	-234
Montenegro	-	835	-	-	60	-	775
Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia	172	253	2.6	81	183	1.7	90
Albania	-	1 528	14.2	-	1 139	10.6	389
Serbia	710	1 040	3.0	791	1 085	3.1	-45
Turkey	17 927	16 911	2.2	3 509	4 312	0.6	12 599
Kosovo (*)	532	690	11.5	157	142	2.4	548

(\*) Extra EU-28 flows.

(\*) This designation is without prejudice to positions on status, and is in line with UNSCR 1244/1999 and the ICJ Opinion on the Kosovo declaration of independence.

Source: Eurostat (online data codes: bop\_c6\_q, bop\_eu6\_q and nama\_10\_gdp)

Source: Eurostat ([bop\\_c6\\_q](#)), ([bop\\_eu6\\_q](#)) and ([nama\\_10\\_gdp](#))

In absolute terms, the highest revenues from international tourism in 2016 were recorded in Spain (EUR 54.7 billion), France (EUR 38.3 billion) and the United Kingdom (37.4 billion), followed by Italy (36, 4 billion) and Germany (33.8 billion).

Germany recorded the highest level of spending on international tourism, totaling EUR 72.1 billion in 2016. Germany was followed by the United Kingdom (EUR 58.4 billion) and France (EUR 36.5 billion).

Spain was the EU Member State with the highest net income in tourism in 2016 (EUR 37.2 billion), while Germany had the largest deficit (-38.3 billion).

### Sources and availability of data

In a statistical context, tourism refers to the activity of visitors who travel to a destination outside their usual environment for less than a year. Such travel can be done for any major reason, including business, pleasure or other personal reasons, other than employment by a resident employer, household or business in the place visited.

In July 2011, the European Parliament and the Council of the European Union adopted the new Regulation (EU) 692/2011 on European statistics on tourism and repealing Council



Directive 95/57 / EC; it entered into force for the reference year 2012 and requires EU Member States to provide on a regular basis a set of comparable statistics on tourism.

Tourism statistics in the EU comprise two main components: on the one hand, statistics on the capacity and occupancy of collective tourist accommodation establishments; on the other hand, statistics on tourism demand. In most EU Member States, the statistics on the first component are collected through the data provided by the accommodation units during the surveys, while statistics on the second component are mainly collected through border surveys or polls in households.

The statistics on the capacity of collective tourist accommodation establishments include the number of structures, the number of rooms and the number of seats. These statistics are available by type of structure or region and are produced annually. The statistics on the occupancy of collective tourist accommodation establishments refer to the number of arrivals (in accommodation establishments) and to the number of nights spent by residents and non-residents, the data being broken down by type of structure or region; annual and monthly statistical series are available. Statistics on the use of rooms and accommodation (occupancy grades) are also produced.

Tourist demand statistics are collected in relation to the number of tourist trips made (and the number of nights spent within them), broken down by:

- country of destination;
- the purpose of the trip;
- length of stay;
- type of accommodation;
- month of departure;
- the mode of transport;
- costs.

The data is also analyzed according to the socio-demographic characteristics of the tourist:

- sex;
- age group;
- level of education graduated (optional);
- Household income (optional);
- activity status (optional).

Until 2013, tourism statistics were limited to a minimum stay of one night; starting with the 2014 reference year, European official statistics also includes one-day visits abroad. These





data will soon be analyzed in a new article on Statistics Explained ([https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=Main\\_Page](https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=Main_Page)).

To study tourism, it is possible to use data from a range of other official sources. These statistics include:

- Business Structured Statistics (BSS) and Short-Term Business Statistics (STBS) that can be used to provide additional information on tourism flows and the economic performance of certain sectors related to tourism;
- data on employment in the tourist accommodation sector of the Labor Force Survey (LFS), broken down by working time (full-time / part-time), professional status, age, level of education, gender, continuity and length of service at the same employer (annual and quarterly data);
- personal income and expenditure data generated by balance-of-payments travelers, transport statistics (eg passenger air transport).

### **Context**

According to a World Tourism Organization publication (UNWTO) entitled "Tourism highlights" (in English), the EU is a major tourist destination, with five of its member states being among the top ten destinations in the world in 2015. Tourism has the potential to contribute to employment and economic growth, as well as to the development of rural, peripheral or less developed areas. In view of these characteristics, reliable and harmonized statistics are needed in this area as well as in the wider context of regional policy and sustainable development policy.

Tourism can play a significant role in the development of European regions. Infrastructure created for tourism purposes contributes to local development, and jobs created or maintained can help to offset industrial or rural decline. Sustainable tourism implies the protection and development of cultural and natural heritage, from art to local gastronomy or biodiversity conservation.

In 2006, the European Commission adopted a Communication entitled "A new EU tourism policy: Strengthening the partnership for tourism in Europe" (COM (2006) 134 final). This document addressed a number of challenges that will influence tourism in the coming years, including demographic aging in Europe, increasing external competition, consumer demand for more specialized tourism and the need to move to more sustainable and environmentally friendly practices in the field of tourism. The document argued that a more competitive tourism offer and sustainable destinations would help increase tourists' satisfaction and strengthen Europe's position at the top of the world's tourist destinations. This Communication was followed in October 2007 by another Communication entitled "A Sustainable and Competitive European Tourism Agenda" (COM (2007) 621 final), which proposed actions on sustainable destination management, the integration of concerns in terms of sustainability in the business environment and awareness of the sustainability of tourists.





The Treaty of Lisbon recognized the importance of tourism, shaping a specific EU competence in this area and enabling qualified majority decision-making. One Treaty article states that the EU "complements the action of Member States in the tourism sector, in particular by promoting the competitiveness of Union enterprises in the sector". "Europe, the world's favorite tourist destination - a new political framework for European tourism" (COM (2010) 352 final) was adopted by the European Commission in June 2010. This Communication aims to encourage a coordinated approach to initiatives related tourism and defined a new framework for action to enhance the competitiveness of tourism and its potential for sustainable growth. The Communication proposed a series of European or multinational initiatives - including a strengthening of the socio-economic knowledge base in the tourism sector - in order to achieve these objectives.

Within this chapter were analyzed several strategies regarding tourism at national / regional and / or local level, implemented or in the process of implementation in the European countries, the most of the measures being developed in spite of the documents and the imitation of their adaptation at the level of Harghita County.

#### **a. Turkey**

For Turkey, the *Tourism Strategy of Turkey - 2023*, developed by the Ministry of Culture and Tourism in Turkey in 2007, focused on the development of the tourism sector in the country through the coherent planning of the strategy for a period of 26 years. The document targets 16 tourism sub-domains and proposes different strategies and / or measures to improve the existing situation. In the analysis, there will be those measures, which have had positive effects and can be implemented in another environment, namely in Harghita County.

**Subchapter 3.1. Planning**<sup>1</sup> highlights the importance of targeted planning, tailored to existing needs. Among the measures identified in this subchapter, which can generate effects implemented in another location, namely Harghita County, are the following<sup>2</sup>:

- Delimitation of areas according to tourism potential - this measure aims at cooperation between neighboring localities, which have different resources, different tourism potential or common needs. Thus, smaller localities, ie less than 2,000 inhabitants, can sign an agreement (between 4-6 localities), which assumes that in the coming years they will work together in the field of tourism, organizing events together, thus being of larger scale; to carry out its activities in line with existing resources and to transfer necessary resources in some cases; manage projects and programs together, thus contributing to the prosperity of each participant, providing support in the necessary situations.

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<sup>1</sup> *Tourism Strategy of Turkey - 2023*, Ministry of Culture and Tourism, Ankara, 2007, pp. 6 - 9, <http://www.kultur.gov.tr/Eklenti/43537,turkeytourismstrategy2023pdf.pdf?0& tag1=796689BB12A540BE0672E65E48D10C07D6DAE291>, accessed on 09.05.2019.

<sup>2</sup> These analyzes include the mentioned measure, the applications, the adjustments, and the needs identified at the Harghita County level.



At Harghita County level, this measure would help to balance existing resources, better collaboration between localities and better management of events and programs (in case of events there is an option to cover all the year with different events, avoiding the dead season, and in the case of projects, mutual support would contribute to sustainable development) due to targeted planning.

- Investments in organizations and entities relevant to the field - this measure aims at generating a community in which there are factors that centralize needs, opportunities, support and organize information sessions, workshops, stakeholder meetings, helping to solve old or new issues.

At Harghita County level, this measure could target NGOs that are active or contributing to this area (even through the creation of communication between entrepreneurs, authorities and civil society), namely Tourist Information Offices / Centers (which could function as a semi-formal center, providing technical support to both authorities and contractors and civil society).

- Rehabilitation and popularization of monuments - this measure refers to investments and projects, where historical, cultural, etc. monuments are to be included again in the tourist circuit.

There are several such monuments in Harghita County, which have deteriorated over time, which has contributed to their abandonment. Their rehabilitation would mean a more diversified program and more opportunities in organizing events, traditions, etc.

- Following the delimitation according to tourism potential, organizations and entities interested in tourism, together with civil society, can prioritize their projects according to the identified needs.

In the case of Harghita County, in the vast majority of cases, infrastructure improvement is needed. With targeted planning, taking into account existing resources, prioritizing improvements to roads, sewerage network, gas network, sewer network, the experiences of other projects, such as culture, history, art, etc. can be improved.

**Subchapter 3.2. Investments<sup>3</sup>** detail certain measures, which contribute to the increase of the number of investments made, including those from different funds. Among these, which responds to a problem that is deeply present both in Romania and in Harghita County, is the ***Removal of bureaucratic barriers***.

The elimination of bureaucratic barriers can not be achieved in a very short period of time, with both insurance objectives and the need for certain cases. However, the very long

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<sup>3</sup> Tourism Strategy of Turkey - 2023, Ministry of Culture & Tourism, Ankara, 2007, pp. 9 - 10, [http://www.kultur.gov.tr/Eklenti/43537,turkeytourismstrategy2023pdf.pdf?0&\\_tag1=796689BB12A540BE0672E65E48D10C07D6DAE291](http://www.kultur.gov.tr/Eklenti/43537,turkeytourismstrategy2023pdf.pdf?0&_tag1=796689BB12A540BE0672E65E48D10C07D6DAE291), accessed on 09.05.2019.



deadlines, the many necessary documents and form rules slow down both investment advancement and development. Since this problem can not be eliminated, we need to focus on better management. There is need for assistance with processes and procedures that target investment, civil society being disadvantaged in this regard, not having a generic, centralizing source of information.

**Subchapter 3.4. Domestic tourism**<sup>4</sup> focuses on measures that contribute to the development of domestic tourism, actively involving the citizens of the country. Among the measures identified in this subchapter, those that can be implemented in Harghita County include:

- Promoting at national level - Information society is essential for an effective tourism strategy. In a century of technology, promotion does not mean flyers and brochures, but a bilateral communication that takes into account the ideas and needs of both demand and supply.

The promotion of the County of Harghita at the moment is a diversified one. There are several sites, apps and even vlogs that are meant to inform the country's population on different opportunities, from holidays to cultural, social events, etc. One of the most important sources of promotion and information is the site, the Visit Harghita application, which provides useful information about the most important news and events, accommodation opportunities, places to visit, restaurants, activities, etc., as well as about culture and local legends. This way is excellent to capture the attention of young adults up to 35 years of age, but for effective communication with a target group over 35 years old, traditional promotion methods are also needed, either through brochures and information books provided by travel agencies, or by publishing a thematic newspaper distributed throughout the country.

## **b. Italy**

*The Ministry of Cultural Heritage and Tourism Activity* in Italy has developed a strategy in 2016 to develop tourism in the country, called the *Strategic Tourism Plan for the period 2017-2022*<sup>5</sup>. This document wanted to be an example for policies, programs, projects and decisions at national (partly international), regional and local level.

The subchapter "*Italy on the World Scene*" highlights the successes of international tourism and its effects on the country's economy. The proposed measures aim at the benefit of historical culture and unique traditions, while trying to provide solutions to the existing problems at the country level, which have negative consequences on tourism.

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<sup>4</sup> **Tourism Strategy of Turkey - 2023**, Ministry of Culture & Tourism, Ankara, 2007, pp. 15 - 17, [http://www.kultur.gov.tr/Eklenti/43537,turkeytourismstrategy2023pdf.pdf?0&\\_tag1=796689BB12A540BE0672E65E48D10C07D6DAE291](http://www.kultur.gov.tr/Eklenti/43537,turkeytourismstrategy2023pdf.pdf?0&_tag1=796689BB12A540BE0672E65E48D10C07D6DAE291), accessed on 09.05.2019.

<sup>5</sup> **Strategic Plan for Tourism 2017 - 2022**, Ministero dei beni e delle attività culturali e del turismo, 2016 <http://www.italia.it/en/home.html>, accessed on 07.05.2019.



In this subchapter, the issue of infrastructure and transport is described, many important tourist cities being affected by them. **Context** subsection shows that because tourists spend more time on the roads (either because of poor connectivity or because of road conditions, etc.), they tend to organize shorter holidays, from 2001 to 2015, the average stay of tourists decreased from 4.1 days to 3.6 days. Thus, the strategy takes into account Italy's *forte* point, namely culture, and proposes the following:

- creating links between cities with high tourist potential to reduce road time, improve access to various monuments (buses, trains, subways, etc.).

This measure may also be a starting point for Harghita County because the accessibility of the sites is problematic due to several factors: air traffic is missing, therefore tourists from outside Romania opt for a higher possibility for a destination that is in the proximity of an airport; the train lines do not cover the County, and their program is rare, so tourists are forced to come with their own car (which is a disadvantage for international tourists) or give up this County; poor road conditions or even the absence of paved roads; and so on. The development of links between localities and monuments could significantly contribute to the increase of the number of visitors in the County, especially within the borders.

- Support localities with reduced tourism potential by identifying local identities, existing resources and promotional opportunities. In some cases, these 3 factors are not enough to turn the locality into a tourist destination, and in these cases it is recommended to create a connection with a nearby monument or city.

In the case of Harghita County, even if there is a wish, every locality can not be turned into a tourist destination. In this case, one possibility is to emphasize the monuments in the area or in the neighborhood and to develop local unique traditions in a manner in which it can be presented or even marketed (eg crafts courses, craftsmanship, etc.)

- The tourist - the focus of attention. As part of this measure, the Strategy focuses on communication between the tourist and local citizens. In some areas of Italy there is a constant problem of not knowing a language of international circulation of citizens. This measure aims to improve this through free language courses (English, German and French), primarily for those working in the field of tourism, but also for citizens in general.

In Harghita County, the lack of knowledge of Romanian is a constant problem, even identified by citizens. In the field of tourism this is an enormous disadvantage because it excludes the efficient exchange of information between Romanian and local tourists, which may cause the number of days spent in the County to decrease or even generate negative feedback. Organizing free Romanian language courses or even implementing exchange programs could help increase the quality of the services offered.



*The Strategic Tourism Plan 2017 -2022* also advances the idea of digitization. Digitalization of services, communication and promotion, respectively solving of problems.

In the case of Harghita County, the digitization of tourism is a good idea at the level of communication and promotion, keeping the traditions and the unique resources as a main source of interest for the tourists. Thus, the creation of online communities, including bidirectional communication and personalized promotion (otherwise content for young adults up to 35 years of age and other content for adults over 35).

### c. Greece

The document *Greece: A growth strategy for the future*<sup>6</sup>, launched in 2018 by the Greek Ministry of Finance, is a document that prioritises the promotion and development of the country's tourism. This strategy focuses on several measures necessary for the efficient development of the country's tourism and economic growth, including:

- training and employment programs
- agricultural production
- tourism throughout the year
- attracting investments
- rehabilitation of accommodation and services

**The training and employment programs** aim both at improving tourism services and reducing unemployment in the country. Greece has faced these problems for many years, and has constantly needed to turn to EU support, especially Germany. In order to generate change and make the country one of the top 5 *destinations for tourists* in Europe, firstly, this strategy aims to improve young people's access to the labor market by providing training courses in tourism and developing communication efficient between the needs of employers, employees and tourists. Employees who benefit from such courses will help increase the quality of the services they offer, resulting in an increase in the number of tourists who choose to visit Greece. This, in addition to increasing the employability of young people, will support sustainable economic growth and development.

This measure may also be applicable to Harghita County. A problem identified at the level of the County is the lack of professional staff in the field of tourism, and the improvement of services is needed. These courses should include: language courses (Romanian, English and German), training for waiters / chefs, training courses for guides, training courses for receptionists, etc. These courses not only would increase the quality of services, but would also diversify the County's tourism activities.

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<sup>6</sup>**Greece: A Growth Strategy for the Future**, Ministry of Finances, 2018, <http://www.mindev.gov.gr/greece-a-growth-strategy-for-the-future/>, accessed on 10.05.2019.



**Agricultural production** aims at linking tourism to agricultural production and presenting it to tourists in an attractive way. In the case of Greece, many agricultural activities are unique or relatively rarely presented to tourists, such as the production of wheat, wool, cotton, olives (third place in the world), raisins and tobacco. The presentation of these activities to tourists has also happened in the past, with positive reactions, and widespread, diversified and interactive organization of more tourist programs could contribute to a great deal of experience.

In the case of Harghita County, the development of traditional and specific agriculture in the field of tourism could have the same effects as in the case of Greece. Harghita County has unique history and traditions at national level, which also has an impact on agricultural production. Several activities are already focused on the involvement of the tourist in day-to-day activities (eg through specific events - "Farsang", "Harvest Balloon", "Summer Balloon", etc. - through various crafts, activities which are popular among tourists in the country as well as outside the country. Even if we do not link the agricultural production itself with tourism, some elements can be taken over and introduced into package offerings or tourist activities such as wheat harvesting.

**Tourism throughout the year** is an objective that seeks to maximize tourism potential by eliminating the dead season / dead seasons. In the case of Greece, this season can generally be placed between November and March. Measures in this case include "sub-strategies", including organizing cultural events as close as possible to the dead season or even during the dead season (where this can be done); areas seriously affected by the dead season will introduce diversified activities into the program, which can be achieved at any time of the year; supporting different types of tourism; applying discounts during the dead season.

In Harghita County, with regard to tourism, there are 2 periods that can be identified as seasons a lower popularity: September - November and March - May. In the season, tourists are welcomed with more events, activities, from constant ones such as *the observation of the bear, various tastings (wine, curd, urda, etc.), skiing and sledding (in the winter season), hiking and much more*, to the periodic or unique ones, such as the *Szekler Equestrian Festival, The Odorheiu Secuiesc Land Fruit Festival, the Via Mariae, Fairs*, etc., but also others, which are often organized spontaneously or locally. Out-of-season periods, however, do not offer enough opportunities to contribute to the longer stay of the guests. That is why organizing events, regionally / locally related, such as cultural, historical, historical anniversaries, even involving historic buildings and / or accommodation and services (wellness and spa).

**The rehabilitation of accommodation and services facilities** in the case of Greece is essential. In order to maintain relatively high prices, it is necessary to provide high quality services, which means modern accommodation and services (keeping the traditional character, where appropriate). That is why the strategy proposes launching several programs whereby hotels, hostels, which have received 2 or fewer stars, are encouraged to modernize and improve their premises, equipment and facilities.



In order to unify the quality of tourism at the level of Harghita County, thus contributing to its development, it is necessary to modernize and develop the facilities meant to accommodate tourists and visitors. This must be done taking into account the existing situation, resources and opportunities. Thus, in some cases, not only modernization, but also the construction of these facilities is necessary, at European standards.

Most of these measures are intended to be implemented by **attracting investment**. Strategies, within this subsection, provide some advice, and described different funding possibilities.

In Harghita County, projects can be submitted to several funding authorities, but support is needed from both the authorities and the stakeholders. Collaboration, centralization of information and opportunities, transfer of know-how can be done through the Tourist Information Offices.

#### **d. Austria (Vienna)**

**Tourism Strategy 2020<sup>7</sup>** was developed by the Vienna Tourist Board in 2014. The strategy aims to develop the city and bring it to a high level, using existing resources, popularity with growth trends and its international importance.

The document itself focuses on developing the city on three dimensions:

- Global Vienna
- Smart Vienna
- Premium Vienna

**Global Vienna** aims to internationalize the city, using its importance as a political and economic center, increased international visibility, diversity of culture and the city itself, as well as being a cosmopolitan metropolis to become a prime destination for international tourists. Since the city is very accessible both by air transport (having several important connections), by rail (being a meeting point) or by river (due to the Danube), the transformation of the city into a global entity was successful. Thus, the measures proposed in this case aim at: supporting universities (which implicitly leads to attracting visitors through various conferences, workshops,

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<sup>7</sup> **Tourism Strategy 2020**, Vienna Tourist Board, Vienna, 2014, [http://www.tourismstrategy2020.vienna.info/downloads/wt-tourismusstrategie-2020\\_en.pdf](http://www.tourismstrategy2020.vienna.info/downloads/wt-tourismusstrategie-2020_en.pdf), accessed on 17. May 2019.





courses, exchanges of experience, etc.), attracting international companies, supporting museums and theaters (for diversification of activities) , organization of conventions.

At Harghita County level, the measures that could contribute to the internationalization of the County are: the development of public transport, either by setting up / constructing an airport with internal and external links, or by developing rail links; supporting the universities and faculties present in the County, in terms of research, conferences and various events, of great magnitude; organization of conventions (at national and / or international level); namely to support the theaters and museums, by involving them both in the program of different events as activities and by diversifying their offerings with activities that involve the visitors of the County in an interactive way (eg White Night of the Museums, The White Night of the Theater, different partnerships between the two, etc.).

**Smart Vienna** implies city development in terms of urban technologies and smart solutions. In the contemporary world, a city that does not keep pace with technological change is losing its economic and tourism potential, so it needs some unified solutions, namely *minimum requirements* such as WiFi accessible everywhere, reducing personal car traffic by facilitating transport (buses), offering alternatives, including Bike Sharing systems, digitized services (taxi order, transportation timetable, maps, programs, projects, etc. - all in one, by computers located on the streets) reducing environmental footprint by setting up green spaces, arranging power equipment for electric cars, etc.

Harghita County has not yet reached the technological level in Vienna, but some measures may also be applicable in this case. Free Wifi is a way for localities to offer visitors and visitors access to the online environment anytime, anywhere, helping to disseminate information, popularize the area and enhance the quality of the experience. Electric buses contribute to reducing pollution, noise, and offer an ecological alternative to personal cars. Another alternative, including sports, is the Bike Sharing system, popular all over the world, which does not require a major investment, and offers tourists the opportunity to go along with them without having to carry these bikes after the visit is complete.

**Premium Vienna** wishes to popularize quality leadership, offering an elegant, exclusive city image. This subcategory involves affordable drinking water everywhere, wine production, select gastronomy and education.

This last subcategory is not in line with Harghita County, but it can be an example by which the County builds its image, such as **Traditional Harghita**, **Friendly Harghita** or **Diversified Harghita**. Within the built image, unique resources in the area such as mineral water, gastronomy, culture, history, etc. can be highlighted.

### 1.2.3 NATIONAL CONTEXT

The national document that should guide the policy of successive governments as well as local public authorities in the field of tourism would be the national strategy for tourism





development if approved by the Government and adopted by the Romanian Parliament. Although in the Government Ordinance no. 58/1998 on the organization and the development of the tourism activity in Romania, approved with some modifications by Law 755/2001, the elaboration of the Medium and Long Term Development Strategy for Tourism, as well as the Annual Tourism Development Program (Article 22) so far we can not talk about such a strategy. Article 23 of the same law stipulates that "Tourist actions initiated at the territorial level by the local public administration authorities must be part of the Medium and Long Term Development Strategy for Tourism and comply with the specific regulations for all forms of tourism practiced in Romania. "

Local initiatives for tourism development can now be aligned with tourism legislation, and to some extent two studies can be taken into account on the one hand by the former National Tourism Authority specialists (subsequently subdivided as the Department of Tourism of the Ministry for Tourism Small and Medium Enterprises, Commerce, Tourism and Liberal Professions), on the other hand the study conducted in collaboration with the WTO specialists known as the Master Plan for the Development of National Tourism of Romania 2007 - 2026, a potential programmatic document with long-term vision . There are also studies developed by the National Institute for Tourism Development and Research, which can serve to substantiate strategic documents elaborated at regional and local level.

Following the parliamentary elections on December 11, 2016, the new government of Romania was formed, in which the Ministry of Tourism was established. The governance program for the period 2018-2020 includes in the Tourism chapter pg.60 the following:

Governance objectives:

1. Adopt the Law on Tourism
2. Establishment of the National Education Center and re-establishment of the vocational schools, including the post-secondary schools for the training of the workforce in the field of tourism
3. Promotion of Romania as a tourist destination in accordance with the general objectives and priorities of our country, the European Union and the global trends in the field
4. Rehabilitation of access infrastructure in tourist resorts and areas with significant tourist impact (monasteries, monuments, agro-tourism areas, vineyards)
5. Development and rehabilitation of the public utilities networks in the existing tourist areas and in the future to be developed in terms of tourism
6. Implementation of the "First Holiday Center"



7. Inventory and evaluation of uncompleted investments from European and government funds; providing funds for completing investments that are in line with the development of tourism in that area
8. For green tourism, the establishment and development of potentially sturdy localities that can exploit protected natural areas and other national resources: mountains, forests, waters and areas not affected by the "modernization era" - the traditional and cultural areas of the Romanian villages
9. Development of tourism in the Danube Delta, while complying with Biosphere Reserve protection rules.
10. Consolidation of Destination Management Organizations (DMO) in tourist resorts and other tourist interest locations on the three development plans
11. Guaranteeing packages of tourist services
12. Ensure that the economic operator who manages tourist accommodation facilities in the beach area has the right to rent the beach areas in the immediate vicinity
13. Ensure a regulation on the administration in public-private partnership by the state and the economic operators holding tourist accommodation structures with accommodation and / or health functions, the treatment bases located within their perimeter belonging to the central public administration and are unused.

- directions for action:

1. ensuring qualified employment, professionalization of people working in tourism and public catering
2. creation of a promotion budget at the ministry level, including opening and streamlining of the activities of foreign tourism offices
3. the increase in the number of tourists and the revenues for the respective areas / objectives, the significant reduction of the maintenance costs of the means of transport
4. to stimulate investments in tourism by providing utilities for new constructions
5. creating new jobs and extending the season by over a month and a half
6. by finalizing unfinished investments, the development of tourism infrastructure and services is being pursued
7. by law, competences of the central and local administrative authorities will be assigned to restrict tourism activities within all protected areas and will compile a portfolio of techniques and



methods to avoid overburdening of these areas. Prohibiting constructions that do not correspond to protected areas and employing additional staff for surveillance and guarding

8. achievement of the Danube Delta cadastre and updating the Danube Delta Planning Regulation so as to harmonize the height regime, the exterior appearance of the buildings, the use of traditional construction materials with the occupation and use of the land according to the protection requirements for one of the largest areas wet in the world; for the protection of ecosystems it is envisaged to increase the use of environmentally friendly means of transport with low pollution, to promote and to develop the non-motorized tourist routes and to regulate coherently the circulation channels with the speed of travel. Ecological passenger transport, by replacing the existing fleet of vessels, which ensures the shipping in the Danube Delta, with low-fuel and low-pollution ships, which also use alternative renewable energy systems (bicycles, paddle boats and electric motors ) the improvement of the tourist information network, the development of GPS support applications with maps and tourist routes, the Danube Delta accommodation structure and other useful information.

9. on the three development plans:

- micro: DMO brings together local public authorities and representatives from the private environment and other relevant entities, the level of a resort to the level of the counties
- Mezo: DMO brings together local public authorities and private and other relevant entities within a region
- macro: Central DMO for Romania destination, which coagulates representatives of regional DMOs, representatives of central public authorities (NTA, MRDPA, Ministry of Environment, Ministry of Culture, Ministry of Education, Ministry of Transport, National Statistic Institute, other tourism research institutes) , federations and employers' associations, with representatives of other relevant entities (promotional associations, professional associations from different economic sectors, NGOs, administrators of protected natural areas, tourism training environment, academia and others)

10. Preventing the negative effects on the citizen as a result of the insolvency of travel agencies

It was also issued the Decision Nr. 558/2017 of 4 August 2017 regarding the approval of the Program for the development of investments in tourism - Masterplan of investments in tourism - and eligibility criteria for investment projects in tourism, according to which for Harghita County were proposed the following projects:

- Extension of the Balnear Complex, Baile Tusnad city
- Rehabilitation of the traditional Nadas bath, Tusnad commune
- Organizing a winter sports complex in the immediate vicinity of the ski slope, the city of Borsec



- Building an adventure park, the city of Borsec
- Refurbishment and modernization of access points to the mineral water springs, the town of Borsec
- Ski slopes and cable cars at Harghita - Madaras, Căpâlnița commune
- Suhard sociable landscaping, Gheorgheni municipality
- Construction of a gondola system in the Lacu Rosu resort on Suhardul Mare peak, Gheorgheni municipality
- Establishment of SPA Center in Lacu Roșu resort, Gheorgheni municipality
- Development of the recreation area at the Homorod Bath, Vlăhița town
- Development of the sociable domain Izvoru Mureșului, Voșlăbeni commune

#### **1.2.4 REGIONAL CONTEXT**

Starting from the Center development region, the strategy for tourism development in Harghita County should be correlated with the tourism strategy of the region, but no such document has been elaborated, we can take into account the chapter on tourism from the Regional Development Plan, elaborated for the period 2014- 2020. On the other hand, the subsidiarity, partnership and decentralization principles point to a bottom-up regional strategy building, building on County strategies in the region (Harghita County Development Strategy). But for now, not all counties have strategies that can be compared and integrated into a regional strategy. Given that the Center region is a territorial planning entity and not a tourist destination, it can be appreciated that such a strategy should not be elaborated, possibly after the institutional building of Romania's tourist regions based on regional identity and historical provinces : Banat, Crisana, Maramures, Transylvania, Bucovina, Moldavia, Dobrogea, Muntenia and Oltenia. Within them will then be delineated tourist sub-regions based on different local, microregional features. As far as the County of Harghita is concerned, it comprises an important part of the Szekler Land, a cultural-historical region, with its own identity, inhabited predominantly by the Szekler community, an important part of the Hungarian minority in Romania. Even if the "Szekler Region" is only a political project for members of the Hungarian community in Romania, based on the tangible and intangible cultural and historical heritage, on the basis of the regional identity one can conceive a tourism strategy of the Szekler Land, respecting the Romanian legislation promoting the values of the region integrating into the tourist offer of the country, as regional specificity. This is in full compliance with the fundamental objective of European development policies on sustainable development and cultural diversity in Europe

#### **1.3. THE FRAMEWORK OF TERRITORIAL DEVELOPMENT POLICY**



At national level in the field of tourism there is a lack of a strategic document. Regional and local efforts to develop tourism can, however, be aligned and integrated into policies on regional socio-economic development and development / territorial planning.

On the occasion of Romania's accession to the European Union, strategic documents such as the National Development Plan (NDP) were elaborated from which the NSRF-National Strategic Reference Framework, which is implemented through SOP-Sectoral Operational Program and ROP-Regional Operational Program, all valid for 2014-2020.

Supporting tourism development through funding programs was designed as an integral part of the Regional Operational Program, which is detailed in the Framework Implementation Document. It presents the priority axes of the ROP strategy, which in turn is in line with the objectives of the NDP and the National Strategic Reference Framework 2014-2020, contributing to the achievement of the overall objective and the specific objectives of the NSRF regarding the diminishing of the development disparities between Romania and the other EU Member States.

In line with the Regional Development Strategy of the NSRF, the Regional Operational Program gives priority to the remaining regions and to the less developed areas of the more prosperous regions. At the same time, special attention will be paid to supporting the sustainable development of cities - potential growth poles that can contribute to the development of several areas of Romania's territory.

### **Specific objectives of the ROP**

In order to achieve the general objective of regional development, the ROP strategy is articulated around the following specific objectives:

- increasing the economic and social role of urban centers through a polycentric approach to stimulate a more balanced development of the regions;
- improving accessibility in the regions and in particular the accessibility of urban centers and their links with surrounding areas;
- increasing the quality of the social infrastructure of the regions;
- increasing the competitiveness of the regions as business locations;
- increasing the contribution of tourism to the development of the regions.

### **Regional Operational Program (ROP)**

The 2014-2020 Regional Operational Program (ROP) is the successor of the 2007-2013 Regional Operational Program and one of the programs through which Romania will be able to access European structural and investment funds from the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) for 2014-2020.



The 2014-2020 Regional Operational Program (ROP), managed by the Ministry of Regional Development and Public Administration as Managing Authority, was adopted by the European Commission (EC) on June 23, 2015.

The strategic vision regarding the development needs to be met by the ROP 2014-2020 is based on the analysis of the economic and social situation of the regions of Romania (in the National Strategy for Regional Development 2014-2020), which led to the identification of the main issues:

- research and development and innovation: limited transfer of research results to the market and low level of assimilation of innovation in firms
- SMEs: an insufficiently developed SME sector, with a negative impact on the competitiveness of regional economies. The main weaknesses of the SME sector in the national strategic programming documents are:
  - a low degree of entrepreneurial culture - reflected by the relatively low business density in all regions,
  - a low resilience of new business - 2/3 of new businesses disappear from the market in their first year of life
- energy efficiency: unsustainable energy consumption and high potential for saving in public infrastructure, including public buildings and residential buildings
- environment: high pollution level in urban areas
- urban development: urban areas degraded, vacant or not properly used in cities in Romania
- heritage resources: Valuable cultural assets that are poorly capitalized
- tourism: valuable, balanced, territorially distributed tourism - alternative for revitalization of less developed / isolated areas
- road infrastructure: the low accessibility of certain areas of the country, resulting in low attractiveness and extremely low investment
- social infrastructure and education: under-sized educational, health and social services impedes social inclusion and human capital development
- cadastre: low level of cadastral records, affecting the implementation of policies on the socio-economic development of local communities
- administrative capacity: the need to strengthen the administrative capacity of the ROP Managing Authority, ROP Implementing Bodies and Beneficiaries, for a good ROP implementation.



These directions of action were correlated with the strategic action directions mentioned by the European Commission regarding the financing from the European Structural and Investment Funds through the European Regional Development Fund for the period 2014-2020:

- Innovation and research;
- Digital Agenda;
- Support for small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs);
- Low carbon economy.

ROP 2014-2020 aims to increase the economic competitiveness and improve the living conditions of local and regional communities by supporting the development of the business environment, infrastructure and services for the sustainable development of the regions so that they can effectively manage resources and harness their potential for innovation and assimilation of technological progress.

These objectives are translated into 11 priority axes (plus a technical assistance axis), with an estimated total allocation of EUR8.25 billion, of which EUR6.7 billion represents EU support through the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) and EUR1.5 billion - national contribution:

Priority Axis 1: Promoting Technological Transfer

Priority Axis 2: Improving the Competitiveness of Small and Medium Sized Enterprises

Priority Axis 3: Supporting the transition to a low-carbon economy

Priority Axis 4: Supporting sustainable urban development

Priority Axis 5: Improving the Urban Environment and Conservation, Protection and Sustainable Valuation of Cultural Heritage

Priority Axis 6: Improvement of regional infrastructure infrastructure

Priority Axis 7: Diversifying local economies through the sustainable development of tourism

Priority Axis 8: Developing Health and Social Infrastructure

Priority Axis 9: Supporting the economic and social regeneration of disadvantaged communities in the urban environment

Priority Axis 10: Improving Educational Infrastructure

Priority Axis 11: Geographic expansion of the property registration system in cadastre and land book

Priority Axis 12: Technical Assistance



In formulating the vision and priorities of strategic development of Harghita County, the structure of the priorities for tourism development within the ROP takes into account, even if it represents only one of the financing opportunities of different investments, on the other hand it can be assumed that not all potential eligible applicants for funding will be interested in these opportunities either because of the perception of the financing process as too bureaucratic and risky in terms of payment scheduling, or because of the administrative inability to initiate, develop and implement appropriate projects.

It is also likely that the funds allocated to major areas of intervention may prove to be insufficient for the region. The need for projects to develop a competitive tourist offer in Harghita County can be higher than the one allowed by the financial framework of Axis 7 of the ROP. It should be borne in mind that the projects in Harghita County will compete with the projects in the other 5 counties of the Center region: Mures, Covasna, Brasov, Sibiu and Alba. In order to have a more concrete picture of the competition situation of the future projects submitted for financing within the ROP, it is useful to refer to the indicative operations for which financing can be obtained. The details of these are accessible in the Applicant's Guidance for each major area of intervention, as well as in the ROP Implementation Framework Document.

#### **1.4. ATTRIBUTIONS OF THE HARGHITA COUNTY COUNCIL**

In order to interpret the competences and attributions of Harghita County council in the field of tourism we can rely primarily on the Government Ordinance no.58 / 1998 on the organization and carrying out of tourism activity in Romania, approved with some modifications by Law 755/2001, which includes the following direct provisions on County councils.

##### **Article 20**

The County Councils and the General Council of the Municipality of Bucharest have the following attributions in the field of tourism:

- inventory of the main tourism resources
- administration of local heritage registers
- development of tourism development proposals, which form the basis of the annual Tourism development Program
- participation in the approval of tourist routes and ski slopes
- contribute to increasing the quality of tourism products
- the pursuit of tourism activity, in such a way that the economic agents with activity in the field of tourism have access to tourism resources, observing the norms of their value and protection
- the organization of tourist information centers in the localities with tourist activity.





### Article 33

- County councils whose administrative-territorial radius is mountainous tourist routes and / or ski slopes organizes, until 30 September 2003, County public services "Salvamont" (Mountain Rescue Team) which coordinates the activity of mountain and mountain rescue and mountain rescue of the injured persons and supervises the activity of arrangement, maintenance and rehabilitation of the mountain trails in the County.
- local councils where the ski-area has administrative-territorial scope organize, until 30 September 2003, local public services "Salvamont".

Of course, in their interpretation we can refer to many other normative acts, both in the field of tourism, as well as in the field of local public administration, regional development, spatial planning and urbanism, environmental protection, protection and preservation of historical monuments, and others.

However, by simply listing these provisions, we can refer to the chapter on the development of the system of tourism development priorities in the County, where the actions of the County council will be distinguished from those projects where the council will have the role of coordination, or approval.



## **II. ANALYSIS OF THE HARGHITA COUNTY TOURISM SITUATION**

### **2.1. TRENDS OF THE TOURIST DEMAND IN THE WORLD, EUROPE AND ROMANIA**

#### **2.1.1 MEGATRENDS IN EUROPEAN TOURISM**

Tourism trends at European level have an impact on the field at national or even regional level, so it is important to analyze them. The tourism industry is linked to the process of dynamizing society, economic development and revenue growth, while being facilitated by the modernization of the means of transport and the means of communication. According to these factors, the following trends can be identified:

Most European tourists travel during their holiday periods, being more open to programs and opportunities, involving active rest and eventual knowledge of the history, culture, architecture and local heritage visited. It is also popular that certain interests and hobbies are involved in travel, so tourists enter various leisure activities such as cycling, hiking, etc.

Ecotourism, religious tourism, cultural and adventure tourism are rapidly evolving as forms of tourism development, being a way for touristic destinations to offer unique experiences, correlated with local potential. These types of tourism attract more and more visitors, as many tourists are looking for new destinations and new products, which are still less valued. This option creates development opportunities and less popular destinations.

Spa tourism and spa resorts have had a high popularity in the past due to positive health effects. Tourists are interested in maintaining and improving their health, and in order to cope with competition and high demands, these resorts have improved accommodation, food, quality of healthcare services and procedures throughout Europe. This is advantageous for tourists, but those who want to enter the market of this type of tourism have to take into account the fact that the high demand also implies exceptional conditions, without which long-term survival is not possible.

Business tourism is expanding, not being limited by factors such as area popularity, price levels or competition. This type of tourism is still at the beginning, but its long-term development can provide benefits in the tourism field in the near future.

- There is a shorter but more frequent holiday phenomenon over the course of a year, which offers the possibility of eliminating dead seasons by offering extra seasonal offers.



- Senior tourism is becoming more and more frequent, which means that many older people, especially at the beginning of the retirement period, start to travel and visit less popular locations. By organizing more facilities and special services, no matter the season, you can increase the number of tourists.
- There is growing emphasis on environmental and social issues, so tourists choose more often for unpolluted tourist destinations, avoiding areas with environmental or social problems.

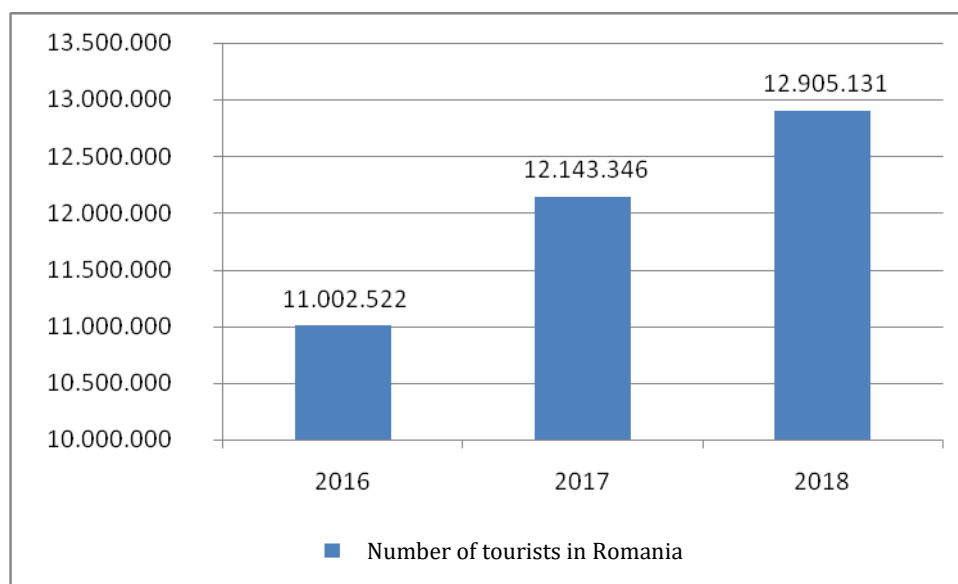
Taking into account these aspects, some centralizations can be seen on 3 major areas: health, culture and entertainment (hobby). Linking them to existing types of tourism at local and / or regional level can contribute to its development.

## **2.1.2 TRENDS OF THE TOURIST DEMAND IN ROMANIA**

### **2.1.2.1 Evolution of the number of tourists in Romania in the period 2016 - 2018**

The number of tourists is an important indicator in formulating the conclusions on tourism development at national level. According to the National Institute of Statistics, between 2016 and 2018, the number of tourists in Romania is the following:

Figure 8 - Evolution of the number of tourists in Romania, between 2016 and 2018



Source: National Institute of Statistics

As can be seen from figure no. 8, between 2016 and 2018, the number of tourists in Romania evolved in an upward direction. Thus, in 2017 compared to 2016, the number of tourists in Romania increased by 1,140,824 tourists (from 11,002,522 tourists in 2016 to 12,143,346 tourists in 2017), respectively by 10.37%, and in 2018 compared to 2017, the value of this

indicator increased by 761,785 tourists (from 12,143,346 tourists in 2017 to 12,905,131 tourists in 2018).

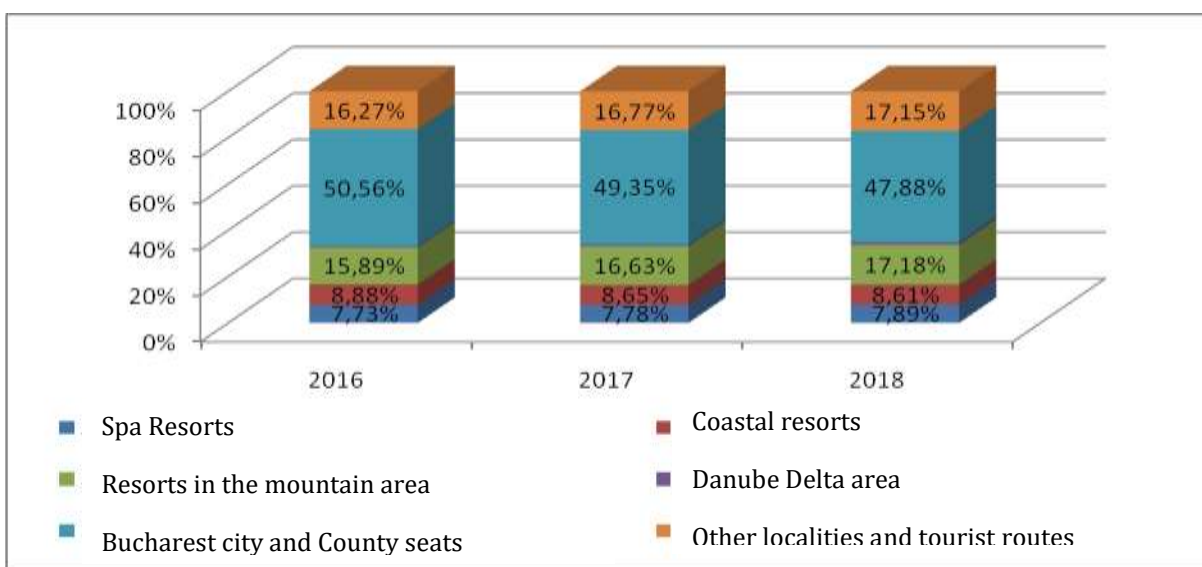
The upward trend in the number of tourists registered between 2016 and 2018 highlights the development capacity of tourism at national level.

#### 2.1.2.2 Structure of tourists at national level according to tourist destinations

The main tourist destinations in Romania are: Spa resorts, Coastal resorts, Mountain resorts, Danube Delta area, Bucharest Municipality and respective County seat cities Other localities and tourist routes.

According to the National Institute of Statistics, the number of tourists from the national level in the period 2016 - 2018 has the following structure:

Figure no. 9 - Structure of tourists at national level according to tourist destinations



Source: National Institute of Statistics

As can be seen from Figure no. 9, in each of the three years of the reference period, the highest weights are recorded by the urban tourist destinations - (Bucharest Municipality and County seat cities), followed by Other localities and tourist routes, Mountain resorts, Coastal resorts, Spa resorts and the Danube Delta.

In 2016, of the total number of tourists from the national level, the number of tourists who visited Bucharest and County residence towns represented 50.56%, the number of tourists visiting other localities and touristic routes represented 16.27%, the number of tourists who had visited Resorts in the mountain area accounted for 15.89%, the number of tourists visiting the coastal resorts represented 8.88%, the number of tourists visiting spa resorts represented 7.73%, and the number of tourists who visited the Danube Delta was 0.66%.



In 2017, of the total number of tourists from the national level, the number of tourists who visited Bucharest and County seat cities represented 49.35%, the number of tourists visiting other localities and tourist routes represented 16.77%, the number of tourists who had visited Mountain Resorts represented 16.63%, the number of tourists visiting the coastal resorts represented 8.65%, the number of tourists visiting spa resorts represented 7.78% and the number of tourists who visited the Danube Delta was 0.83%.

In 2018, of the total number of tourists from the national level, the number of tourists who visited Bucharest and County residence towns represented 47.88%, the number of tourists visiting other localities and tourist routes represented 17.15%, the number of tourists who had visited tourist resorts in the mountain area accounted for 17.18%, the number of tourists who visited seaside resorts represented 8.61%, the number of tourists visiting spa resorts represented 7.89% and the number of tourists visiting the Danube Delta was 1.28%.

In 2017 compared to 2016, the number of tourists from the national level who visited Bucharest and County seat cities increased by 429,660 tourists (from 5,562,743 tourists in 2016 to 5,992,403 tourists in 2017) and 7.72%, and in 2018 compared to 2017, the value of this indicator increased by 186,262 tourists, respectively 3.11% (from 5,992,403 tourists in 2017 to 6,178,665 tourists in 2018).

In 2017 compared to 2016, the number of tourists from the national level who visited Other localities and tourist routes increased by 246,069 tourists (from 1,790,082 tourists in 2016 to 2,036,151 tourists in 2017), respectively 13.75%, and in 2018 compared to 2017, the value of this indicator increased by 177,664 tourists, respectively 8.73% (from 2,036,151 tourists in 2017 to 2,213,815 tourists in 2018).

In 2017 compared to 2016, the number of tourists from the national level who visited Mountain Resorts increased by 270,985 tourists (from 1,748,157 tourists in 2016 to 2,019,142 tourists in 2017) and 15.50% and in 2018 compared to 2017, the value of this indicator increased by 2,019,142 tourists, respectively by 9.80% (from 2,019,142 tourists in 2017 to 2,217,110 tourists in 2018).

In 2017 compared to 2016, the number of tourists from the national level who visited spa resorts increased by 94,217 entries (from 851,040 tourists in 2016 to 945,257 tourists in 2017), respectively by 11.07% and in 2018 compared to 2017, the value of this indicator increased by 73,464 tourists, respectively by 7.77% (from 945,257 tourists in 2017 to 1,018,721 tourists in 2018).

In 2017 compared to 2016, the number of tourists from the national level who visited spa resorts increased by 94,217 tourists (from 851,040 tourists in 2016 to 945,257 tourists in 2017), respectively 11.07%, and in 2018 compared to 2017, the value of this indicator increased by 73,464 tourists, respectively by 7.77% (from 945,257 tourists in 2017 to 1,018,721 tourists in 2018).

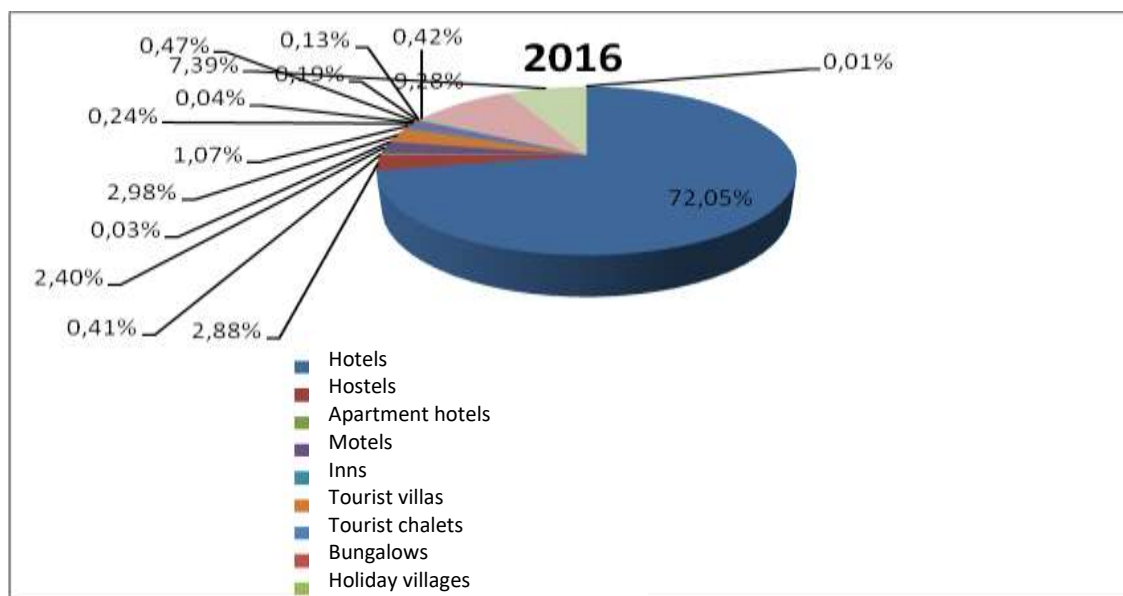
In 2017 compared to 2016, the number of tourists from the national level who visited the Danube Delta increased by 27,309 tourists (from 73,144 tourists in 2016 to 100,423 tourists in 2017), respectively by 37,35%, and in the year 2018 compared to 2017, the value of this indicator increased by 65,008 tourists, respectively 64,73% (from 100,423 tourists in 2017 to 165,431 tourists in 2018).

### 2.1.2.3 Structure of tourists at national level according to the accommodation option

The main tourist facilities preferred by tourists from Romania in the period 2016 - 2018 are: Hotels, Hostels, Apartment hotels, Motels, Inns, Tourist villas, Tourist chalets, Bungalows, Holiday villages, Campings, Tourist stops, Tourist cottages, School preschool camps, Tourist guesthouses, Agrotourism guesthouses, Accommodation on river and sea vessels.

According to the National Institute of Statistics, the structure of tourists at national level according to the preferred accommodation option for each of the 3 years of the reference period is the following:

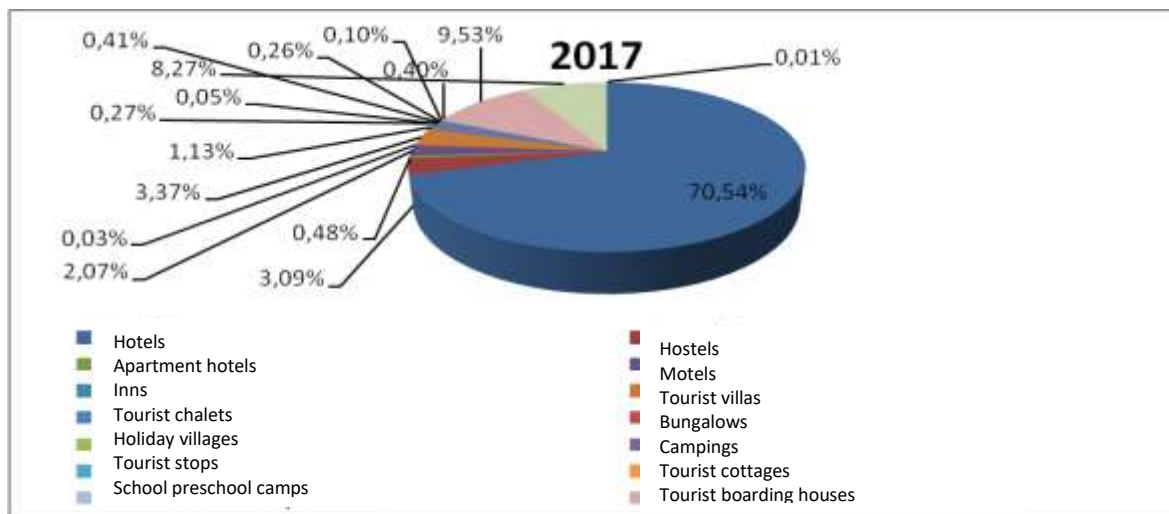
Figure no. 10. Structure of tourists at national level according to the option of accommodation in 2016



Source: National Institute of Statistics

As can be seen from Figure no. 10, in the year 2016, the structure of tourists at national level according to the option of accommodation is: Hotels (72,05%), Hostels (2,88%), Apartment hotels (0,41%), Motels (2,40%), Inns (0,03%), Tourist villas (2,98%), Tourist chalets (1,07%), Bungalows (0,24%), Holiday villages (0,04%), Campings (0,47%), Tourist stops (0,19%), Tourist cottages (0,13%), School preschool camps (0,42%), Tourist guesthouses (9,28%), Agrotourism guesthouses (7,39%) and Accommodation on river and sea vessels (0,01%).

Figure no. 11- Structure of tourists at national level according to the option of accommodation in 2017

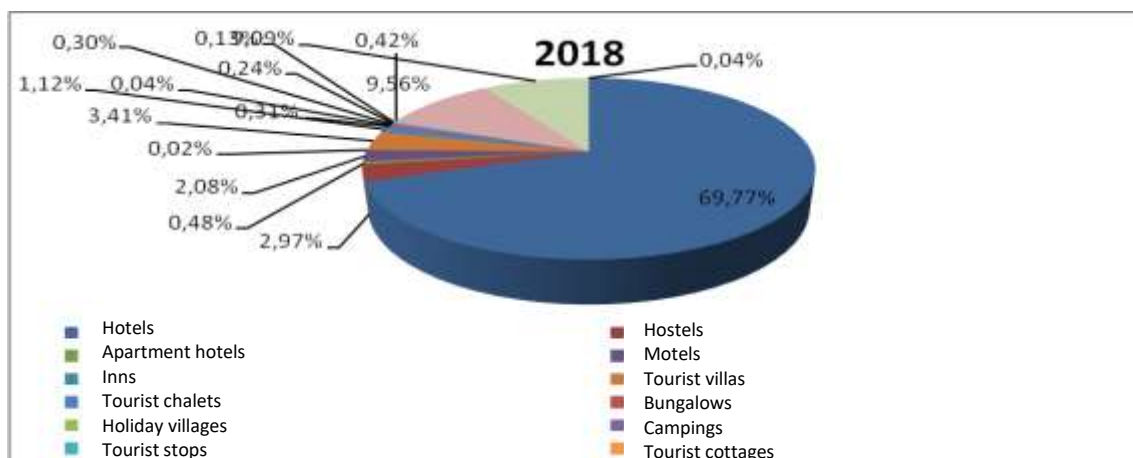


Source: National Institute of Statistics

As can be seen from Figure no. 11, in 2017, the structure of tourists at national level according to the option of accommodation is: Hotels (70.54%), Hostels (3.09%), Apartment hotels (0.48%), Motels (2.07 %), Inns (0.03%), Tourist villas (3.37%), Tourist chalets (1.13%), Bungalows (0.27%), Holiday Villages (0,05%), Campings (0,41%), Tourist stops (0,26%), tourist cottages (0,10%), camps for students and preschools (0,40%), tourist guesthouses (9,53%), agrotourism guesthouses (8,27%) and accommodation spaces on river and sea vessels (0.01%).

Figure no. 12 - Structure of tourists at national level according to the accommodation option in 2018





Source: National Institute of Statistics

As can be seen from Figure no. 12, in the year 2018, the structure of tourists at national level according to the option of accommodation is: Hotels (69,77%), Hostels (2,97%), Apartment hotels (0,48%), Motels (2,08%), Inns (0,02%), Tourist villas (3,41%), Tourist chalets (1,12%), Bungalows (0,31%), Holiday villages (0,04%), Campings (0,30%), Tourist stops (0,24%), tourist cottages (0,13%), camps for students and preschools (0,42%), tourist guesthouses (9,56%), agrotouristic guesthouses (9,09%) and accommodation on river and sea vessels (0,04%).

From the point of view of mobility, depending on the preferred accommodation option, the number of tourists at national level in the period 2016-2018 shows the following evolution:

Table no. 4. Evolution of the number of tourists at national level according to the preferred accommodation option between 2016 and 2018

Accommodation type	2016	2017	2018
Hotels	7.927.540	8.565.979	9.004.486
Hostels	317.027	374.806	383.696
Apartment hotels	45.621	58.804	62.295
Motels	264.086	251.047	268.310
Inns	3.409	3.928	2.630
Tourist villas	327.824	409.165	440.497
Tourist chalets	117.304	136.832	144.182
Bungalows	26.483	32.196	40.538
Holiday villages	4.588	6.233	4.841
Campings	52.043	49.484	38.519
Tourist stops	21.082	31.014	30.530
Tourist cottages	14.364	12.100	16.350
Students and pre-school camps	46.468	48.213	54.731
Tourist guesthouses	1.020.606	1.157.665	1.234.295
Agrotouristic guesthouses	813.454	1.004.400	1.173.455



Accommodation spaces on river and sea vessels	623	1.480	5.776
TOTAL	11.002.522	12.143.346	12.905.131

Source: National Institute of Statistics

In 2016 as compared to 2017, the number of tourists at national level, which have opted for Hotels as their accommodation option, increased by 638,439 tourists, respectively 8,05% (from 7,927,540 tourists in 2016 to 8,565,979 tourists in 2017), and in 2018 compared to 2017, the value of this indicator increased by 438,507 tourists, respectively 5.12% (from 8,565,979 tourists in 2017, to 9,004,486 tourists in 2018).

In 2016 as compared to 2017, the number of tourists at national level, which have opted for Hostels as their accommodation option increased by 57,779 tourists, respectively by 18,23% (from 317,027 tourists in 2016 to 374,806 tourists in 2017). in 2018 compared to 2017, the value of this indicator increased by 8,890 tourists, respectively by 2,37% (from 374,806 tourists in 2017, to 383,696 tourists in 2018).

In 2016 as compared to 2017, the number of tourists at national level, which have opted for Apartment Hotels as their accommodation option, increased by 13,183 tourists, respectively by 28,90% (from 45,621 in 2016 to 58,804 in 2017) and in 2018 compared to 2017, the value of this indicator increased by 3,419 tourists, respectively by 5,94% (from 58,804 tourists in 2017, to 62,295 tourists in 2018).

In 2016 compared to 2017, the number of tourists at national level, which have opted for Motels as their accommodation option, decreased by 13,039 tourists and 4,94% respectively (from 264,086 tourists in 2016 to 251,047 in 2017). in 2018 compared to 2017, the value of this indicator increased by 17,263 tourists, respectively by 6.88% (from 251,047 tourists in 2017, to 268,310 tourists in 2018).

In 2016 as compared to 2017, the number of tourists at national level, which have opted for Inns as their accommodation option increased by 519 tourists, respectively by 15.22% (from 3,409 tourists in 2016 to 3,928 in 2017). in 2018 compared to 2017, the value of this indicator diminished by 1,298 tourists, respectively by 33.04% (from 3,928 tourists in 2017, to 2,630 tourists in 2018).

In 2016 as compared to 2017, the number of tourists at national level, which have opted for Tourist Villas as their accommodation option, increased by 81,341 tourists, respectively by 24,81% (from 327,824 tourists in 2016 to 409,165 tourists in 2017) and in 2018 compared to 2017, the value of this indicator increased by 31,332 tourists, respectively by 7.66% (from 409,165 tourists in 2017, to 440,497 tourists in 2018).

In 2016 as compared to 2017, the number of tourists at national level, which have opted for Tourist Chalets as their accommodation option, increased by 19,528 tourists, respectively by 16,65% (from 117,304 tourists in 2016 to 136,832 in 2017) and in 2018 compared to 2017, the



value of this indicator increased by 7.350 tourists, respectively by 5.37% (from 136,832 tourists in 2017, to 144,182 tourists in 2018).

In 2016 compared to 2017, the number of tourists at national level, which have opted for Bungalows as their accommodation option, increased by 5,713 tourists, respectively by 21,57% (from 26,483 tourists in 2016 to 32,196 in 2017). in 2018 compared to 2017, the value of this indicator increased by 8.342 entries, respectively by 25.91% (from 32.196 tourists in 2017, to 40.538 tourists in 2018).

In 2016 compared to 2017, the number of tourists at national level, which have opted for Holiday Villages as their accommodation option, increased by 1,645 tourists, respectively by 35,85% (from 4,588 tourists in 2016 to 6,233 tourists in 2017) , and in 2018 compared to 2017, the value of this indicator diminished by 1,392 tourists, respectively by 22.33% (from 6,233 tourists in 2017, to 4,841 tourists in 2018).

In 2016 as compared to 2017, the number of tourists at national level, which have opted for Campings as their accommodation option decreased by 2,559 tourists and 4,92% respectively (from 52,043 tourists in 2016 to 49,484 tourists in 2017). in 2018 compared to 2017, the value of this indicator diminished by 10,965 tourists, respectively by 22,16% (from 49,484 tourists in 2017, to 38,519 tourists in 2018).

In 2016 compared to 2017, the number of tourists at national level, which have opted for Tourist Stops as their accommodation option, increased by 9,932 tourists, respectively by 47,11% (from 21,082 tourists in 2016 to 31,014 in 2017) and in 2018 compared to 2017, the value of this indicator diminished by 484 writers, respectively by 1.56% (from 31,014 tourists in 2017, to 30,530 tourists in 2018).

In 2016 compared to 2017 the number of tourists at national level, which have opted for Tourist Cottages as their accommodation option, decreased by 2,264 tourists, respectively 15.76% (from 14.364 to 12.100 tourists tourists 2017 2016) and in 2018 compared to 2017, the value of this indicator increased by 4,250 tourists, respectively by 35,12% (from 12,100 tourists in 2017, to 16,350 tourists in 2018).

In 2016 to 2017 the number of tourists at national level, which have opted for Students and Pre-school camps as their accommodation option, increased by 1,745 tourists or by 3.76% (from 46 468 tourists in 2016 to 48.213turisti 2017), and in 2018 compared to 2017, the value of this indicator increased by 6,518 accounts, respectively by 13.52% (from 48,213 tourists in 2017 to 54,731 tourists in 2018).

In 2016 as compared to 2017, the number of tourists at national level, which have opted for Tourist Guesthouses as their accommodation option, increased by 137,059 tourists, respectively 13.43% (from 1,020,606 tourists in 2016 to 1,157,665 tourists in 2017), and in 2018 compared to 2017, the value of this indicator increased by 76,630 accounts, respectively by 6.62% (from 1,157,665 accounts in 2017 to 1,234,295 tourists in 2018).



In 2016 to 2017 the number of tourists at national level, which have opted for Agrotouristic Guesthouses as their accommodation option increased by 190 946 tourists, ie 23.47% (from 813 454 tourists 2016-1004400 tourists in 2017 ), and in 2018 compared to 2017, the value of this indicator increased by 169,055 tourists, respectively 16.83% (from 1,004,400 tourists in 2017, to 1,173,455 tourists in 2018).

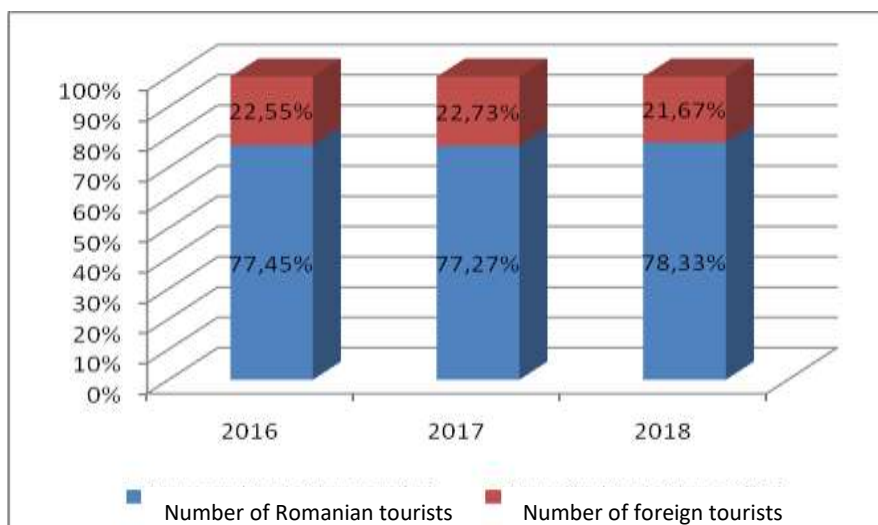
In 2016 as compared to 2017, the number of tourists at national level, which have opted for spaces on river and sea vessels as their accommodation option increased by 857 tourists, respectively by 137.56% (from 623 tourists in 2016 to 1,480 tourists in 2017), and in 2018 compared to 2017, the value of this indicator increased by 4,296 tourists and 290.27% respectively (from 1,480 in 2017 to 5,776 tourists in 2018).

#### **2.1.2.4 Structure of tourists at national level according to their origin**

In Romania, in terms of origin of tourists recognizes two types of tourism: internal (domestic) - involving the number of Romanian tourists visiting sights in Romania and foreign tourism - involving the number of foreign tourists who visit the sights on the territory of Romania.

Depending on their provenance, the number of tourists at national level in the period 2016-2018 has the following structure:

Figure no. 13 - Structure of tourists at national level according to their origin  
in the period 2016 – 2018



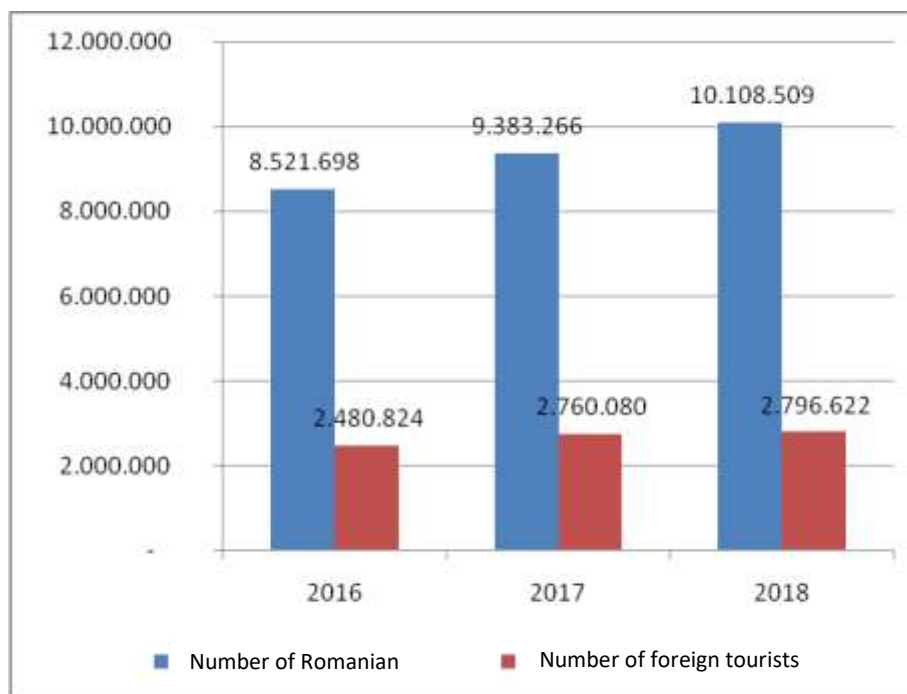
Source: National Institute of Statistics

As can be seen from Figure no. 13 between 2016 and 2018, in Romania there is predominant domestic tourism, practiced by the population of the country, traveling to different regions and localities for sightseeing purposes. Of the total number of tourists at national level, the number of Romanian tourists represented 77.45% in 2016, 77.27% in 2017 and 78.33% in 2018.

Romania's foreign tourism is modest, so the total number of tourists at national level, the number of foreign tourists represented 22.55% in 2016, 22.73% in 2017 and 21.67% in 2018.

From the perspective of mobility, between 2016 and 2018, the number of tourists according to their origin is the following:

Figure no. 14 - Evolution of the number of tourists according to their origin in the period 2016 – 2018



Source: National Institute of Statistics

As can be seen from Figure 14, between 2016 and 2018, the number of Romanian tourists and the number of foreign tourists evolved in the ascending order.

In 2017 compared to 2016, the number of Romanian tourists at national level increased by 861,568 tourists respectively by 10,11% (from 8,521,698 tourists in 2016 to 9,383,266 tourists in 2017), and in 2018 compared to 2017 the value of this indicator increased by 725,243 tourists, respectively by 7,73% (from 9,383,266 in 2017 to 10,108,509 tourists in 2018).

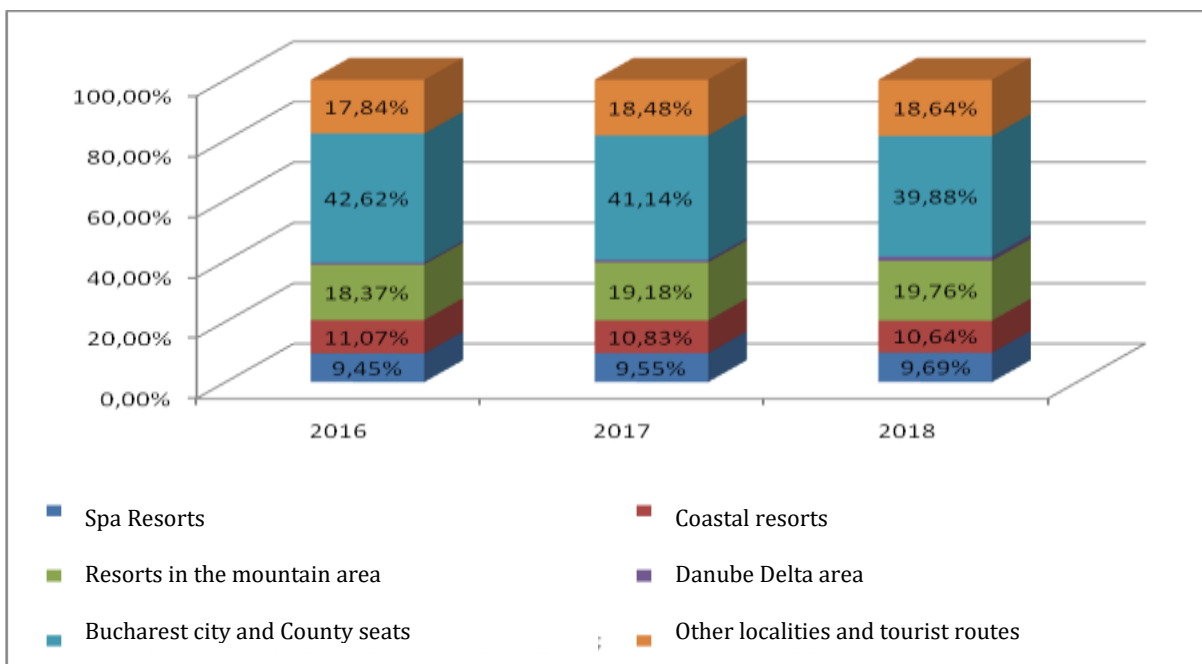
In 2017 as compared to 2016, the number of foreign tourists from the national level increased by 279,256 tourists respectively by 11,26% (from 2,480,824 tourists in 2016 to 2,760,080 tourists in 2017), and in 2018 compared to 2017 the value this indicator increased by 36,542 tourists respectively by 1,32% (from 2,760,080 in 2017 to 2,796,622 tourists in 2018).

#### 2.1.2.5 Structure of the number of Romanian tourists at national level according to tourist destinations

The tourist destination is an essential feature in the context of tourism development trends. According to the National Institute of Statistics, according to the chosen tourist

destination, the number of Romanian tourists from the national level in the period 2016 - 2018 has the following structure:

Figure no.15 - Structure of the number of Romanian tourists at national level according to the tourist destinations



Source: National Institute of Statistics

As can be seen from Figure no. 15, in each of the three years of the reference period, the highest weights are recorded by the urban tourist destinations - (Bucharest Municipality and County seat cities), followed by Other localities and tourist trails, Mountain resorts, Stations the coastal area, spa resorts and the Danube Delta.

In the year 2016, 9.45% of the Romanian tourists visited the spa resorts, 11.07% visited the seaside resorts, 18.37% visited the mountain resorts, 0.65% visited The Danube Delta area, 42.62% visited Bucharest and County towns, and 17.84% visited other localities and tourist routes.

In 2017, 9.55% of the Romanian tourists visited the spa resorts, 10.83% visited the seaside resorts, 19.18% visited the mountain resorts, 0.81% visited The Danube Delta area, 41.14% visited Bucharest and the County seat cities, and 18.48% visited other localities and tourist routes.

In 2018, 9.69% of the Romanian tourists visited the spa resorts, 10.64% visited the coastal resorts, 19.76% visited Mountain resorts, 1.39% visited The Danube Delta area, 39.88% visited Bucharest and County towns, and 18.64% visited other localities and tourist routes.





In 2016 compared to 2017, the number of Romanian tourists who visited spa resorts grew by 91,560 tourists, respectively by 11.4% (from 804,955 in 2016 to 896,515 tourists in 2017), and in 2017 compared to 2018, the value this indicator increased by 82,728 tourists, respectively by 9,23% (from 896,515 tourists in 2017 to 979,243 tourists in 2018).

In 2016 as compared to 2017, the number of Romanian tourists who visited Seaside resorts increased by 73,300 tourists, respectively by 7,77% (from 942,987 in 2016 to 1,016,287 tourists in 2017), and in 2017 by 2018, the value of this indicator increased by 59,757 tourists, respectively by 5,88% (from 1,016,287 in 2017 to 1,076,044 tourists in 2018).

In 2016 as compared to 2017, the number of Romanian tourists who visited Mountain Resorts increased by 234,578 tourists, respectively by 14.98% (from 1,565,562 in 2016 to 1,800,145 tourists in 2017), and in the year 2017 compared to 2018, the value of this indicator increased by 197,672 tourists, respectively by 10.98% (from 1,800,140 in 2017 to 1,997,812 tourists in 2018).

In 2016 compared to 2017, the number of Romanian tourists who visited the Danube Delta increased by 20,534 tourists, respectively 36,83% (from 55,747 in 2016 to 76,281 tourists in 2017), and in 2017 as compared to 2018, the value of this indicator increased by 63,796 tourists, respectively 83,63% (from 76,281 in 2017 to 140,077 tourists in 2018).

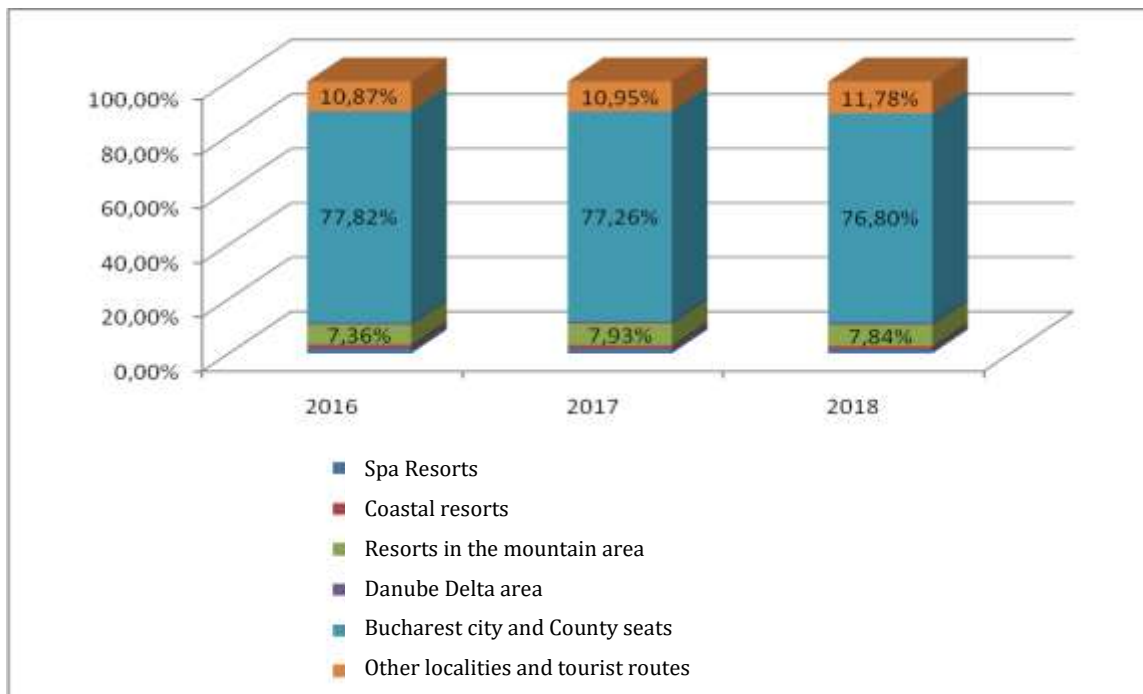
In 2016 as compared to 2017, the number of Romanian tourists visiting Bucharest and County seat cities increased by 227,911 tourists, respectively by 6,27% (from 3,632,115 in 2016 to 3,860,026 tourists in 2017) and in 2017 compared to 2018, the value of this indicator increased by 170,875 tourists, respectively by 4,43% (from 3,860,026 tourists in 2017 to 4,030,901 tourists in 2018).

In 2016 as compared to 2017, the number of Romanian tourists who visited other localities and tourist routes increased by 213,685 tourists, respectively 14,06% (from 1,520,332 in 2016 tourists to 1,734,017 tourists in 2017), and in 2017 compared to 2018, the value of this indicator increased by 150,415 tourists, respectively by 8.67% (from 1,734,017 tourists in 2017 to 1,884,432 tourists in 2018).

#### **2.1.2.6 Structure of the number of foreign tourists at national level according to the tourist destinations**

The tourist destination is an essential feature in the context of tourism development trends. According to the National Institute of Statistics, according to the chosen tourist destination, the number of foreign tourists from the national level in the period 2016 - 2018 has the following structure:

Figure no. 16 - Structure of the number of foreign tourists at national level according to tourist destinations



Source: National Institute of Statistics

As can be seen from Figure no. 16, in each of the three years of the reference period, the highest weights are registered by the urban tourist destinations - (Bucharest Municipality and County seat cities), followed by Other localities and tourist routes, Mountain resorts, Stations the coastal area, spa resorts and the Danube Delta.

In 2016, 1.86% of the total number of foreign tourists visited spa resorts, 1.39% visited seaside resorts, 7.36% visited mountain resorts, 0.70% visited Danube Delta area, 77.82% visited Bucharest and County seat cities, and 10.87% visited other localities and tourist routes.

In the year 2017, 1.77% of foreign tourists from the national level visited spa resorts, 1.22% visited seaside resorts, 7.93% visited mountain resorts, 0.87% visited Danube Delta area, 77.26% visited Bucharest and County cities, and 10.95% visited other localities and tourist routes.

In 2018, 1.41% of the total number of foreign tourists visited spa resorts, 1.26% visited seaside resorts, 7.84% visited mountain resorts, 0.91% visited The Danube Delta area, 76,80% visited Bucharest and County seat cities, and 11,78% visited other localities and tourist trails.

In 2016 as compared to 2017, the number of foreign tourists who visited spa resorts increased by 2.657 tourists, respectively by 5.77% (from 46.085 in 2016 tourists to 48.742



tourists in 2017), and in 2017 compared to 2018, the value this indicator diminished by 9,264 tourists, respectively by 19,01% (from 48,742 tourists in 2017 to 39,478 tourists in 2018).

In 2016 compared to 2017, the number of foreign tourists who visited seaside resorts decreased by 716 tourists, respectively by 2.08% (from 34.399 in 2016 to 33.683 tourists in 2017), and in 2017 compared to 2018, the value of this indicator increased by 1,662 tourists, respectively by 4.93% (from 33,683 tourists in 2017 to 35,3458 tourists in 2018).

In 2016 as compared to 2017, the number of foreign tourists who visited Mountain Resorts increased by 36,407 tourists, respectively by 19.94% (from 182,595 in 2016 tourists to 219,002 tourists in 2017) and in 2017 as compared to 2018, the value of this indicator increased by 296 tourists, respectively by 0.14% (from 219.002 tourists in 2017 to 219,298 tourists in 2018).

In 2016 as compared to 2017, the number of foreign tourists visiting the Danube Delta increased by 6,775 tourists, respectively by 39,01% (from 17,367 in 2016 tourists to 24,142 tourists in 2017), and in 2017 as compared to 2018, the value of this indicator increased by 1,212 tourists, respectively 5,02% (from 24,142 tourists in 2017 to 25,354 tourists in 2018).

In 2016 as compared to 2017, the number of foreign tourists visiting Bucharest and County seat cities increased by 201,749 tourists, respectively by 10.45% (from 1,930,628 in 2016 to 2,132,377 tourists in 2017) and in 2017 compared to 2018, the value of this indicator increased by 15,387 tourists, respectively by 0.72% (from 2,132,377 tourists in 2017 to 201,749 tourists in 2018).

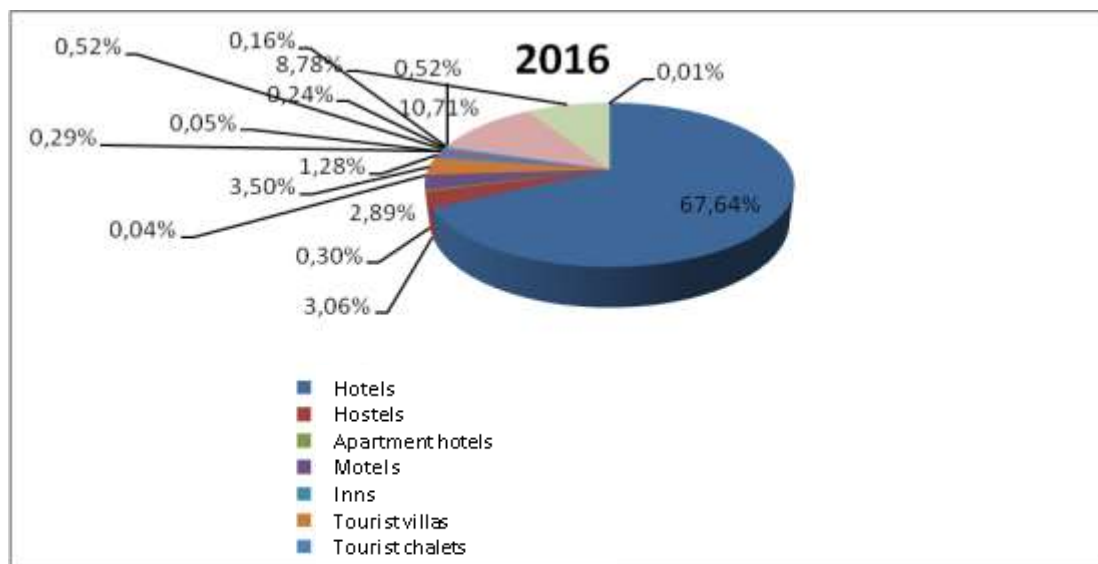
In 2016 compared to 2017, the number of foreign tourists who visited other localities and tourist routes increased by 32,384 tourists, respectively by 12,01% (from 269,750 in 2016 tourists to 302,134 tourists in 2017), and in 2017 compared to 2017 2018, the value of this indicator increased by 27,249 tourists, respectively by 9.02% (from 302,144 tourists in 2017 to 329,383 tourists in 2018).

#### **2.1.2.7 Structure of the number of Romanian tourists at national level depending on the accommodation option**

The main tourist structures preferred by the Romanian tourists from Romania in the period 2016 - 2018 are: Hotels, Hostels, Apartment hotels, Motels, Inns, Tourist villas, Tourist chalets, Bungalows, Holiday villages, Campings, Tourist stops, Tourist cottages students and preschools, tourist boarding houses, boarding houses, accommodation on river and sea vessels.

According to the National Institute of Statistics, the structure of Romanian tourists at national level according to the preferred accommodation option for each of the 3 years of the reference period is the following:

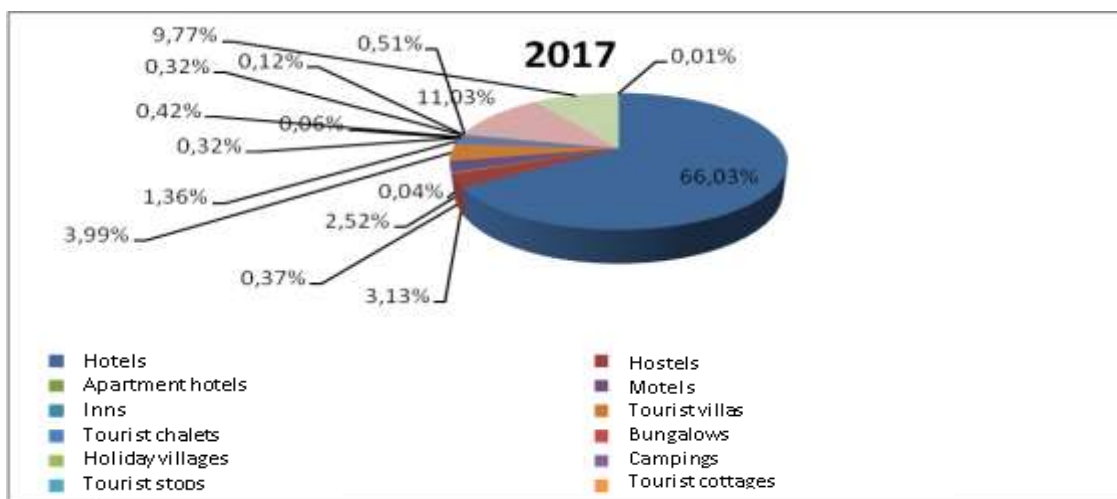
Figure no. 17 - Structure of Romanian tourists at national level according to the accommodation option in 2016



Source: National Institute of Statistics

As can be seen from Figure no. 17, in the year 2016, the structure of Romanian tourists at national level according to the option of accommodation is: Hotels (67.64%), Hostels (3.06%), Apartment hotels (0.30%), Motels (2, 89%), Inns (0.04%), Tourist Villas (3.50%), Tourist Chalets (1.28%), Bungalows (0.29%), Holiday Villages (0,05%), Campings (0,52%), Tourist Stops (0.24%), Tourist Cottages (0.16%), Camps for students and preschools (0.52%), Tourist Guesthouses (10.71%) Agrotouristic Guesthouses (8,78%) and Accommodation spaces on river and sea vessels (0.01%).

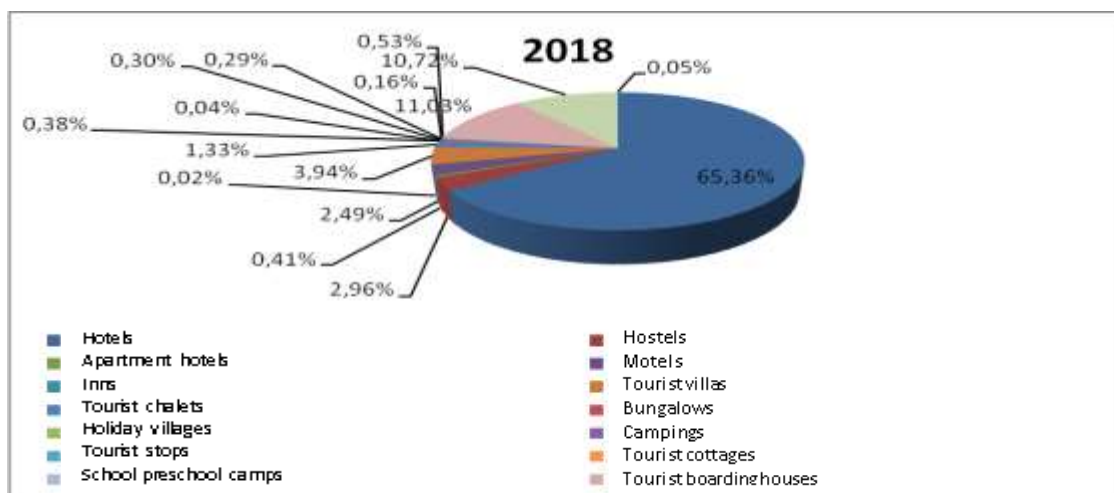
Figure no. 18 - Structure of Romanian tourists at national level according to the accommodation option in 2017



Source: National Institute of Statistics

As can be seen from Figure no. 18, in the year 2017, the structure of Romanian tourists at national level according to the option of accommodation is: Hotels (66,03%), Hostels (3,13%), Apartment hotels (0,37%), Motels (2,52%), Inns (0,04%), Tourist Villas (3,99%), Tourist Chalets (1,36%), Bungalows (0,32%), Holiday Villages (0,06%), Campings (0,42%), Tourist Stops (0,32%), Tourist Cottages (0,12%), Camps for students and preschools (0,51%), Tourist Guesthouses (11,03%) Agrotouristic Guesthouses (9,77%) and Accommodation spaces on river and sea vessels (0,01%).

Figure no. 19 - Structure of Romanian tourists at national level according to the accommodation option in 2018



Source: National Institute of Statistics

As can be seen from Figure no. 19, in the year 2018, the structure of the Romanian tourists at national level according to the option of accommodation is: Hotels (65,36%), Hostels (2,96%), Apartment hotels (0,41%), Motels (2,49%), Inns (0,02%), Tourist Villas (3,94%), Tourist Chalets (1,33%), Bungalows (0,38%), Holiday Villages (0,04%), Campings (0,30%), Tourist Stops (0,29%), Tourist Cottages (0,16%), Camps for students and preschools (0,53%), Tourist Guesthouses (11,03%) Agrotouristic Guesthouses (10,72%) and Accommodation spaces on river and sea vessels (0,05%).

From the point of view of mobility, depending on the preferred accommodation option, the number of Romanian tourists at national level in the period 2016-2018 shows the following evolution:

Table no. 5. Evolution of the number of Romanian tourists at national level according to the preferred accommodation option, between 2016 and 2018

Accommodation type	2016	2017	2018
Hotels	5.764.475	6.195.801	6.606.653
Hostels	260.788	293.593	299.007
Apartment hotels	25.754	34.558	41.350
Motels	246.147	36.588	251.499
Inns	3.227	3.378	2.407
Tourist villas	98.028	374.445	398.301
Tourist chalets	109.050	127.350	134.273
Bungalows	24.816	29.896	38.484
Holiday villages	3.887	5.644	4.217
Campings	44.541	39.511	29.954
Tourist stops	20.489	30.027	29.709
Touristic cottages	13.884	11.537	15.963



Camps for students and preschools	44.705	47.738	53.725
Tourist guesthouses	912.982	1.035.214	1.114.622
Agrotourist guesthouses	748.320	917.213	1.083.662
Accommodation spaces on river and sea vessels	605	773	4.683
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>8.521.698</b>	<b>9.383.266</b>	<b>10.108.509</b>

Source: National Institute of Statistics

In 2016 as compared to 2017, the number of Romanian tourists the national level, which opted for Hotels as their accommodation option, increased by 431,326 tourists, respectively by 7.48% (from 5,764,475 tourists in 2016 to 6,195,801 tourists in 2017), and in 2018 compared to 2017, the value of this indicator increased by 410,852 tourists, respectively by 6.63% (from 6,195,801 tourists in 2017, to 6,606,653 tourists in 2018).

In 2016 compared to 2017, the number of Romanian tourists from the national level, which opted for Hostels as their accommodation option, increased by 32,805 tourists, respectively by 12,58% (from 260,788 tourists in 2016 to 293,593 in 2017) and in 2018 compared to 2017, the value of this indicator increased by 5,414 tourists, respectively 1,84% (from 293,593 tourists in 2017, to 299,007 tourists in 2018).

In 2016 as compared to 2017, the number of Romanian tourists from the national level, which opted for Hotel Apartments as their accommodation option,, increased by 8,804 tourists, respectively by 34.18% (from 25,754 tourists in 2016 to 34,558 tourists in 2017) , and in 2018 compared to 2017 the value of this indicator increased by 6,792 tourists, respectively by 19,65% (from 34,558 tourists in 2017, to 41,350 tourists in 2018).

In 2016 compared to 2017, the number of Romanian tourists from the national level, which opted for Motels as their accommodation option,, decreased by 9,559 tourists, respectively 3,88% (from 246,147 tourists in 2016 to 236,588 tourists in 2017) and in 2018 compared to 2017, the value of this indicator increased by 14,911 tourists, respectively by 6,30% (from 236,588 tourists in 2017, to 251,499 tourists in 2018).

In 2016 compared to 2017, the number of Romanian tourists from the national level, which opted for Inns as their accommodation option,, increased by 151 tourists and 4,68% (from 3,227 tourists in 2016 to 3,378 tourists in 2017) and in 2018 compared to 2017, the value of this indicator diminished by 971 tourists, respectively by 28.74% (from 3.378 tourists in 2017, to 2.407 tourists in 2018).

In 2016 as compared to 2017, the number of Romanian tourists from the national level, which opted for Tourist Villas as their accommodation option,, increased by 76,417 tourists, respectively by 25,64% (from 298,028 tourists in 2016 to 374,445 tourists in 2017) , and in 2018 compared to 2017, the value of this indicator increased by 23,856 tourists, respectively by 6.37% (from 374,445 tourists in 2017, to 398,301 tourists in 2018).





In 2016 compared to 2017, the number of Romanian tourists from the national level which opted for Tourist Chalets as their accommodation option, increased by 18,300 tourists, respectively by 16,78% (from 109,050 tourists in 2016 to 127,350 tourists in 2017) , and in 2018 compared to 2017, the value of this indicator increased by 6,923 tourists, respectively by 5.44% (from 127,350 tourists in 2017, to 134,273 tourists in 2018).

In 2016 as compared to 2017, the number of Romanian tourists from the national level which opted for Bungalows as their accommodation option, increased by 5,080 tourists, respectively 20,47% (from 24,816 tourists in 2016 to 29,896 tourists in 2017) and in 2018 compared to 2017, the value of this indicator increased by 8,588 tourists, respectively by 28,73% (from 29,896 tourists in 2017, to 38,484 tourists in 2018).

In 2016 compared to 2017, the number of Romanian tourists from the national level which opted for Holiday Villages as their accommodation option, increased by 1,757 tourists, respectively by 45,20% (from 3,887 tourists in 2016 to 5,644 tourists in 2017) , and in 2018 compared to 2017, the value of this indicator diminished by 1,427 tourists, respectively by 25.28% (from 5,644 tourists in 2017, to 4,217 tourists in 2018).

In 2016 as compared to 2017, the number of Romanian tourists from the national level, which opted for Campings as their accommodation option, decreased by 5,030 tourists, respectively by 11,29% (from 44,541 tourists in 2016 to 39,511 tourists in 2017) and in 2018 compared to 2017, the value of this indicator diminished by 9,557 accounts, respectively by 24,19% (from 39,511 tourists in 2017, to 29,954 tourists in 2018).

In 2016 as compared to 2017, the number of Romanian tourists from the national level, which opted for Tourist Stops as their accommodation option, increased by 9,538 tourists, respectively by 46,55% (from 20,489 tourists in 2016 to 30,027 tourists in 2017) , and in 2018 compared to 2017, the value of this indicator decreased by 318 tourists, respectively by 1.06% (from 30.027 tourists in 2017, to 29.709 tourists in 2018).

In 2016 compared to the year 2017, the number of Romanian tourists from the national level, which opted for Tourist Cottages as their accommodation option, decreased by 2.347 tourists, respectively by 16.90% (from 13.884 tourists in 2016 to 11.537 tourists in 2017) , and in 2018 compared to 2017, the value of this indicator increased by 4,426 accounts, respectively by 38.36% (from 11,537 in 2017, to 15,963 in 2018).

In 2016 as compared to 2017, the number of Romanian tourists from the national level which opted for Camps for students and preschools as their accommodation option increased by 3,033 tourists, respectively by 6,78% (from 44,705 tourists in 2016 to 47,738 entries in 2017), and in 2018 compared to 2017, the value of this indicator increased by 5.987 entries, ie 12.54% (from 47.738 tourists in 2017, to 53.725 tourists in 2018).

In 2016 compared to 2017, the number of Romanian tourists from the national level, which opted for Tourist Guesthouses as their accommodation option, increased by 122,232



tourists, respectively by 13,39% (from 912,982 tourists in 2016 to 1,035,214 tourists in 2017), and in 2018 compared to 2017, the value of this indicator increased by 79,408 tourists, respectively by 7.67% (from 1,035,214 in 2017, to 1,114,622 in 2018).

In 2016 compared to 2017, the number of Romanian tourists from the national level, which opted for Agrotourism Guesthouses as their accommodation option, increased by 168,893 tourists, respectively by 22.57% (from 748,320 tourists in 2016 to 917,213 tourists in 2017) , and in 2018 compared to 2017, the value of this indicator increased by 166,449 tourists, respectively by 18.15% (from 917,213 tourists in 2017, to 1,083,662 tourists in 2018).

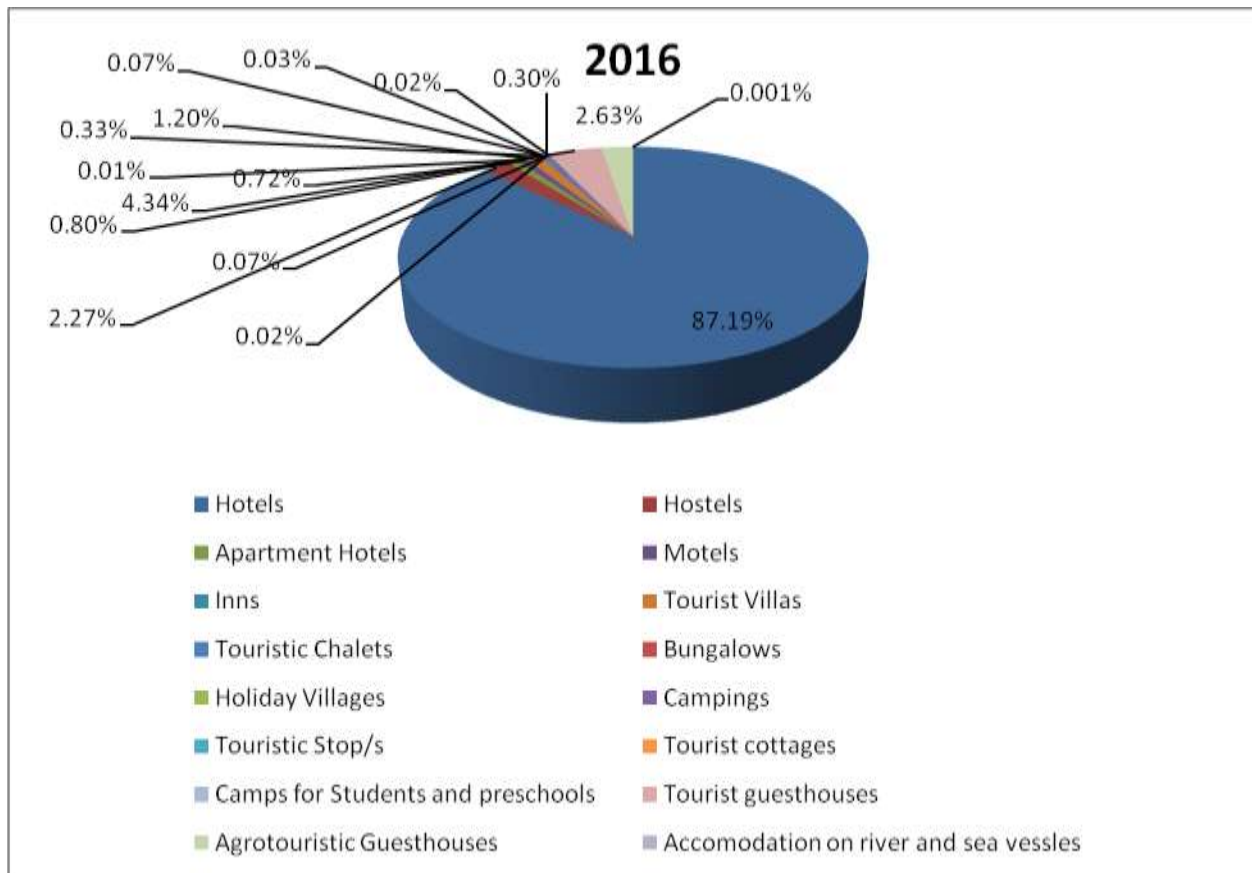
In 2016 compared to 2017, the number of Romanian tourists from the national level, which opted for Accommodation spaces on river and sea vessels as their accommodation option, increased by 168 tourists, respectively by 27.77% (from 605 tourists to 2016 to tourists in 2017), and in 2018 as compared to 2017, the value of this indicator increased by 3,910 tourists, respectively by 505.82% (from 773 accounts in 2017 to 4,683 in 2018).

#### **2.1.2.8 Structure of national tourism number of national level accompanied by the accommodation option**

The main tourist structures preferred by foreign tourists in Romania between 2016 and 2018 are: Hotels, Hostels, Apartment Hotels, Motels, Inns, Tourist Villas, Tourist Chalets, Bungalows, Holiday Villages, Campings, Tourist Stops, Tourist Cottages, Camps For Students And Preschools, Tourist Guesthouses, Agrotourist Guesthouses, Accommodation on River and Sea Vessels.

According to the National Institute of Statistics, the structure of foreign tourists at national level according to the preferred accommodation option for each of the 3 years of the reference period is the following:

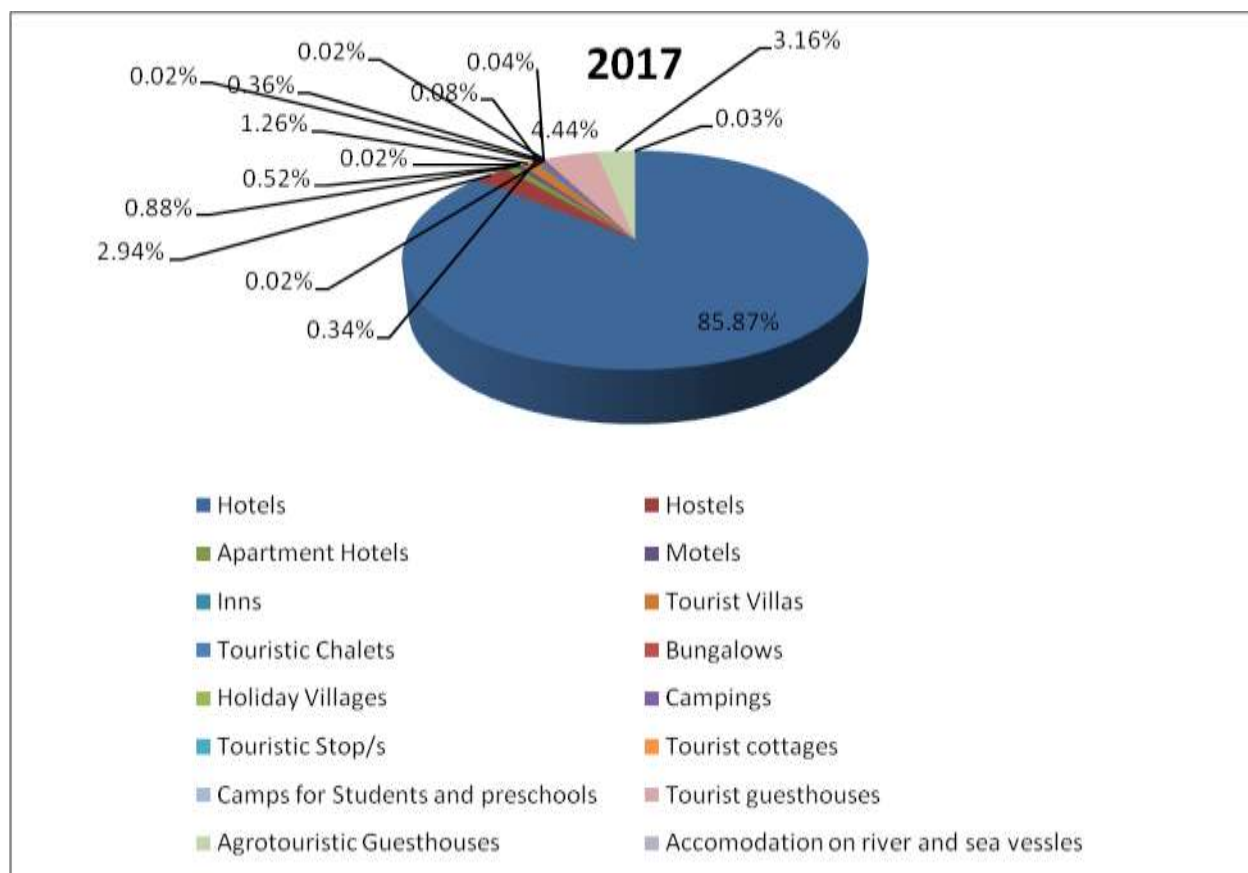
Figure no. 20 - Structure of foreign tourists at national level according to the option of accommodation in 2016



Source: National Institute of Statistics

As can be seen from Figure no. 20, in the year 2016, the structure of foreign tourists at national level according to the option of accommodation is: Hotels (87,19%), Hostels (2,27%), Apartment Hotels (0,80%), Motels (0, 72%), Inns (0,01%), Tourist Villas (1.20%), Tourist Chalets (0.33%), Bungalows (0.07%), Holiday Villages (0,03%), Campings (0,30%), Tourist Stops (0,02%), Tourist Cottages (0,02%), Tourist Cottages (0,02%), Camps For Students And Preschools (0,07%), Tourist Guesthouses (4,34%), Agrotourist Guesthouses(2,63%) And Accommodation Spaces On River And Sea Vessels (0.001%).

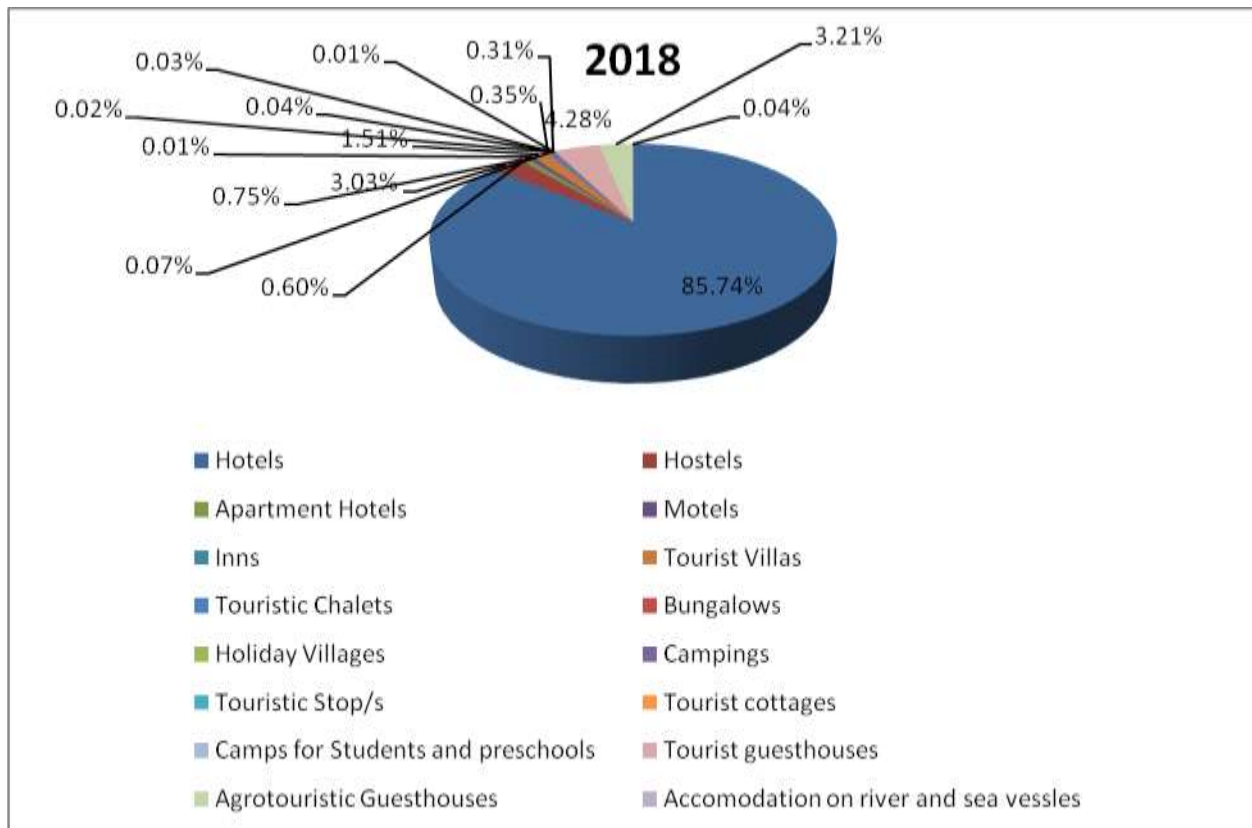
Figure no. 21 - Structure of foreign tourists at national level according to the accommodation option in 2017



Source: National Institute of Statistics

As can be seen from Figure no. 21, in the year 2017, the structure of foreign tourists at national level according to the option of accommodation is: Hotels (85,87%), Hostels (2,94%), Apartment Hotels (0,88%), Motels (0, 52%), Chalets (0.02%), Tourist Villas (1.26%), Tourist Chalets (0.34%), Bungalows (0.08%), (0.04%), Tourist Cottages (0.04%), Tourist Cottages (0.02%), Camps For Pupils And Preschools (0.02%), 16%) And Accommodation On River And Sea Vessels (0.03%).

Figure no. 22 - Structure of foreign tourists at national level according to the accommodation option in 2018



Source: National Institute of Statistics

As can be seen from Figure no. - in 2018, the structure of foreign tourists at national level according to the option of accommodation is: Hotels (85.74%), Hostels (3.03%), Apartment Hotels (0.75%), Motels (0.60%), Inns (0.01%), Tourist Villas (1.51%), Touristic Chalets (0.35%), Bungalows (0.07%), Holiday Villages (0.02%), Campings (0.31%), Touristic Stops (0.03%), Tourist Cottages (0.01%), Camps For Pupils And Preschools (0.04%), Tourist Guesthouses (4.28%) Agrotourist Guesthouses (3.21%) And Accommodation Spaces On River And Sea Vessels (0.04%).

From the point of view of mobility, depending on the preferred accommodation option, the number of foreign tourists from the national level in the period 2016 - 2018 shows the following evolution:

Table no. 6. Evolution of the number of foreign tourists at national level according to the preferred accommodation option between 2016 and 2018

Accommodation type	2016	2017	2018
Hotels	2.163.065	2.370.178	2.397.833

Hostels	56.239	81.213	84.689
Apartment hotels	19.867	24.246	20.945
Motels	17.939	14.459	16.811
Inns	182	550	223
Tourist villas	29.796	34.720	42.196
Tourist chalets	8.254	9.482	9.909
Bungalows	1.667	2.300	2.054
Holiday villages	701	589	624
Campings	7.502	9.973	8.565
Tourist stops	593	987	821
Touristic cottages	480	563	387
Camps for students and preschools	1.763	475	1.006
Tourist guesthouses	107.624	122.451	119.673
Agrotourist guesthouses	65.134	87.187	89.793
Accommodation spaces on river and sea vessels	18	707	1.093
TOTAL	2.480.824	2.760.080	2.796.622

Source: National Institute of Statistics

In 2016 as compared to 2017, the number of foreign tourists from the national level, who opted for Hotel as their accommodation option, increased by 207.113 tourists, respectively by 9.57% (from 2,163,065 tourists in 2016 to 2,370,178 tourists in 2017) and in 2018 compared to 2017 the value of this indicator increased by 27,655 tourists, respectively by 1,17% (from 2,370,178 tourists in 2017 to 2,397,833 tourists in 2018).

In 2016 compared to 2017, the number of foreign tourists from the national level who opted for Hostel as their accommodation option increased by 24,974 tourists, respectively by 44,41 %% (from 56,239 tourists in 2016 to 81,213 in 2017) , and in 2018 compared to 2017, the value of this indicator increased by 3,476 tourists, respectively by 4,28% (from 81,213 tourists in 2017, to 84,689 tourists in 2018).

In 2016 compared to the year 2017, the number of foreign tourists from the national level, who opted for Apartment Hotel as their accommodation option, increased by 4,379 tourists, respectively by 22.04% (from 19,867 tourists in 2016 to 24,246 tourists in 2017) , and in 2018



compared to 2017, the value of this indicator diminished by 3,301 tourists, respectively by 13,61% (from 24,246 tourists in 2017, to 20,945 tourists in 2018).

In 2016 compared to 2017, the number of foreign tourists from the national level, who opted for Motel as their accommodation option, decreased by 3.480 tourists, respectively by 19.40% (from 17.939 tourists in 2016 to 14.459 tourists in 2017) and in 2018 compared to 2017 the value of this indicator increased by 2.352 tourists, respectively by 16.27% (from 14.459 tourists in 2017, to 16.811 tourists in 2018).

In 2016 as compared to 2017, the number of foreign tourists from the national level who opted for Inns as their accommodation option increased by 368 tourists, respectively by 202.20% (from 182 tourists in 2016 to 550 tourists in 2017) and in 2018 compared to 2017, the value of this indicator diminished by 327 tourists, respectively by 59.45% (from 550 tourists in 2017, to 223 tourists in 2018).

In 2016 as compared to 2017, the number of foreign tourists from the national level, who opted for Tourist Villas as their accommodation option, increased by 4,924 tourists, respectively 16,53% (from 29,796 tourists in 2016 to 34,720 tourists in 2017) , and in 2018 compared to 2017, the value of this indicator increased by 7,476 tourists, respectively by 21.53% (from 34,720 tourists in 2017, to 42,196 tourists in 2018).

In 2016 compared to 2017, the number of foreign tourists from the national level, who opted for Toursit Chalets as their accommodation option, increased by 1,228 tourists, respectively by 14,88% (from 8,254 tourists in 2016 to 9,482 tourists in 2017) , and in 2018 compared to 2017, the value of this indicator increased by 427 tourists, ie by 4.50% (from 9,482 tourists in 2017, to 9,909 tourists in 2018).

In 2016 as compared to 2017, the number of foreign tourists from the national level who opted for Bungalows as their accommodation option increased by 633 tourists respectively 37.97% (from 1,667 tourists in 2016 to 2,300 tourists in 2017) and in 2018 compared to 2017, the value of this indicator diminished by 246 tourists, respectively by 10.70% (from 2.300 tourists in 2017, to 2,054 tourists in 2018).

In 2016 compared to 2017, the number of foreign tourists from the national level, who opted for Holiday Villages as their accommodation option, decreased by 112 tourists, respectively by 15.98% (from 701 tourists in 2016 to 589 tourists in 2017 ), and in 2018 compared to 2017, the value of this indicator increased by 35 tourists, respectively by 5.94% (from 589 tourists in 2017, to 624 tourists in 2018).

In 2016 as compared to 2017, the number of foreign tourists from the national level, who opted for Campings as their accommodation option, increased by 2.471 tourists, respectively by 32.94% (from 7,502 tourists in 2016 to 9,973 tourists in 2017) and in 2018 compared to 2017, the value of this indicator diminished by 1,408 tourists, respectively by 14,12% (from 9,973 tourists in 2017, to 8,565 tourists in 2018).





In 2016 compared to 2017, the number of tourists from the national level, who opted for Tourist Stops as their accommodation option, increased by 394 tourists, respectively by 66.44% (from 593 tourists in 2016 to 987 tourists in 2017) and in 2018 compared to 2017, the value of this indicator diminished by 166 tourists, respectively by 16.82% (from 987 tourists in 2017, to 821 tourists in 2018).

In 2016 as compared to 2017, the number of tourists from the national level, who opted for Tourist Cottages as their accommodation option, increased by 83 tourists, respectively by 17.29% (from 480 tourists in 2016 to 563 tourists in 2017) and in 2018 compared to 2017, the value of this indicator diminished by 176 entries, respectively by 31.26% (from 563 tourists in 2017, to 387 tourists in 2018).

In 2016 as compared to 2017, the number of tourists from the national level who opted for Camps for Students and preschools as their accommodation option decreased by 1,288 tourists, respectively 73.06% (from 1,763 tourists in 2016 to 475 tourists in 2017), and in 2018 compared to 2017, the value of this indicator increased by 531 accounts, respectively by 111.79% (from 475 tourists in 2017, to 1,006 in 2018).

In 2016 compared to 2017, the number of tourists from the national level, who opted for Tourist Guesthouses as their accommodation option, increased by 14,827 tourists, respectively by 13.78% (from 107,624 tourists in 2016 to 122,451 in 2017) and in 2018 compared to 2017, the value of this indicator diminished by 2,778 tourists, respectively by 2.27% (from 122,451 in 2017 to 119,673 in 2018).

In 2016 compared to 2017, the number of tourists from the national level, who opted for Agrotourist Guesthouses as their accommodation option, increased by 22,053 tourists, respectively by 33.86% (from 65,134 tourists in 2016 to 87,187 tourists in 2017) and in 2018 compared to 2017, the value of this indicator increased by 2,606 tourists, respectively by 2.99% (from 87,187 tourists in 2017 to 89,793 tourists in 2018).

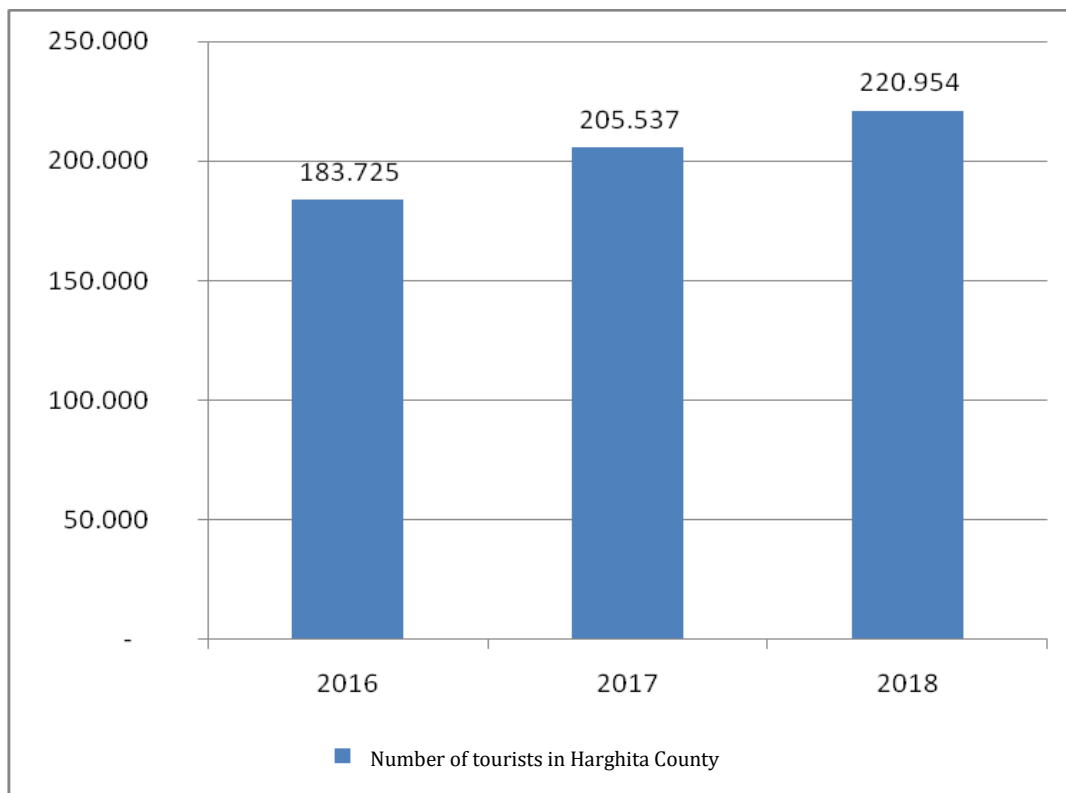
In 2016 compared to the year 2017, the number of tourists from the national level, who opted for Accommodation Spaces On River And Sea Vessels as their accommodation option, increased by 689 tourists, respectively by 3827.78% (from 18 tourists in 2016 to 207 in 2017), and in 2018 compared to 2017, the value of this indicator increased by 386 tourists, respectively by 54.60% (from 207 entries in 2017 to 593 tourists in 2018).

## **2.1.3 EVOLUTION OF TOURIST DEMAND REGISTERED IN HARGHITA COUNTY**

### **2.1.3.1. Evolution of the number of tourists from Harghita County**

The number of tourists is an important indicator in formulating the conclusions regarding the tourism development at Harghita County level. According to the National Institute of Statistics, between 2016 and 2018, the number of tourists in the County of Harghita is the following:

Figure no. 23 - Evolution of the number of tourists from the Harghita County, between 2016 and 2018



Source: National Institute of Statistics

As can be seen from figure no. 23, between 2016 and 2018, the number of tourists in Romania evolved in an upward direction. Thus, in 2017 compared to 2016, the number of tourists in the County of Harghita increased by 21,812 tourists (from 183,725 tourists in 2016 to 205,537 tourists in 2017), respectively by 11,87%, and in 2018 compared to 2017, the value this indicator increased by 15,417 tourists (from 205,537 tourists in 2017 to 220,954 tourists in 2018).

The upward trend of the number of tourists registered between 2016 and 2018 highlights the tourism development capacity at Harghita County level.

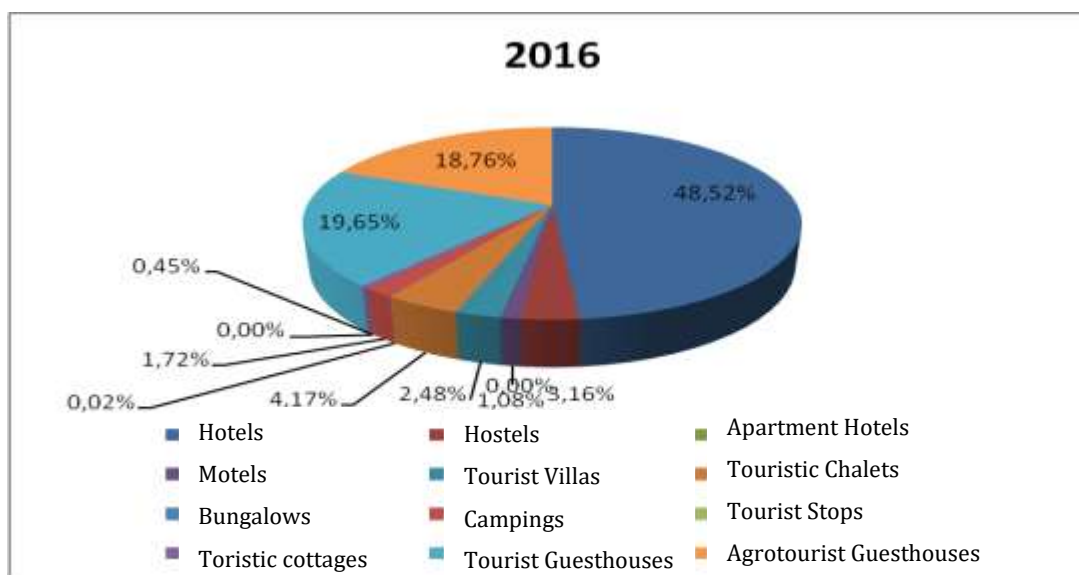
Besides the official statistical data, provided by the National Institute of Statistics, during an internal investigation, conducted by the Tourist Destinations Management Cluster “Szekler Land” was found that for the year 2018, the number of tourists that visited the Harghita County was 215.405 people.

#### 2.1.3.2. Structure of the tourists from Harghita County according to the accommodation option

The main tourist structures preferred by the tourists from the Harghita County level 2016 - 2018 are: Hotels, Hostels, Apartment hotels, Motels, Tourist villas, Tourist chalets, Bungalows, Campings, Tourist stops, Tourist cottages, Tourist guesthouses and agrotourist guesthouses.

According to the National Institute of Statistics, the structure of the tourists from Harghita County according to the preferred accommodation option for each of the 3 years of the reference period is the following:

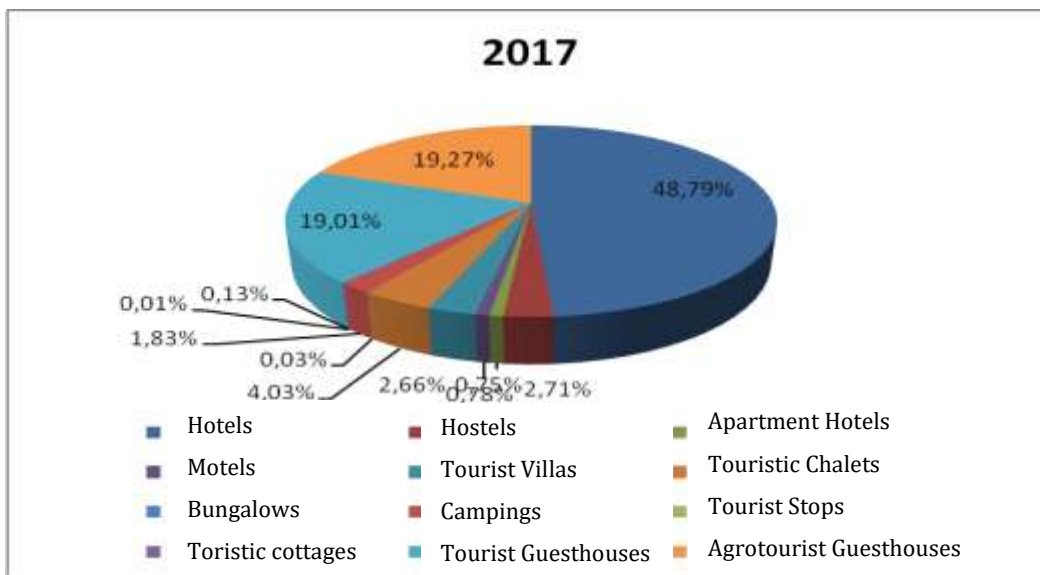
Figure no. 24 - Structure of the tourists from Harghita County according to the accommodation option in 2016



Source: National Institute of Statistics

As can be seen from Figure no. 24, in the year 2016, the structure of the tourists from Harghita County level according to the option of accommodation is: Hotels (48,52%), Hostels (3,16%), Apartment hotels (0%), Motels (1,08%), Tourist villas (2,48%), Tourist chalets (4,17%), Bungalows (0,02%), Campings (1,72%), Tourist Stops (0%), Tourist cottages (0,45%), Camps tourist cottages (10,45%), Tourist guesthouses (19.65%) and Agrotourist guesthouses (18.76%).

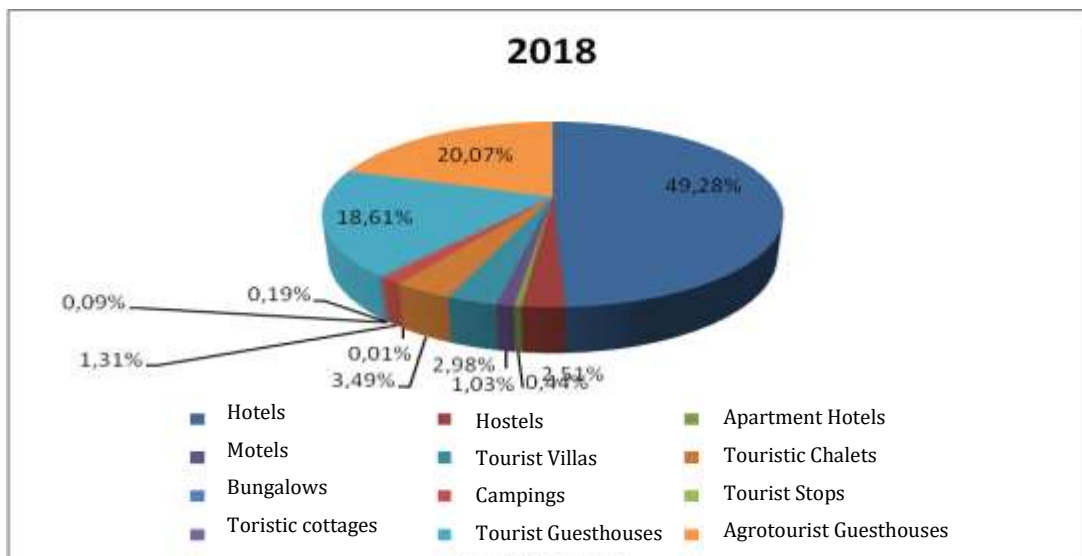
Figure no. 25 - Structure of the tourists from Harghita County according to the accommodation option in 2017



Source: National Institute of Statistics

As can be seen from Figure no. 25, in the year 2017, the structure of the tourists from Harghita County level according to the option of accommodation is: Hotels (48,79%), Hostels (2,71%), Apartment Hotels (0,75%), Motels (0,78%), Tourist Villas (2,66%), Tourist Chalets (4,03%), Bungalows (0,03%), campings (1,83%) Tourist Stops (0,01%), Tourist cottages (0,13%), Tourist Guesthouses (19,01%) And Agrotourist Guesthouses (19,27%).

Figure no. 26 - Structure of tourists from the County of Harghita according to the option of accommodation, in 2018



Source: National Institute of Statistics

As can be seen from Figure no. 26, in the year 2018, the structure of the tourists from Harghita County according to the option of accommodation is: Hotels (49,28%), Hostels (2,51%), Apartment Hotels (0,44%), Motels (1,03%), Tourist Villas (2,98%), Tourist Chalets (3,49%), Bungalows (0,01%), Campings (1,31%), Tourist Stops (0,09%), Touristic Cottages (0,19%), Tourist Guesthouses (18,61%) And Agrotourist Guesthouses (20,07%).

From the point of view of mobility, depending on the preferred accommodation option, the number of tourists from the Harghita County between 2016 and 2018 shows the following evolution:

Table no. 7. The evolution of the number of tourists from the Harghita County according to the preferred accommodation option, between 2016 and 2018

Accommodation type	2016	2017	2018
Hotels	89.136	100.280	108.878
Hostels	5.809	5.573	5.535
Apartment Hotels	-	1.535	962
Motels	1.984	1.596	2.269
Tourist Villas	4.552	5.475	6.583
Tourist Chalets	7.668	8.293	7.713
Bungalows	37	66	26
Campings	3.152	3.763	2.903
Tourist Stops	-	14	203
Tourist Cottages	821	261	418
Tourist Guesthouses	36.094	39.064	41.121



Agrotourist Guesthouses	34.472	39.617	44.343
TOTAL	183.725	205.537	220.954

Source: National Institute of Statistics

In 2016 compared to 2017, the number of tourists from the County of Harghita which opted for Hotels as their accommodation option increased by 11,144 tourists, respectively by 12.5% (from 89,136 tourists in 2016 to 100,280 tourists in 2017) and in 2018 compared to 2017, the value of this indicator increased by 8,598 tourists, respectively by 8.57% (from 100,280 tourists in 2017, to 108,878 tourists in 2018).

In 2016 compared to 2017, the number of tourists from the County of Harghita which opted for Hostels as their accommodation option decreased by 236 tourists, respectively 4.06% (from 5,809 tourists in 2016 to 5,573 tourists in 2017) and in 2018 compared to 2017, the value of this indicator diminished by 38 tourists, respectively by 0.68% (from 5 573 tourists in 2017, to 5 535 tourists in 2018).

In 2016 as compared to 2017, the number of tourists from the County of Harghita which opted for Apartment Hotels as their accommodation option, increased by 1535 tourists (from 0 tourists in 2016 to 1,535 tourists in 2017), and in 2018 by 2017, the value of this indicator diminished by 573 tourists, respectively by 37.33% (from 1,535 tourists in 2017, to 962 tourists in 2018).

In 2016 compared to 2017, the number of tourists from the County of Harghita which opted for Motels as their accommodation option, decreased by 388 tourists (from 1,984 tourists in 2016 to 1,596 tourists in 2017), respectively by 19.56% , and in 2018 compared to 2017 the value of this indicator increased by 673 tourists, respectively by 42.17% (from 1,596 tourists in 2017, to 2,269 tourists in 2018).

In 2016 compared to 2017, the number of tourists from the County of Harghita which opted for Tourist Villas as their accommodation option, increased by 923 tourists (from 4,552 tourists in 2016 to 5,475 tourists in 2017), respectively by 20.28 and in 2018 compared to 2017, the value of this indicator increased by 1108 tourists, respectively by 20.24% (from 5,475 tourists in 2017, to 6,583 tourists in 2018).

In 2016 compared to the year 2017, the number of tourists from the County of Harghita which opted for Tourist Chalets as their accommodation option increased by 625 tourists (from 7,668 tourists in 2016 to 8,293 tourists in 2017), respectively by 8.15 and in 2018 compared to 2017 the value of this indicator decreased by 580 tourists, ie by 6.99% (from 8.293 tourists in 2017 to 7.713 tourists in 2018).

In 2016 as compared to 2017, the number of tourists from the County of Harghita which opted for Bungalows as their accommodation option increased by 29 tourists (from 37 tourists in 2016 to 66 tourists in 2017), respectively by 78.38% , and in 2018 compared to 2017, the value of



this indicator diminished by 40 tourists, respectively by 60.61% (from 66 entries in 2017, to 26 tourists in 2018).

In 2016 compared to 2017, the number of tourists from the County of Harghita which opted for Holiday Villages as their accommodation option, increased by 611 tourists (from 3.152 tourists in 2016 to 3.763 tourists in 2017), respectively by 19,38%, and in 2018 compared to 2017, the value of this indicator decreased by 860 tourists, respectively by 22,85% (from 3.763 tourists in 2017, to 2.903 tourists in 2018).

In 2016 as compared to the year 2017, the number of tourists from the County of Harghita which opted for Tourist Stops as their accommodation option, increased by 14 tourists (from 0 tourists in 2016 to 14 tourists in 2017), and in 2018 by 2017, the value of this indicator increased by 189 tourists, respectively by 1350% (from 14 in 2017, to 203 tourists in 2018).

In 2016 as compared to 2017, the number of tourists from the County of Harghita which opted for Tourist Cottages as their accommodation option decreased by 560 tourists (from 821 tourists in 2016 to 261 tourists in 2017), respectively by 68.21 and in 2018 compared to 2017 the value of this indicator increased by 157 tourists, respectively by 60.15% (from 261 entries in 2017 to 418 tourists in 2018).

In 2016 as compared to 2017, the number of tourists from the County of Harghita which opted for Camps for students and preschools as their accommodation option, increased by 547 tourists (from 2,144 tourists in 2016 to 2,681 in 2017), respectively 25.63%, and in 2018 compared to 2017, the value of this indicator decreased by 929 tourists, respectively by 34.65% (from 2.681 in 2017, to 1.752 tourists in 2018).

In 2016 as compared to 2017, the number of tourists from the County of Harghita which opted for Tourist Guesthouses as their accommodation option, increased by 2,970 tourists (from 36,094 tourists in 2016 to 39,064 in 2017) respectively by 8,23 %, and in 2018 compared to 2017, the value of this indicator increased by 2,057 entries, respectively by 5.27% (from 39,064 tourists in 2017, to 41,121 tourists in 2018).

In 2016 as compared to 2017, the number of tourists from the County of Harghita which opted for Agrotourist Guesthouses as their accommodation option increased by 5,145 tourists (from 34,472 tourists in 2016 to 39,617 tourists in 2017), respectively by 14,93 %, and in 2018 compared to 2017, the value of this indicator increased by 4.726 entries, respectively by 11.93% (from 39.617 entries in 2017, to 44.343 tourists in 2018).

In addition to the official statistical data provided by the National Institute of Statistics, the results of an internal survey conducted by the Tourist Destination Management Cluster "Szekler Land" at the Harghita County level, shows the following structure of tourists at County level, depending on the accommodation option: Hotels - 50,99% (109,840 tourists), Motels - 1,05% (2,269 tourists), Tourist villas - 3,06% (6,583 tourists), Tourist chalets - 3,58% (7713





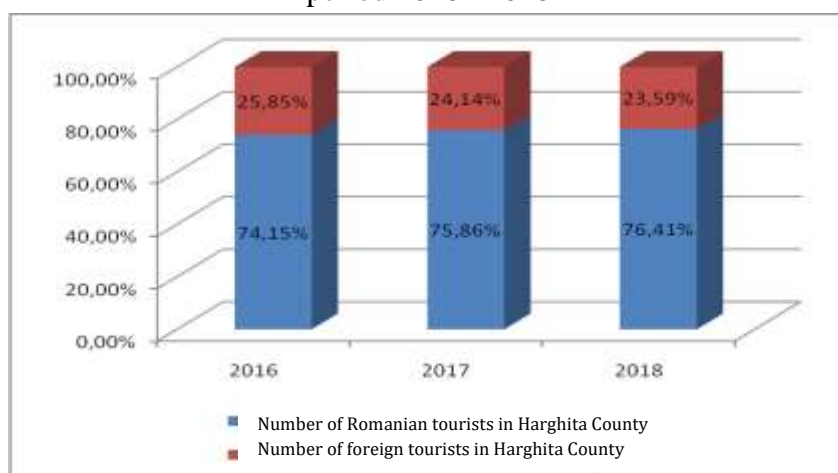
tourists) Tourist Guesthouses- 18,35% (39,528 tourists), Agrotourism Guesthouses - 18,75% (40,387 tourists).

### 2.1.3.3. Structure of tourists at Harghita County Level depending on their provenance

At the level of Harghita County, two types of tourism predominate: domestic tourism - involving the number of Romanian tourists visiting tourist attractions in the County of Harghita and foreign tourism - involving the number of foreign tourists who visit the tourist destinations on the territory of this County.

Depending on their provenance, the number of tourists from Harghita County in the period 2016 - 2018 has the following structure:

Figure no. 27 - Structure of the tourists from Harghita County according to their origin in the period 2016 - 2018



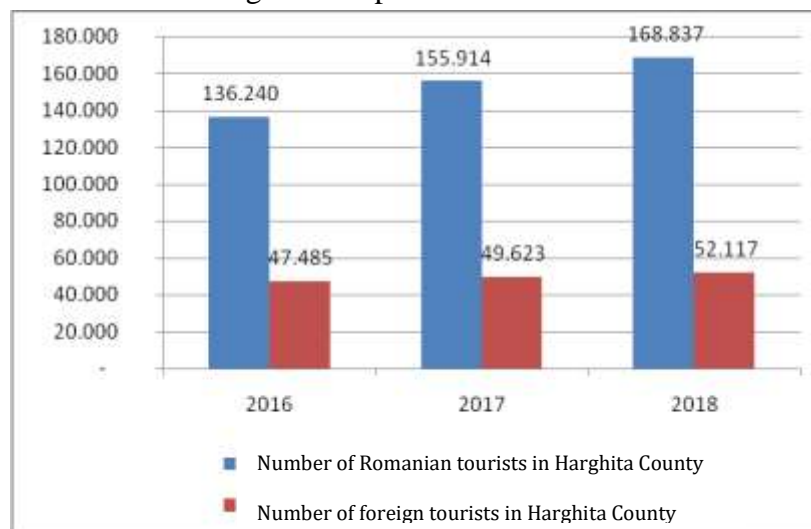
Source: National Institute of Statistics

As can be seen from Figure no. 27, between 2016 and 2018, Harghita County is predominant of domestic tourism, practiced by members of the Romanian population who travel to the localities of this County for the purpose of visiting tourist attractions. Of the total number of tourists from the County of Harghita, the number of Romanian tourists represented 74.15% in 2016, 75.86% in 2017 and 76.41% in 2018.

The foreign tourism practiced at the level of Harghita County is in modest proportions; therefore, the number of foreign tourists represents 25.85% in 2016, 24.14% in 2017 and 23.59% in 2018

From the perspective of mobility, between 2016 and 2018, the number of tourists according to their origin is the following:

Figure no. 28 - Evolution of the number of tourists in the County of Harghita according to their origin in the period 2016 – 2018



Source: National Institute of Statistics

As can be seen from Figure 28, between 2016 and 2018, at the level of Harghita County, the number of Romanian tourists and the number of foreign tourists evolved in ascending order.

In 2017 as compared to 2016, the number of Romanian tourists in Harghita County increased by 19,674 tourists respectively by 14,44% (from 136,240 tourists in 2016 to 155,914 in 2017) and in 2018 compared to 2017 the value of this indicator increased by 12,923 tourists, respectively by 8,29% (from 155,914 tourists in 2017 to 168,837 tourists in 2018).

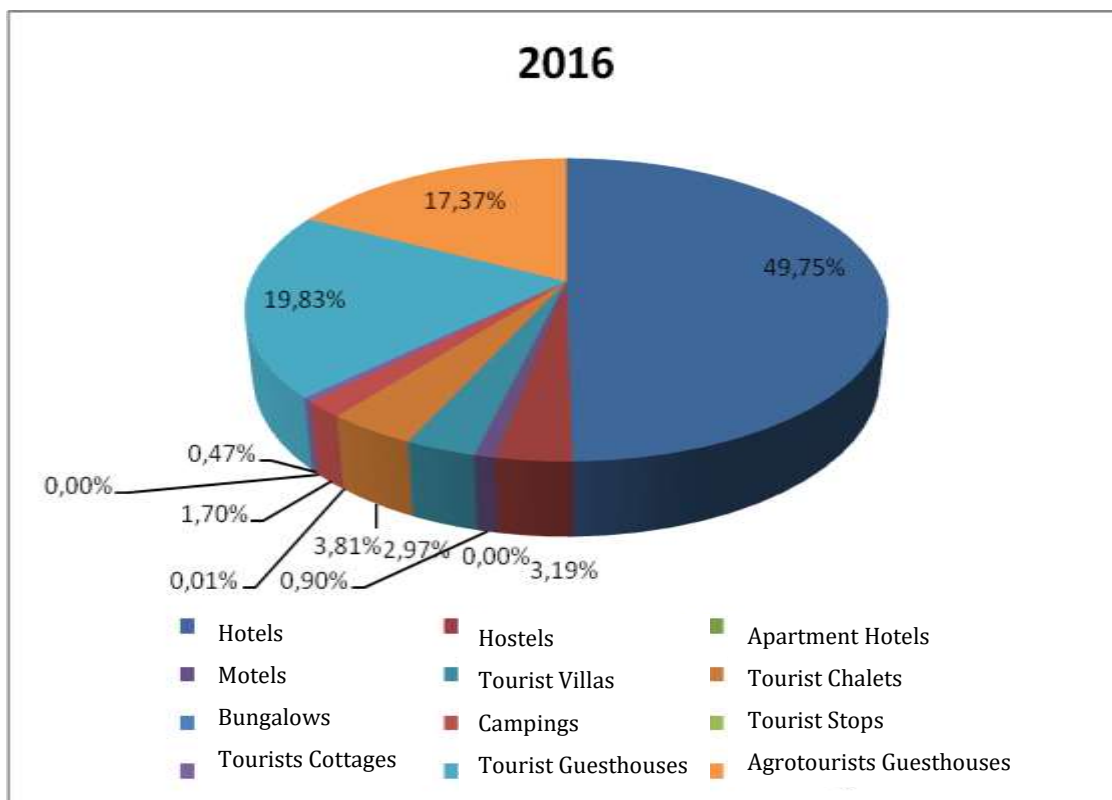
In 2017 as compared to 2016, the number of foreign tourists from the Harghita County increased by 2,138 tourists respectively by 4,50% (from 47,485 tourists in 2016 to 49,623 tourists in 2017), and in 2018 compared to 2017 the value of this indicator increased by 2,494 tourists, respectively 5,03% (from 49,623 tourists in 2017 to 52,117 tourists in 2018).

#### **2.1.3.4. THE STRUCTURE OF THE ROMANIAN TOURISTS FROM THE HARGHITA COUNTY LEVEL IN ACCOMMODATION FUNCTION OPERATION**

The main tourist structures preferred by Romanian tourists from the Harghita County level 2016 - 2018 are: Hotels, Hostels, Apartment Hotels, Motels, Tourist villas, Tourist Chalets, Bungalows, Campings, Tourist Stops, Tourist Cottages, Camps for students and preschools, Tourist Guesthouses and Agrotourist Guesthouses.

According to the National Institute of Statistics, the structure of the Romanian tourists from Harghita County according to the preferred accommodation option for each of the 3 years of the reference period is the following:

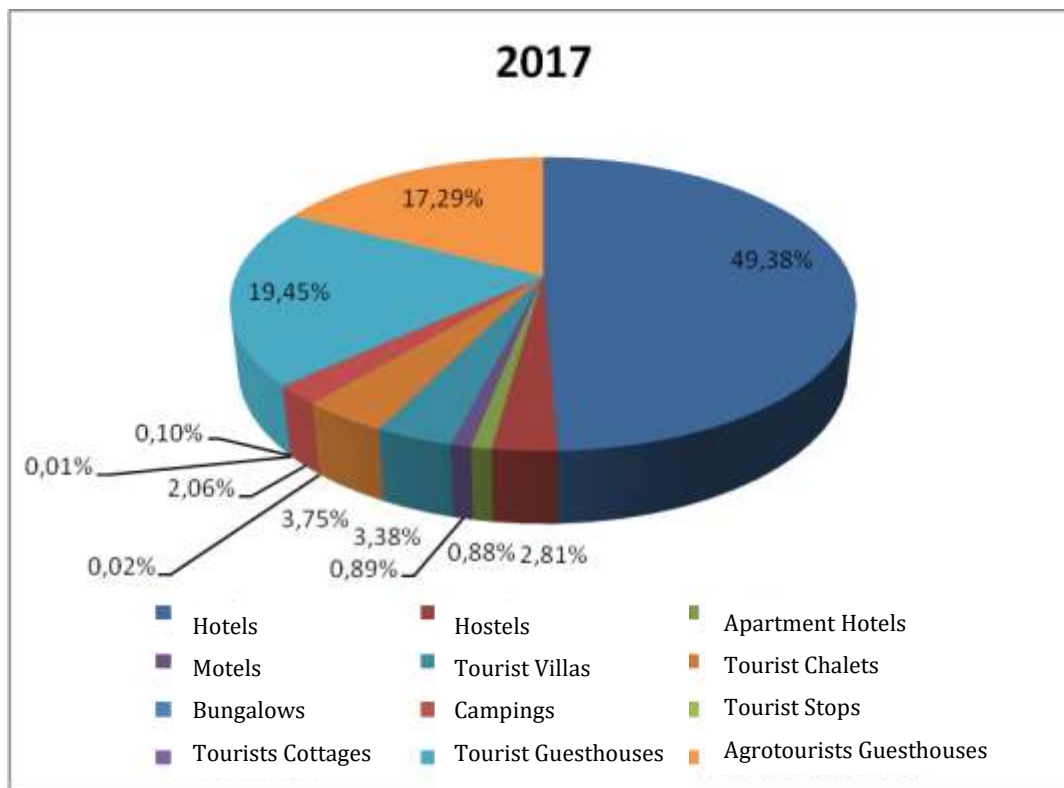
Figure no. 29. Structure of the Romanian tourists from Harghita County according to the accommodation option in 2016



Source: National Institute of Statistics

As can be seen from Figure no. 29, in the year 2016, the structure of Romanian tourists from Harghita County level according to the option of accommodation is: Hotels (49,75%), Hostels (3,19%), Apartment Hotels (0%), Motels (0,09%), Tourist Villas (2,97%), Tourist Chalets (3,81%), Bungalows (0,01%), Campings (0,30%), Tourist Stops (0%), Tourist Cottages (0,47%), Camps For Students And Preschools (1,39%), Tourist Guesthouses (19,83%) And Agrotourist Guesthouses (17,37%).

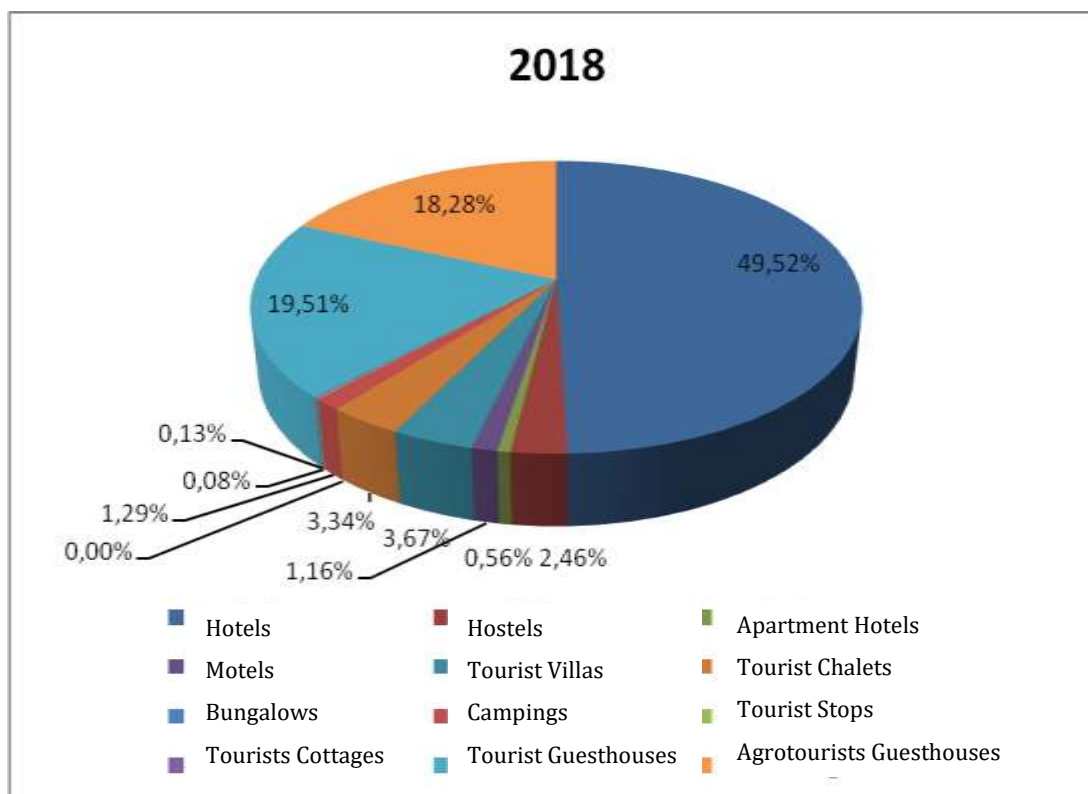
Figure no. 30. Structure of Romanian tourists from the County of Harghita according to the option of accommodation in 2017



Source: National Institute of Statistics

As can be seen from Figure no. 30, in the year 2017, the structure of the Romanian tourists from Harghita County level according to the option of accommodation is: Hotels (49,38%), Hostels (2,81%), Apartment Hotels (0,88%), Motels 0,89%), Tourist Villas (3,38%), Tourist Chalets (3,75%), Bungalows (0,02%), Campings (0,48%), Tourist Stops (0,01%), Tourist Cottages (0,10%), Camps For Students And Preschools (1,58%), Tourist Guesthouses (19,45%) And Agrotourist Guesthouses (17,29%).

Figure no. 31- Structure of Romanian tourists from Harghita County according to the option of accommodation in 2018



Source: National Institute of Statistics

As can be seen from Figure no. 31, in the year 2018, the structure of the Romanian tourists at the Harghita County level according to the option of accommodation is: Hotels (49.52%), Hostels (2.46%), Apartment hotels (0.56%), Motels 1.16%), Tourist villas (3.67%), Tourist chalets (3.34%), Bungalows (0%), Campings (0.33%), tourism (0,13%), camps for students and preschools (0,96%), tourist boarding houses (19,51%) and agrotourist hostels (18,28%).

From the point of view of mobility, depending on the preferred accommodation option, the number of Romanian tourists from the County of Harghita in the period 2016 - 2018 shows the following evolution:

Table no. 8. The evolution of the number of Romanian tourists from Harghita County according to the preferred accommodation option, between 2016 and 2018

Name of accommodation structure	2016	2017	2018
---------------------------------	------	------	------



Hotels	67.775	76.987	83.612
Hostels	4.351	4.377	4.152
Apartment Hotels	-	1.370	943
Motels	1.223	1.382	1.966
Tourist Villas	4.053	5.264	6.197
Tourist Chalets	5.186	5.843	5.639
Bungalows	18	26	-
Campings	2.312	3.211	2.180
Tourist Stops	-	14	134
Tourist Cottages	645	153	223
Tourist Guesthouses	27.017	30.328	32.932
Agrotourist Guesthouses	23.660	26.959	30.859
TOTAL	136.240	155.914	168.837

Source: National Institute of Statistics

In 2016 as compared to 2017, the number of Romanian tourists from Harghita County, which opted for Hotels as their accommodation option, increased by 9,212 tourists, respectively 13,59% (from 67,775 tourists in 2016 to 76,987 tourists in 2017) , and in 2018 compared to 2017, the value of this indicator increased by 6,625 tourists, respectively by 8.61% (from 76,987 tourists in 2017, to 9,212 tourists in 2018).

In 2016 as compared to 2017, the number of Romanian tourists from Harghita County, which opted for Hostel as their accommodation option, increased by 26 tourists, respectively by 0.60% (from 4,351 tourists in 2016 to 4,377 tourists in 2017) , and in 2018 compared to 2017, the value of this indicator diminished by 255 tourists, respectively by 5.14% (from 4,377 tourists in 2017, to 4,152 tourists in 2018).

In 2016 as compared to 2017, the number of Romanian tourists from Harghita County, which opted for Apartment Hotels as their accommodation option, increased by 1,370 tourists (from 0 tourists in 2016 to 1,370 tourists in 2017) and in 2018 compared to 2017, the value of this indicator diminished by 427 tourists, respectively by 31.17% (from 1,370 tourists in 2017, to 943 tourists in 2018).

In 2016 compared to 2017, the number of Romanian tourists from Harghita County, which opted for Motel as their accommodation option, increased by 159 tourists (from 1,223 tourists in 2016 to 1,382 tourists in 2017), respectively 13% and in 2018 compared to 2017, the value of this indicator increased by 584 tourists, respectively by 42.26% (from 1,382 tourists in 2017, to 1,966 tourists in 2018).

In 2016 as compared to 2017, the number of Romanian tourists from Harghita County, which opted for Tourist Villas as their accommodation option, increased by 1,211 tourists (from 4,053 tourists in 2016 to 5,264 tourists in 2017), respectively 29, 88%, and in 2018 compared to



2017 the value of this indicator increased by 933 tourists, respectively by 17.72% (from 5,264 tourists in 2017, to 6,197 tourists in 2018).

In 2016 as compared to 2017, the number of Romanian tourists from Harghita County, which opted for Tourist Chalets as their accommodation option, increased by 657 tourists (from 5,186 tourists in 2016 to 5,843 tourists in 2017), respectively by 12, 67%, and in 2018 compared to 2017, the value of this indicator diminished by 204 tourists, respectively by 3.49% (from 5,843 tourists in 2017, to 5,639 tourists in 2018).

In 2016 as compared to 2017, the number of Romanian tourists from Harghita County, which opted for Bungalows as their accommodation option increased by 8 tourists (from 18 tourists in 2016 to 26 tourists in 2017), respectively by 44.44 %, and in 2018 compared to 2017, the value of this indicator diminished by 26 tourists, respectively by 100%.

In 2016 as compared to 2017, the number of Romanian tourists from Harghita County, which opted for Campings as their accommodation option, increased by 899 tourists (from 2,312 tourists in 2016 to 3,211 tourists in 2017) respectively by 38.88%, and in 2018 compared to 2017, the value of this indicator diminished by 1,031 tourists, respectively by 32.11% (from 3,211 tourists in 2017, to 2,180 tourists in 2018).

In 2016 as compared to 2017, the number of Romanian tourists from Harghita County, which opted for Tourist Stops as their accommodation option, increased by 14 tourists (from 20 tourists in 2016 to 14 tourists in 2017), and in 2018 compared to 2017, the value of this indicator increased by 120 tourists, respectively by 857.14% (from 14 tourists in 2017, to 134 tourists in 2018).

In 2016 compared to 2017, the number of Romanian tourists from Harghita County, which opted for Tourist Cottages as their accommodation option decreased by 492 tourists (from 645 tourists in 2016 to 153 tourists in 2017), respectively by 76, 28%, and in 2018 compared to 2017, the value of this indicator increased by 70 tourists, respectively by 45.75% (from 153 tourists in 2017, to 233 tourists in 2018).

In 2016 as compared to 2017, the number of Romanian tourists from Harghita County, which opted for Camps for students and preschools as their accommodation option, increased by 557 tourists (from 1,900 tourists in 2016 to 2,457 tourists in 2017), respectively by 29.32%, and in 2018 compared to 2017, the value of this indicator decreased by 834 tourists, respectively by 33.94% (from 2,457 tourists in 2017, to 1,623 tourists in 2018).

In 2016 as compared to 2017, the number of Romanian tourists from Harghita County, which opted for Tourist Guesthouses as their accommodation option, increased by 3,311 tourists (from 27,017 tourists in 2016 to 30,328 tourists in 2017), respectively by 12, 26%, and in 2018 compared to 2017, the value of this indicator increased by 2,604 tourists, respectively by 8.59% (from 30,328 tourists in 2017, to 32,932 tourists in 2018).





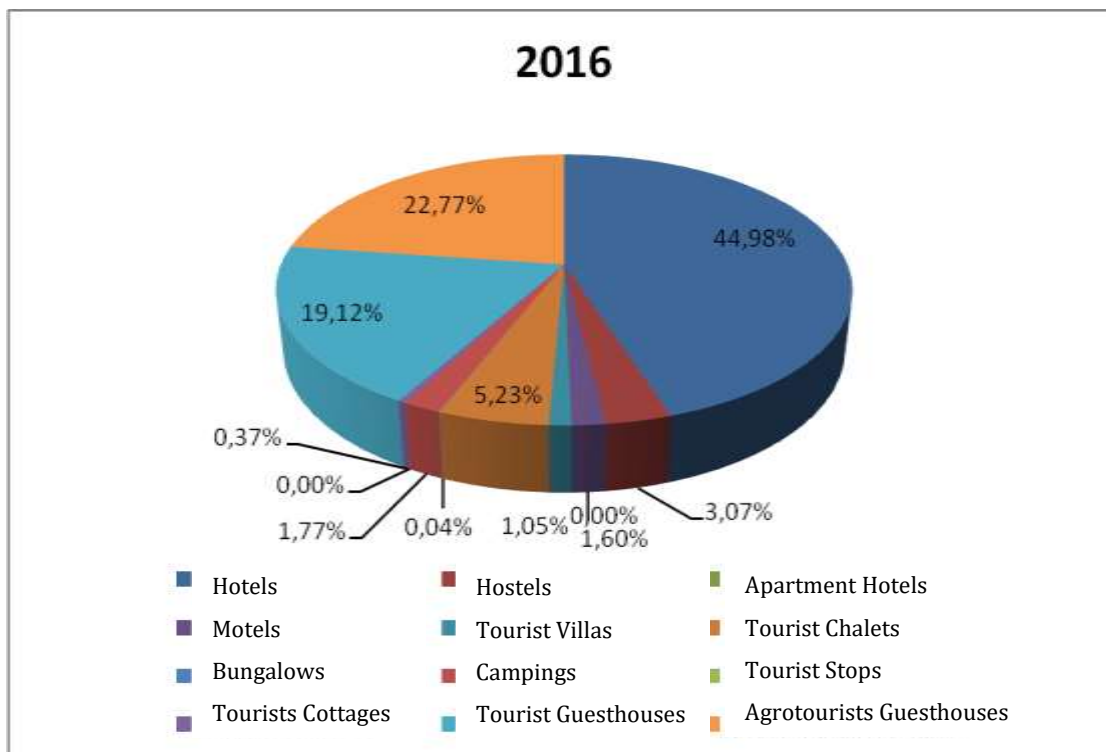
In 2016 compared to 2017, the number of Romanian tourists from Harghita County, which opted for Agrotourism Guesthouses as their accommodation option, increased by 3,299 tourists (from 23,660 tourists in 2016 to 26,959 tourists in 2017), respectively 13, 94%, and in 2018 compared to 2017, the value of this indicator increased by 3,900 tourists, respectively by 14,47% (from 26,959 tourists in 2017, to 30,859 tourists in 2018).

#### **2.1.3.5. THE STRUCTURE OF THE HARGHITA COUNTY HIGHER TOURISM IN THE FUNCTION OPTION FUNCTION**

The main tourist structures preferred by the foreign tourists from the Harghita County level 2016 - 2018 are: Hotels, Hostels, Apartment Hotels, Motels, Tourist Villas, Tourist Chalets, Bungalows, Holiday villages, Tourist Stops, Tourist Cottages, Camps for students and preschools, Tourist guesthouses and Agrotourist guesthouses.

According to the National Institute of Statistics, the structure of foreign tourists from the County of Harghita according to the preferred accommodation option for each of the 3 years of the reference period is the following:

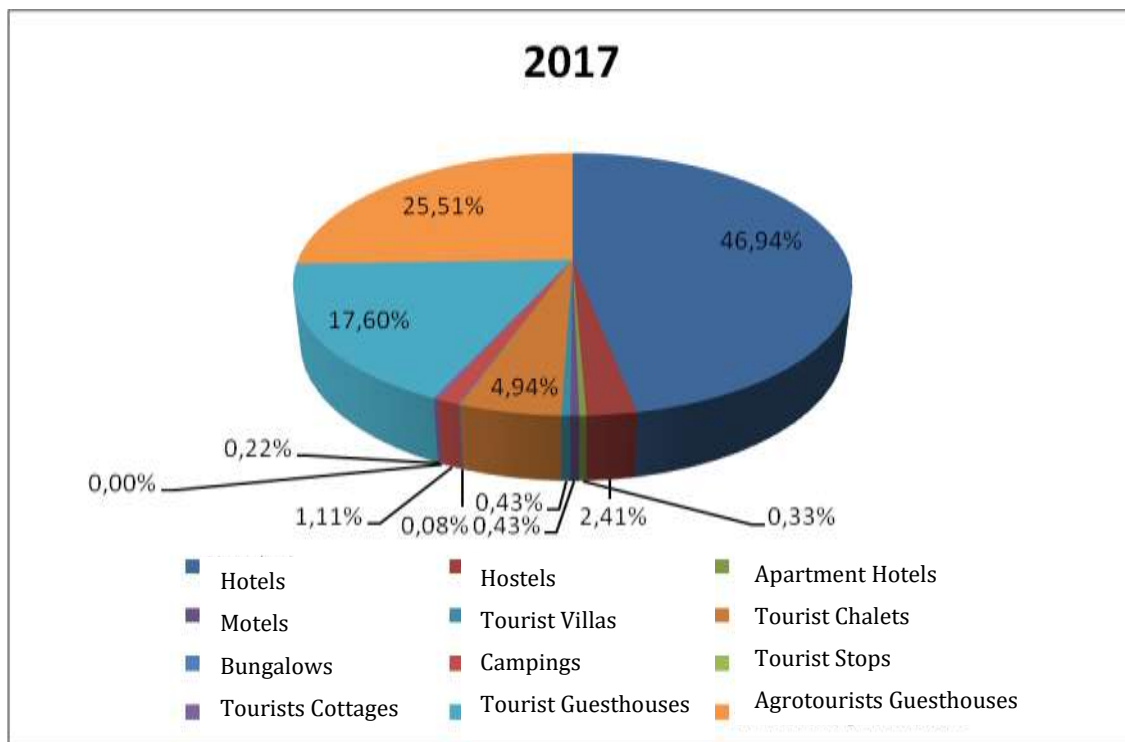
Figure no. 32 - Structure of foreign tourists from the County of Harghita depending on the accommodation option in 2016



Source: National Institute of Statistics

As can be seen from Figure no. 32, in the year 2016, the structure of foreign tourists from Harghita County level according to the option of accommodation is: Hotels (44,98%), Hostels (3,07%), Apartment Hotels (0%), Motels (1,60%), Tourist Villas (1,05%), Tourist Chalets (5,23%), Bungalows (0,04%), Holiday Villages (1,28%), Tourist Stops (0%), Tourist Cottages (0,37%), Camps For Students And Preschools (0,49%), Tourist Guesthouses (19.12%) And Agrotourist Guesthouses (22.77%).

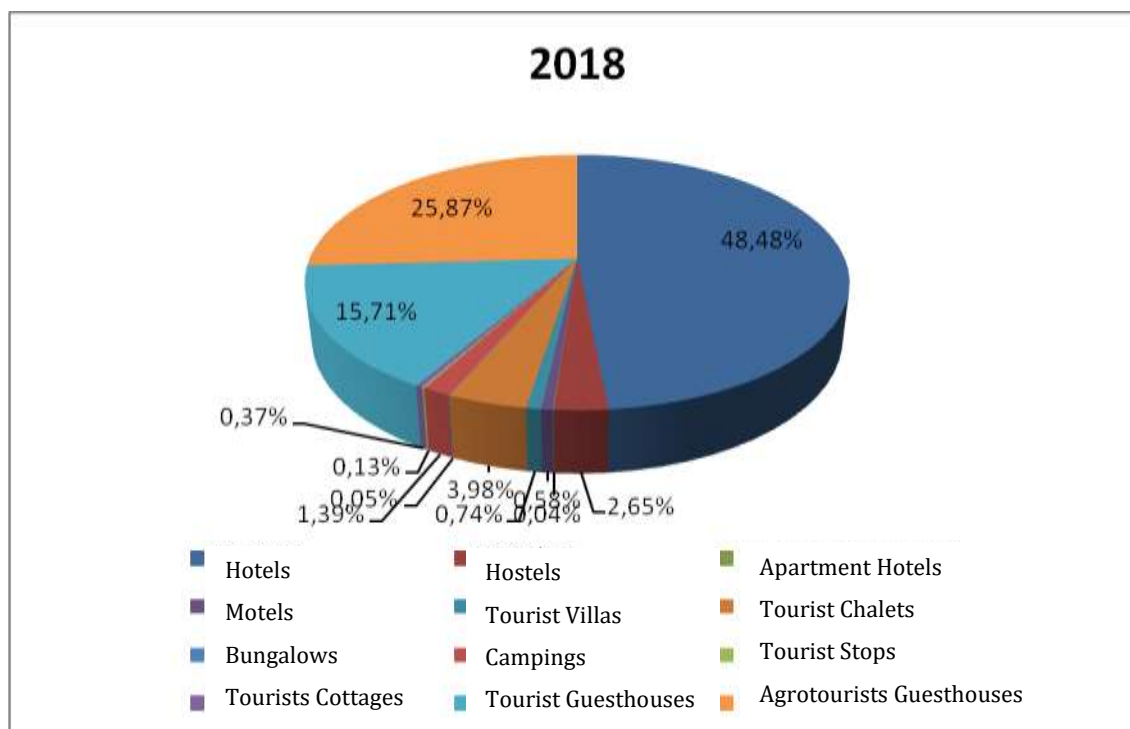
Figure no. 33 - Structure of foreign tourists from the County of Harghita depending on the accommodation option in 2017



Source: National Institute of Statistics

As can be seen from Figure no. 33, in the year 2017, the structure of foreign tourists from Harghita County level according to the option of accommodation is: Hotels (46,94%), Hostels (2,41%), Apartment hotels (0,33%), Motels (0,43%), Tourist villas (0,43%), Tourist chalets (4,94%), Bungalows (0,08%), Campings (1,11%), Tourist Stops (0%), Tourist guesthouses (17,60%) and Agrotourism guesthouses (22,51%).

Figure no. 34 - Structure of foreign tourists from the County of Harghita according to the accommodation option in 2018



Source: National Institute of Statistics

As can be seen from Figure no. 34, in the year 2018, the structure of the foreign tourists from Harghita County level according to the option of accommodation is: Hotels (48.48%), Hostels (2.65%), Apartment Hotels (0.04%), Motels (0.58%), Tourist Villas (0.74%), Tourist Chalets (3.98%), Bungalows (0.05%), Campings (1.39%), Tourist Stops (0.13%), Tourist Cottages (0.37%), Tourist Guesthouses (15.71%) And Agrotourist Guesthouses (25.87%).

From the point of view of mobility, depending on the preferred accommodation option, the number of Romanian tourists from the County of Harghita in the period 2016 - 2018 shows the following evolution:

Table no. 9. The evolution of the number of Romanian tourists from the Harghita County according to the preferred accommodation option between 2016 and 2018

Name of accommodation structure	2016	2017	2018
Hotels	21.361	23.293	25.266



Hostels	1.458	1.196	1.383
Apartment hotels	-	165	19
Motels	761	214	303
Tourist villas	499	211	386
Tourist chalets	2.482	2.450	2.074
Bungalows	19	40	26
Campings	606	328	594
Tourist stops	-	-	69
Tourist cottages	176	108	195
Camps for students and preschools	234	224	129
Tourist guesthouses	9.077	8.736	8.189
Agrotourist guesthouses	10.812	12.658	13.484
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>47.485</b>	<b>49.623</b>	<b>52.117</b>

Source: National Institute of Statistics

In 2016 as compared to 2017, the number of foreign tourists in Harghita County that opted for Hotels as their accommodation option increased by 1,932 tourists, respectively 9,04% (from 21,3615 tourists in 2016 to 23,293 tourists in 2017) , and in 2018 compared to 2017, the value of this indicator increased by 1,973 tourists, respectively by 8.47% (from 23,293 tourists in 2017, to 25,266 tourists in 2018).

In 2016 as compared to 2017, the number of foreign tourists in Harghita County that opted for Hostels as their accommodation option, diminished by 262 tourists, respectively by 17.97% (from 1,458 tourists in 2016 to 1,196 tourists in 2017) , and in 2018 compared to 2017, the value of this indicator increased by 187 tourists, respectively by 15.64% (from 1,196 tourists in 2017, to 1,383 tourists in 2018).

In 2016 as compared to 2017, the number of foreign tourists in Harghita County that opted for Apartment Hotels as their accommodation option, increased by 165 tourists (from 0 tourists in 2016 to 165 tourists in 2017), and in 2018 compared to 2017, the value of this indicator diminished by 146 tourists, respectively by 88.48% (from 165 tourists in 2017, to 19 tourists in 2018).

In 2016 compared to 2017, the number of foreign tourists in Harghita County that opted for Motels as their accommodation option, decreased by 547 tourists (from 761 tourists in 2016 to 214 tourists in 2017), respectively by 71.88 and in 2018 compared to 2017, the value of this indicator increased by 89 tourists, respectively by 41.59% (from 214 tourists in 2017, to 303 tourists in 2018).

In 2016 compared to 2017, the number of foreign tourists in Harghita County that opted for Tourist Villas as their accommodation option, decreased by 288 tourists (from 499 tourists in 2016 to 211 tourists in 2017), respectively by 57, 72%, and in 2018 compared to 2017 the value



of this indicator increased by 175 tourists, respectively by 82.94% (from 211 tourists in 2017, to 386 tourists in 2018).

In 2016 as compared to 2017, the number of foreign tourists in Harghita County that opted for Tourist Chalets as their accommodation option reduced by 32 tourists (from 2,482 tourists in 2016 to 2,450 tourists in 2017), respectively by 1, 29%, and in 2018 compared to 2017, the value of this indicator diminished by 376 tourists, respectively by 15.35% (from 2,450 tourists in 2017 to 2,074 tourists in 2018).

In 2016 as compared to 2017, the number of foreign tourists in Harghita County that opted for Bungalows as their accommodation option increased by 21 tourists (from 19 tourists in 2016 to 40 tourists in 2017), respectively by 110.53 and in 2018 compared to 2017, the value of this indicator diminished by 14 tourists, respectively by 35% (from 40 tourists in 2017 to 26 tourists in 2018).

In 2016 compared to 2017, the number of foreign tourists in Harghita County that opted for Campings as their accommodation option, decreased by 288 tourists (from 840 tourists in 2016 to 552 tourists in 2017), respectively by 34.29%, and in 2018 compared to 2017, the value of this indicator increased by 171 tourists, respectively by 30.98% (from 522 tourists in 2017, to 723 tourists in 2018).

In 2018 compared to 2017, the number of foreign tourists in Harghita County that opted for Tourist Stops as their accommodation option, increased by 14 tourists (from 0 tourists in 2017 to 69 tourists in 2018).

In 2016 compared to 2017, the number of foreign tourists in Harghita County that opted for Tourist Cottages as their accommodation option, diminished by 68 tourists (from 176 tourists in 2016 to 108 tourists in 2017), respectively by 38, 64%, and in 2018 compared to 2017, the value of this indicator increased by 87 tourists, respectively by 80.56% (from 108 tourists in 2017, to 195 tourists in 2018).

In 2016 as compared to 2017, the number of foreign tourists in Harghita County that opted for Camps for students and preschools as their accommodation option, decreased by 10 tourists (from 234 tourists in 2016 to 224 tourists in 2017) respectively with 4.27%, and in 2018 compared to 2017, the value of this indicator decreased by 95 tourists, respectively by 42.41% (from 224 tourists in 2017, to 129 tourists in 2018).

In 2016 compared to 2017, the number of foreign tourists in Harghita County that opted for Tourism Guesthouses as their accommodation option, decreased by 341 tourists (from 9.077 tourists in 2016 to 8.736 tourists in 2017), respectively by 3, 76%, and in 2018 compared to 2017, the value of this indicator diminished by 547 tourists, respectively by 6.26% (from 8.736 tourists in 2017 to 8.189 tourists in 2018).

In 2016 as compared to 2017, the number of foreign tourists in Harghita County that opted for Agrotourism guesthouses as their accommodation option, increased by 1,486 tourists



(from 10,812 tourists in 2016 to 12,658 tourists in 2017), respectively 17, 07%, and in 2018 compared to 2017, the value of this indicator increased by 826 tourists and 6.53% respectively (from 12,658 tourists in 2017 to 13,484 tourists in 2018).

## **2.2 TRENDS OF THE TOURIST OFFER IN HARGHITA COUNTY**

### **2.2.1 ATTRACTIONS AND RESOURCES, MANAGEMENT ISSUES**

#### *Presentation of the forms of tourism at Harghita County level.*

At Harghita County level, resources are identified both in the natural and the anthropic context. Thus, the value and visibility of an area is largely due to its image, its appearance, but to a large extent the impression it leaves to all those who come into contact with it.

Resources should be promoted and advertised to become attractions to bring many visitors.

Attractions sum up all those factors that influence the public's decision to move to that location or motivate them to search and study information about it.

The more promoted, more visited and popular a location, the more it will become a sought-after attraction for visitors.

The attraction is quantifiable, its value expresses the tourist attraction force of an area. In our situation, the observed area is that of an administrative territory: Harghita County.

Summing up all resources and services that attract tourists or stops them from transit to visit or benefit from local experiences or local services, determines the attractions of the County.

E-tourism is increasingly becoming a more and more used method and it must be treated as a form of visiting. Attractions are based entirely on resources, which can be classified by origin in two major classes: natural tourism resources and anthropic tourism resources.

#### *Natural tourism resources*

It is proven that the vast majority of tourists often want to admire a natural or unimaginable landscape or element of nature, or with the smallest and insignificant changes from man. For access to such unique locations and to be admired or visited (eg mountains, gullies, gorges, caves, reserves, etc.), it is necessary to find optimal solutions to facilitate access to those areas. The landscaping up to the respective locations involved the construction of roads, access roads, resting points or servicing, meaning they were supposed to make changes to the existing landscape, which may have led to a change in the landscape. However, these changes must be minimized to ensure a steady state that protects and preserves these beautiful elements for the next generation.





*The main categories of natural resources important to tourism activities are: relief, hydrography, climate and biodiversity.*

#### *Attractive relief resources*

Relief is the richest attractive resource for visitors, being the basis of any landscape attraction. The variety of relief forms, their appearance, their landscape value clearly dominate the tourism structures through morphology, lithology, tectonics, as well as its relation with moderating factors.

At the same time, they are in mutual coevolution and support with other aspects of the natural environment, such as hydrography, climate and vegetation. Influences are reciprocal, the attractiveness of the relief is enriched by their contribution.

The diversity of relief forms, their complexity makes the landscape scenery very attractive to everyone. The grouping of these forms into various restricted frames also leads to the creation of special landscape images, thus increasing their value.

From these forms we can emphasize: steeps, ridges, passages, gorges, defiles, canyons, waterfalls, craters and volcanic cones, valleys, dolinas, slopes, ravines, caves, twists, etc.

As a result of the landscapes resulting from the association of such forms, we can mention the importance of the touristic potential of the glacial, volcanic, limestone, salt and salt relief.

Glacial relief is likely to impress by the high degree of landscape potential related to structure, tectonic lithology and its relation to modeling factors.

The varied landscape valences given by the mountain regions, the contrast between shapes, contribute with a special personality to the increase of the attractive palette.

The potential of the glacial relief is the result of the action of quaternary glaciers, especially during the last two large glacial periods (Riss, Wurm), which operated through circular and valley glaciers in the highest Carpathian regions. The appearance of the landscape is due to the erosion of the glaciers.

Among the most beautiful and spectacular forms of relief, there are: the peaks, often of pyramidal form, with altitudes over 2000 m. The Călimani Mountains, whose peaks are above circular glaciers, represent the only massif in Harghita County that exceeds this altitude ; the alpine ridges, which are the result of the pleistocene glaciation erosion processes that have been manifested on both sides of the ridges, resulting in narrow, fragmented spines; glacial circles represent the basic morphological forms of the glacial landscape, being very complex and vast.

At their base we can identify a large mass of accumulations of scree, before which we can also find glacial lakes.

The impressive aspect of the landscape in the Northern part of the County is given by the diversity offered by the heights of the Călimani Mountains. Even if they are of volcanic origin,



their height did not exclude them from glacial modeling, which was then affected by other superficial erosion processes, but despite these conditions they still show the traces of glaciation.

The glacial lake under Reșița Peak, glacier Lake Iezer still preserves the specific glacial ice trails, although the appearance of the valleys has changed over time.

Neogen volcanic eruptions played an important role in determining the tourist potential of the volcanic relief.

As a result, a spectacular relief emerged: the craters, the caldera that have been preserved in the sea, being highlighted by circular alignments of high peaks.

Here we mention the caldera of the Călimani, with a diameter of 10km, marked by the peaks: Red Rocks, Tamău, Rățiș, Voievodeasa, Călimani Izvor and Călimani Cerbu. The image created is that of a huge open amphitheater north of the Hăita Valley. Grouped columns can be identified somewhere on the vertical walls where the exogenous agents have acted.

In the North, there are crafted, fragmented, large-scale craters highlighted by high-circular alignment.

The 13-kilometers wide Făncel-Bătrâna massifs with their caldera are partly preserved. They continue in the Sacă massif, with a well preserved crater, then the massive Șoimuș and Ciurani.

A succession of ten volcanic cones is noted in the Harghita Mountains, in the north-south direction. The most imposing of these is the Harghita cone, measuring over 1800m, being drained by Vârghiș Valley. Then follows the Luci cone in whose caldera an oligotrophic swamp of the same name was formed.

In the south-eastern extremity of the Harghita Mountains there is the massive Ciomatu Mare, having two twin craters, one of them is the only volcanic lake in Romania, Saint Ana Lake, being one of the best preserved craters in the country. Its twin crater, where we find the Moș oligotrophic swamp, is in the immediate vicinity of the massif.

The volcanic plateaus can be found in the western part of the volcanic cones. They descend to the Depression of Transylvania.

In the volcanic plateau of Harghita there are small depressions such as Chirui or Căpâlnița, where large mineral water deposits have come to the surface.

*The tourist potential of the limestone relief* is primarily due to the wide variety of forms resulting from a strong erosion process, correlated with a strong pronounced tectonics, but also due to the chemical action of CO<sub>2</sub>-loaded water on limestone.

Deep valleys with many interesting, spectacular shapes, vertical walls, surploms and waterfalls are part of this impressive relief in mountain landscaping.



The large platforms of large expansions formed in the upper parts, with well-defined shapes like the Lone Stone, Ecem Peak, attract many visitors passing through the area and enchanting with their beauty.

The Haşmaşu Mare (Curmăturii) Mountains, although having a relatively small extinction, offer a special note to the County's attractiveness.

Bicaz and Bicăjelului gorges and their tributaries offer an image of a wonderful landscape, leaving unique memories to tourists who choose to visit. 7.5 km long and along with the tributary valleys of the Şugau, Oilor, Suhard, Cupas, Lapos and Licos creeks sculpture in limestone massifs narrow valleys in their longitudinal profile, showing discontinuities with slope breaks, steep walls a few hundred meters, with high cliffs (Altar Stone, The Porch, Black Tower, Bardoş Stone, Sentinel, etc.) and many surploms.

Negative relief forms, such as the valleys and doline associations, which develop exclusively on limestone plats, are in the form of microdepressions and canals, spectacular forms, like true funnels, in which superficial water disappears into underground systems.

Caves in this area appear as underground cavities, rarely exceeding a few hundred meters. As a tourist potential, caves have a high degree of interest, by the attraction created in front of the visitors. They are spectacular, rely on the surprise element and fascinate the audience eager to explore.

The most famous in this area are: Şugău Creek Cave, Munticelu Cave from the Sugău Valley, well arranged and maintained; The Flacara Cave and the Bardoşului Hole Cave on the Bardoş Valley.

Here, tourists can admire stalagmites, stalactites, columns, dreams, parietal flows, etc.

The other caves are also impressive and have a positive impact on the landscape, even if their size is not so stunning.

Besides speleotems, these endocarticles can also shelter fossil glaciers. Here we mention the discovery of skeletal bear skeletons (*Ursus speleus*) or other small mammals discovered in Sugău Cave.

The passage of water through the different differentiated hardness rocks led to the formation of various spectacular sections with complex physiognomies, representing both narrow sectors of gorges and gorges, as well as large, smooth portions forming intramontan depressions (Giurgeu, Ciucului, Bilborului, Borsec, Ghimes, and Plays).

All this contributes to increasing the tourist potential of the valleys and gorges.

Besides these we also mention the keys, with a great potential for attracting tourists. These are narrow, deeply stretched sections of varying lengths.



The main features would be tiny slopes (only a few tens of meters), steep slopes, often crawled with hanging sidewalks. These have been formed on monoclinic or cut structures.

In our case, the keys can be the result of the crash of some ceilings, thus making the river sectors open, thus providing access to other structures such as saplings, caves, avenues, siphons.

Bicaz Gorges and Red Lake form the most impressive representative of this category of natural wealth.

Figure no. 35 Bicaz Gorges



Source: <https://visitharghita.com/>

Figure no.36 Red Lake



Source: <https://visitharghita.com/>



They are located at a distance of 8km, are practically the most famous in the country, on a modernized, very accessible transcarpathian route. They have sections of maximum narrowing in the Hell Neck sector, where steep walls of 300-350 m can be found, with frequent areas of surploms, hanging marmites. Numerous alpine trails are located in this area. They attract climbers from the country and abroad (Hell's Neck Sentinel, 23 August Route, Pinteni Route, Ivory Tower Route, Art Fissure, Big Surduc Fissure, etc.).

The action of the major hydrographic network determines the emergence of the gully sectors. They are heavily deeper, extending over longer lengths. In these sectors there can also be narrowing to the level of the keys, followed by sectors of small basins of tectonero-erosive or eripogenetic origin.

Thus, on the upper Olt at the exit from the Depression of the Superior Ciuc, the Olt cuts the Tușnad Defile from 5 km long, in the Andesitian massifs Pilisca and Ciomatu Mare.

The presence of the two massifs of the gorge, hydro-carbo-gaseous thermal curative deposits has led to the formation of many resorts, such as Băile Tușnad, of national interest.

The most important valleys of the County are: The Mures and Olt Valley, The Small and Big Târna Valleys, Corund Valley, Bistricioara from Bilbor Valley, Casin Valley, Ditrău Valley, etc.

Along these valleys there is the access to the County, there are the major communications and transport routes (railway, road and air). These are of national and local importance.

#### *Potential of karst relief on salt*

With respect to this, we can say that it is very varied since it is one of the most soluble rocks, offering varied, spectacular formations. Due to the dissolution process, the lifetime of these sculpted shapes is quite small. You can form shapes like lakes, valleys, carstohalins, niches, avenues, bridges, arches or even caves.

The famous Salt Mountain and Salt Gorge in Praid has impressive dimensions, with roots about 3 km deep and 1.8 km in diameter. It is a geological reservation, where the Corund Creek, crossing the salt gorge, carved specific shapes. Salt, being on the surface in the case of the girl, meteor water sculpts unique forms with salty springs. The area is well-maintained and well-arranged. The fact that the underground of the mountain is the Praid mine and salt mine does not have to shade or neglect the spectacle of this landscape.

#### *The climatic and bioclimatic potential*

The climatic details in this area, which influence the body, health status and good mood of the tourists, are influenced by several factors: the major configuration of the relief, the geographical position, the morphological details (such as slope exposition, inclination, shape) along with the vegetal cover (vegetation and fauna).





Of the climatic factors with bioclimatic impact we mention: temperature, rainfall, humidity, winds, composition of the atmosphere, solar radiation, etc. All these determine the most important attractive features of an area, regions or even tourist resorts, defining its predisposition to forms of climate therapy, cure, relaxation and recreation activities, seasonal sports, etc. Factors such as dynamic (wind), thermal and hydric (air humidity) are essential in determining climatic therapy.

### *Bioclimatic indices*

Aerotherapy is known to be one of the most commonly used methods of treatment, but in order for it to have an increased effect on the body, certain conditions must be appropriate, such as the heat factor, such as aeroionization. This factor is determined by the effective EET equivalent temperature, which gives a thermal sensation to the body, under the simultaneous influence of humidity and air movement (Teodoreanu Elena, 1984).

According to the thermal comfort index, the feeling of thermal comfort is achieved when the human body does not lose or receive heat. This is possible between certain temperature limits actually experienced by humans in the conditions of air heating, water vapor load and air currents (effective equivalent temperature). If EET is between 16.8 and 20.6 degrees C, thermal comfort below 16.8 degrees C of thermal inconvenience by cooling, and over 20.6 degrees C of heat inconvenience through heating can be mentioned.

The majority of tourism activities, their maximum potential, is largely influenced by the number of thermal comfort days. Thus the days of thermal comfort occur in the mountain range between June to September, up to 1500 m altitude; in the hilly areas and submontane depression their number increases, implicitly their period, extending between April and October.

Aerotherapy (airbaths) used in spa resorts can be of several types: cold, moderate cold, cool, warm, very warm, indifferent, static, poorly dynamic, dynamic, strong dynamic, dry, moderately dry, strongly wet. Of course, these procedures apply in a personalized way, taking into account the state of health, respectively the indications and therapeutic contraindications for each individual subject to them. Take into account the skin stress, which is felt in the skin, by resorting to the body's thermoregulatory mechanisms.

Also, pulmonary stress is based on respiration, oxygen absorption and carbon dioxide removal. It is directly influenced by the humidity of the air which, if raised, causes irritation of the mucous membrane of the airways. On the other hand, in the absence of water vapor, desiccant inconvenience can occur, especially in winter.

The global climate demand for the body is borne out by the total bioclimatic stress resulting from the summing up of skin and lung stress. The lower the value, the more relaxed and relaxed.

Climate-tourism index is another bioclimatic factor calculated for Romania by Farsa I and collaborators using the formula proposed by Klausse R and Gerault A;  $I = (S + T - 5D) / 5$ , where I



= climatic tourism index, S = sunshine duration in hours, T = average temperature, D = duration of daytime precipitation in hours, as an hour of rain equals 5 hours of sunshine). According to this indicator, the favorable interval for tourism in the mountain regions is July-September, this period increasing as we reach the depression or extra-Carpathian regions of the western County.

Aeroionization should also be taken into account as a physiotherapeutic factor by the predominance of positive or negative ions in the atmosphere.

The presence of negative ions in mountain resorts positively influences the development of diseases such as bronchial asthma, rheumatism, hypertension, neurosis or overuse. Most resorts have ion concentration values of 1400 ions / cm<sup>3</sup>. Thus, in Borsec there is a negative ionization, and in the case of Tisnad Băilor unipolarity-equality, as a weight between the two ionic categories.

#### *Climatic therapy*

The state of health of the human body is often influenced by climatic conditions and its components and can be used as a therapeutic means for the treatment and amelioration of certain diseases.

This form of therapy can be applied under two conditions: for meteorotherapy and climatotherapy. The first one is less demanding for the body to be carried out in the living environment of the locality, while the second one, climatotherapy is applied in different environments and climates as the origin for stimulating or diminishing the neuro-endocrine-vegetative activity.

#### *Bioclimatic potential of tourist resorts in Harghita County*

The reference stations in Harghita County are covered by altitudes between 500 and 1350m, so they are part of a bioclimate of the small and medium mountains, respectively of the submontane hills and depressions in and submontane. The bioclimate of the mountains is divided into positive or negative forms.

Positive forms, on the one hand, represented by plateaus, slopes, heights, have a cold, wet climate with increased nebulosity but also with relatively long duration of sunshine. On the other hand, the negative forms represented by the depressions, valleys, can have more continental characters, the summer with strong sunlight, sheltered by winds, in the shade of precipitation and in winter with frequent thermal inversions accompanied by fog. Below 1400m thermal comfort can be present, especially in sunny and sheltered places.

At Izvorul Mureșului, the total climatic biostress has values of 43, the skin of 13 and the pulmonary of 30. If we refer to Red Lake these values are: 50, 15 and 35 respectively; the climatic-tourist index being 54.0 and 55.0 at the two resorts.

Bioclimate with tonic, sedative, stimulation for the organism in Izvorul Mureș resort is recommended for various diseases: asthenic neurosis, debilitating conditions, physical and





intellectual overwork, convalescence with good general condition, rickets and growth disorders in children, etc.

The Red Lake resort also has the same features, with tonic bioclimate, mountain stimulant, cold winters and cool summers and is highly recommended for the relief and treatment of various diseases.

Thermal relaxing months at both resorts are from May to October, highlighting the most balanced - May, September, October and Red Lake, even April.

Being compared to the Red Lake resort, Dark Valley in the Ghimes area, at an average altitude of 800m, has a tonic, stimulating and sedative bioclimate.

At Harghita and Sântimbru-Pucioasa Baths the indications are cardiovascular diseases and associated diseases (asthenic neurosis, rheumatic diseases, occupational diseases), in this case the tonic bioclimate is also complemented by mofetes, ferruginous mineral waters, bicarbonates, carbonated waters.

The resorts situated in the area of the intra-mountainous depressions can be compared with Băile Tușnad, but there are differences in the topographic location in the sense that the Băile Tușnad are located in the gorge with the same name and the ones we refer to (Jigodin, Dănești, Madicia, Remetea, Toplita) being lying more to the north, in lighter areas, at the eastern foothills of Harghita and Gurghiu, either on gais or on the terraces of Olt and Mureș. Sedative bioclimate is also found in these resorts and the therapeutic factors are also filled here with mineral waters, sometimes with mofetic emanations.

Homorod Baths is a resort that can be recommended for digestive, hepato-biliary, respiratory, gastric, duodenal and gastric diseases due to its location in the middle of coniferous forests (terpenic aerosols) and the abundance of carbonated mineral waters, bicarbonates, chlorate sodium, calcium, magnesium, ferrous, endocrine, asthenic neurosis.

A relaxing bioclimate can also be found in Praid, at an altitude of 580m, surrounded by hills covered with deciduous trees and having an intracolinary depression climate. Here we can find the bioclimate of saline used in the treatment of the diseases of the upper respiratory system. The other hilly resorts are appreciated not for both bioclimatic properties and spa.

Another interesting aspect of the climate from the perspective of the organization of tourism activities is represented by the quantity and persistence of the snow layer. It can be said that Harghita County has an appreciable potential. In higher mountain areas, especially in the case of the Nordic slopes, where topographic conditions permit this, ski areas can be arranged. Known are the ski slopes of Harghita-Bai and two more modest slopes in the Kossuth Cliff area. All these are served by ski lifts, being usually skiing between December and mid-April.

In the resort much appreciated especially by the youngsters, the Mures spring, with the duration of snow persistence somewhat shorter (December to late March, sometimes up to April),



the skiing domains are found on the northern slopes of the North-Harghita Mountains, Gretes (1121m) - Răchitiș (1153m). There is a small ski slope right next to the tourist spring of Mureș, with a slope of about 100m.

The ski slope from Toplita (Magheruș Piste) is a modern piste with cable transport equipment, night lighting and facilities for tourists as well as ski equipment rental point. It has a total length of 1450m and is made up of two slopes, one 1000m smoother for beginners and another 450m intermediate level for advanced. The Ciumani slopes that depart from the altitude of 1129m on Mount Amza (1654m), is 838m long, 2 cableway transport, is another attraction for tourists. The other slopes were also equipped with cable transport equipment along the road over the Bucin pass.

Apart from the alpine skiing, the snow in the less inclined areas could also be used for cross-country skiing, but also for a relaxing walk with horse-drawn horses, a service especially offered in the areas served by rural tourism.

*The hydro-geographic potential contributes greatly to increasing the attractiveness of Harghita County.*

The diversity of the tourist offer present in this County is also due to the fact that it is located in a predominantly mountainous area with rich springs and water resources, which not only favors the existence of the human being, but also clearly enhances the beauty of the area and implicitly attracts visitors. The underground or superficial waters are required to define certain types and forms of tourism specific to the Harghita area. Hydromineral resources offer spa effects, lacquer surfaces according to genesis, physical or chemical characteristics of water can be of landscape, balneo-tourism or recreational value. Here is a series of carbon-mineral, hypothermal and mezothermal resources, even hyperthermal (the mineral waters from Băile Tușnad reach the surface with 64 degrees C and an impressive mineralization).

All this shows that in Harghita County there is the highest concentration of hydromineral deposits in the country, which has also favored the appearance of many spa resorts, balneoclimateric.

#### *Resources of lacustral surfaces*

In Harghita County, lake areas are divided into several categories according to their genesis.

This makes it possible to differentiate the potential of natural lakes. Here, originally, we can mention glacial lakes (Lake Iezer from Călimani Mountains, situated at about 2000 m altitude below the peak of Retitis in Călimani Mountains).

Crater lakes are another category of lakes with tourism potential. Here, an important sea is the only lake, at the country level, St. Ana Lake in the crater of Ciomatu Mare Mountain with access and on foot from Băile Tușnad.



This is the only lake of volcanic origin in Southeast Europe, located on the bottom of a crater. The clogging process, which is over 9800 years old, has accelerated a lot. In recent years, the maximum depth of the lake has dropped by half. The lake, which is only fed with meteoric water, has the prime importance of man and the activity carried out by them.

The lake has an area of approximately 20 ha and a maximum depth of 6.3 m. Following the studies and measurements made, the depth of the lake decreased from 8.3m in 1909 to 7.2m in 1971 reaching 6.3m in 1999. The surface the lake also underwent changes in the direction of its decrease, reaching today on an area of less than 20 hectares, due to the occurrence of edging at the edges.

Along its evolution over the last 10,000 years, Saint Ann Lake has gone through tinov (oligotrophic marsh) phases, which shows that the evolution from lake to oligotrophic marsh is not a linear one.

In the future, the lake can reach a stage similar to Mohoşul, the tin (the oligotrophic marsh) of the twin crater, open through erosion and drained by the Red River.

At the country level, the most representative example of lake areas created by natural barrage is given by Red Lake. This area attracted the tourist activities in the area, as well as investments for creating the tourist reception infrastructure of the resort that was created on the lake.

If the lake attracts passionate boat riders, the cliffs of Hăşmaş, both in the vicinity of the Red Lake resort and within the Gorges of Bicaz, Bicăjelul and Lapoş (Ghilcos, Făgetul Ciucului, Piatra Poienii, Surducul, Bardoş Shelves, Altar's Stone, Small Suhard) climbing activities of any difficulty, for those passionate about this sport, as well as for those who want to go on marked tourist routes.

Canyoning is another form of sport, adventure for tourists, and is based on making it on waterfalls on rapid streams.

Very important for attracting tourists is the presence in this arial of salt lakes, less known but which contributes to the development of the resort, namely Coştiui.

Lakes of anthropogenic origin are important points of interest for visitors. They integrate very well into the image of the mountainous area. Although created after the 1960s, they have both economic and tourist importance.

We mention the reservoirs from Zetea and Frumoasa, which can create new tourist areas, can generate the development of new tourist resorts, starting from accommodation units with unclassified functions, tourist and agrotouristic guesthouses. Also, Lake Ciucas, having a 2 ha surface and a 3 meters depth is representative and attracts many tourists (being maintained and cared for), being even the pride of Băile Tuşnad.

Hydro-mineral resources and their tourism potential



In our country, one of the richest counties in varieties of hydromineral resources is represented by Harghita County. By detailed analysis of the variety of mineral waters in the region, there are seven basic hydrocarbon types: carbonated, ferrous, carbonated, sulphurous, sulphate, chlorinated and a few of the few but with special therapeutic valences.

For several spa resorts we find sources or groups of sources with the same hydrochemistry, the mineral waters being of the bicarbonate-carbonated type, a direct result of the postvulcanic phenomena, of CO<sub>2</sub> emanation and characterizing the cauline motif of Căliman-Harghita.

Feruginous mineral waters are the main sources of therapeutic agents used for internal and external cures along with other types of mentioned waters.

There are sulphurous and sulphated waters, oligo-sulfuric sulphurous waters, sulphurous bicarbonate sulphates and magnesium sulphates in this area. There are also sources of carbonated mineral waters, but in a smaller percentage.

Also in the category of therapeutic interest, so attractive for tourists, the properties of the radioactive elements, property due to the radon emanations from the volcanic substrate, fall. Thus, very low radioactive springs (up to 500 pCi, Mădăraș, Dănești, Sâncrăieni, Lueta, Miercurea Ciuc, Toplita, Iacobeni), moderately radioactive mineral waters (Borsec-Izvorul Pierre Curie), springs with special radioactivity (Băile Tușnad).

The exploitation of mineral springs in the area was made to a small extent relative to the real potential they could have, to the possibilities of exploiting resources, or by bottling for table water (Borsec, Sâncrăieni, Tușnad, Băile Jigodin, Iacobeni) or by their maximum exploitation for therapeutic purposes in balneo-tourist resorts of local or even national importance.

The reason for this can be attributed to the low degree of development of the economy in general.

This crisis can be solved by adopting regional development policies, investment programs appropriate to market economy requirements, a strategy that can be based on the interests of local communities and sustainable development, taking into account the rules of protection of the environment.

The main therapeutic characteristics of the main sources of mineral waters in Harghita County:

- Dark Valley: carbonated mineral waters, bicarbonate, calcium, magnesium; Indications: digestive, hepato-biliary, cardiovascular disease;
- Toplița: bicarbonate, sodium, calcium, magnesium, hypothermal; Indications: cardiovascular, digestive and liver disease, asthenic neurosis, debilitating conditions, physical and intellectual impairment, etc.



- Remetea: carbonated, ferrous, bicarbonate, sodium, magnesium, hypotonic;
- Madicia (Carta): carbonated waters;
- Dănești: bicarbonate waters, low sulphate, calcine, magnesium, carbonated, hypotonic.
- Miercurea-Ciuc: bicarbonate, carbonated, weakly ferrous, hypotonic, hypothermic waters;
- Băile Jigodin: carbonated, bicarbonate, calcium; Indications: cardiovascular disease, digestive tract, asthenic neurosis.
- Iacoveni: bicarbonate, ferugino, calcium, magnesium, sodium, carbonate, hypotone;
- Sântimbru-Pucioasa: carbonated waters, bicarbonates, calcium, magnesium, sodium, light ferrous, hypotonic; Indications: cardiovascular diseases, asthenic neurosis, rheumatic diseases, occupational diseases.
- Băile Harghita: feruginous, bicarbonate, carbonated waters; Indications: cardiovascular disease, asthenic neurosis, rheumatic diseases, occupational diseases.
- Băile Chirui: carbonated, ferrous, chlorosodic, magnesium, calcium;
- Băile Selters: carbonated, ferrous, chlorosodic, magnesium, calcium;
- Vlahița: carbonated water, bicarbonate, sodium chlorate, calcium, magnesium, feruginoase, hypotone;
- Băile Homorod: carbonated, bicarbonate, chlorinated sodium, calcium, magnesium, ferrous, hypotonic;
- Praid: concentrated, mezothermal and thermal chlorinated sodium waters. Indications: degenerative rheumatic diseases, post-traumatic diseases, peripheral neurological, cardiovascular, respiratory diseases (in saline).
- Corund: bicarbonate, calcium, magnesium, ferrous, carbonated, hypotonic;
- Băile Seiche (Odorheiu Secuiesc): carbonated mineral waters; Indications: cardiovascular disease, asthenic neurosis, digestive tract, hepatobiliary disorders, degenerative and abarticular rheumatism;
- Cristuru Secuiesc: chlorinated sodium water, concentrated; Indications: rheumatic, degenerative and abarticular disorders.

Figure no. 37 Băile Chirui Spring



Source: <https://visitharghita.com/>

### *Bio-geographic potential*

Vegetation and fauna represent the two major components of the biogeographic shell.

Geographic location, relief nature, geological substrate, lithology, climatological elements and hydrographic network all determine biodiversity.

The ecosystems of the landscapes in Harghita County represent the essence of the influences from the Carpathian geosystem. The stepped arrangement of the relief, the orientation of the mountain ranges, the presence of the intramontane depressions and the transition zone between the volcanic chain and the depression of Transylvania are due to the biopedoclimatic element.

On the territory of the County there are almost all vegetation types characteristic of the neighboring areas, enriched by rare vegetal and faunal elements, which implicitly attracts visitors and increases the attractiveness of the area.

The vegetal-faunistic potential of Harghita County.

If we are talking about the vegetal-faunistic potential of the County then it should be mentioned that it is a very varied and rich one. We can mention here that there are several levels of vegetation: that of deciduous forests and woods of mixed beech and resinous. The boreal floor is represented by spruce trees, followed by the alpine vegetation floor located in the north of the County.

Variety and quality of biogeographic potential are attractive factors not only for tourists but also for the economy, depending on their distance from major urban centers.

Due to the poor urbanization of the County, it can be said that the forested area per capita is somewhere among the first in the country, which leads to the increase and favoring of tourism activities.



Another factor with high potential in this category is represented by the presence of alpine vegetation. It develops from the top of the forests to the highest peaks. It consists of: coniferous forests, subalpine bushes resulting in species adapted to morpho-climatic conditions. Among these we can mention: jneapăn (*Pinus mugo*), juniper, billberry, rhododendron.

An important attraction is due to the beauty of spruce forests, which occupy vast territories in the Oriental Carpathians (200 km long and 40-80 km wide).

Spruce is dominant, often associated with mountain ash, birch, maple, mountain elm, fir, beech.

The coarse and grassy layer is less developed due to the thickness of the crown. It is, however, represented by: bilberry and cranberry, various species of moss.

Also, here we find species such as hazelnuts, elder, raspberries, *Salvia glutinosa*, *Asperula odorata*, *Pulmonaria rubra*, etc. ferns and moss are characteristic of these forest areas.

The transition to the oak is made by beams that penetrate the valleys and the sunny slopes from the eastern slopes of the Oriental Carpathians. There can be seen beads associated with resinous or pure beads in the Mureș defile, Toplita-Deda, Bistricioarei valleys (Tulghes-Pintic area), Bicazului, in the Ghimes area, Izvorul Mureșului, Șumuleul Mare near Miercurea-Ciuc, Ciomatu Large mixed with spruce and fir in the Persian Mountains.

In the lower western areas in the phage, there is also the roar, the maple, the ash, the hornbeam, the tremulous poplar, the lime tree, even if it appears rarer. Among the shrubs we can list the cone and the hawthorn.

Due to forest exploitation activities, mountain and sub-mountain secondary meadows have been left in place of the deforested forests. Another cause of the fall of the forested areas is linked to the great winds of the 1990s.

Harghita County has a very large area of deminatural meadows, which means that these meadows have formed through anthropic impact instead of forests, but without changing the natural composition of the species. The meadows are classified in two types based on the dominant use: pastures and grasslands. Semi-natural grasslands are a special natural value, rare in Central and Western Europe. In fact, Harghita County has the largest area of semi-natural grasslands of all Romania's counties, totaling approximately 160,000 hectares, almost a quarter of the County's territory. Although comparative figures are not available, but probably Harghita County has the highest surface area of semi-natural grasslands on European level. Semi-natural grasslands are habitats for many rare and European level protected species of rare plants and animals. In addition to the biodiversity value, grasslands are a special resource for beekeeping and landscaping.





Meadows are dominated by grassy vegetation or hay fields. Among the existing species we mention: red fescue, grass of the wind, *Cynosorus cristatus*, *Tordylium maximum*, *Poa pratensis*, *Festuca pratensis*, *Trifolium pratense* etc.

The fauna, together with the vegetal associations and other elements of the natural environment, is a basic component of the ecological, hunting, hunting and sporting tourism offer.

It is worth mentioning that the Harghita forests are populated with numerous specimens of the hunting land of hunting interest and here we mention the bear. Harghita County ranks first in the country because of the largest number of bears. Also, a considerable number of species live in the forests in the area: the deer, the lynx, the wild cat, mountain rooster, the bark rooster, the wolf, the fox, the boar, the deer and the rabbit at the lower altitudes.

The attractiveness of the vegetal associations is amplified by the presence of numerous singing birds, which together with the sound of the rapid mountain brooks create a relaxing and much appreciated ambiance among tourists coming mainly from the urban environment. Birds can become important and attractive factors for ecotourism.

The determinant avifauna for the various plant associations is made up of the following species so localized:

- on the coniferous floor: the mountain rooster, *Dryocopus martius*, *Athene noctua*, Coal tit, European crested tit, Red crossbill, Spotted nutcracker;
- in beech: *Ficedula parva*, Willow tit, European pied flycatcher, Common firecrest;
- in storks: European turtle dove, Song thrush, black scabbard, *Sitta europaea*, *Dendrocopos medius*, large pigeon, Icterine warbler, Long-eared owl, Tawny owl, *Phoenicurus phoenicurus*, *Picus canus*, Eurasian hobby, *Glaucidium passerinum*;
- in rocky areas: Wallcreeper, Peregrine falcon, Common kestrel, Alpine accentor, Common rock thrush, Western jackdaw, Black redstart, *Muscicapa striata*, Rock bunting, *Ptyonoprogne rupestris*
- in the meadows: Common sandpiper, *Motacilla cinerea*, Western Yellow Wagtail, the white stork.

Mammals and some birds are important for hunting tourism, small birds and mammals for ecological tourism and fish for sport fishing.

Trout is known to be very common in the Harghita caves and is also very demanded in the restaurant by tourists. Other species of fish commonly found in the area are: Common minnow, European bullhead, Mediterranean barbel, Grayling, Romanian barbel, *Squalius cephalus*, *Alburnoides bipunctatus*, *Romanogobio uranoscopus*.

The more streaked waters are populated by cobbler, pike and barbell.

Potential of national parks, nature reserves and natural monuments in Harghita County



Thanks to the protection of work and climate conditions, the conservation of rare species, of great importance in the attractiveness offered to tourists, has been achieved.

These can be identified in flora-forest reserves or complex landscapes - in National Parks (Red Lake - Bicz Gorges) or severe protection areas (Saint Ana-Mohoş-Puciusu Lake).

Due to the opportunistic settlement of the Harghita County Reserves, namely in the vicinity of the dwellings, their visit is very easy, of course thanks to the support of the local authorities or due to the involvement of non-governmental or civil institutions, which ensure the protection, as well as their arrangement.

These advantages can be a priority in the strategy of diversifying tourism, through the European interest in ecological tourism (green tourism, ecotourism) and the knowledge of the natural environment.

In the Red Lake-Bicz Gorges Natural Park, which has an area of 955.3 hectares, and alongside the natural dam lake, there are some rare species of plants and animals. Among them we can mention: Wolf's bane, Rorner's hair, Hungarian beard, Pojorata eagle, Zawadski's lizard, *Poa pratensis*, Carpathian oats, Bicz Roosters, but also the beautiful Edelweiss and the lady's slipper. Besides these, we can also meet in the area: *Gentiana lutea*, *Hepatica transsilvanica*, *Daphne mezereum*, the juniper or the warthole, the tail of the rabbit.

The După Luncă swamp, near the Mureş Spring (along with the caving reservation Şugău Cave), there are species attracting the attention of tourists such as *Euonymus nana*, *Viola epipsila*, rare species of *Pedicularis* and *Spiraea ulmifolia*.

Among the eutrophic marshes of the Ciucul de Jos (near Jigodin, Miercurea-Ciuc and near Băile Tuşnad), the most famous is the Borsaros (Sâncrăieni) mineral water with glacial relics, such as dwarf birch, polar moss, mountain breeze, sky dew, *Eriophorum vaginatum*, Sedges, white lizard.

This category of marshes is completed by the Middle Valley Marsh and the Swamp near Vrabia, which house species such as the dwarf birch and *Primula farinosa* respectively.

For Vlăhiţa significant are narcissus poles (*Narcissus stellaris*) on the plateau, an attractive point to visit for tourists. Băile Sântimbru-Pucioasa are distinguished by the largest oligotrophic marsh in Transylvania, Tinovul Luci (the Luci Oligotrophic Swamp), extended to the bottom of the volcanic caldera with the same name and Budos swamp (Puciosu). In Tinovul Luci we encounter various species such as *Viola epipsila*, *Drosera rotundifolia*, *Andromeda polifolia*, a series of species of peat moss (*Sphagnum*), *Carex stellulata* etc.

The promotion of these nature reserves, their popularization among the tourists, their knowledge and the scientific importance of them, can be made easier by the creation of routes with footpaths, indications with explanations regarding the paleofitogeographic evolution, under



the guidance of specialized guides, initiatives already implemented in practice in the Western and Central European countries.

National parks, along with biosphere reserves, nature reserves and natural monuments, were protected by the decision of the Harghita County Council no 142 of 2006, as well as in the decision of Harghita County Council no. 162 of 2005. This was issued for the amendment of the Decision of the Harghita County Council no. 162 of 2005 on the protection of natural values on the territory of Harghita County.

Thus, the "List of secular trees and dendrological parks in Harghita County" was established, in Annex 4, then, in Annex 1 of the Decree 162 of 2005, the national parks, the natural reserves and the natural monuments of the County were established.

Local dendrological parks such as the Csiky Garden Dendrology Park in Gheorgheni, which although in town since 1864, are not properly maintained and arranged and are not included in the tourist offer circuit, can be identified. It is worth mentioning that it has over 172 species of plants, trees and is unique in the region.

It is worth mentioning the number and the large area of Natura 2000 sites, designated after Romania's accession to the EU. Natura 2000 sites are part of the Natura 2000 network, a network of protected natural areas at European level designed to preserve ecosystem-based natural values and human activities that are associated with these natural values, often contributing to their maintenance. In Harghita County, 24 Natura 2000 sites, which represent more than 30% of the County's surface, are fully or partially covered.

The great potential of the County is thus derived from all the unique items listed above. It is hoped that this will be reflected in the economic and social indicators as well, as the authorities and institutions are aware of their values for their development, protection and promotion.

### **Anthropic resources and attractions**

The appearance and value of a region is due, on the one hand, to attraction for elements within the natural environment and, on the other hand, complementary to the other attractive elements, attraction for man-made objectives.

These anthropic objectives have gained attractive valences once and along with the development of civilization and culture in time and space.

Religious, or cultural, and later trade fairs, initially represented interests to visit. But the phenomenon is gradually increasing, so that over time an increasing number of anthropic objectives become attractive points for more and more tourists. Thus, this component of tourism potential has contributed to the individualization of mass tourism.



Given that in our case in Harghita County, the area in which the culture and civilization of several nationalities combines, makes these anthropic objectives more interesting, colorful and diverse, to attract even more visitors through their uniqueness, in the area.

These human achievements, unique structural and architectonic characteristics, by the nature of the materials used, style, shape, color, ornaments, dimensions, purpose - placed in places where they were important and during creation, but today, emphasize their valences and increase the value and the potential of the entire County. The purpose of visiting these goals is knowledge, discovery as well as the accumulation of cultural and spiritual experiences through this process.

In this way, Harghita County colours its palette of tourist offers made available to visitors, besides the recreational ones, treatment and cleaning, cultural programs, religious and historical values of anthropogenic origin, diversifying their experiences.

The significance and importance of anthropic tourism is to preserve the values and features characteristic of a nation or ethnicity, the preservation of folklore, cultural, religious, museum, medieval games and other activities or monuments that characterize the population of the place and allows it to take care of national values.

Depending on the occurrence and the function served, the anthropic objectives have been classified into several categories:

1. *Historical-cultural objectives*

They are represented by various categories and sub-categories of buildings assembled according to historical and chronological criteria, because their features and valences are found and are specific to the categories of objects belonging to a certain historical age and concentrated in a determined geographic space.

The emotional impact that acts on collective consciousness, not only through aesthetic, but also spiritual and emotional components, determines that certain groups of visitors are linked to all the buildings or vestiges that awaken such feelings and focus their attention and interest.

The "back to the roots" ideology makes these tourist attractions a part of hereditary tourism, representing the cultural heritage of the local ethnicity. Hereditary tourism is based on the totality of those historical vestiges, as well as traditional folkloric, historical or cultural events and festivals, old-time manifestations that preserve the traditions and national identity.

Harghita County has a wide range of anthropic objectives, but in order to increase its attractiveness among tourists, it has to be combined with other forms or attractions for visitors.

Thus, 517 historical monuments, of which 96 are of ancient architecture, 25 castles and fortresses, 120 churches and 115 well-known buildings and groups of buildings, have been taken into account. This list also includes: antique furniture (35), traditional folklore buildings (58),



equipment, traditional technical tools of value (24), architectural and art values (22), archaeological sites, and funerary monuments (1), rare parks and gardens (1).

Depending on their time of origin and origin, the archaeological resources were cataloged, and 210 sites were identified in the list of archaeological sites.

Between them, there are 8 Neolithic sites (Dejuțiu, Ghipeș, Mugeni, Odorheiu Secuiesc, Oteni, Sandominic, Leticeni and Păuleni Ciuc) in chronological order; 23 bronze age (Hallstatt, Wietenberg) dating back to the iron age with Dacian vestiges 23, 19 Roman sites, (Roman baths, settlements, burgus, castellum), remains of the great migrations of the peoples 16, the monuments of the middle ages 11. Very few of these vestiges can still be visited in original form in the sense that they remained intact after the discovery.

A special attraction is generated by the visit to castles, fortresses. Unfortunately, the castle-tourism was not developed in Harghita County, with major deficiencies on the national and international market.

Accommodations in fortresses, castles, mansions are increasing in Western Europe, but we only see these groups of buildings as museums that go into the category of cultural tourism but also in the category of historical monuments.

Mansions and curias are still an important component, although, unfortunately, in many cases, they have already lost their original function, entered a state of degradation and their only escape would be their introduction into the tourist circuit.

In this context, at the level of Harghita County, we can mention only one castle - the one from Lazarea (built between 1450-1532), currently unavailable for visitation, because it is being restituted to the legitimate owners, however, in the future its return in the touristic circuits is highly recommended; mansions and boxes of 22 and 2 castles: Odorheiu Secuiesc (Curia Ugron) and the one from Cristuru Secuiesc (Curia Biro).

Figure no.38 The Castle at Lazarea





Source: <https://visitharghita.com/>

On the territory of the County there are two fortresses: the Medieval Fortress Szekelytamadt (1562-1600) and the Fortress Miko (1623-1631). In addition, 19 ruins of castles can be freely visited by tourists.

Figure No.39 The Medieval Fortress of Szekelytamadt



Source: <https://visitharghita.com/>



Among the religious cultural objectives we can mention the fortified churches and other religious objectives.

Churches have served, since ancient times, many functions throughout history. They represented not only spiritual centers, but human settlements were formed around them. And today, churches are the collection points of locals or even visitors, well-maintained for both the visit and the soul refreshment. A single church in Harghita County is a UNESCO heritage site, the one from Dârjiu, which is unique as a monument, but also because of the frescoes painted in it in 1419, or because of the archaeological discoveries, such as rune brick.

Figure no. 40- The Dârjiu Fortified Church



Source: <https://visitharghita.com/>

The entire County includes 88 Catholic churches, 23 Catholic chapels, 42 Reformed churches, 12 church towers, Unitarian churches 39, Orthodox churches and Orthodox monasteries 23, Greek Catholic churches, two synagogues and Armenian Catholic church.





All these churches could be included in tourist offerings, which would implicitly increase the attractiveness of the County, offering a cultural and spiritual variety.

## 2. *Urban and rural architectural objectives*

In the category of urban and rural architectural objectives, railroad elements for the exploitation of wood or for tourist purposes, such as Borsec and Toplița, or viaducts built for their support, such as Borsec, must be mentioned.

Several bridges, gates and water mills can be added to this list. Unfortunately, few have been reconditioned and introduced into the tourist circuit. We can mention here the Zsigmond Sawmill from Madaras, built in the 19th century and modernized at the beginning of the 20th century. It could still be in operation, but unfortunately after the floods, its dam broke, requiring repair. The owner wants to keep it running and tries to take action in this regard.

At Gheorgheni there is another water mill, considered a monument, at the end of the street with the same name (Morii Street), located on the bank of Belcia, considered an architectural museum.

The Borsec resort houses numerous villas and buildings of landscape value but not only. Their value also increases due to the unique architectural aspects, along with the numerous mineral water wells that give visitors a unique and delightful ambience.

## 3. *Cultural and sporting objectives: art and exhibition galleries, museums, cinemas*

From this class belong categories of edifices that are imposed by intuitive architectural values of constructions, but especially by their conservation function, by their image as traditional buildings, as well as by the exhibits inside them, represented either by works of art, architecture, or elements of culture, civilization and traditional urban or rural customs, or important historical personalities.

Museums and art collections also include exhibits that characterize the culture, civilization or elements of the natural science specific to the area.

Along with other activities in the package offered, museums are a special cultural or scientific attraction that can be offered to visitors and can increase the number of tourists in the area.

There are mentioned the museums from Miercurea Ciuc, Gheorgheni, Odorheiu Secuiesc, Cristuru Secuiesc; museums of the village at Joseni, Sândominic and Corund; collections of natural sciences from Odorheiu Secuiesc, and geology and crystallography from Gheorgheni; school museums from Odorheiu Secuiesc and Atid.

Memorial houses are also a great attraction for visitors: Lupeni, Praid, Miercurea Ciuc, Odorheiu Secuiesc, Ciumani, Joseni, Lăzarea, Remetea, Satu Mare, Sândominic, Racu and Matiseni. Also worth mentioning is the Tușnad Mineral Water Museum respectively the Borsec Mineral Water Museum.



Art galleries are classified as special cultural attractions and here we mention the Munkacsy painting exhibition at the Art Gallery in Miercurea Ciuc. Its impact was extraordinary by bringing an impressive number of visitors to the area.

Other art galleries can be found in Odorheiu Secuiesc, Gheorgheni and Satu Mare.

The existence of several groups and theater organizations in the County makes cultural tourism more generous. Here we mention: Csiki Jatekszin Miercurea Ciuc, Tomcsa Sandor Theater in Odorheiu Secuiesc, Figura Studio Gheorgheni. Besides the theater, The Philharmonic of Children from Vlahița colorfully draws on this attractive pallet offered to tourists.

The cultural ensemble includes: cultural houses, libraries, cultural and folkloric organizations.

Once the cinemas were one of the great attractions of both locals and visitors, they have lost their charm and impetus at the moment.

On the tourist market there are certain categories of visitors looking for both cultural and recreational or leisure programs and wellness programs.

For these reasons cultural tourism has its beauty and uniqueness and gives a certain color to the package offered.

In addition to these goals, sport is of major importance for regional attractiveness.

Ice Hockey is the sports king of Harghita County, being also the hockey center in Romania. Becoming a traditional sport, several teams have formed not only in major cities but also in neighboring communes and villages

Another important sporting attraction for tourists is the existence of outdoor skaters in almost all localities in the Giurgeu and Ciuc basins. The County sports competitions are very strong and provide players with the first league teams.

Winter sports are complemented by the numerous ski slopes and sports clubs that offer numerous value-added sportsmen to national teams, both cross-country skiing and alpine skiing or speed skating.

In the area there are two jump skis, the Strâmbă Valley and Remetea.

Of course, they are practiced in addition to County sports and other sports in sports clubs. Fortunately, funds have been attracted by programs in the County that helped to refurbish the speed skating track in the open air, to build many modern sports halls.

The speed skating track, which is behind the Vakar Lajos skating rink, had artificial ice in the mid-2000s. Since then, the concrete surface has been destroyed. It is inappropriate for organizing competitions. There is no artificial ice for about 20 years. In its place, the short track championship is organized, where most of the competitors are from Miercurea Ciuc competing



against those from Gheorgheni, against those from Ciucului de Sus, more recently with those from Brasov, because this sport is not practiced anywhere in the country.

Motor sports, especially those on a mountain or two-wheeled route, are in full swing and are a very effective way of attracting a specific blanket of the tourists.

The motocross track at the Round Forest near Odorheiu Secuiesc is one of the most modern tracks in the country, with annual motocross championship races here.

Rally races in the domestic championship, organized in Harghita County, attract the fans of extreme sports on four wheels, as are the carting or enduro races for field cars, which have already become a tradition in the area.

#### 4. *Socio-cultural events of tourist importance*

In any community, culture and cultural-traditional manifestations are an important component of attractiveness. As a result, it is necessary to care for and preserve the traditional values, events and manifestations with tradition in the area.

The most important and publicized cultural, religious manifestation in Harghita County is represented by the Pilgrimage and the Summit of Șumuleu Ciuc. The Church and Monastery of the franciscans from Șumuleu, although an ancient pilgrimage site for the Catholic and Csango Szeklers in Moldavia, are a key element of religious tourism.

For a long time, believers have become accustomed to gathering at Șumuleu on the occasion of the feast of the Holy Mary.

Thus every year, on Saturday, Pentecost, the Catholics of Szekler and Moldavia, as well as elsewhere, come to pilgrimage to the church of the Holy Virgin Mary in Șumuleu-Ciuc and surround the Șumuleu-Mic hill in the procession, at the descent decorating their flags with birch branches.

All these cultural events culminate in the summer, when these activities influence or attract curiosities not only from the County or neighboring regions, but also from abroad.

Harghita County is very rich in both traditional values and cultural manifestations, traditional values, but there must be all the necessary elements that will determine during the course of these events to influence the decision of the tourist to increase the number of overnight stays in the area, and after the festival's completion. This would require a management and a strategy for presenting future events for visitors.

An important step was taken with the Harghita County Calendar of Cultural Events and its submission to national and international tourism agencies.

Increased attention should be paid to the planning of these events in order not to overlap with other events in the region in order to avoid conflicts of interest or belonging and to provide a certainty and continuity of their existence in the future.



The centers for organizing cultural events can be found at: Miercurea Ciuc, Odorheiu Secuiesc, Băile Tușnad, Toplita, Red Lake, Borsec, Sumuleu Mic, Sândominic.

The Miercurea Ciuc Old Music Festivals and the Băile Seiche Rock Festival, the Sântimbru and Sâncrăieni Fanfare, the Băile Seiche folkloric festival all give a special touch to the area and enjoy a great appreciation from the visitors.

Figure no. 41 - Corund's Fanfare



Source: <https://visitharghita.com/>

The cultural delight offered by the diversity of habits, folk dances, portraits makes the number of tourists growing. Here we can mention the events that took place: the dance festival for children or the dancing camp in Dănești, the folk dance festival from Cozmeni, the folk dance camp from Lunca de Jos, the funeral of the carnivals from Madaras and Cozmeni, the Festival of the 1000 Secuience girls from Șumuleu Ciuc, the daffodils festival from Vlăhița or the painting camp of the traditional furniture from Merești.

Figure no. 42-. Farsang





Source: <https://visitharghita.com/>

Craftsmanship festivals are meant to present not only the creations of pottery craftsmen or testers, but it is a unique opportunity to see how they work and how a masterpiece is born.

These events are a picnic for tourists during the festivals, the Arcio ceramic fair in Corund, or visiting the craft workshops in Corund, Sândominic, Racu or Lazaresti.

The Coal Days in Lupeni and Corund are also a great attraction for many visitors.

Folkloric festivals in combination with village days are organized not only for those in the area. People in the region participate in events, recharge with positive energy, enjoy dance, traditional games, specific celebrations and local culinary art. Here we can mention: the days of the town or the village organized in Toplita, Dârjiu and Odorheiu Secuiesc. In autumn, they are complemented by the grape harvesting grape or the grapes from Lueta, Satu Mare, Bradesti, Zetea and Vrsag. These are organized by locals who invite the local villages to participate.

The ethnographic tourism potential can not be individually characterized, or separated from the other components of the attractiveness and the anthropic tourist potential, which are in close connection. In this context, the organization of socio-cultural-religious events can only take place in connection with the elements of the historical-cultural-religious potential, of the urban and rural architectural elements. To enhance success, besides the natural environment, buildings, man has an influence and a decisive role in achieving it.

In order to support and support the development of festivals' tourism in good conditions, traditional art centers have been set up at Corund, Dănești, Lueta and Sândominic. In addition, they are added to preserve traditions and culture and folk dance ensembles such as Jolotca, Joseni, Lunca de Jos, Carta, Lazarea, Cristuru Secuiesc. Where there is history and tradition, there are folk art monuments such as Zetea, Satu Mare and Ciucsângiorgiu.

In Harghita County, woodworking, carving in wood is and still remains a living tradition even today. Starting from the Szekler gates, wooden furniture, tools and tools, wood was the first and most important friend of the man of the place. Thus, Szekler gates, considered monuments of



a special beauty, can be found at: Satu Mare, Zetea, Brădești, Târnovița, Sândominic, Miercurea Ciuc, Ciucsângiorgiu, Păuleni-Ciuc, Praid, Joseni și Ditrău. We also collect Szekler gates collections at the Băile Seiche, Miercurea Ciuc, Satu Mare, which are dedicated to the tourist visits segment.

In conclusion, Harghita County has a huge natural and anthropogenic potential, which unfortunately is not yet fully capitalized on its true significance. Due to the lack of material funds and well-defined and devised strategies, the wealth held by this area is not quantified at the level at which it really is. Better structuring of activities, reorganization and attraction of funds, involvement and support of competent authorities and institutions could increase the visibility of the County and would implicitly increase the living standards of the population.

### **2.2.2 COUNTY INFRASTRUCTURE**

Infrastructure (transport, environment, communications, education, health, social, cultural and energy) is absolutely relevant to tourism development, and it is undisputed that this sector requires a well-developed infrastructure base.

#### **a. Road and rail infrastructure**

Within this chapter, we will focus on the infrastructure of Harghita County, more specifically on road and rail.

In terms of road infrastructure, we need to quantify the values with the active indicator "Length of railways and roads", as follows: total length of Harghita county road network (excluding forestry, neighboring roads and streets in localities) - this value is 1,827,856 km, according to the official site of the Prefect Institute, consisting of European roads, county roads and communal roads. This road network consists of 8 national roads, 43 county roads and 142 communal roads.

The county is crossed by a road of European importance, E578 (DN12), which connects the European roads: E58, E60 and E574, respectively the connection between the towns of Reghin, Gheorgheni, Miercurea Ciuc and Sfântu Gheorghe.

Regarding the secondary roads, a problem with the level of the quality of these roads can be identified at Harghita County level, as it is necessary to rehabilitate and modernize or even to arrange them. Inaccessibility or low accessibility of some localities due to their roads or their condition has negative effects on tourism and economic potential.

In the case of railway infrastructure, the railways of national importance are:

- Main Railroad 400 (Bucharest - Brasov - Sfântu Gheorghe - Miercurea Ciuc - Ciceu - Deda - Dej - Baia Mare - Satu Mare - Halmeu)

The railways of county and local importance are:



- Odorheiu Secuiesc - Vânători (near Sighișoara, Mureș County)
- Praid - Sovata (Mures county)
- Miercurea Ciuc - Moinești (Bacău County)

In Harghita County, the network of roads is determined by relief: Ciuc and Giurgeu depressions are linked to the railway line from the valley of Olt and Mureș, line 400 between kilometers 333 and 454, crossing the county in the direction of NS, ensuring the connection with the capital of the country, built at the end of the 19th century. The railway crosses Siculeni, line 501 from kilometer 0 to kilometer 32, thus providing traffic to Moldova through Ghimeș-Palanca pass, and from Odorheiu Secuiesc line 308 from kilometer 0 to kilometer 33 towards the Transylvania plateau, Sighișoara. The railway network in the Odorhei - Cristur area is very poor: two lines, line 308, Sighișoara - Odorheiu Secuiesc and line 307 Praid - Tg. Mures. Taking into account the geographical particularities of the county, for the realization of the railway network it was necessary to execute 18 bridges, lengths between 14 and 52 m, 4 viaducts with lengths between 80 and 255 m and 3 tunnels among which the shortest is 207m and the longest 1222.1m. The Harghita mountain range divides the county into two, and thus there is no railway line between the Miercurea Ciuc and Odorheiu Secuiesc municipalities.

We can see that in this case, accessibility is low, and the density of the timetable is also a problem. This has negative effects on the number of tourists, and localities are not accessible by rail infrastructure, thus eliminating those who do not have a personal car or find no other transport alternatives.

#### b. Analysis of the use of transport means at the level of Harghita county

Common means of transport and private cars are an alternative to travel within the county. Since the railway infrastructure is not sufficiently developed, there was a need for the development of a public transport network complemented by the use of passenger cars.

The inhabitants choose to make extensive use of personal cars for journeys within the county, the means of public transport being preferred by young people traveling outside the county.

#### c. Analysis of health services

The health system of Harghita County could be considered a developed one with more than 750 public and private sanitary units, with a wide range of specialized medical services being provided. Thus, preventing, diagnosing and treating diseases should be a simple and rapid process. In addition to the large number of healthcare providers, all hospitals in the county are interconnected by a European-funded computer system, with physicians having access to patient information and medical records.





However, in rural areas, the number of functional hospitals is low, with the population having to move to larger cities, so they are disadvantaged at times when rapid and efficient intervention is needed, wasting time.

#### d. Telecommunication Infrastructure Analysis

On the territory of Harghita County, the main fixed telephony operator is Telekom Romania, which also includes mobile telephony, internet and television services. Several local operators such as Orange, Vodafone, RCS & RDS, UPC, ASTRAL TELECOM, etc. are present on the market. From the point of view of the major telecommunications networks, the territory of the county is crossed by the fiber optic cable route Sf. Gheorghe (Covasna County) - Băile Tușnad - Miercurea Ciuc - Vlăhița - Odorheiul Secuiesc - Cristuru Secuiesc - Sighișoara (Mureș County). In the area of Harghita Băi there is a radio relay connected through telecommunication cable networks from Miercurea Ciuc, respectively Târgu-Mureș, Vlăhița, Odorheiul Secuiesc.

Given the specific landscape, Harghita County faces the problem of dead zones, ie areas where there is no signal from any mobile operator. This situation makes communication difficult and can create dangers, so it is advisable to offset it with Wi-Fi (Wi-Fi) access in these areas.

#### e. Analysis of municipal infrastructure

In Harghita County, the average percentage of electrification is 97.6% in urban and rural areas, 93.6% being one of the most affected districts after Alba and Vrancea, due to the territorial dispersion of settlements generating very high costs connection and that does not allow a damping of the investment.

This deficiency is also noted by the population of Harghita County, due to the fact that they often do not have access to electricity for shorter or longer periods of time. This also contributes to other problems, with electrical panels even contributing to the deterioration of electrical machines.

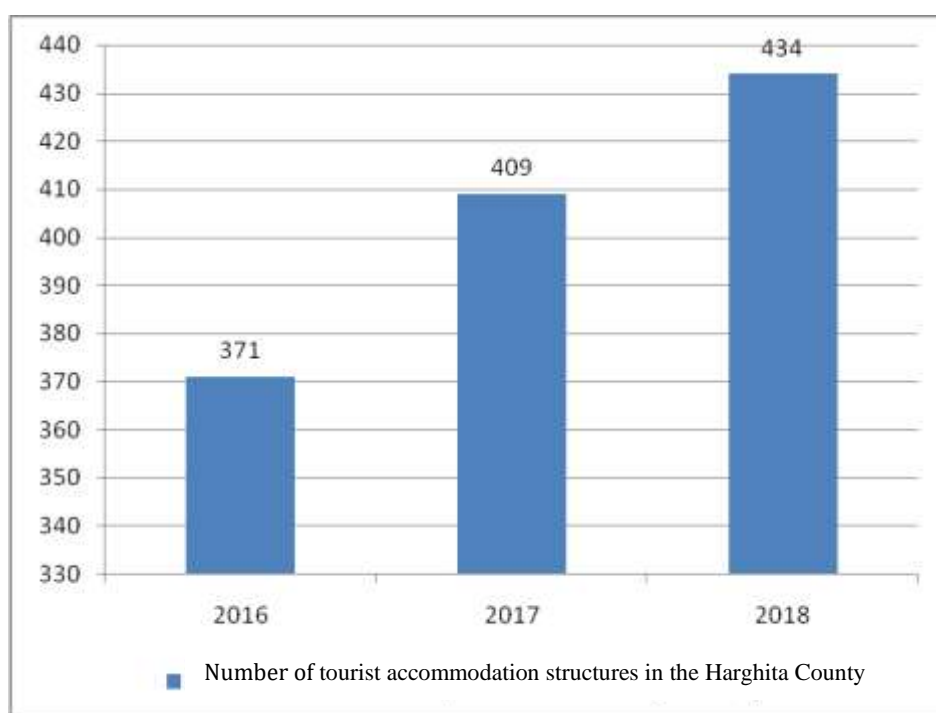
### **2.2.3. TOURIST ACCOMODATION STRUCTURES**

#### **2.2.3.1 The development of Harghita County tourism structures in the period 2016 - 2018**

The tourist offer of Harghita County is defined by the total number of existing tourist accommodation structures on the territory of this County.

According to the National Institute of Statistics, the situation of the tourist offer of Harghita County, expressed by the number of tourist reception facilities, is the following:

Figure no. 43 - Evolution of the tourist accommodation structures in the Harghita County between 2016 and 2018



Source: National Institute of Statistics

As can be seen from Figure no. 43, in each of the three years of the reference period, the number of tourist accommodation facilities in Harghita County evolved in an upward direction, which highlights the development trends of tourism in this County from the perspective of the tourist offer.

In 2017 compared to 2016, the number of tourist accommodation structures in the County of Harghita increased by 38 establishments of tourist reception, respectively by 10.24% (from 371 structures of tourists' reception in 2016 to 409 structures of tourists' reception in 2017), and in 2018 compared to 2017, the value of this indicator increased by 25 establishments of tourists' reception, respectively 6.11% (from 409 accommodation establishments in 2016 to 434 accommodation establishments in 2017).

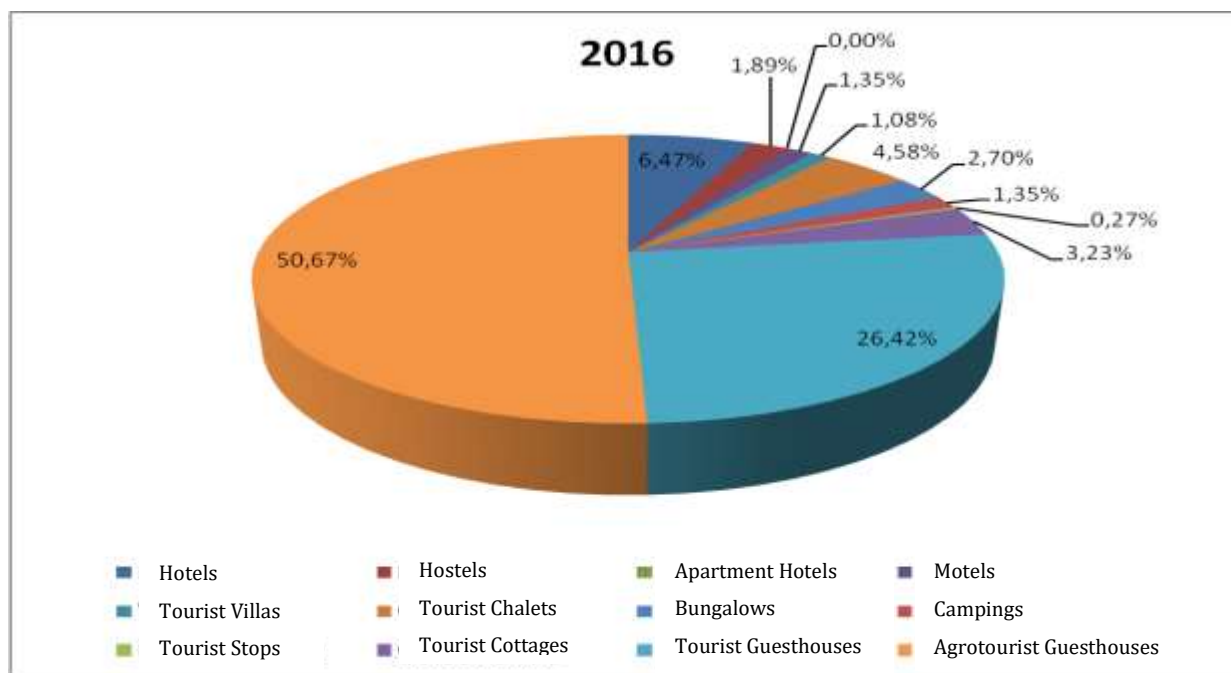


The ascendant trend of the number of tourist accommodation structures in Harghita County, between 2016 and 2018, highlights investments in the field of tourism, a factor contributing to the development of this area at County level.

### 2.2.3.2 THE STRUCTURE OF TYPES OF TOURISM STRUCTURES FROM THE HARGHITA COUNTY IN THE PERIOD 2016 - 2018

The tourist offer of the Harghita County is made up of the tourist accommodation structures: Hotels, Hostels, Apartment hotels, Motels, Tourist villas, Tourist chalets, Bungalows, Holiday villages, Campings, Tourist stops, Tourist cottages, Camps for students and preschools, Tourist guesthouses and Agrotourist guesthouses.

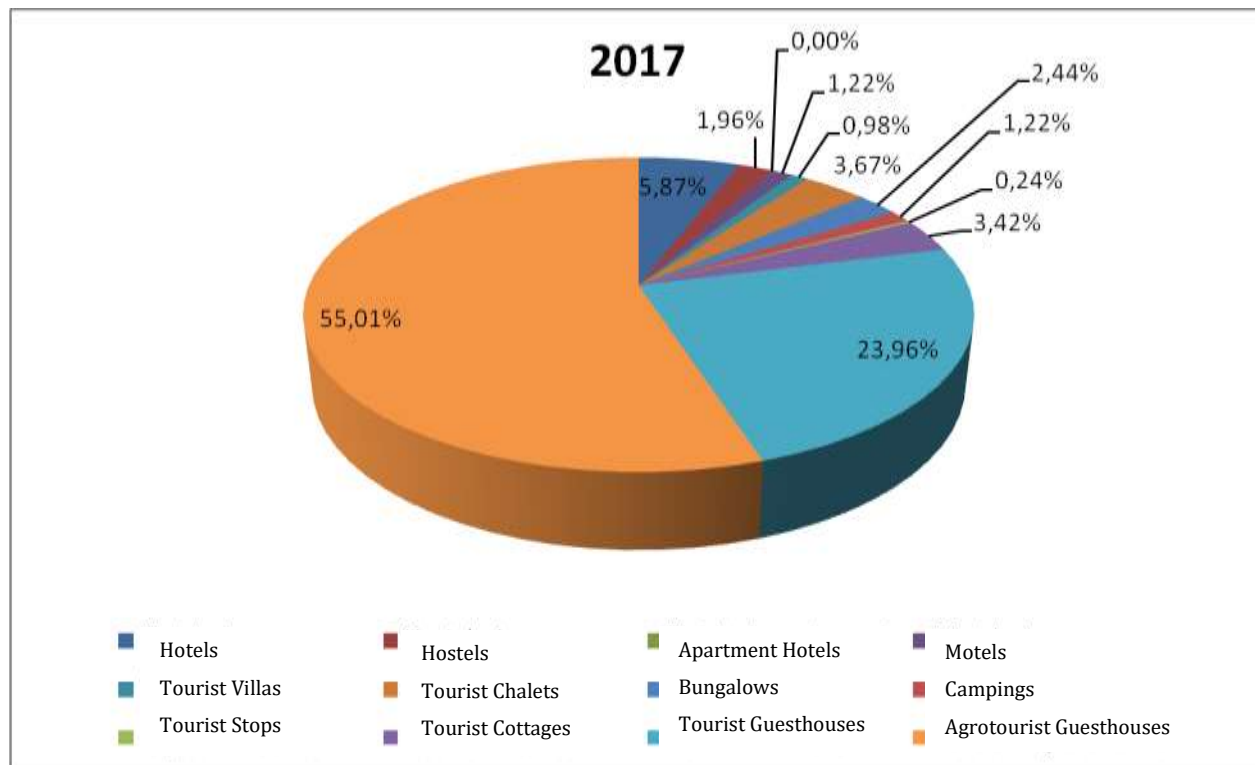
Figure no. 44 - Structure of the types of tourists' accommodation structures at County level in 2016



Source: National Institute of Statistics

As can be seen from figure no. 44, in the year 2016 the tourist offer of Harghita County, expressed in the type of tourist structures, was made up of: Hotels (6.47%), Hostels (1.89%), Apartment Hotels (0%), Motels (1.35%), Tourist Villas (1.08%), Tourist Chalets (4.58%), Bungalows (2.70%), Campings (1.35%), Tourist Stops (0.27%), Tourist Cottages (3.23%), Tourist Guesthouses (26.42%) And Agrotourist Guesthouses (50.67%).

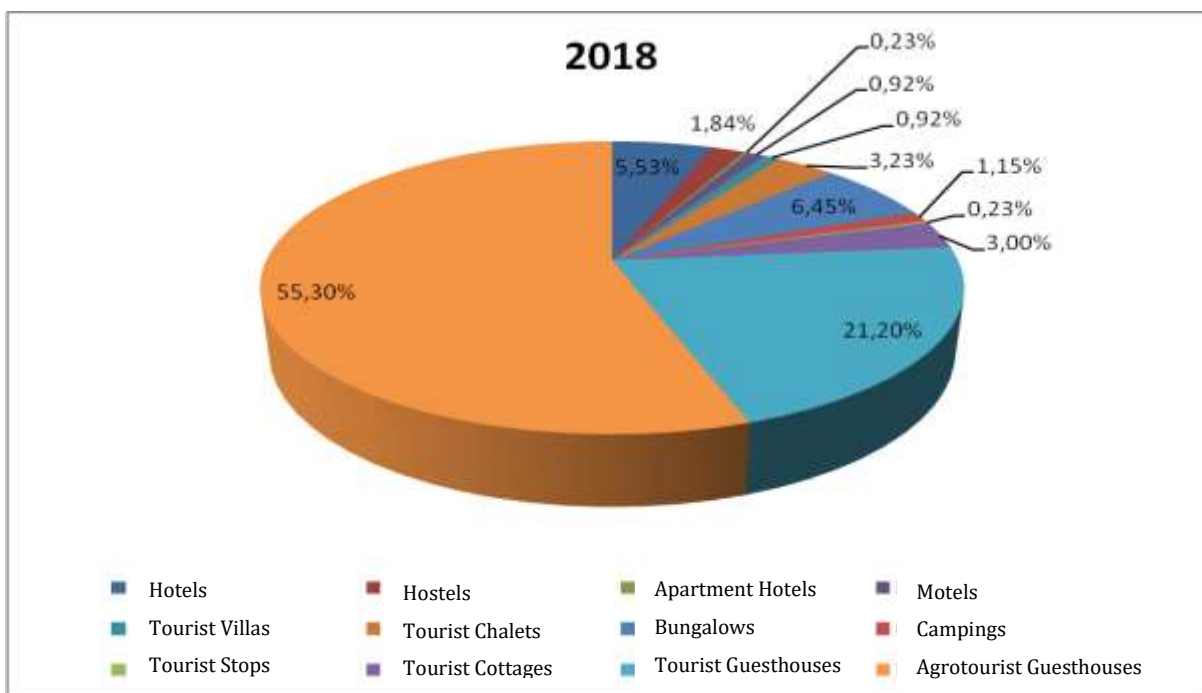
Figure no. 45 - Structure of the types of tourist accommodation structures in the Harghita County in 2017



Source: National Institute of Statistics

As can be seen from Figure no. 45, in the year 2017 the tourist offer of Harghita County, expressed in the type of tourist structures, was composed of: Hotels (5.87%), Hostels (1.96%), Apartment Hotels (0%), Motels (1.22%), Tourist Villas (0.98%), Tourist Chalets (3.67%), Bungalows (2.44%), Campings (1.22%), Tourist Stops (0.24%), Tourist Cottages (3.42%), Tourist Guesthouses (23.96%) And Agrotourism Guesthouses (55.01%).

Figura no. 46 - The Structure of Types of Tourist Accommodation Structures at Harghita County level in 2018 accommodation structures in the Harghita County in 2017



Source: National Institute of Statistics

As can be seen from Figure no. 45, in the year 2017 the tourist offer of the Harghita County, expressed in the type of tourist structures, consisted of: Hotels (5.53%), Hostels (1.84%), Apartment hotels (0.23%), Motels (0.92%), Tourist villas (0.92%), Tourist chalets (3.23%), Bungalows (6.45%), Holiday villages (0.23%), Campings (0.46%), Tourist Stops (0.23%), tourist cottages (3%), camps for students and preschools (0.46%), Tourist Guesthouses (21,20%) and Agrotourist Guesthouses (55,30%).

As far as the evolution is concerned, the situation of the tourist offer at the level of the County of Harghita, materialized in the number of the tourist accommodation structures, between 2016 and 2018 is the following:

Table no. 10. The evolution of the types of tourist accommodation structures in the Harghita County between 2016 and 2018

Name of tourist structure	2016	2017	2018
Hotels	24	24	24
Hostels	7	8	8
Apartment hotels	0	0	1
Motels	5	5	4
Tourist villas	4	4	4
Tourist chalets	17	15	14



Bungalows	10	10	28
Campings	5	5	5
Tourist stops	1	1	1
Tourist cottages	12	14	13
Tourist guesthouses	12	14	13
Agrotourist guesthouses	98	98	92
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>371</b>	<b>409</b>	<b>434</b>

Source: National Institute of Statistics

Between 2016 and 2018, the number of tourist accommodation type hotel in the Harghita County has remained constant at 24 tourist units of this type.

In 2017 as compared to 2016, the number of Hostels in Harghita County has increased by 1 tourist unit of this type, respectively 14.29% (from 7 tourist accommodation units in 2016 to 8 tourist accommodation units in 2017), and in 2018 the number of hostel-type tourist accommodation units remained constant at 8 structures of this type.

In 2018, at the Harghita County level, an Apartment Hotel-type tourist accommodation structure was set up, this type of structure not being identified in the other years of the reference period.

In the period 2016 - 2017, the number of motel type tourist accommodation structures remained constant at 5 tourist accommodation structures of this type, and in 2018 compared to 2017, the value of this indicator diminished with 1 motel type structure, respectively by 20% (from 5 tourist accommodation units in 2017 to 4 tourist accommodation units in 2018).

In the period 2016 - 2018 the number of tourist accommodation type tourist villas in the County of Harghita is of 4 tourist structures of this type, the number of touristic villas maintained at this level.

In 2017 as compared to 2016, the number of tourist accommodation establishments of type Tourist Chalets diminished by 2 such structures, respectively by 11.76% (from 17 tourist accommodation units in 2016, to 15 tourist accommodation units in 2017 ), and in 2018 compared to 2017, the value of this indicator diminished by 1 tourist structure of this type, ie by 6.67% (from 15 tourist accommodation units in 2017, to 14 tourist accommodation units in 2018).

Between 2016 and 2017, the number of Bungalow type tourist accommodation structures in the County of Harghita was of 10 such tourist accommodation structures and in 2018 as compared to 2017, the number of these tourist accommodation structures increased by 18 bungalows, respectively 180% (from 10 tourist accommodation units in 2017, to 28 tourist accommodation units in 2018).



In the period 2016 - 2018, the number of structures of the Camping type of reception in Harghita County was of 5 such structures, this number remaining constant in each of the three years of the reference period.

Between 2016 and 2018, the number of Tourist Stops – type of structures in the Harghita County category was of 1 structure, the number of these structures remaining constant in each of the three years of the reference period.

In 2017 as compared to 2016, the number of Tourist Cottages in the County of Harghita increased by 2 such tourist accommodation structures, respectively by 16.67% (from 12 tourist accommodation units in 2016, to 14 units of tourist reception in 2017), and in 2018 as compared to 2017, the number of such tourist accommodation structures diminished by 1 touristic structure (from 14 tourist accommodation units in 2017, to 13 tourist reception units in 2018).

Between 2016 and 2017, the number of Tourist Guesthouse-type tourist accommodation establishments in the County of Harghita was 98 such tourist reception units, and in 2018 as compared to 2017 the number of such accommodation structures decreased by 6 such unit, respectively by 6.12% (from 98 units of tourists' reception in 2017, to 92 tourist accommodation units in 2018).

In 2017 as compared to 2016, the number of tourist accommodation establishments of the type of Agrotourism Pensions in the County of Harghita increased by 37 such tourist accommodation units, respectively by 19.68% (from 188 units of tourist reception in 2016, to 225 units of tourist reception in 2017), and in 2018 compared to 2017, the number of such tourist structures increased by 15 such units of tourists' reception, respectively by 6.67% (from 225 tourist reception units in 2017, to 240 tourist accommodation units in 2018).

#### **2.2.4. TOURIST INFORMATION**

Tourist promotion activity must be a continuous concern of counties whose main objective is to become a tourist destination. Of course, the promotion of opportunities can be limited due to financial resources, even if natural resources would contribute to this. In such cases it is necessary to maintain a minimum of visibility, in order to be constantly in the sight of domestic and international tourists.

At international level, local and regional tourist offices and offices are often referred to as "Tourist Information Centers", ie Information / Tourist Information Centers, which is a generic term, being used as a name for several types of tourism organizations. In general, tourist information is facilitated by Tourist Information Centers or Tourist Information Offices, which aim to exchange information between the tourist sector, tourists and information centers.

In Harghita County there are:

- Lueta Tourist Information Office
- Borsec Tourist Information Center





- Vlăhița National Tourist Information And Promotion Center
- Ciumani Tourist Information Office
- Cozmeni And Lazaresti Tourist Information Office
- Dealu Tourist Information Office
- Ditrău Tourist Information Office
- Gheorgheni Tourist Information Office
- Ghimes Tourist Information Office
- Harghita Băi Tourist Information Office
- Izvoru Mureșului Tourist Information Office
- Lupeni Tourist Information Office
- Miercurea Ciuc Tourist Information Office
- ReFmetea Tourist Information Office
- Sântimbru-Băi Tourist Information Office
- Siculeni Tourist Information Office
- Toplita Tourist Information Center
- Public Information and Advisory Service for Youth and Tourism “Tourinfo” - Odorheiu Secuiesc

The skills of these entities may differ, but their purpose is the same: to centralize and transmit local and regional tourist information and opportunities. As you can see, Harghita County is sufficiently covered to be able to implement effective strategies that have as target group both domestic and international tourists and local entrepreneurs and / or firms. However, the large number of centers and offices do not make a visible contribution to the development of local and regional tourism.

Problems surrounding these centers and offices include lack of transparency in terms of activities, inefficiency of promotion (both of offices and of local tourism potential), poor communication with stakeholders, etc. Indeed, there is no possibility of unifying standards in terms of functioning, but among the possible solutions we can identify facilitating communication through conferences and workshops in the field, aimed at local stakeholders; local strategies, following discussions, implemented in relation to the identified resources and needs, ie inter-institutional or extra-sectoral partnerships.

In Harghita County, these tourist information entities could become a network where both tourists and tourists could inform about opportunities, resources, relevant events, and so on.



## 2.2.5 IMAGE OF THE AREA ON FOREIGN TOURIST MARKETS. EXTERNAL PROMOTION

At present, Harghita County benefits from many tourist attractions that successfully succeed in attracting visitors, both from Romania and from abroad. Due to the continuous development, in the last 2 years there has been an increase of about 12% of the number of foreign tourists<sup>8</sup> who choose to spend holidays or holidays on Romanian territory, which is an opportunity for Harghita County to increase number of visitors.

According to several tourist planning sites, Harghita County enjoys a positive outlook on visibility on foreign markets. Among the popular destinations preferred<sup>9</sup> by tourists from abroad are Praid, Băile Tușnad and Odorheiu Secuiesc. At the same time, many of those who choose to spend their holidays in these areas inevitably visit the Bicaz Gorges, St. Anne Lake and even the Praid Salt; these destinations being among the most visited destinations in the County. In general, the tourist image of the Harghita region is a good one, due to the popularity of spa centers and resorts, which are the main attraction of foreign tourists.

From a national point of view, foreign tourists prefer to visit well-known cities such as Bucharest, Braşov or Sighişoara<sup>10</sup>. This trend can be explained by the great development of cities and the very present historical component; most of the tourists wanting to visit tourist attractions such as "National Museum of Natural History Grigore Antipa", Bran Castle or Sighisoara Citadel. As far as spa tourism is concerned, Harghita faces a very strong adversary, namely the Romanian Seaside, offering diversified activities to all social groups - there are offers for young people, for adults, for those with low income and for those with income over the medium.

According to statistical data, in the period 2016-2018, there is an increase of about 9% among foreign tourists, in Harghita County, and at national level there is an increase of up to 12%. This phenomenon is due to the development precedent of the County but also favorable socio-economic factors. In an era of globalization and technology, where information is just a click away, promoting online is both an effective and an economic strategy.

On a promotional basis, the national image suffers because there is no well-defined tourism promotion strategy; at present, there is only one official national promotional material issued by RO2019EU<sup>11</sup>. The Ministry of Tourism made public the new promotion video of Romania. The film has three and a half minutes and the message: "Romania, a destination for 365

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<sup>8</sup> TUR104B - Arrivals of tourists in tourist accommodation establishments, by types of structures, types of tourists, by macroregions, development regions and counties (<http://www.insse.ro/cms/>)

<sup>9</sup> TripAdvisor ([https://www.tripadvisor.com/Tourism-g2699689-Harghita\\_County\\_Central\\_Romania\\_Transylvania-Vacations.html](https://www.tripadvisor.com/Tourism-g2699689-Harghita_County_Central_Romania_Transylvania-Vacations.html)), accessed on May 22, 2019.

<sup>10</sup> TripAdvisor ([https://www.tripadvisor.com/Tourism-g2699689-Harghita\\_County\\_Central\\_Romania\\_Transylvania-Vacations.html](https://www.tripadvisor.com/Tourism-g2699689-Harghita_County_Central_Romania_Transylvania-Vacations.html)), AutoEurope (<https://www.autoeurope.com/travel-blog/top-10-places-to-visit-in-romania/>), WorldAtlas (<https://www.worldatlas.com/articles/the-most-visited-tourist-attractions-in-romania.html>), accessed on 22 May 2019

<sup>11</sup> YouTube, (<https://www.worldatlas.com/articles/the-most-visited-tourist-attractions-in-romania.html>), accessed on 22 May 2019



holiday days a year." Historical buildings and folk customs appear alongside clubs and music festivals. of the past, such as the use of records about other areas than those in Romania, have contributed to a decrease in interest in it. Another problem is the language barrier, as the promotional video is recorded exclusively in Romanian, limiting the access of foreign tourists, non-Romanian speakers.

The tools used to promote tourism are made either individually, by travel agencies, through social media; either through music festivals (Untold, Neversea, Electric Castle), which attract about 250,000 tourists every year.

However, existing and implemented measures are not enough. After TUI and Neckermann, Dertour dropped out of promoting the Romanian offer in 2018, being one of the great German tourists, arguing the poor infrastructure, the small number of quality hotels and the high rates they had. Romania has become the only country in the region that is no longer promoted in the catalogs of major tourists in Germany, a state that was recently the main provider of tourists for the local market. Instead of remedying the situation, the new measures implemented aim to promote Romania on the Asian continent, being a failure to attract tourists from this area.

## **2.2.6 THE ISSUE OF HUMAN RESOURCES IN TOURISM IN HARGHITA COUNTY**

As part of the analysis of the current situation of staff working in the field of tourism and of the personal potential in this sector, besides labor market issues in the tourism sector, aspects related to the formal and informal education and logistics system that contribute to the acquisition of knowledge and skills staff.

At Harghita County level, tourism is perceived as a landmark in regional and micro-regional development, which means analyzing and addressing all positive and negative aspects in this area. Regarding the workforce in the tourism sector, the strategy needs to identify the educational system's deficiencies by reference to market requirements; respectively proposed the best measures for correcting and completing the identified deficiencies, in a manner that will solve the problem of human resources in the tourism sector in the County of Harghita, so that in this sector to activate professional staff, competent and able to contribute to the development of the tourism sector of Harghita County (in a narrow sense) and to the economic development of this County (in a broad sense).

The main issues addressed within this subchapter are:

- analysis of the workforce in the field of tourism at the level of Harghita County and its reporting to higher hierarchical units
- analysis of vacancies in tourism

The results of the aforementioned analyzes will highlight the positive and negative aspects of the labor market in the field of tourism in Harghita County and based on the conclusions



drawn from the interpretation of these results will be established strategic objectives and proposed measures for the improvement of the tourism field in the Harghita County in the context of human resources.

#### **2.2.6.1 Analysis of the labor force in the field of tourism at the level of Harghita County**

The main indicator of the labor force in a field of the national economy is the population of the occupied population. Thus, the workforce in the field of tourism at the level of Harghita County, as well as from the level of higher hierarchical structures (regional and national), is defined by the number of persons employed in different branches of this sector. The main instruments of the labor market analysis in the field of tourism are: the evolution of the employed population in this sector, the share of this County population in the total population employed in the tourism sector at the regional and national level, respectively the evolution of the incomes achieved by the staff who are active in this field.

The employment situation in the tourism sector at national, regional and County level is presented in the following table:

Table no.11. Workforce in the tourism sector between 2015 and 2017

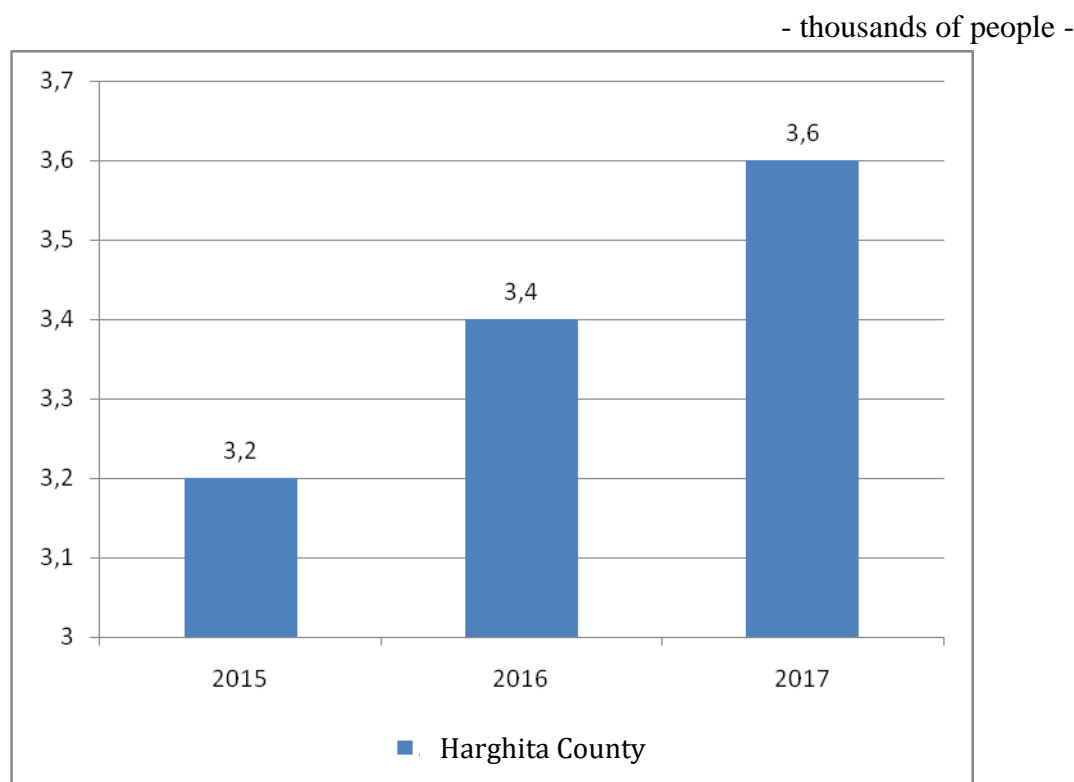
Element Name	2015 (thousands of people)	2016 (thousands of people)	2017 (thousands of people)
Romania	174,2	193,3	204,2
Center Region	28	30,4	31,5
Harghita County	3,2	3,4	3,6

Source: National Institute of Statistics

As can be seen from Table no.11, the occupied population in the field of tourism at national, regional and County level registered a trend of ascending evolution, aspect which highlights the development of the tourism field within these administrative structures.

In the context of evolution, the work force in the field of tourism, at the level of Harghita County, presents the following situation:

Figure no. 47 - Evolution of the occupied population in the tourism sector at Harghita County level, between 2015 and 2017



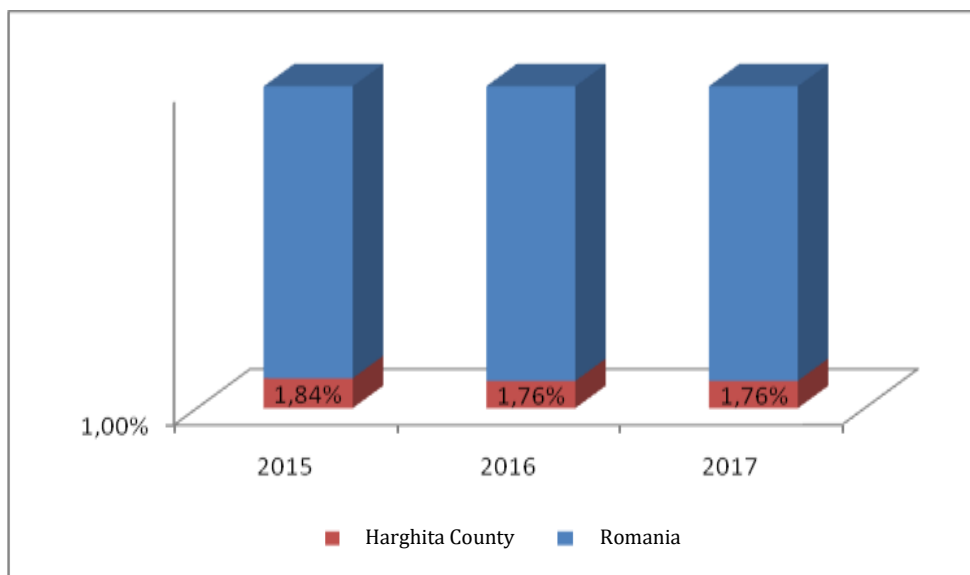
Source: National Institute of Statistics

As can be seen from Figure no. 469, between 2015 and 2017, the population employed in the tourism sector at the level of Harghita County evolved in an upward direction, highlighting the development potential of this sector.

In 2016, as compared to 2015, the population employed in the tourism sector in Harghita County evolved in an upward direction, by an increase of 0.2 thousand persons, respectively by 6.25% (from 3.2 thousand persons in 2015, at 3.4 thousand people in 2016) and on the same ascending trend in 2017 as compared to 2016 this population of Harghita County increased by 0.2 thousand persons, respectively by 5.88% (from 3.4 thousand people in 2016 to 3.6 thousand people in 2017).

Regarding the employment situation in the tourism sector in Harghita County, by referring it to the superior hierarchical structures, the following picture is outlined:

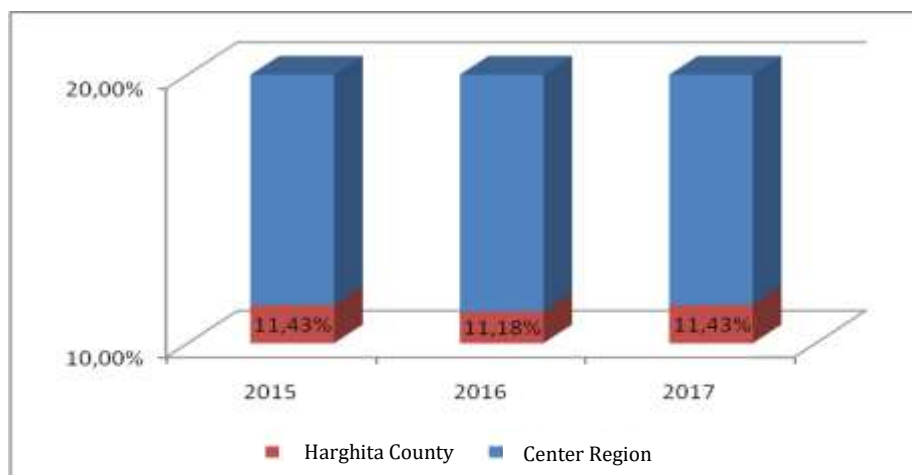
Figure no.48 - The employment situation in the field of tourism in Harghita County by reporting at national level



Source: National Institute of Statistics

As can be seen from Figure no. 47, in the year 2015, the employed population in the tourism sector at Harghita County level represented 1.84% of the total of this population at the national level, and in the next 2 years the share of the occupied population in the tourism sector in Harghita County in the total of this national populations declined and remained at 1.76%. The decrease of the occupied population in Harghita County in the total number of this population at the national level is due to the accelerated rate of the ascendant evolution of the employed population in the tourism sector at national level compared to the rhythm of the ascending evolution of this population from the County level Harghita

Figure no.49 - The employment situation in the field of tourism at Harghita County level by reporting at the regional level



Source: National Institute of Statistics

As can be seen from Figure no. 48, in 2015, the population of Harghita County, occupied in the tourist sector, represented 11.43% of the total of this population at the level of the Center Region. In 2016, on the backdrop of rising upward pace, more accelerated at the level of the Central Region, than in the County of Harghita, the share of the occupied population in the field of tourism in this County decreased by 0.25 percentage points, representing 11.18% of the total of this population at the level of the Center Region. In 2017, due to the rhythm of the ascendant evolution of the occupied population in the tourism sector, at the level of Harghita County, higher than the rate of evolution of this population at the level of the Center Region, the share of employed population in the tourism sector at the County level increased by 0,25%, so that in 2017 the population of Harghita County, occupied in the field of tourism represented 11.43% of the total of this population at the level of the Center Region.

#### 2.2.6.2 ANALYSIS OF EMPLOYMENT PLACES IN HOLIDAYS TOURISM AREA

The number of vacancies in the tourism sector represents the need for busy personnel in this sector, this need being determined as the average of the main indicators involved: tourist offer - tourist demand - busy staff in the tourism sector.

Regarding the number of vacancies at the level of administrative subdivisions of Romania, the National Institute of Statistics provides information only at regional level.

The situation of vacancies in the tourism sector at the level of the Center Region is presented in the following table:

Table no. 12. Vacancies in the Center Region between 2015 and 2016

Item Name	2015	2016	2017
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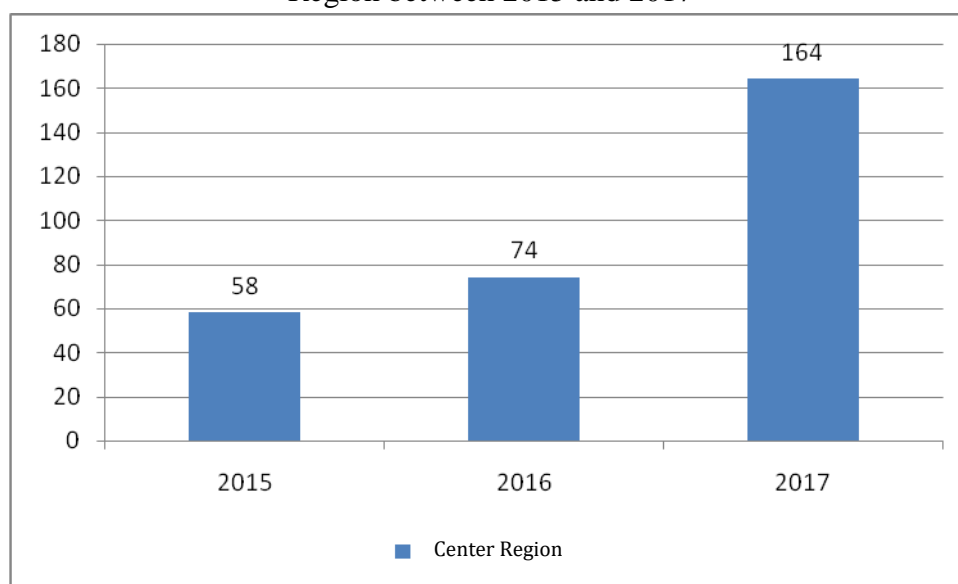
Central Region	58	74	164
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Source: National Institute of Statistics

As can be seen from Table no. 12, the number of vacancies in the tourism sector at the level of the Center Region in 2016 registered an upward trend of evolution, which highlights the need for personnel in this sector, in relation to demand and supply tourist, respectively busy staff.

Regarding the evolution of vacancies in tourism, from the level of the Center Region, between 2015 and 2017 the situation is the following:

Figure no. 50 - Evolution of vacancies in the tourism sector at the level of the Center Region between 2015 and 2017



Source: National Institute of Statistics

As can be seen from Figure no. 49, in 2016 compared to 2015, the number of vacancies in the tourism sector at the level of the Center Region has evolved in ascending order, increasing by 16 such places, respectively by 27.59% (from 58 vacancies in 2015 to 74 vacancies in 2016). In 2017 compared to 2016, based on the same upward trend of evolution, the number of vacancies in the tourism sector at the level of the Center Region increased by 90 such places, respectively by 121.62% (from 74 seats vacancies in 2016 to 174 vacancies in 2017).

The existence of vacancies in the tourism sector and the upward trend in their number highlight the need for staff in this sector, namely the need for training of staff potentially employed in this sector.

#### **2.2.6.3 TOURISM AUTHORIZATION AND ATTENDANCE SYSTEM - TOURISM LICENSES AND PATENTS; TOURISM GUIDE QUALIFICATION**



Authorization and Monitoring Directorate within the Ministry of Tourism, authority responsible for the development, monitoring and management of tourism activities; is responsible for the following tasks:

1. Initiation and promotion of normative acts specific to the field of authorization and privatization, respectively post-privatization of tourism companies
2. Drawing up of syntheses and reports on the activity of authorization, privatization and post-privatization of companies with tourism profile
3. Authorization of the economic agents and of the specialized personnel in the respective tourism field:
  - grants the licensing of travel agencies
  - classifies the tourist reception facilities
  - grants patents to specialist staff
  - issues certified tour guides
  - grants authorization for beach tourism
  - grants authorizations for carrying out water tourism activities
  - grants authorizations to carry out recreational water activities
  - approves ski slopes and mountain hiking trails
  - grants opinions according to the planning and spatial planning documents for tourist areas and resorts, respectively for technical documents specific to the construction of the tourism sector
  - certifies by certification the ownership of the land for the companies operating in the field of tourism.
4. perform the procedure for attestation of tourist resorts of local or national interest
5. ensure and verify compliance with the criteria for classification and licensing of tourism structures and travel agencies for their authorization
6. verify the fulfillment of the minimum criteria regarding the endowment of the tourist beaches in order to obtain the permits
7. coordinates the privatization and post-privatization activity of the companies active in the field of tourism, elaborates and applies the privatization strategies in the field of tourism and ensures the management of the privatization process of the companies that operate in the field of tourism



8. monitors the exercise of the rights and obligations of the state as a shareholder of the companies operating in the field of tourism until the completion of the privatization process
9. participate in professional documentation and information activities: conferences, congresses, symposia and other events organized at national and international level in order to improve the authorization and control activity
10. cooperates with bodies and institutions in the country and abroad with specialization for the authorization, control and promotion of the quality of tourist services
11. coordinates the authorization activity of economic agents and tourism specialists
12. fulfillment of any other duties delegated by the Ministry of Tourism management.

### **Travel licenses and patents**

The tourism license is the document that certifies the capability of the holder to provide tourist services according to the quality and safety standards for tourists and the opportunity to set up a travel agency.

The travel document is the document that attests the professional capacity of individuals specializing in the field of tourism, occupying management positions of travel agencies or tourist reception structures.

The authority licensed to issue tourist licenses and certificates is the Ministry of Tourism, which at the request of the economic agent issues these documents within 30 days from the date when the request of the economic agent / natural person was registered. These documents are issued after verification by the Ministry of Tourism and the fulfillment of all the criteria by the applicant (economic agent / natural person).

### **Travel guides**

The tourist guide is the person in charge of conducting and guiding a group of strangers or visitors in a visit to the tourist destinations and to provide explanations and information on the visited touristic objectives. Also, the responsibility of the tourist guide is also to ensure that the touristic program is carried out in the best conditions.

The requirements, the legal basis and the categories of tourism attestations granted at national level, valid also for Harghita County, are set out below:

Table no. 13. Requirements, legal bases and categories of attestation in tourism

Item Name	Tourist guides	Tourism license	Brevet de truism
Legislative basis	HG 305/2001	ORDER 1866/2010	ORDER 1866/2010
	HG 361/2003	HG 1267/2010	HG 1267/2010



	ORDIN 637/2004		
Requirements	<p>Qualification certificate - National Tourist Educational Center</p> <p>Guidance certificate</p> <p>Certificate of knowledge of an international language</p>	<p>- tourist activity specified in the agent's objective</p> <p>- registration in the trade register</p>	<p>- vocational training certificate</p> <p>- attestation of the period of activity in the field of tourism</p> <p>- Certificate of foreign language knowledge</p>
Categories	<p>- local guide</p> <p>- national guide</p> <p>- specialized guide on certain segments - mountain, hiking, art, supervisor, animation, natural habitat: fauna, flora, ornithology; Athletic: climbing and rock climbing; skiing, bobs, swimming, canoeing, yachting, flying with ultra-light devices (deltaplan, paraglider etc.)</p>	-	<p>- a tourism patent is issued for the following functions:</p> <p>a) manager in tourism activity</p> <p>b) travel agency director</p> <p>c) retailer travel agency director</p> <p>d) hotel manager</p> <p>e) restaurant manager</p>



			f) cabanier
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### **2.2.7. SOLUTIONS FOR THE INTRODUCTION OF SPECIALIZED AND VOCATIONAL COURSES IN THE FIELD OF TOURISM, AS WELL AS LANGUAGE COURSES FOR PERSONS WORKING IN THIS FIELD, WITH SPECIAL ATTENTION PAID TO THE ROMANIAN LANGUAGE COURSES**

At present, Harghita County, despite its tourist potential, faces problems in terms of communication in Romanian and / or in other languages of international circulation, namely the reduced number of employees, who participated in different specialization courses / tourism specialty. Within this chapter, some of the difficulties were analyzed and ideas for solving them were proposed.

The main problems that Harghita County encounters in the tourism field are the low number of specialized staff and the low level of knowledge of both Romanian and international languages.

The problem of free of charge offers for studying Romanian and international language (English, French, German, possibly Chinese), including tourism specific language, for residents of the County also implies the passivity of the inhabitants of Harghita County, lack of communication and promotion of these opportunities, respectively administrative problems with regard to diplomas and certificates received (delay in the issue of certificates and diplomas and / or non-validation of certificates and diplomas).

A possible solution is a partnership with the Faculty of Romanian Literature - English Language and Literature from the *Sapientia University*<sup>12</sup>, based in Miercurea-Ciuc, and the *Spektrum Educational Center*<sup>13</sup>. One advantage of this solution is that both are in Miercurea-Ciuc, which includes the accessibility of everyone in the County. There are several training courses in the field of tourism in Romania, but in order to obtain the best results, we must also take into account the needs of the citizens. Courses - both Romanian and training - must be organized in Harghita County, thus eliminating extra expenses for accommodation, meals and travel, which may be an important aspect, because in most cases, these expenses are incurred by the beneficiary. At the same time, the courses organized in Harghita County would be accessible to the inhabitants and would mean a reduced traveling time for the beneficiaries.

Another solution would be to set up a Professional Center (or Centers) for tourism. The existence of such a Center improves access to finance for the necessary courses, constitutes a fixed point (or more, as the case may be) of those who may be interested in providing courses or attending courses, gathering stakeholders, etc. Within the center, for excursions, exchanges of experiences between countries (for those studying international languages, respectively in the field of tourism - exchange of experience for the purpose of raising interest, accessing funds and

<sup>12</sup> Sapientia University, Admissions, <http://www.sapientia.ro/en/admitre/programme-de-studiu-de-licenta/miercurea-ciuc/limba-si-literatura-romana-engleza>, accessed on 21 May 2019.

<sup>13</sup> The Spektrum Education Center, <https://sec.ro/en>, accessed May 21, 2019.



creating partnerships) chefs, waiters) and regions or counties in Romania (for those studying Romanian). Within them, the participants will find out which tourism strategies are implemented in other states, other regions and / or localities (analyzing whether they can contribute to the development of the native land or whether the internal strategies of the different places can be transposed in Harghita County). will visit the tourist attractions, get familiar with the specialized language.

The Center / Centers could also facilitate dialogue between young people and employers, so after the end of the courses, counseling sessions can be implemented to identify possible jobs and / or potential candidates in pensions, museums and other tourist destinations, thus a number of former students (depending on the abilities mentioned above) will become employed in the field.

### **2.2.8 TRAINING COURSES FOR TOURIST GUIDES**

In the case of Harghita County, regarding the situations of the tourism guides we can notice two situations:

- guides with studies in the field
- guides without studies in the field (people who are or may be interested in the field)

In the case of people who already work as a guide, have higher education in the field of tourism, but are unemployed (but not an exclusive clause), they can offer courses to become trainers and provide training to those who are interested in the field or profession. This solution would contribute to targeted training, according to the needs of the County, respectively existing resources, facilitating better communication between the trainers and the participants in the course / training / workshop.

Another possibility is a partnership with a training and qualification center, eg the A.P.T. International (in this case, the nearest headquarters is in Brasov, which means that there will be additional expenses to ensure the minimum necessary - mass, travel - if no closer or closest center is found).

In this case, we can also initiate the training center solution proposed in subchapter 2.2.7, which could provide the location and needs of these courses as well as the necessary support for various activities such as partnerships, projects, etc.

### **2.3 SUMMARY OF THE STATISTICAL ANALYSIS OF TOURISM AT HARGHITA COUNTY LEVEL**

The statistical analysis carried out on the tourism sector at the level of Harghita County reflects the following aspects:

- At the Harghita County level, between 2016 and 2018, the number of tourists at Harghita County level evolved in an upward direction. The ascendant trend of the evolution of the number of tourists highlights the tourist attraction capacity of Harghita County, indicating the need for development of the tourism sector at the County level.



- The average proportion of the tourists who visited Harghita County between 2016 and 2018 is about 1.69% of the national tourists and about 7.18% of the total number of tourists from the Center Region.
- Harghita County is the destination for which mainly Romanian tourists opt, accounting for approximately 75% of all tourists, and 25% of foreign tourists are made up of tourists from the countries: Hungary, Austria, Germany and the Republic of Moldova.
- The average proportion of the Romanian tourists who visited Harghita County between 2016 and 2018 is about 1.64% of the Romanian tourists' population at national level and about 6.67% of the total Romanian tourists from the Center Region level
- The average proportion of foreign tourists who visited Harghita County between 2016 and 2018 is about 1.86% of the number of foreign tourists from the national level and about 9.38% of the total number of Romanian tourists from the Center Region level.
- During the period 2016 - 2018, the number of tourist accommodation structures in the County of Harghita evolved in an upward direction, which highlights the development trends of the tourism sector in this County, from the perspective of the tourist offer.
- The average proportion of the number of tourist accommodation structures in Harghita County in the period 2016 - 2018 is approximately 5.22% of the total number of tourist accommodation structures at the national level and about 17.79% of the total tourist accommodation structures Center region.
- The main types of tourist accommodation structures in the County of Harghita, in the order of tourists' preferences are: hotels, agrotourist guesthouses, tourist guesthouses, tourist chalets, tourist villas and motels.
- During the period 2016 - 2018, the number of the occupied population in Harghita County, active in the tourism sector, evolved in an upward direction, which highlights the development potential of this sector at the County level, with the support of the personnel involved in this field.
- The average proportion of the number of employees working in the tourism sector in Harghita County is about 1.79% of the labor force in this sector at national level and about 11.35% of the total number of employees in the period 2016-2018 active in the tourism sector at the level of the Center Region.





### **III. COMPETITIVENESS ANALYSIS**

#### **3.1 NATURAL AND ANTROPICAL ATTRACTIONS**

##### **General analysis**

As for the anthropic attractions, in the County there are:

Băile Tușnad, the smallest town in the country, also called the "Pearl of Transylvania". The resort originated in 1842 and became famous due to the curative properties of the surrounding area. Today, the resort attracts tens of times more tourists than residents. Also, Băile Tușnad are famous for its mofetts.

The Bacon Fortress, located in the village of Darjiu, is the name the villagers give to the fortified church from their village because they have cool rooms where they have deposited their supplies for hundreds of years (smoked bacon, bones, etc.) .

Figure no.51 Bacon Fortress from Dârjiu Village



Source: <https://visitharghita.com>

The village of Crișeni has an antropol attraction, the only Romanian museum dedicated to straw hats. Inside this museum is also the largest straw hat in the world according to Guinees World Records, made in 2004. The museum counts a few thousand visitors every year, and it needs better coordinated promotion at national and international level, or including them in tourists-specific programs.

Figure no.52 - The straw hat museum in the village of Crișeni



Source: <https://visitharghita.com>

Lazar Castle is situated in Lăzarea commune and bears the name of the noble family that created it. The architectural style is the Renaissance, the walls are decorated with a painted and



concave cornice. The castle hosts annual creations for artists, and the winning works are subsequently exhibited in the castle. From January 2014 the castle is temporary closed because it has been restituted to their former owners. There are still undergoing steps in order to reintroduce it in the tourist circuit.

Figure no. 53 - Lazar Castle from Lăzarea



Source: <https://visitharghita.com/>

The Cârța Peasant Fortress from the village of Cârța, which has as main attraction the Roman Catholic Church, built around 1500, in the Gothic style. The village does not have many hostels, so the accommodation is in the neighboring villages or in Miercurea Ciuc.

Figure no. 54 - The Cârța Peasant Fortress



Source: <https://visitharghita.com/>

The Borsec resort is located in the middle of the Oriental Carpathians, about 100 kilometers from Bicz, in Borsec. The resort is famous for its mineral waters. The Borsec Company, a native of the city, extracted mineral water and sold it both in the country and in the US, Israel, Canada, receiving the title of Queen of Mineral Water in 1878. There are also mountain trails in the locality. Sapte Izvoare (Seven Springs) is located 1550 meters from the center of the resort and is known due to the large number of springs of drinking water that feed the whole resort.

Zânelor Glade, Bear Cave, Ice Cave, Ancient Spring, Pierre Curie Spring or Owl Fortress are some other mountain trails to follow.

Figure no. 55- The Borsec Resort





Source: <https://visitharghita.com/>

Szekler gates from Brădești commune. In 1973 there were: near the road leading to Ciuc two large gates, near the road to Gheorgheni, on the right side 17 large gates and a small gate, and on the left side 13 large gates and a small gate. In the village is also a popular craftsman, Dávid Mózes, who is still building gates.

The specific ornaments are applied manually, respecting both the tradition and the preferences of the future owner.

Figure no. 56 - The Szekler Gate from Brădești commune



Source: <https://visitharghita.com/>

Homorod Bath resort in Vlahita is a balneological resort and is located about 18 km away from Odorheiu Secuiesc, on the valley of Homorodul Mare and the Băilor brook. Characteristic of Harghita County, the resort has baths and springs of mineral water, the most famous being the



Lobogo, Maria, Csorga, Homoradi, Ilona, Fenyves springs). The water's characteristic of these springs is rich in minerals: Li, Mn, Br. J.

Natural cure factors present at the resort:

- sulphurous mineral waters
- chlorinated
- bicarbonateD
- sulfated
- sodium
- sapropelic mud
- sparing bioclimate

At this resort you can treat those with degenerative rheumatic diseases (cervical, dorsal and lumbar spondylosis, arthrosis, polyarthrosis); abarticular rheumatic disorders (tendinosis, tendomiasis, scapulohumeral tendrilostoses-periarthritis, etc.); gynecological disorders (chronic metroanexites, minor puberty and menopause disorders); dermatological disorders (psoriasis, keratoderma); endocrine affections.

Figure no. 57 - Homorod Bath Resort



Source: <https://visitharghita.com/>

As a tourist attraction of religious nature, Harghita presents the Izvoru Muresului Monastery, dedicated to the "Assumption of the Virgin" located at the foot of Hășmașul Mare, between Miercurea Ciuc and Gheorghieni. Its construction began in 1996 and the church was sanctified in 2000 by Patriarch Teoctist.

Figure no.58 - Izvorul Muresului Monastery



Source: <https://visitharghita.com/>

Another religious purpose is the Franciscan Church in Odorheiu Secuiesc, built in a blend of Baroque and Classical styles, and the two front towers have a slight Renaissance influence. The church and monastery were built between 1728 and 1779. Since 1990, the monastery has been ceded for 25 years to the Franciscan sisters. Currently, the church rite is Roman Catholic.

Figure no. 59 - The Franciscan Church in Odorheiu Secuiesc



Source: <https://visitharghita.com/>

The Nagy Imre Memorial House is a tourist attraction for the inhabitants of Miercurea Ciuc and the nearby regions. Imre Nagy was an inter-war sculptor and a university professor. Inside there are documents, books, pieces of furniture, personal items and the artist's art collection.

Figure no. 60- Nagy Imre Memorial House





Source: <https://visitharghita.com/>

Miko Castle in Miercurea Ciuc, made in Neorenaissance style, with regular geometric plan and Italian bastions. It is the oldest and most important historical monument of the city. It was built on the bank of Olt between 1623-1631, on the order of count Hidvegi Miko Ferenc. During the revolution of 1848-1849, the headquarters of the Szekler revolutionary forces commander, Gal Sandor. After the revolution, it remained in use for the army. The castle is the most preserved Renaissance monument in the Szeklerland. At present, it is the seat of the Szekler Museum of Ciuc, a museum where visitors can enjoy a rich collection of local history, natural sciences, folk art, folk crafts, church art, old prints and fine arts. In the inner courtyard of the castle there are the concerts of the Old Music Festival.

In the park in front of the castle are two statues, that of Petofi Sandor and that of Nicolae Balcescu.

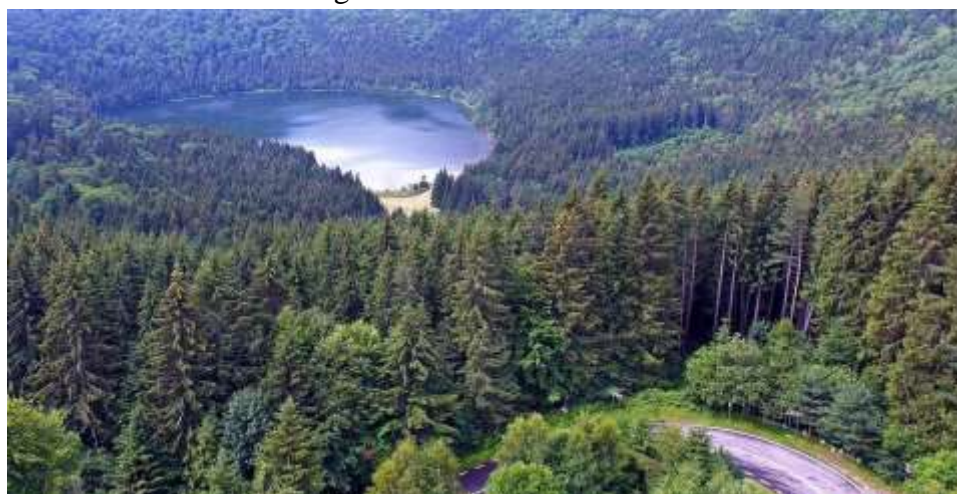
Figure no. 61 - Miko Castle in Miercurea Ciuc



Source: <https://visitharghita.com/>

Next to Baile Tusnad there is Lăzărești commune, of which the Saint Ana Lake belongs to, and in close proximity is Tinovul Mohoș. It is also called the Lake of the Moss. It is actually a swamp that has been formed for 3,000 years in a volcanic crater, Peat Ciomatu Massive. There are 17 almost black water lakes in Tinov. True traps for tourists and animals. The depth of the swamp sometimes exceeds 70 meters. A trip to Tinovul Mohoș reveals all sorts of rarities of nature. The great attraction of the reserve is the carnivorous plant known as the Roua Cerului (Heaven's Dew). It's 16,000 years old, from the ice age. Lake St. Ana, the only natural volcanic lake in Romania, 17 kilometers away from Bixad. The lake is at an altitude of 949-950 meters. The Sugau Cave (The Whisper Cave, translated) has a kilometer in length and four storeys. You can only visit a 150-meter route from it.

Figure no.62 - Lake St. Ana



Source: <https://visitharghita.com/>

The Vârghiș Gorges includes about 50 caves, of which the most famous is the Merești Cave. Prior to entering the cave, there are traces of fortification walls, which show that the cave was used in the past in the event of invasion. The cave has two entrances, only one being newly



arranged. It has two main rooms - the Grand Hall and Fekete Istvan Hall. The name of the second comes from the name of the speleologist who, in 1835, mapped the cave in detail, its maps can still be used today. Upon completion of the research, the speolog published a 16-page work, to which he attached the map. Only two copies of it have been preserved today, one in Budapest and one in Odorheiul Secuiesc. Also, the cave is of interest to scientists because of the human prehistoric fossils discovered here.

Figure no. 63 - The Vârghiș Gorges



Source: <https://visitharghita.com/>

The salt mine in Praid is known for the curative properties that the saline air has, the belts in this saline being recommended for treating certain lung conditions. A saltwater swimming pool has been opened since 2014. Here is the largest butterfly museum in Romania.

Figure no. 64 - Praid Saline





Source: <https://visitharghita.com/>

The Neck of Hell is one of the sections of the Bicaz Gorges and includes the passage that connects with Bicajel Gorges, it is an attraction for climbers.

Figure no.65 - Neck of Hell in Bicaz Gorges



Source: <https://visitharghita.com/>

The village of Bilbor is the richest settlement in Harghita County regarding the springs of mineral water - over 700 in number. The mineral waters here are considered to be of high quality, the common producing large amounts of mineral water. In addition to this, there are rare species



of plants such as juniper, yew, reed, zimbru, thyme, dwarf garlic or peony etc., as in other areas of the County. These are species protected by law, being considered monuments of nature.

Figure no. 66 - Bilbor village



Source: <https://visitharghita.com/>

These attractions offer a unique view of the history, culture of Harghita County, and can be identified as the main resources for local and regional tourism development.

These resorts offer Harghita County an advantage in terms of health tourism as well, bringing together several types of natural resources that have positive health effects. It is important to note that even if there are other similar opportunities in the country, the accessibility of the County from anywhere in the country and the related opportunities offer unique experiences. As far as the attractions are concerned, they offer a unique view of the history, culture of Harghita County and can be identified as the main resources for the development of local and regional tourism.

### **3.2 TOURISTIC INFRASTRUCTURE**

Harghita County benefits from a vast network of tourist infrastructure, consisting of hotels, hostels, information points, cottages, resorts, ski slopes, camping and parking places, marked trails, guided tours, etc.



Regarding the natural attractions they have, Harghita County has an underdeveloped tourist infrastructure. The number of accommodation has fallen significantly since the 90s due to the closure of some mountain resorts or spa resorts. In recent years there has been an improvement in accommodation capacity, but growth has been lower than in neighboring counties.

The accommodation offer is dominated by accommodation in units such as tourist and agrotourist pensions; they have a 79% share of accommodation units. In contrast, the specialized offer for youth and / or travelers crossing the area has a significantly lower share. The number of tourist reception facilities is concentrated in rural areas.

However, although the number of accommodation places is not small, there are large disparities from one area to another. Most often, disparities in accommodation capacity correspond to differences in tourism potential. Some areas with high or medium tourist potential do not benefit from tourist infrastructure or benefit very poorly. A concrete example would be the Călimani Mountains National Park, located partly on the territory of Harghita County, which has the lack of boarding houses or other types of accommodation units, and those that have few places or are located far away. Tourists are advised to prepare their holidays early, often this deficit affecting the tourist transit in the area.

Establishing a basic accommodation infrastructure would increase the number of tourists, especially in the city break category (weekend tourists or up to 3 days), but also in the longer-term category. However, the arrangement of the accommodation units should be made in such a way that they do not interfere with the natural landscape and according to the objective, not to be too close to the objective visited. For example, if the target is a cave and there are numerous rocks on the route, no arrangements are needed. Generally, natural objectives need to provide subsistence infrastructure (water and food sources, toilets, dumps) to allow the visitor to visit the goal without too much luggage and without much training. In the case of sanitation facilities, they should consider the possibility of attracting wild animals (eg bears), endangering both the life of tourists and animals. They can be arranged in such a way that they can not be accessible to animals, and it is also necessary to periodically check them. This is already being implemented in Switzerland, but also in some localities in Romania.

Anthropic targets, on the other hand, allow for more developed tourist facilities, provided, however, that they respect the architectural style of their objective to be located at a distance from it in order not to be part of the complex. They can be arranged in a holistic manner, pensions in an area respect the style and character of the area, local culture, even if the ethnicity of the population has changed in the meantime.

### **3.3 BALNEAR TOURISM - MINERAL WATERS AND MOFETS – TRADITIONAL WATERS, MINERAL WATER LAKES, MINERAL WATER BATHS**



The quality and the high number of the mineral water sources in Harghita County made it considered a balneoclimate center in the middle of the 19th century, the mineral waters being used for commercial purposes (bottled mineral water Tușnad, Borsec etc.), curative (resorts dedicated to mineral water cures, extraction and processing of curative minerals) or recreation. Spa resorts have been set up around the spa resorts, the best known and visited being Băile Tușnad, Borsec, Harghita and Homorod Baths. Băile Tușnad resort is one of the most visited spa resorts in the country due to the fact that doctors recommend it for treatment of digestive, respiratory, cardiovascular, circulatory, endocrine or even nervous system diseases.

The less known spa resort, Praid, has recently witnessed a significant increase in the number of visitors, alongside areas such as Red Lake or Izvorul Mureșului.

The spa tourism in Harghita has the potential to develop by capturing the city break segment of tourists: tourists from major cities such as Cluj, Brașov, Iași, who often go on holiday during the weekend to avoid the burn-out phenomenon, Harghita being relatively close to these urban and university centers, with a relatively young population willing to spend money on city breaks.

Another segment that could be an opportunity is that of budget members, especially due to recent holiday voucher programs. By offering advantageous packages for this category, for medium or long periods (one week, one month), this category of tourists could be attracted; an advantage being compared to other popular destinations in Romania, such as the Romanian seaside, proximity and affordable price.

A third category of tourists, which are important for this type of tourism, are pensioners or older people. This category is a lesser category but with a much higher budget due to the senior tourism phenomenon.

Figure no. 67 - Mineral water spring





Source: <https://visitharghita.com/>

Figure no.68 - Borsec Mineral Water Museum



Source: <https://visitharghita.com/>

Figure no.69 - Szejke Mineral Water Museum



Source: <https://visitharghita.com/>

Figure no. 70 - Tușnad Sat Mineral Water Museum



Source: <https://visitharghita.com/>

### 3.4 ECOTOURISM



Ecotourism is the form of tourism where the tourist experiences nature and local culture, aiming at:

- producing a minimal negative impact on local nature and culture;
- active preservation of the nature and cultural heritage of the visited area;
- use of local services;
- understanding the elements of local nature and culture;
- direct contact directly with the locals and the local travel agent, facilitated by the small size of the groups of visitors;

Thus, ecotourism activities can include:

- types of adventure activities (eg rafting, canoeing, equestrian tourism on pre-arranged routes, skiing, bicycle trips on arranged trails, etc.);
- guided tours / trips;
- nature observation tours (flora, fauna);
- excursions to experiment with nature conservation activities;
- excursions to local communities (visiting cultural objectives, visiting traditional fertility, watching traditional cultural events, consuming traditional food, purchasing traditional non-food products, etc.).

The ecotourism activities in Harghita are varied, the County being rich in attractions and tourist offerings easily accessible from Harghita Visit. The application manages to gather together information about all the tourist attractions, places of accommodation and leisure opportunities, personalized in categories that will surely provide the tourist with a rich travel agenda.

In Harghita County, there is the smallest ecotourism destination in the country - Baile Tusnad Ecotourism Destination and its surroundings. Since 2015, this ecotourism destination has been administered by the ACCENT Geo-Ecological Organization, the destination being the result of several activities of this organization, including: arranging thematic paths, organizing bicycle paths, etc.

Baile Tusnad Ecotourism Destination and its surroundings is structured in the following areas:



- Zone 1 – The Ciucul de Jos Basin – includes the Natura 2000 Site The Ciucul de Jos Basin (ROSCI0007) with the localities: Sâncrăieni Commune, Sântimbru Commune, Sânsimion and Tuşnad Communes
- Zone 2 – Băile Tuşnad – includes the Hawk Rock Natural Resort (2.484) and the city of Băile Tuşnad
- Zone 3 – Sfânta Ana Lake – includes the natural reservations Sfânta Ana Lake (92.486) and the Mohoş Tinov (2.487) and the Natura 2000 Site Mohoş Tinov - Sfânta Ana Lake (ROSCI0248) with the locality Cozmeni Commune.

#### Recommendations:

- Modernization / refurbishment of tourism infrastructure;
- Promotional packages for tour groups;
- Collaborating guest reception facilities with different travel agencies or tour guides
- Organizing events to attract tourist potential
- Preparing the staff involved in tourism activities
- Updating existing marketing strategies
- Ensure the institutional framework for the operation of the Destination Management Ordinance (DMO) and its development
- Developing an integrated network of quality ecotourism services at the destination level
- Promoting the destination unit to increase the number of tourists
- Developing the organizational capacity of DMO in order to ensure the sustainability of the ecotourist destination and conservation actions initiative.

### **3.5 WINTER TOURISM - SPORTS TOURISM - ACCESS TO THE "ALTERNATIVE SCHOOL" WINTER PROGRAMME - WINTER AND SUMMERTIME TOURISM WITH MORE COMPONENTS**

#### General information:

The natural resources existing in Harghita County offer numerous opportunities to practice sports and leisure activities for all age groups throughout the year. Here are just a few of the most common sports and forms of entertainment: hiking, biking, mountaineering, kayaking, canoeing, horse riding, sport fishing, skiing, ice hockey, skating, sledding and dogs, etc.,

At the same time, suitably equipped gymnasiums as well as artificial turf fields offer excellent opportunities for practicing sports, and developments in the last few years in the field are also reflected in the results of sportsmen both in winter sports and in indoor sports.



Thus, the Harghita County Council places a special emphasis on the awareness of the importance of healthy lifestyle, movement, promotion of opportunities for leisure, development of various sports branches. In this respect, the County Sports Strategy has been drawn up, with its own sports support programs, as well as opportunities for practicing sport at the level of the institution.<sup>1</sup>

#### Recommendations for Winter Tourism:

- Prepare seasonal and off-season promotional packages; Collaboration of guest reception facilities with nearby slopes and group discounts;
- Marketing offer for lesser-known sports and possible presentations to motivate tourists;
- Packages for both beginners and advanced learners;
- Organizing camps for both adults and children;
- Renovating guest reception facilities where appropriate;
- Modernization of mountain tracks and trails;
- Collaboration with existing rescue centers and informing the public about them.

#### Alternative School (National program „Școala Altfel”):

Within the national Alternative School program, the County library offered in the school year 2018-2019 various activities for all age groups. Librarians met groups of pupils who participated in puppet theater performances with the group of puppeteers of the library, listened to stories at the children's section, participated in various activities, such as a themed drawing contest on stories, an open book time , etc.<sup>2</sup>

The children visited equestrian centers in Harghita County sponsored by 5 centers that participated in the program, such as: Lókodi Foundation in Locodeni, Club Lobogó Sports Club in Homorod Bai, Kavalliera Equestrian Club in Cotormani, Földvály Károly Traditions Association in Gheorgheni and the Salvator Foundation.<sup>3</sup>

#### Recommendations:

- Preparing programs that directly target activities involving children / pupils who come on trips throughout the year, especially during the School period;
- Discounts for groups of children / students;
- Organizing events to attract public interest;
- Updating existing marketing offers;
- Personnel specializing in working with children;





- Involve children / students in the community through different programs with schools.

Figure no. 71 - Winter tourism in Harghita County



Source: <https://visitharghita.com/>

### **3.6 EQUESTRIAN TOURISM AND OPPORTUNITIES OFFERED BY THIS TYPE OF TOURISM - HORSE RIDING**

In the high areas, the Harghita Mountains are forested; the Harghita-Mădăraș Peak (1800 m), the Beveled Corner (1709 m) and the Harghita Mountain (Ciceu) are barely showing their creeks in meadows. The landscape is varied, colorful, with trails and trails, in the area there are the cabins Harghita Mădăras, Harghita, Brădet, Chirui, Selters) and the high altitude resort Harghita-Băi (1350 m) from where the marked trails begin.

The area is perfect for horse riding and carriage rides, the activities vary according to the tourist's interest. The offer is quite varied, and there are many agencies that deal with it ([https://visitharghita.com/en/places?cat\\_type=centru-de-echita-ie\\_1529997055](https://visitharghita.com/en/places?cat_type=centru-de-echita-ie_1529997055) ). The identity of this type of tourism is important, and for the development of this segment, it is necessary to create a strong brand or integrate it into a local brand. Equestrian tourism in Harghita County needs a convincing message to attract tourists, using the existing potential and promoting it.

Equestrian tourism is a novelty and a curiosity for both Romanian tourists and foreign tourists. Its development, first of all, must be based on the country's experience in the field; At the moment, the horse population has 800 thousand heads. The studs all over the country are growing different breeds of horses, such as the Lipizzaner, Arabian pure blood, the Arabian Shagya, the Huțu, the Ghidran, the local races such as the Apuseni, Fagaras or Bucovina horses. A symbol for Romania is the wild horses from the Letea Forest and the Danube Delta.



To promote equestrian tourism, it is necessary to support local authorities, economic agents, travel agencies and guides, and also support from the inhabitants of Harghita County.

Recommendations:

1. Improvement of infrastructure and rearrangement of specific locations (where applicable); a problem may be the lack of signaling of the routes or even their non-existence in some cases. Improving the situation at Harghita County level, according to the opportunities, could contribute to the popularization of this type of activity.
2. The organization of horse riding camps with seasonal promotions; the offer of these camps may include both basic activities and instruction, guide and personalized activities (for young people, for families, for experts).
3. Improve the local economy by organizing farm involvement projects by offering accommodation and dining for a genuine Harghita experience.
4. Volunteer programs for tourists and locals at farms / agencies, thus having the opportunity to get acquainted with this type of tourism, contributing to its popularization.
5. Organize an information campaign for this tourist offer, both through travel agencies and on-line media, involving several factors, from NGOs to civil society.
6. Improve existing marketing offerings and increase national visibility through targeted promotion.
7. Various promotional packages for both beginners and advanced, providing support from guides and trainers.
8. Organize thematic events to attract tourists, festivals, community days, city days.
9. Services for weddings / parties.

Figure no. 72 - Equestrian tourism in Harghita County





Source: <https://visitharghita.com/>

### **3.7 CYCLIST TOURISM AND OPPORTUNITIES OFFERED BY IT**

Harghita County has a wide range of cycling routes for both beginners and amateurs of challenging routes. Bike routes are a great way to enjoy the scenic landscapes of the entire County whether visitors are accompanied by family or friends.

As this type of tourism is less sought after by tourists, I believe that it should be invested in promotional campaigns and marketing offers that increase the visibility of cycling agencies.

Some of the most popular forest roads that are practicable by bike are:

Mădăraş Harghita (1618 m) - Vlăhiţa (898 m) - Harghita Băi (1276 m);

Ghimes (115m) - Ghiurche Peak (1366m) - Casin Pass (1085m);

Rugát Pass (1085m) - Casin's Pass (876m);

ECO-TUSNAD CYCLING TOUR (ETCT).

Recommendations:

- Organizing information campaigns on this way of traveling and visiting;
- Organizing cycling camps for both young people and adults;
- Arranging promotional offers with guest reception facilities
- Investing in cycling tracks / finding stakeholders willing to invest in the project;
- Upgrading mountain trails;

- Possible collaborations with health institutions;
- Updating existing marketing offers and expanding the target group.

Figure no. 73 - Cycling in Harghita County



Source: <https://visitharghita.com/>

### **3.8 HIKING - FACILITATION AND MODERNIZATION OF SUCCESSFUL TRAILS FOR SLOW TOURISM TRAVEL (ANALYSING BOTH ACTIVE AND SLOW VERSIONS)**

Hiking is an outdoor activity consisting of walking, in natural environments, often in mountainous areas or other picturesque areas. Usually this activity takes place on routes specially designed for this kind of recreation, also called hiking trails<sup>14</sup>. The popularity of this activity is increasing in Harghita County. The benefits of various types of hiking on health have been confirmed in many studies, and among the visitors of Harghita County is becoming more and more opt-in activity.

Due to the natural resources and mountains in Harghita County, hiking has become an active part of the visits and holidays spent here. However, a problem constantly perceived by both residents and visitors, namely the lack of poorly arranged, signaled or inappropriately marked paths and / or the degraded deterioration of the trails.

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<sup>14</sup> McKinney, John, „For Good Health: Take a Hike!”, 22 March 2009.



In order to analyze the existing situation and the potential of hiking, we need to consider the two types of people who practice this activity:

- Those who have a particular destination and practice this activity to get there.
- Those who explore the area, and hiking is just a way to do it.

In the case of Harghita County, in terms of hiking, it would be beneficial to attract tourists who want to explore the area to visit more places in the region, because those with a well-defined purpose and destination usually fall into the group of visitors specializing in this activity, or who have experience, and their stay is shorter, are not open to other opportunities and self-isolation. Instead, those who want to explore the area tend to be more open and change their plan for the moment. It is therefore necessary to plan and modernize the routes, signaling them accordingly. There are currently several routes, with varying levels of difficulty, ranging from 1 hour to 6-13 hours, providing an experience for both amateur and relevant.

Figure no. 74 - Hiking in Harghita County



Source: <https://visitharghita.com/>

### **3.9 RELIGIOUS TOURISM - THE CONTINUOUS DEVELOPMENT OF THE VIA MARIAE PILGRIMAGE ROAD**

The Via Mariæ Pilgrimage road is a touristic spiritual journey. A pilgrimage route that relies on Saint Mary's worship by the peoples of Central Europe, but also unites marian places and historical, cultural values along the route, without distinction according to religion. It aims to build a tourist and pilgrimage route in Central Europe, and a network that would systematize



religious values in the region. Via Mariae connects east-west direction between Mariazell in Austria, Budapest, Máriapócs and Șumuleu Ciuc, and north-south between Częstochowa, Esztergom, Budapest and Medjugorje. The road traces a cross on the map of Central Europe (Austria, Hungary, Romania, Slovakia, Poland, Croatia, Bosnia), thus creating a network of pilgrimage routes based on local values, similar to El Camino<sup>15</sup>.

This road addresses everyone, calls them all. It awaits those who, regardless of nationality, religion, want to be pilgrims for religious, spiritual, self-knowledge, and waits for those who want to go on this road for the sake of tourism or sports. This road will be a bridge between nations, religions, people, linking the sunset to the sunrise, becoming the Way Linking the Nations in Central and Eastern Europe, the "Road to Reconciliation," which in the future can become a European cultural path.

Being a unique opportunity, the pilgrimage of Via Mariae and its development can generate economic, tourist, cultural and social benefits. That is why it is necessary to mark the spiritual tours of the Via Mariae pilgrimage route with a system of symbols, which has happened partly in Transylvania.

The specificity of the Harghita County and the Szekler Land lies in the fact that an important end of the route is here, which is why not only the main artery is built here, but also the ramifications in many other directions - unites potential pilgrims and tourists from at least 8 directions (on foot, on bike, on horses).

M 05 red

Târgu Mureș – Miercurea Ciuc (Șumuleu Ciuc) - Ghimeș-Făget

M 01 purple

Mariazell – Budapesta – Máriapocs - Cluj Napoca – Târgu Mureș – Miercurea Ciuc (Șumuleu Ciuc)

M 03 purple

Mariazell - Arad – Alba Iulia - Sighișoara – Miercurea Ciuc (Șumuleu Ciuc)

M 12 blue

Brașov – Sfântu Gheorghe – Miercurea Ciuc (Șumuleu Ciuc) – Toplița – Vatra Dornei

M28 yellow

Coșnea – Miercurea Ciuc (Șumuleu Ciuc) – Târgu Secuiesc – Sfântu Gheorghe

M29 green

Micloșoara – Baraolt– Sântimbru Băi – Miercurea Ciuc (Șumuleu Ciuc)

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<sup>15</sup> Official website HU: Via Mariae, <http://www.mariaut.ro/?language=en> , accessed on 22 May 2019.



M 24 yellow Praid –Atia-Inlaceni

M32 yellow Ditrau -Borsec

The Szekler route requires particular attention: here, in some cases, natural beauties also represent serious obstacles, requiring not only a simple bookmarking system, but also a complex pedestrian infrastructure, assuming, at the same time, the establishment of a system for removing dangers and granting first aid.

Also, in order to improve the quality of the pilgrimage, besides markings, it is necessary to develop an IT application (for computers and phones) for the purpose of promoting and organizing various programs to attract tourists.

### **3.10 ȘUMULEU CIUC – INTERNATIONAL TOURISM DESTINATION**

Șumuleu Ciuc is a pilgrimage site for the Szeklers and Roman Catholics in general. It is located 3 km from the center of Miercurea Ciuc, in the northeast, on the shore of Sumuleu brook.

Figure no. 75 - Religious tourism in Harghita County - Șumuleu Ciuc



Source: <https://visitharghita.com/>

The first Franciscan church was built between 1442-1448, on the site of the old church, following the commemoration of the victory at Santana de Mureș by Iancu de Hunedoara. It was demolished in 1802 due to its deterioration. Instead, the present church was built between 1802-1824 in baroque style, the interior finishing was 72 years old.

Figure no. 76 - The Holy Mary Church of Șumuleu Ciuc





Source: <https://visitharghita.com/>

This region can be considered a huge open-air museum.

The region has a strong rural character. Villages, well preserved traditions and traditional gates are very attractive to tourists, and the region is inhabited by people who preserve and truly cultivate today's folk traditions. Ornamentation of traditional gates reflecting the talent and ingenuity of the inhabitants.

The capitalization of this tourist destination, both locally and internationally, can add to the economic development of the region.

recommendations:

- Involving the community in activities that are beneficial to both the tourism industry and the community itself (guest reception facilities, plus the involvement of tourists in their daily routine with their agreement);
- Promoting the pilgrimage road Via Mariae, attracting international tourists;
- Organizing events to attract public interest;
- Allocation of funds to improve local infrastructure (roads, renovation of public structures);
- Selling goods produced by locals;
- Arranging religious camps at different times of the year;
- Extending the church site with guest accommodation structures;
- Possible establishment of an animal sanctuary around the church as an attraction.



### 3.11 GASTROTURISM AND THE OPPORTUNITIES PROVIDED BY IT

Gastrotourism includes travel undertaken in order to know the gastronomic values of a region. In this form of tourism, the emphasis is on tasting the typical dishes and beverages of the locality, participation in gastronomic festivals and deeper knowledge of gastronomy in a particular region. In this situation gastrotourism is closely associated with rural tourism (snacking of traditional dishes and drinks) and event tourism (participation in gastronomic events) .

Once in the Szekler Landscapes, visitors are impressed with the taste of food in addition to the fairytale scenery and the famous tourist spots. For those who go for the first time in Harghita, the cooks recommend them with tradition, which is the first place in the menu of each restaurant: the goulash and the tochtura, as well as the Szekler spice dessert. Other local dishes that attract tourists are the Succulents of Kucos (Kurtos Kalacs) and langos with different flavors. These could be the main stars of a Slavic food festival preceded by other local products such as wine and cheese tasting and guided tours to vineyards and wine cellars with a short history.

Rural areas offer true and recognized hospitality based on unpolluted environment, good quality wines and gastronomy, as well as popular folklore traditions. Taking into account the generally low level of rural basic infrastructure, this form of tourism is experiencing some difficulties competitiveness at international level. For these reasons, this priority refers to the measures needed to help Harghita County to become an attractive and well-known destination for this type of tourism.

The existing potential offers an advantage to the County, being the basis of the opportunities in the future, thus several recommendations have been identified:

1. **Highlighting the traditional cultural heritage through various thematic festivals to which tourists can take part (pig slaughter, vineyard festival)**, using rural tourism, the existence of rural areas with folklore and traditions, crafts, gastronomy based on local natural products, tradition vineyards could be exploited through a small to medium festival.
2. **Visits to local herds where tourists will have a genuine experience with the milk processing process preceded by a tasting of the products;** thus involving local farmers in the process of popularizing and promoting activities.
3. **Gourmet competitions**, the involvement of various competitions in the program of organized festivals, or the organization of complementary activities for gastronomic festivals.
4. **Gastronomy lessons from local people;** as an activity for visitors and tourists, based on traditional gastronomy.
5. **Gourmet tours through which promotional packages are offered at local restaurants;** accommodation and dining facilities are provided with specialty gourmet





restaurants including a zoo-specific entertainment component. This increases not only during the operator's holidays, but also the added value of the tourists.

6. **Involvement of farmers and citizens in activities;** both in the festivals and the various activities for tourists, offering unique experiences, such as the process of slaughtering the pig and the torch after.
7. A particularly important measure for preserving the rural landscape and developing rural tourism is the need to introduce rural construction regulations so that they do not damage the rural landscape. In this context, it is necessary to impose conditions for the preservation of traditional elements in the construction and modernization of constructions.

### **3.12 CULTURAL TOURISM IMPOSED ON THE TRADITIONAL IMAGE OF THE AREA, FOCUSING ON THE VALORISATION OF THE ANTROPIC PATRIMONY**

#### **INTRODUCTION**

Defined by the WTO (World Tourism Organization) as "tours whose main or secondary purpose is to visit sites and events whose cultural and historical value has been part of the cultural heritage of a community," cultural tourism appears as well object of study at the beginning of the 20th century.

Concerning the County of Harghita, it includes, among others, the historical monuments and museums in the area. Visiting castles, fortresses and mansions generates a special activity. The mentioned tourist objectives are not only an important resource of the given areas, but more, they are also a picture of the past. As for churches, they continue to be the spiritual centers of locals and visitors.

#### **THE ANTROPIC PATRIMONY**

On the County's area are located: 1 castle located in Lazarea (dating from 1450-1532) and 2 castles: Odorheiul Secuiesc (Curia Ugroun) and Cristuru Secuiesc (Curia Biro). Fortresses, including the medieval fortress Szekely tamadt (1562-1600) and Mikó Fortress (1623-1631) along with the 19 freely-visited ruins, are also an important part of culture, traditions and tourism. Among the churches, one can remember the Church of Dârjiu, which is a UNESCO heritage. In total, the County has 88 Catholic churches, 23 Catholic chapels, 42 Reformed churches, 12 Church towers, Unitarian churches 39, Orthodox churches and Orthodox monasteries 23, Greek Catholic churches, two synagogues and one Armenian Catholic Church.



As for handicraft production and handicrafts, the inhabitants of Harghita pride themselves with the creations of Corund. Renamed "the museum-village ", it is known, especially for the manufacture of ceramic products and primary woodworking.

#### RECOMMENDATIONS:

- placement of crafts at national and European level, programmatic documents and relevant initiatives;
- regulation of crafts, organizations and actions at national level that support craft activities and sector development in Romania;
- presenting the level of economic, social, cultural life of the Centru region and the place of crafts in this ensemble;
- educating the population of the Central Region by raising awareness of the importance of crafts, both as part of the cultural patrimony, having an artistic and practical side, as well as an option of professional activity;
- initiating forms of learning traditional local crafts and acquiring knowledge and skills in both formal and non-formal contexts by children and young people;
- increasing the competitiveness of crafts to enable them to compete on the market at national and international level;
- better protection of cultural heritage, based on a knowledge of the situation and the engagement of effective partnerships (local-central and public-private).

Figure no. 77 - House-museum in Bisericani



Source: <https://visitharghita.com/>

Figure no. 78 - The Ethnographic Collection of the Technological Highschool Gábor Áron



Source: <https://visitharghita.com/>

Figure no.79 - Kováts Photo Laboratory Odorheiu Secuiesc



Source: <https://visitharghita.com>

Figure no. 80 - The Corund Ethnographic Museum



Source: <https://visitharghita.com> /

Figure no. 81 - The Plăieșii de Jos Ethnographic Museum





Source: <https://visitharghita.com/>

Figure no. 82 - The Haáz Rezső Museum



Source: <https://visitharghita.com/>

Figure no.83 - The Márton Áron Museum in Sândominic



Source: <https://visitharghita.com/>

Figure no. 84 - The Molnár István Museum in Cristuru Secuiesc



Source: <https://visitharghita.com/>

Figure no. 85 - Crișeni Straw Hats Museum



Source: <https://visitharghita.com/>

Figure no. 86 - Village Museum in Lunca de Jos



Source: <https://visitharghita.com/>

Figure no.87 - The Szekler Museum of Ciuc





Source: <https://visitharghita.com/>

### **3.13 INFRASTRUCTURE - DEVELOPMENT AND IMPROVEMENT OF EXISTING SITUATION - ROADS, AIRPORT, CYCLING TRAILS**

#### **INTRODUCTION**

Infrastructure (transport, environment, communications, education, health, social, cultural and energy) is absolutely relevant to tourism development, and it is undisputed that this sector requires a well-developed infrastructure base.

Harghita County, the 13th County as a Romanian dimension, currently has a centralized system in 41 localities and individually in 26. As far as the main types of infrastructure (rail, road, telecommunications) are concerned, they play an important role in economy of the area.

The road infrastructure includes 1,827,856 km (except for the forest, neighboring roads and the streets of the localities) according to the official website of the Prefect Institute<sup>1</sup>, consisting of 3 types of roads: European, County and communal. The County is crossed by a road of European importance, E578 (DN12), which connects the European roads: E58, E60 and E57. As for the railway infrastructure, the national highways are: Magistral 400 (Bucharest - Brasov - Sfântu Gheorghe - Miercurea Ciuc - Ciceu - Deda - Dej - Baia Mare - Satu Mare - Halmeu), followed by railways of County and local importance : Odorheiu Secuiesc - Vânători (near Sighișoara, Mureș County), Praid - Sovata (Mureș County), Miercurea Ciuc - Moinești (Bacău County).

The health system of Harghita County could be considered a developed one with more than 750 public and private sanitary units, with a wide range of specialized medical services



being provided. Lastly, regarding telecommunications, the main fixed telephony operator is Telekom Romania, which also includes mobile, internet and television services.

#### RECOMMENDATIONS:

- creating cycling tracks in as much as possible for people's safety and to help improve the County's infrastructure;
- the construction of an airport in the Ciuc area (Ciceu) with small dimensions to mediums, regular flights and national connections such as Cluj-Napoca, Timisoara, Bucharest, Oradea, Bacau, Suceava and international airports: Budapest, Vienna, Rome, Paris, London , Sofia;
- the rehabilitation of the County roads, which are of particular importance both in the social and the touristic and economic context (the road connecting Păuleni de Miercurea-Ciuc);
- development, modernization or adaptation of agricultural or forestry infrastructure;
- developing tourist products to improve tourism, so attracting as many people as possible ("The Gate of the Secu Gates"), then promoting this product through various methods.

### **3.14 YOUTH CAMPS - SOLUTIONS FOR REMEDYING THE SITUATION - RELIGIOUS CAMPS**

#### INTRODUCTION

Due to its natural resources, tourist attractions, fauna and vegetation, Harghita County can be the perfect place for organizing youth and religious camps, among others.

Camps of different types are beneficial to people in personal development, knowledge of new places and people, socialization, self-knowledge, teamwork, nature, relaxation.

Youth camps are mostly organized for summer holidays and focus on a particular topic and help children and / or teenagers to communicate better, develop skills, approach to nature. These are organized with the help of the Ministry of Youth and Sport and the County Sports and Youth Directorate of Harghita, alongside potential sponsors.

As far as religious camps are concerned, they can be organized in several areas, in collaboration with the bishops. The program mainly includes visits to religious places, tourist attractions, participation in religious services and activities in order to educate children and adolescents from this point of view. Such camps can also be organized off-season, both in winter and in summer, thus contributing to the elimination of the dead season<sup>16</sup>.

Harghita County has the advantage, in terms of the potential for youth camps, with the possibility of introducing elements of local culture into their programs, intersection with other programs / events (festivals, presentations, etc.), religious isolation being impossible.

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<sup>16</sup> Lumina newspaper, <https://ziarulumin.ro/actualitate-religioasa/regionale/transilvania/tabara-de-tineret-la-izvorul-muresului-harghita-119900.html> , accessed on 28.05.2019



## RECOMMENDATIONS:

- arranging special places for the camps;
- electricity and running water supply;
- establishing hiking trails to bring young people closer to nature;
- Camp promotion in schools;
- promoting camps on social sites (pictures, filming);
- creating partnerships with both national and international high schools to sponsor and support the exchange of experiences in this context.

### 3.15 THEMATIC PARKS TOURISM – THE BEAR PARK, AQUATIC PARKS

Thanks to its settlement, Harghita County, it benefits from natural cadres and scenic landscapes, unique fauna and unique structures worth visiting, such as Toplița Waterfalls, Red Lake, St. Ana Lake, Praid Salt Lake and many more. Thematic parks help to improve the image of these places and to promote them at national and international level.

Thematic parks try to create an atmosphere of another place and time and usually emphasize a dominant theme around architecture, scenery, walks, shows, food services, costumes and disguises. The notion of theme is crucial to the operation of parks, walks, entertainment and food all used to create more different environments. Examples of types of themes used in contemporary themed parks include: historical periods, princesses, animals, marine life and futurism.

Large fir forests are home to over 1,000 bears, and travel agents and authorities have come up with the concept of "bear watching" that has attracted more tourists from Sweden, Norway, Finland and even Australia<sup>17</sup>. "Bear watching" consists of sheltering the tourists in the cottages, from where the bears can see the natural habitat. The number of observatories is about 100, from where several wildlife species can be traced<sup>18</sup>. Active live observers on Facebook and YouTube can watch live shots with the bears.<sup>19</sup>

In Harghita County there are several thermal baths and wellness centers that can be used both in summer and winter. Both thermal and salt water pools are visited because of the benefits they bring to the body, but also for relaxation. Most benefit from two pools, for children and adults, from 1.40 meters to 2.40 meters. The County does not currently benefit from an aquapark

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<sup>17</sup> "Adevărul", Bearwatching or "Hunting" bears with the eyes - The Transylvanian Tourist Objective of Transylvania, Remus Florescu, [https://adevarul.ro/locale/cluj-napoca/video-bearwatching-vanatoarea-ursicu-privirea-obiectivul-turistic-ascuns-ardealului-1\\_53d40acb0d133766a8c35c0c/index.html](https://adevarul.ro/locale/cluj-napoca/video-bearwatching-vanatoarea-ursicu-privirea-obiectivul-turistic-ascuns-ardealului-1_53d40acb0d133766a8c35c0c/index.html) accessed on 27.05.2019

<sup>18</sup> Press Office of Harghita County Council, <https://judetulharghita.ro/daune/stiri/cele-mai-bune-observatoare-de-urs-se-vor-construi-in-aceasta-zona.html> accessed on 27.05.2019

<sup>19</sup> Bear Observatory in Romania, <https://www.facebook.com/observatorursi/> accessed on 27.05.2019



such as Bucharest, Oradea or Satu Mare, but it is located in a mountainous area very different from the other counties<sup>20</sup>.

Recommendations:

- promoting the concept of "bear watching" both in the country and abroad;
- promoting Facebook and YouTube pages that record bears;
- building an aquapark (if possible) to attract more families with children in the area;

### **3.16 CAMPING TOURISM, CAMPER VANS AND POSSIBILITIES OFFERED BY IT**

#### **INTRODUCTION**

In Romania camping is defined as a tourist reception structure designed to accommodate tourists in tents or caravans, arranged to allow them to park the means of transport, to prepare their meals and to benefit from the other services specific to this type of unit accommodation.

According to the legislation, the compulsory facilities of a commercial camping include, among others: sanitary groups with washbasins, showers and WC cabins, campgrounds laden and covered with lawns, potable water supply, plumbing, roads and paved or paved inland roads, planted with trees and shrubs on at least 15% of the surface, phone land available to tourists, fencing and guarding during day and night, panel with camping scheme, illumination of communal spaces, company at the entrance<sup>1</sup>.

Harghita County has a lot of areas that can ensure the success of a possible campsite business, or even the improvement of this type of tourism itself. The fact that they are not anthropic contributes even more to the importance and image they possess both in the context of tourism and the general one.

Moreover, the high number of historical monuments found here (among them: Salt Fortress, Jigodin Fortress) are a convincing reason for attracting as many tourists as possible. Affordable prices and location further support the idea that this is the perfect place for such relaxation.

But not least, Harghita is also renowned for its amusement options: The Balu Adventure Park (1.5 hectares including a 6 km bicycle trail) or the Aventura Club Park, the first adventure park in Europe in a saline at 120 m deep) 3.

#### **RECOMMENDATIONS:**

- setting up camps for camping at the base or outskirts of areas such as: Bilbor, Borsec, Narciselor Glade from Vlăhița;
- setting up of such parks and for tourists holding caravans;

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<sup>20</sup> Ideas for holiday, Waterscapes from Romania. 9 places where the little ones and the big ones can have fun, Ana Maria Olteanu, <https://ideipentruvacanta.ro/raiuri-acvatice-din-romania> accessed on 27.05.2019



- partnerships with environmental protection companies, tourism firms, and even airports where appropriate;
- applying for European funds to create at least 1 park for each type;â
- promoting the already existing attractions in order to make the area a more attractive point for tourists.

### **3.17 SALVAMONT SERVICE - DEVELOPMENTS, COURSES, EXTENSION OF THE OFFERED SERVICES**

#### **INTRODUCTION**

The Salvamont is a professionally qualified person to carry out preventive patrol activities, to ensure permanence in Salvamont bases, points and refugees, to seek missing person, first medical assistance in case of injury and to transport the injured person or the patient until handed over to the Ambulance / SMURD / helicopter or first sanitary unit. Mountain rescue teams are made up of staff and volunteers, all of whom have the same professional training. In Harghita County there are currently 4 bases of rescue in Harghita Băi, Harghita-Madaras, Toplița and Red Lake.<sup>21</sup> They can be contacted at the Public Rescue Service of the Harghita County Council headquartered in Miercurea Ciuc or at the telephone number in the towns of Miercurea Ciuc, Toplița, Odorheiu Secuiesc and Gheorgheni<sup>22</sup>. They have rescue, diving, rescue and dog teams.

#### **Professional training**

In order to become a mountain rescuer, the National Association of Mountain Rescuers in Romania has established a minimum of 2 (two) years of local professional training, carried out in salvage centers accredited as training providers for the aspiring mountain savior, for minimum 160 hours<sup>23</sup>.

#### **Terms**

1. is at least 18 years old;
2. has no criminal record;
3. has an appropriate state of health confirmed by the medical record;
4. has completed the training courses and has completed an internship, established by the National Association of Mountain Rescuers in Romania;
5. has a dignified and moral conduct;

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<sup>21</sup> Salvamont Harghita, Salvamont bases, <http://www.salvamontharghita.ro/salvamont-harghita/ro/baze-salvamont>, accessed on 22.05.2019.

<sup>22</sup> Salvamont Harghita, Contact, <http://www.salvamontharghita.ro/salvamont-harghita/ro/contact>, accessed on 22.05.2019

<sup>23</sup> Salvamont Romania, Professional Training, <http://salvamontromania.ro/module.php?node=salvator-montan>, accessed on 22.05.2019



6. passed the qualification certificate in the profession organized by the National Association of Mountain Rescuers in Romania.

7. In the County of Harghita, you still need to know the Toplita area, the Călimani Mountains

### **Development**

In order to develop the rescue service in Harghita County, it is necessary to take actions to promote it among young people and persons in physical condition corresponding to the requirements.

- a. In order to fulfill this point, the Public Service of the Harghita County Council may organize introductory classes or free courses for the inhabitants of all who wish.
- b. After the changes of February 1, 2017 in Braşov, according to the Draft County Council Decision, the amount of 50 lei / share per person is foreseen for interventions on ski slopes, and for interventions in other areas the sum increases to 75 lei / share / person / day. For patrols, rescuers will receive 50 lei / day / person and the amount of the food allowance was set at 30 lei / person / action / day<sup>24</sup>. Harghita County could take over this practice, paying the interested persons / wishes, thus motivating them to continue their work in the field.
- c. Organizing summer / winter camps that would teach the participants the basics of the technical and medical module (climbing, medical first aid) and would raise interest in the mountain salvation profession.

Figure no. 88 - Salvamont Base at Red Lake

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<sup>24</sup> Bună ziua newspaper, Braşov, <http://www.bzb.ro/stire/ce-salarii-si-indemnizatii-primesc-salvamontistii-din-brasov-a107615>, accessed on 22 May 2019.





Source: <https://visitharghita.com/>

### **3.18 ADVENTURE TOURISM - ALPINISM, CANOEING, CYCLING**

#### **Introduction**

Due to the numerous natural resources existing in Harghita County, it can become a favorite destination both for Romanian tourists and for those from abroad. Its specific relief offers visitors the opportunity to practice adventure-climbing, cycling, mountaineering, extreme sports, hiking, etc. At the moment, the County's concern must be to actively promote this type of tourism through specialized agencies and the media.

#### **Recommendations**

- a. Improving and promoting the Visit Harghita<sup>25</sup> website (for example, by advertising social walls or YouTube)
- b. creating cycling performance tracks (including mountain hiking, extreme sports enthusiasts)
- c. organizing sporting competitions for climbing, canoeing, cycling for sports or amateurs all over the country and broadcasting them on television (not only at sports channels) and on social networks
- d. development of existing tourism centers in Borsec, Vlăhița, Gheorgheni<sup>26</sup> etc

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<sup>25</sup> Visit Harghita, <https://visitharghita.com/>, accessed on 23 May 2019.

<sup>26</sup> Visit Harghita, Home, Tourist Information Centers, [https://visitharghita.com/ro/places?cat\\_type=centru-de-informare-turistica\\_1532084651c](https://visitharghita.com/ro/places?cat_type=centru-de-informare-turistica_1532084651c), accessed on 23 May 2019.



- e. creation of bicycle rental centers, canoeing boats and mountaineering equipment. At the given centers to work qualified staff, who speak in Romanian and in international languages.
- f. hiring guides, coaches who would help tourists during practicing dangerous sports or those. in the mountains, forests, where there is a high risk of injury
- g. Harghita County has many localities that have ski slopes: Miercurea-Ciuc, Homorod-Bai, Toplita, Harghita-Bai, Madaras, Izvorul Mureşului, Valea Rece, Sanmartin, Ciumani, etc.<sup>27</sup>, but they are not in the best condition, requiring renovation and refurbishment.

Figure no. 89 - Adventure tourism in Harghita County



Source: <https://visitharghita.com/>

### 3.19 CYNEGETIC TOURISM - OBSERVERS AND VENISON

#### Introduction

Due to natural factors and favorable physical and geographical location, Harghita County has a great potential for hunting tourism development. The rich fauna of the area allows both the observation of wild animals and the hunting of certain species provided by official laws<sup>28</sup>. Later, the practice of "Safari in the Forest", especially Bears Watching, has become increasingly popular, not to mention the hunting season, to which the County owes a large number of tourists a year. Thus, these aspects should be promoted to ensure the development of the County.

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<sup>27</sup> Harghita County, Tourism, <https://hargitamegye.ro/judetul-harghita/turism/turism-activ.html>, accessed on 23 May 2019.

<sup>28</sup> General Association of Hunters and Sports Fishermen from Romania, Specific Legislation, Hunting Law and Hunting Fund Protection no. 407/2006, <http://agvps.ro/docs/Legea%20407.pdf>, accessed on May 23, 2019.



### **Suggestions and recommendations**

- a. Finding favorable natural areas that would provide observers with a beautiful view but at the same time would not disturb the animals in the forest
- b. arrangement of these areas
- c. analyzing the animals in those areas and the risk factors with which they may be confronted. If the number of animals is decreasing, the ban on hunting.
- d. (possibly) the captive rearing of endangered or displaced animals. In other words, the creation of natural reserves that would become interesting to foreigners and safe for animals.
- e. In the case of hunters, this type of tourism can be combined with the culinary - the hunted meat is brought to a rural area and cooked according to the specificity of the locality and traditions.
- f. hiring qualified, knowledgeable Romanian and international people to guide visitors and observers
- g. the creation of Hunting Houses - of rustic-style dwellings in which to stop the tourists night and to bring back the atmosphere of living in the forest

Figure no. 90 - Borzont Bear Observatory



Source: <https://visitharghita.com/>

### 3.20 TOURISM FOCUSED ON MONUMENT EXISTENCE

#### Introduction

Harghita County has recorded 742 historical monuments of great cultural importance<sup>29</sup>, including monuments and architectural ensembles (fortresses and courtyards, wooden and wall churches, urban civil buildings, towers) and archaeological monuments and sites (settlements, sites) . **All this needs a promotion among national and foreign tourists.**

#### General objectives

- general information on tourist offer and local, regional or national tourist attractions, cultural and business events;
- providing local, regional or national promotional material to tourists;
- informing about the local offer of accommodation, as a free service - leisure facilities or any other facilities that can accompany a tourist and / or tourist trip
- information on the possibilities of reservation of transport tickets as well as on local, national and specialized tourist guides;
- organizing exhibitions of tourism on local and regional level and general internal and external marketing activities with a role in increasing the local and regional tourist circulation;

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<sup>29</sup> Ministry of Culture, List of Historic Monuments 2015, <http://www.cultura.ro/sites/default/files/inline-files/LMI-HR.pdf> , accessed on May 22, 2019.



- advice on choosing various local, regional and national tourist products as a free service;
- providing information on competent authorities in dealing with locally registered complaints about the quality of tourism services.
- increasing the awareness of tourists visiting the area and tour operators

### **Specific objectives**

- building a National Tourist Information and Promotion Center in Miercurea Ciuc
- creating a website promoting tourism and anthropogenic resources in Harghita County
- endowment of the National Tourist Information and Promotion Center in Miercurea Ciuc with equipment, facilities specific to tourist centers
- increasing the visibility of the tourist objectives in the County by achieving a complex, original, attractive, competitive tourist offer;
- creating an attractive image of the County in the Romanian tourism market by promoting sustainable tourism based on a variety of forms of tourism: cultural / historical, natural, traditional and recreational.

### **3.21 TOURISM FOCUSED ON THE EXISTENCE OF PROTECTED AREAS**

Harghita County has 35 protected areas, including mud volcanoes, marshes, lakes, gorges, Praid Salt Mountain, Șugău Cave<sup>30</sup>, in the list of national parks, nature reserves and natural monuments. Although some are well known at national and international level, they need to be promoted in the long run to attract as many visitors as possible.

The most visited tourist attractions are Saint Ann Lake, Red Lake, Salt Mountain and Praid Saline, Șugău Cave, Bicazului-Hășma Gorge National Park, Thermal Water Waterfall. We can also mention the Red Lake and Bicaz Gorges as tourist objectives. Thanks to them, the County has great tourist potential and would be the perfect place for a longer trip for nature enthusiasts.

A major disadvantage is the setting up of the reserves, the roads not being accessible to all, most of them even rural. Instead, accommodations can be found on the way to the reserve, but may be located further away from marshes, caves, lakes, mud volcanoes.

Recommendations:

- development of access routes to the tourist attractions or their rehabilitation;
- increasing the number of school camps, camping sites and modernizing existing ones;
- promoting the tourism potential through advertisements, videos, etc.

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<sup>30</sup> List of national parks, nature reserves and natural monuments in Harghita County, [http://www.palyazatinfo.ro/dokumentumok/Lista\\_arii%20HR\\_1258034117.pdf](http://www.palyazatinfo.ro/dokumentumok/Lista_arii%20HR_1258034117.pdf) accessed 27.05.2019



- development of infrastructure for practicing types of tourists with development potential (wellness centers);
- improving the quality of services (offering breakfast and dinner packages)
- increasing hiking trails;
- promotion of local legends (eg the legend of the gold from Șugău cave<sup>31</sup>)

### 3.22. ACCESSIBILITY

#### Introduction

Due to its location in a relatively central area, it offers proximity to several important cities of Romania (Sibiu, Brașov, Bucharest, Sfântu Gheorghe, Piatra Neamț, Bacau).

The County is crossed by a European road (E578 Sărățel-Reghin-Toplita-Gheorgheni-Miercurea Ciuc-Sfântu Gheorghe-Chichiș), 8 national roads (DN11B, DN12, DN12A, DN12C, DN13A, DN13B, DN13C, DN15)<sup>32</sup> and 43 of County roads. The total length of public roads is 2085 km, of which 813 km are modernized and 272 km with light road clothing.<sup>33</sup>

The length of the railway lines in Harghita County is 207 km, out of which 173 km are electrified<sup>34</sup>. Here is a major bus route at national level, the 400 bus route with the following route: Bucharest-Brasov-Sfântu Gheorghe-Miercurea Ciuc-Ciceu-Deda-Dej-Baia Mare-Satu Mare-Halmeu, and 3 ways of County and local importance: Odorheiul Secuiesc -Vânători (Mureș County), Praid-Sovata (Mureș County), Miercurea Ciuc-Moinești (Bacau County).

In the County there is no airport, the closest being:

- Brasov-Ghimbav International Airport, Brasov - Miercurea Ciuc (108 km)
- George Enescu International Airport, Bacău - Miercurea Ciuc (144 km)
- International Airport Târgu Mureș - Miercurea Ciuc (159 km)
- Avram Iancu International Airport, Cluj Napoca - Miercurea Ciuc (233 km)

#### Recommendations:

- a. the rehabilitation of the national and County roads in order not to interfere with the tourism objectives in the County and outside it;

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<sup>31</sup> AdevăruL, Șugău Cave, the only place in Romania where the gold springs from the walls, Simona Suciu, [https://adevarul.ro/locale/brasov/video-pestera-Sugau-locul-unic-romania-aurul-picura-pereti-1\\_55ea8759f5eaafab2c46ee56/index.html](https://adevarul.ro/locale/brasov/video-pestera-Sugau-locul-unic-romania-aurul-picura-pereti-1_55ea8759f5eaafab2c46ee56/index.html) accessed on 27.05.2019

<sup>32</sup> Regional Directorate of Roads and Bridges in Brasov, <http://www.drdpbv.ro/drumuri.html#reteahg> , accessed on 28.05.2019

<sup>33</sup> National Institute of Statistics, Length of Transports at the End of 2017, [http://www.insse.ro/old/sites/default/files/field/publicatii/lungimea\\_cailor\\_de\\_transport\\_la\\_sfarsitul\\_anului\\_2017.pdf](http://www.insse.ro/old/sites/default/files/field/publicatii/lungimea_cailor_de_transport_la_sfarsitul_anului_2017.pdf) , page 11, accessed on 28.05.2019

<sup>34</sup> National Institute of Statistics, Length of Transports at the End of 2017, [http://www.insse.ro/old/sites/default/files/field/publicatii/lungimea\\_cailor\\_de\\_transport\\_la\\_sfarsitul\\_anului\\_2017.pdf](http://www.insse.ro/old/sites/default/files/field/publicatii/lungimea_cailor_de_transport_la_sfarsitul_anului_2017.pdf) , page 7, accessed on 28.05.2019





- b. cleaning and retention of railways in order not to impede the transport of goods and persons;
- c. the need to build an airport to attract more international tourists, for example the Ciceu area<sup>35</sup>;
- d. if the airport is not built, the maintenance and the periodic asphaltting of roads leading to international airports.

### 3.23. CONCLUSIONS

Within this chapter were identified the types of active tourism in Harghita County, the possibilities for other counties, the existing resources and the recommendations for improvement of the situation. Trends correlated with the national or international situation can be observed, as well as possible measures applicable at the level of the County in order to counter the deficiencies in certain sectors.

In order to stimulate rural tourism, all types of tourism, viable in Harghita County, need to be developed and involved in the tourist circuit, with the help of all identified resources both internally and externally. In this context, it is important that the areas concerned are involved, requiring both infrastructure investments, local production, having a significant role and reducing unemployment, boosting employment and supporting the business sector.

The strategies implemented (including this strategy) must be in line with national, regional and local policies, synthesizing the main development opportunities for this sector, in order to increase the County's activity.

## IV. SWOT ANALYSIS OF TOURISM IN HARGHITA COUNTY

Strong points	Weak points
<b>Tourist resources</b> - Exceptional natural and cultural touristic objectives (Red Lake and Bicaz Gorges, St. Ana and Mohos Tinov, Varghis	<b>Tourist resources</b> - harsh climatic conditions in mountain areas

<sup>35</sup> Harghita Airport, Offer request, <http://www.hargitaairport.ro/wp-content/uploads/2016/08/Arajanlat-Igenylo-20160628.pdf> , accessed on la 28.05.2019



<p>Gorges, Lake Sanpaul Lake, Praid Salt, Corund Ceramic Center, Darjiu Fortress, UNESCO Heritage, religious monuments and pentecost pilgrimage in Sumuleu-Ciuc etc.)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- natural landscape and good environmental quality, close to nature; mountain-relief, temperate climate during summer, abundant vegetation</li> <li>- the rich population of hunting species of species of honeysuckle, lycopene specific to the mountain parks (trout)</li> <li>- snow cover for winter sports</li> <li>- The richness of mineral waters and mofetic emanations</li> <li>- elements of endemic and relict plants, specific ecosystems, the multitude of natural reserves</li> <li>- rich cultural heritage, both in terms of tangible elements - built and intangible - spiritual (the authenticity of the ethnographic heritage)</li> <li>- the majority presence of the Szekler population - the attractive force for the Hungarian tourist market, the importance of ethnic and VFR tourism (visiting relatives and friends), the multiple links between the communities in Harghita County and the Hungarian communities in Hungary and other nearby countries (Slovakia, Ukraine, Serbia , Croatia and Austria), settlements and twin counties</li> <li>- some forest areas are natural, intact, with no visible human anthropic influence</li> <li>- the national-regional identity of the Hungarian-Szeklers, an element of destination marketing</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Climate risks for travel and tourist programs: Frequency of fog in intramontane depressions, rains and high nebulosity in peak season</li> <li>- the risk of snow delays and high temperature oscillations, causing snow damage in the ski areas in the hiver season</li> <li>- deterioration of landscape and biodiversity aesthetics due to abusive forest exploitation, uncontrolled construction, abandonment of fanatic and pasture crops, failure to maintain the cultural landscape</li> <li>- pollution of water and soil with household wastes in the perimeter of human settlements and especially in the tourist areas, associated with the noise pollution</li> <li>- the occurrence of damages caused by wild animals (bears, wild boar, wolves) (because of the reduction of the area needed for the respective populations)</li> <li>- problems of rehabilitation of historical monuments, buildings and ensembles of urban landscape value, in some cases due to unclear legal status or lack of financial sources</li> <li>- constructive, inadequate modernization works in the case of monument or patrimony buildings (lack of control and early intervention by competent authorities)</li> </ul> <p><b>Basic Infrastructure</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Air pollution with exhaust and dust in cities due to traffic as well as due to inadequate sanitation, deficiencies in green areas design and protection and delayed debris cleaning of sludge residues used</li> </ul>
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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- the presence of Romanian cultural elements as a factor of diversification of the regional offer, an element of attractiveness for the internal market, but also for the Hungarian market as a specificity</li> </ul> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Basic Infrastructure</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- some road traffic axes in the County, national and County roads important from the point of view of the accessibility of some micro-regions or tourist attractions have recently been rehabilitated</li> <li>- programs for the modernization of the municipal infrastructure, water-sewerage</li> <li>- Increasing environmental consciousness at the level of public decision makers, preparing for sustainable waste management</li> <li>- the development of telecommunication networks, especially mobile telephony, internet penetration and rural areas</li> </ul> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Tourist infrastructure</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- private investment in accommodation structures, increasing the share of 3-star structures, especially urban and rural pensions</li> <li>- appearance of wellness services in several hotel units</li> <li>- the appearance of selected food establishments in some cities</li> <li>- increased interest in rehabilitation of marked tourist routes, initiatives from NGOs and local public authorities (LPAs)</li> <li>- the existence of more riding centers</li> <li>- designing new ski areas (parts and</li> </ul>	<p>during winter</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- frequent presence of stray dogs - lack of specialized placements, at least temporary additions</li> <li>- deficiencies in electricity networks, sometimes causing interruptions in the supply of electricity</li> <li>- insufficient sewerage networks, the acute problem of the spa resorts of local interest</li> <li>- serious deficiencies in the state of national roads, roads and streets of cities and tourist resorts</li> <li>- Most forest roads are not operational</li> <li>- lack of car parks, especially in cities and resorts, deficiencies in traffic organization, lack of bypass routes</li> <li>- lack of pedestrian walkways, sidewalks in numerous settlements along main roads, lack or insufficiency of parks and squares in numerous settlements of tourist interest</li> </ul> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Tourist infrastructure</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- the low share of hotels in the accommodation infrastructure, the predominance of low capacity accommodation units</li> <li>- low quality of existing hotels in some resorts, degraded status of accommodation, treatment and leisure facilities in some resorts, lack of capital</li> <li>- lack of balneal complexes with a diversified offer of recreational services that can be used throughout the year</li> <li>- unilateral offer of food services, lack</li> </ul>
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<p>cableway installations)</p> <p><b>Promotion, information, research</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- initiatives to set up tourist information centers or offices</li> <li>- participation at some tourism and excursion exhibitions in the country and abroad (especially in Hungary)</li> <li>- the emergence of business consultancy firms and the presence of research institutions in socio-economic areas, including tourism, related to higher education institutions</li> </ul> <p><b>Human Resources</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- existence of different levels and profiles of tourism education, both in secondary education and higher education</li> <li>- organizing occasional training courses in different tourist and hospitality trades by specialized and accredited companies</li> <li>- Relatively increased interest in tourism education among young people, and in the case of adult improvement especially among women</li> </ul> <p><b>Organization</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- the interest of APLs in integrating tourism into local development strategies</li> <li>- engaging in some places of tourism reviewers or establishing relationships with tourism consultants</li> <li>- creating micro-regional associations, intercommunity development associations, knowledge and interest in government and / or European funding programs (from the Structural Funds)</li> </ul>	<p>or low number of restaurants with local, national, hunting or fishery, with artistic programs, etc.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- reduced capacity of the ski area, lack of cable transport installations usable in the summer season (cable car, telegondola), lack of network character or system of the skiing area, the slopes being short, insufficiently diversified</li> <li>- unsatisfactory condition of the tourist routes marked in the mountain area</li> <li>- lack of cycling routes from cities, resorts, and out-of-town areas (except the lower Ciuc area)</li> </ul> <p><b>Promotion, information, research</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- lack or insufficiency of tourist information centers in cities, resorts and other places of tourist interest</li> <li>- Promotional materials sometimes very unattractive and morally and informally overcome, about the County and some localities</li> <li>- lack of sightseeing centers for protected areas</li> <li>- lack of organized and professionally coordinated distribution of the informative materials of the tourist enterprises, of the localities and tourist areas, and especially of the tourist objectives</li> <li>- lack of the strategy and the annual marketing program of the County (potential tourist destinations), including the public monitoring of the activity in this respect</li> <li>- lack of a County / regional research program of the tourism market and the evolution of offers and trends of demand</li> </ul>
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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- the existence of informal or formal cooperation between entrepreneurs, in some cases also between local entrepreneurs in tourism</li> <li>- the existence of Tourist Destinations Management Organisations (TDMO)</li> <li>- the activity of NGOs to promote forms of active tourism (hiking, winter sports), cultural and ecotourism.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- poor cooperation between research institutions / firms and businesses, respectively authorities, lack of dissemination of information on tourism policy and good practice models</li> </ul> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Human Resources</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- the lack or insufficiency of the practical nature of tourism education (including foreign language learning), poor cooperation between educational institutions and economic agents</li> <li>- the low prestige of tourism and hospitality, unattractive wages and working conditions, the perception of the professional career perspective as being limited</li> <li>- deficiencies of entrepreneurial culture in human resources management</li> <li>- low professionalism of hospitality workers, atrocious attitudes and behavior, lack or insufficient sensitivity to the needs and exigencies of the guests</li> <li>- the low level of the tourist consciousness of the population, implicitly of the environmental consciousness, of the demands towards the state of the public or private spaces (compared to the optimal situation for a competitive destination)</li> </ul> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Organization</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- the lack or insufficiency of tourism specialists in LPAs and in some public institutions with cultural or environmental protection (administration of protected areas)</li> <li>- poor cooperation with national and international organizations on tourism issues</li> <li>- poor cooperation between LPAs and</li> </ul>
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	<p>tourist enterprises, for destination marketing programs, tourism planning, quality assurance programs, promotion of investments, coordination between educational institutions and the labor market</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- poor development of Tourist Destination Management Organizations</li> <li>- poor cooperation between NGOs and between NGOs and LPAs</li> <li>- lack, insufficient complex tourism products, well-organized packages</li> </ul>
Opportunities	Threats
<p><b>Market environment (tourism micro-environment)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- increased interest towards different forms of active tourism: hiking, cyclotourism, equestrian tourism, mountaineering, winter sports</li> <li>- growing interest in cultural and heritage tourism</li> <li>- increasing interest in ecotourism based on knowledge and ecological consumer consciousness</li> <li>- increasing interest in incentive tourism in business / professional tourism</li> <li>- the interest of the inhabitants of the big cities towards the tranquility and authenticity of rural space, for traditional lifestyle styles and natural foods (slow-food movement)</li> <li>- Increasing interest in relaxation, retention and restoration activities, wellness services</li> <li>- developing innovative, adaptable tourism products in our area</li> <li>- the introduction of travel or holiday tickets in Romania</li> </ul>	<p><b>Market environment (tourism micro-environment)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- great distance from tourist markets</li> <li>- delay of public or private investment in the spa and leisure infrastructure</li> <li>- increasing the international tourist competition and decreasing the competitiveness of the local, regional offer</li> <li>- preserving bad attitudes, behaviors and practices in the hospitality sector in different tourist enterprises or areas of the County prejudices the attractiveness of the County</li> <li>- lack of adaptability to new trends in tourism demand</li> <li>- ineffective promotion efforts</li> <li>- likeness, lack of differentiation between local tourist offerings, sometimes formed without personality and without creativity</li> <li>- the negative effects of mass tourism</li> <li>- some seemingly discouraging</li> </ul>





<p><b>The socio-cultural environment</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- the relative increase of the level of population culturalization with implications for travel motives</li> <li>- Relative increase in leisure time and discretionary revenue</li> <li>- the aging of the European population, increasing the share of active elderly people</li> <li>- the psychological and spiritual daily pressures of the tertiary sector workers create impulses for participation in leisure activities through travel and entertainment and recreational programs in the natural environment</li> <li>- cultural globalization increases interest in specifics, authentic values in life, creation, and gastronomy</li> <li>- the decrease of interethnic prejudices</li> </ul> <p><b>Economic environment</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- the faster economic growth in Romania compared to the general trends in other countries, the concentration of development in the major urban centers of the country favors the formation of an increased domestic tourism demand</li> <li>- Opening the country to foreign investors</li> <li>- the development of the financial and banking sector facilitates investment and tourism credit</li> </ul> <p><b>Political environment</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- the retrocession of some abusively taken land and buildings favors investment</li> <li>- domestic political stability increases the confidence of investors and tourists towards</li> </ul>	<p>problems for active tourism in connection with existing tourism products (motorized trips - ATVs, snowmobiles) or traditional occupations (shepherd dogs)</p> <p><b>The socio-cultural environment</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- maintaining low language skills both in foreign languages of the international movement and in the official language of the state (also in the domestic tourism market)</li> <li>- maintaining the low prestige of jobs in tourism and the hospitality industry, continuing labor migration in other countries</li> </ul> <p><b>Economic environment</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Increased employment uncertainty in the issuing markets contributes to the decrease in tourists arrivals in those areas</li> <li>- economic recession or short-term crises affects the flow of tourists, creating hardship for local tourist business and jobs in County tourism</li> <li>- the disillusionment of local actors with the profitability of tourist activity and the renouncing of the clients' reception business, leading to reduced reception capacity and the disappearance of tourism jobs</li> </ul> <p><b>Political environment</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- delay of the clarification of the property right of land and buildings</li> <li>- Delays in public administration reforms</li> <li>- creating a non-stimulating fiscal environment for tourism business</li> </ul> <p><b>Technological environment</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- the delay in adapting technological</li> </ul>
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<p>the tourist destinations in the country</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- the EU member state status increases the confidence of the investors and tourists towards the tourist destinations in the country and also allows access to significant funds for the development of basic infrastructure, human resources, tourism infrastructure and services, as well as for financing marketing activities, especially promotion</li> <li>- the possibility of taking the best practice models in developing and implementing the tourism policy from different international organizations, to which Romania is a part</li> <li>- transfer of knowledge in the field of international tourism market research, quality assurance (quality standards), sustainable, responsible and universally accessible tourism</li> <li>- increasing the efficiency of marketing efforts in markets outside Europe through the participation of Romania in ETC - European Travel Commission</li> <li>- Harghita County membership in the Assembly of European Regions - transfer of knowledge, regional lobby</li> </ul> <p><b>Technological environment</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- the development of information and communication technologies increases the efficiency of promotional efforts, facilitates the easier transmission of marketing messages to the target markets, facilitates the booking system, but also the research of the markets</li> <li>- Innovations in the management of tourism reception facilities facilitate the reduction of environmental pressure, the consumption of</li> </ul>	<p>innovations contributes to lower competitiveness</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- delay of some public investments in the road and rail transport infrastructure</li> </ul> <p><b>The natural environment</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- increased climate risks, lack or insufficiency of winter snow cover, unusual temperatures for certain periods of the year</li> <li>- the continued deterioration of the natural and cultural landscape reduces the attractiveness of the region and of the areas in the County (eg displaying billboards on some portions of roads such as the Harghita Mountains, the Tolvajos Pass).</li> </ul>
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<p>raw materials and energy, allowing the taking of good practices and thus increasing the competitiveness of tourism businesses</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- development of air transport services, expansion of low-cost airline offers</li></ul> <p><b>The natural environment</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Through the gradual development of local infrastructure, some hard-to-reach and intact areas are opened to tourism, which - in the case of ecotourism - can become significant attractions for Western tourists. Otherwise, at the same time, this can also be a danger.</li></ul>	
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## **V. EFFICIENT TOURISTIC ADVERTISING OF HARGHITA COUNTY, CONSIDERING THE USE OF MODERN PROMOTIONAL MEANS**

One of the most cramped and refined battles in terms of promotion that all countries, world regions, both in the international arena, as well as within countries, is in the field of tourism, because the attraction of tourists is the most the advantageous business of this early millennium, having economic, social, cultural effects.

A region, in order to express its viability as a tourist destination, must emphasize its defining elements, but also the activities in the recreational, curative or cultural sphere in which it has specialized. For defining this process, it takes several stages, planned according to the proposed objectives and involving specific strategies at both micro, meso and macro levels, taking into account the needs and resources identified. Thus, tourism being one of the sectors with the highest potential to provide growth and economic development, the fight for best results is pursued through different strategies and promotional measures.

Harghita County must pay special attention to promoting tourism, which could be a job-generating area that would help improve the region's economic performance. The region has a valuable and rich natural potential that, properly exploited, could make the region competitive on the domestic and European tourism market.

Regarding the ways of promoting tourism in Harghita County, taking into account the use of modern means of promotion, we have to distinguish three distinct situations:



- attracting Romanian tourists;
- attracting European tourists;
- attracting international tourists (outside the EU).

At the same time, analysts distinguish between three other categories of tourists, taking into account their aspirations and their demand for tourist products and holiday destinations, as follows<sup>36</sup>:

- tourists for whom tourism is not restricted by income levels and is the category of "luxury" clientele. This segment of demand is profitable for specific service providers but difficult to monitor because tourism products and services are often personalized for each customer and are not found in regular market analyzes. For the destinations of these tourists the effects are mixed - on the one hand, the tourists allocate financial resources to the respective destinations, on the other hand they exhibit opulence and extravagance to the local population and are often looked at with reticence. New trends and challenges are emerging on this segment. Thus, given that the destinations targeted so far by luxury tourists are invaded, by imitation, by middle-income tourists, luxury tourists are turning to new destinations, more exotic and less well-known to the general public.
- active 'tourists' who have the necessary financial resources or are looking for resources to establish a financial balance between their economic means and the demands for holiday travel. The main features of the active tourist are: relatively high economic capacity, above average socio-cultural understanding, and discernment and selection of preferred forms of tourism and destinations. The demand expressed by this segment covers: the needs of relaxation, recreation and entertainment, and the thirst for culture, all resulting from temporary detachment from the everyday life through sports activities, social games, contacts with the native population, accumulation of new knowledge, etc.
- 'passive' tourists (or, according to some analysts, the so-called 'captive' tourists), whose aspirations for the acquisition of tourism products do not go beyond the limits of their economic conditions. The passive tourist profile is characterized by: limited financial capacity in relation to the range of options offered by tourist services and inclination to holiday flat formulas prepared and marketed by tour operators or their intermediary agencies.

Thus, each situation needs to be treated separately, taking into account several factors, including financial possibilities, targeted promotion and targeting information.

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<sup>36</sup> Tourism Economy, Lect. univ. PhD. Carmen Boghean, [https://www.academia.edu/10374214/ECONOMIA\\_TURISMULUI](https://www.academia.edu/10374214/ECONOMIA_TURISMULUI), accessed May 23, 2019.



## 5.1. ADVERTISING WAYS TO ATTRACT ROMANIAN TOURISTS

Taking into account the location of the County on the map, the historical monuments, the traditions and the culture, respectively the natural resources, we can say that the area has the necessary conditions for the development of tourism and including, in order to introduce in the repertoire new ways of promotion.

### *1.1. Popularization of the official tourism website (VisitHarghita) of Harghita County as a major tool for promotion, information and booking, in real time*

The existence of the **Visit Harghita** site and application offered an excellent opportunity to promote the County, centralizing information about accommodation, dining, tourist attractions, events and activities, and other useful information. Increasing the popularity of this site, and implicitly, of the County, in terms of tourism, can also be done through the online environment. The online environment is an opportunity for information to reach the target group easily, quickly, clearly, its accessibility being high in any part of the country - in conclusion, the online environment is accessible to potential tourists. To diversify online channels, the site must be on multiple platforms, such as Facebook and Youtube (if this presence is beneficial in terms of number of tourists, the Instagram and Twitter platform can still be involved).

In the past, the low number of users on the internet does not encourage the allocation of budgets for online promotion, being more viewed as an optional action. Paradoxically, at present, budgets earmarked for online promotion have equaled those in the offline environment, and even more in some cases even exceeded them, because the opportunities offered by this space have been identified, due to technological development and globalization.

The site and its promotion is the first step towards building a strong online presence. A webpage is not just an online platform that displays information, it is a way of communication, remarketing, notification, to get the opinion of visitors and tourists and to react to these views through new services, options, even policies implemented at the level local. At the same time, the biggest problem regarding the VisitHarghita site, which is encountered even by the inhabitants of the County, is the lack of visibility. To increase its visibility, it can connect to an (official) Facebook account.

At the same time, it requires the involvement of modern promotion methods, adding site options such as interactive hiking maps or holograms that can be downloaded, creating 3D movies or even 360 ° pictures.

### *1.2. Developing the existing brand of Harghita County – VisitHarghita (promotion and dissemination policies, regulation for branding at local, national and international level)*

At this time the official brand of Harghita County is VisitHarghita – Treasure in nature. Creating a strong and respected brand is the key to the effective promotion of the County, especially at the national level (but it can also have an international effect). Brands are the key, intangible resources that require continued maintenance and development. Their features include



reputation, trust, loyalty and recognition among tourists / visitors by identifying and differentiating the County from other opportunities.

Thus, it is necessary to identify the elements that contribute to the development of the brand of Harghita County:

- identification of resources that differentiate the County from other counties (skiing opportunities, Bear Watching, traditions, culture, history, etc.)
- establishing an identity or types of identities (in Harghita County an identity is recommended based on friendship, tradition and culture)
- establishing a unique motto (according to established identity)
- exchanging bilateral information with the target group, ie tourists and visitors to the County, through: messages, pictures, videos, etc.
- after developing the previous point, creating a community
- presence (even aggressive) on all possible online and offline platforms
- sending a message
- branding
- the possibility of creating a mascot

Creating a common brand in tourism would result in increased national and international visibility of Harghita County as a tourist destination and would help to more effectively promote existing opportunities.

### *1.3. Visibility Elements*

Creating visibility elements, related to the site and brand mentioned at point 1.1. and 1.2 for a more effective offline promotion and to facilitate contact with the target group, ie visitors and tourists. Such elements of visibility may be:

- **VisitHarghita** stickers, logo and motto: **Treasure in nature.**
- **VisitHarghita** inscription about 4m x 25m, in several cities and high importance points in Harghita County: Miercurea Ciuc, Odorheiu Secuiesc, etc. - these inscriptions can also be financed from the local budget, if the Territorial Administrative Unit of a locality wishes to use the inscription.

### *1.4. National promotion - through NGOs*

The existence of NGOs in the field of tourism is an important opportunity in promoting the Harghita County. Collaboration with the non-governmental sector and the public sphere to organize general promotion actions at national (and possibly international) level would have the effect of transmitting information on opportunities through local actors throughout the country,





with the benefit of knowledge (ie, local NGOs already have a local community involved, often have the location needed to organize promotional events and can organize these events for those who may be interested.

#### *1.5. Touristic offers promoted by tour operators*

Promoting tourist offerings in the region by including them in the Romanian tourists' catalogs and the presence of offers on specialized sites is the easiest way for information to reach tourists from active and passive tourists. The existence of an intermediary agent provides tourists with safety, is easy to approach and can offer the perfect options for each one.

### **5.2. ADVERTISING WAYS TO ATTRACT EUROPEAN TOURISTS**

At present, the number of European tourists in the County of Harghita fluctuates, most of them coming from Hungary, Austria, Germany and the Republic of Moldavia. European tourists choose to visit Harghita County for several reasons, including: sentimental considerations (common history), financial considerations (relatively low prices), diversified activities (the County offers several types of tourist activities for each age group, regardless of the sex). However, current promotion is not effective enough to attract visitors to a significant number of countries like France, Spain, Italy, etc. In order to remedy the situation, some measures can be identified that could contribute to the promotion of the County at European level.

#### *2.1. Online promotion*

The benefits of on-line promotion, namely via sites, Facebook and Youtube, identified in the previous subchapter, could have the same effects for the target group at European level, but some additions are needed:

- Movies and posts require versions in international languages (English, German, French) or subtitles;
- In order to increase visibility, it is necessary to purchase promotional (temporary) services, through which the site and related accounts appear in the form of advertising on other sites, using their popularity to reach the target group.

#### *2.2. Promotion through international tourism fairs*

Promoting the County at international level (even through its brand) by encouraging entrepreneurs and companies to participate in various international tourism fairs, presenting the County's offers and popularizing the area. This measure may include online material under point 2.1, or material specifically drawn up for these events.

International tourism fairs are an important opportunity because they meet exhibitors representing European countries (or even globally), having the opportunity to establish contacts



and meetings with other exhibitors, to enter into partnerships, to observe the strategies of other countries, find out new information about tourism trends through events organized over the course of the year.

### **5.3. ADVERTISING WAYS TO ATTRACT TOURISTS OUTSIDE OF THE EUROPEAN UNION**

Tourists outside the European Union usually visit the major European countries, being attracted by their reputation and even their national brand. In order to identify a way of popularizing Harghita County internationally, we need to highlight the importance of the measures proposed in the previous chapters.

Being a County in Romania, it is difficult to use targeted promotion, but presence at international fairs and online platforms can generate bilateral communication by presenting bids and even by presenting the area in a semi- and / or informal way, suggesting a unique experience, thanks to resources (natural, historical, traditional).

### **5.4. CONCLUSIONS**

Online promotion must be at the center of any promotion, no matter what its size, because it offers unlimited visibility, direct contact with the target group, and does not consume much financial resources. An integrated plan with regard to the materials made up, combined with a common brand, could have significant effects on the number of visitors in the future.



## **VI. COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF ADVERTISING METHODS AGAINST OTHER COUNTIES (TAKING INTO ACCOUNT OF THE 4 EXISTING ASPECTS - GOOD RESOURCES + GOOD PROMOTION, GOOD RESOURCES + LACK OF PROMOTION, LACK OF RESOURCES + GOOD PROMOTION, LACK OF RESOURCES + LACK OF PROMOTION)**

In this chapter we briefly present the main attractions, strengths and weaknesses in terms of tourism in Harghita County. We will compare the competing areas. We use the concept of "area" instead of "County" for the simple reason that there are some competing tourist areas that administratively are on the territory of several counties but still form a single tourist destination.

The first step in the competitiveness analysis should be the determination of competing areas, followed by the listing of competitiveness factors and the identification of competitors' strategies. The analysis of competitiveness will be done in two dimensions: on the one hand, we have tried, on the basis of the data and information available, to compare the areas that are largely of the same profile with environmental conditions and similar tourist potential. The other dimension, the so-called "inborn" dimension, must be interpreted on the basis of a comparison of the advantages or competences that can be expressed in exact data derived from natural conditions (eg mineral waters, settlement, snow conditions) comparative analysis and " "(Eg capacity, infrastructure, education).

Much of the tourists who visit Harghita County come from Hungary. From this perspective, the main competing areas are Covasna County and part of Mures County. If we look at a larger scale, the County being part of the Szekler Land, we can talk about a competition between Szekler Land - Moldavia, Prahova Valley, Saxon Land. The analysis can be based on the following features: natural and anthropic attractions, accessibility, tourism infrastructure, spa tourism.

### **6.1. NATURAL AND ANTROPICAL ATTRACTIONS**

#### **6.1.1. COMPETITION OF THE COUNTIES IN THE SZEKLER REGION**

Harghita County has three important nodal tourist points, namely:

a) the nodal point of Lake Red and the Bicaz Gorges

- are part of the national park with a similar name, but also Lazarea (Renaissance castle), and several rural tourist centers such as Remetea, Ditrău



b) Praid and Corund that are part of the Saltland

- these localities together with Sovata are the most important salt therapy centers in Transylvania, as well as important rural tourist centers

c) Băile Tușnad

- the city is on the outskirts of the counties of Harghita and Covasna, that is why there are some attractions in the neighboring County that can be considered as attractions of Băile Tușnad

- Mohoș Tinov, Băile Balvanyos, drinking and therapeutic effect of the waters from Băile Tușnad, Ciucas Lake, Tușnad treatment base, Wellness Tușnad

The main attractions of:

- Covasna County: Sfântu Gheorghe, Băile Șugaș, Vârgheș (karst region - caves), Covasna (mineral waters, natural gas, balneo-climatic treatment), Comandău, Zânelor Valley, Băile Balvanyos, Ghelînța.

- Mures County: Sovata (part of Saltland, balneo-climatic treatments), town of Târgu Mureș (history and old buildings), Sighișoara (medieval fortress), God's Chair, Călimani Mountains, Sângeorgiu de Mureș Valley of Mures.

### **6.1.2 THE LAND OF SAXONY**

Brașov County: mountainous areas with the highest mountains in the country (Moldoveanu, Negoiu); Ciucas Mountains, Piatra Mare, Bucegi, Piatra Craiului, Fagaras, Perșani; national parks: Bucegi and Piatra Craiului; Alpine ski slopes at Predeal and Poiana Brasov; thermal waters at Codlea and iodo-sodic at Perșani, Rotbav, mineral waters at Zizin; Castles at: Fagaras, Bran, Rupea; The Black Church in Brașov and the center of Brasov, the buildings built in the Saxon style; Saxon Fortified Church in Prejmer; The Fortified Church of Rasnov; Cave of Rasnov.

Sibiu County: Făgăraș Mountains; curative waters from the Ocna Sibiului and Bazna spa resorts; limestone deposits from Cisnădioara and Turnu Rosu; the Serbian Valley reservation; Balea Lake and Cindrel's Lake; ski slopes in Păltiniș; Saxon-style buildings; Sibiu Municipality (Tower of the Council, Evangelical Cathedral, Gross Tower, Old Fortress Walls, Stairs Passage); Cișnădioara Fortress.

In Brasov County there are two tourist resorts of national interest (Poiana Brasov and Predeal) and four tourist resorts of local interest (Bran, Moieciu, Pârâul Rece, Timișu de Sus). In Sibiu County there are three tourist resorts of local interest (Bazna, Ocna Sibiului and Paltinis).

### **6.1.3. MOLDAVIA**

Suceava County: Rarău and Giumalău Mountains, Călimani Mountains; Bistrița Valley and Gorges; The Citadel of the Chair and the Prince's Inn from Suceava; Monasteries of Bucovina (Voroneț, Humor, Moldovita, Sucevita, Arbore); The Monastery and Wooden Church in Putna; Vatra Dornei (mineral water baths, perfect climate for winter sports).



Neamt County: Bicz Gorges; Ceahlău National Park; balneo-climatic factors at Durău, Negulești, Băltăești; mineral waters (mirrors); monasteries (Agapia, Varatec, Sihastria, Bistrita, Neamt); Neamț Fortress.

Iasi County: balneo-climatic factors (Strunga, Nicolina); monasteries ("Three Hierarchs", Galata, Frumoasa, Cetatuia, Golia); Palace of Culture in Iasi, other buildings in Iasi; Ruginoasa Palace; Sturdza Palace in Miclauseni; the towns of Pascani, Târgu Frumos and Harlău.

Bacau County: Royal Courts and Precista Church in Bacau; Church of Borzesti; Căsi Monastery; Trotuș, Siret, Bistrita valleys; mineral waters in Slanic Moldavia, Poiana Sarata, Târgu Ocna.

In Suceava County there are three tourist resorts of national interest (Câmpulung Moldovenesc, Gura Humorului, Vatra Dornei). There are two tourist resorts of local interest (Băltăești and Durău) in Neamț County. In Iasi County there are tourist resorts of national or local interest. In Bacau there are two national interest stations (Slănic Moldavia and Târgu Ocna).

#### **6.1.4. PRAHOVA VALLEY**

Bucegi, Baiului, Ciucas Mountains; Prahova Valley, Valea Slănicului, Valea Teleajenului; mineral and salt water (Azuga, Slanic); Salt Mountain nature reserve; Sinaia Monastery; Busteni, Vălenii de Munte, Slănic, Sinaia, Cheia, Azuga.

According to HG 852/2008 (for the approval of the norms and criteria for attestation of tourist resorts) there are three tourist resorts of national interest (HR - Băile Tușnad, CV - Covasna, MS - Sovata Băi) and seven tourist resorts of interest local (HR - Homorod, Borsec, HarghitaBai, Izvorul Muresului, Red Lake, Praid, CV - Balvanyos).

Then we will compare the Harghita County to the various attractions, types of tourism with other regional destinations in Romania.

### **6.2. TOURISTIC INFRASTRUCTURE**

#### **6.2.1. COMPETITION OF THE COUNTIES IN THE SZEKLER REGION**

In the tourism infrastructure analysis we focused on the accommodation capacity present in the competing counties. In the Table-Types of tourist accommodation structures existing in the counties analyzed in 2017 and Table-Types of tourist accommodation structures existing in the analyzed counties from 2018.



Table no. 14. Types of existing tourism accommodation structures in the counties analyzed in 2017

Types of structures 2017	Harghita	Szekler Land			Saxon Land			Prahova	Moldavia					Romania
		Covasna	Mures	Total	Brasov	Sibiu	Total		Suceava	Neamt	Iasi	Bacau	Total	
Hotels	24	2419	4476	6895	11804	3610	15414	6742	3835	1715	2887	2111	10548	126105
Hostels	8	90	124	214	784	114	898	552	258	283	106	149	796	8454
Motels	4	45	550	595	630	146	776	631	244	259	126	362	991	7264
Inns	0	0	0	0	0	38	38	0	0	0	0	0	0	80
Tourist Villas	4	233	106	339	1594	622	2216	898	279	157	82	297	815	9117
Tourist Chalets	14	21	60	81	1004	323	1327	143	205	184	27	16	432	4160
Tourist Guesthouses	92	337	1514	1851	4858	1593	6451	2276	1701	372	415	1032	3520	28740
Agrotourist Guesthouses	240	465	815	1280	5634	1777	7411	722	2419	1931	224	341	4915	31194
Campings	5	0	0	0	352	0	352	28	0	0	0	0	0	554
Tourist Stops	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	44	48	0	0	70	118	420
Bungalows	28	0	0	0	118	24	142	0	30	12	0	16	58	534

Table no. 15. Types of existing tourism accommodation structures in the counties analyzed in 2018

Types of structures 2018	Harghita	Szekler Land			Saxon Land			Prahova	Moldavia					Romania
		Covasna	Mures	Total	Brasov	Sibiu	Total		Suceava	Neamt	Iasi	Bacau	Total	
Hotels	24	2548	4795	7343	11601	3676	15277	6857	3879	1869	2759	2085	10592	168919
Hostels	8	112	254	366	789	68	857	455	254	188	31	94	567	9900
Motels	5	87	537	624	632	179	811	691	257	335	139	379	1110	7489
Inns	0	0	0	0	0	38	38	0	0	0	0	0	0	101
Tourist Villas	4	223	225	448	1472	614	2086	950	231	143	142	287	803	10751
Tourist Chalets	15	21	48	69	966	406	1372	244	180	261	27	16	484	4359
Tourist Guesthouses	98	323	1696	2019	4741	1698	6439	2308	1617	352	548	929	3446	28386
Agrotourist Guesthouses	225	413	841	1254	5692	1899	7591	718	2272	2002	247	430	4951	31986
Campings	5	0	53	53	352	144	496	28	144	0	0	20	164	3466
Tourist Stops	1	15	0	15	0	0	0	44	66	36	0	70	172	2065
Bungalows	10	0	0	0	130	24	154	0	104	16	0	16	136	1231

We can see that between 2017-2018 the counties of Braşov, Suceava and Bacau have registered increases in the number of approved places of accommodation and in the counties of Harghita, Covasna, Mureş Sibiu, Neamţ and Iaşi there are decreases in the number of the homologated accommodation. In absolute numbers, Harghita County ranks first in terms of accommodation places, but in the categories of arrivals, overnight stays lose the advantage. For this reason, it is the last place regarding the use of the capacity in operation (27.9%), being overtaken by Mures County by 7.2% and by Covasna County by 29.6%. The 58% rate for the use of accommodation in Covasna County can be explained by the mass of tourists who go to Covasna resort with treatment tickets.

In Table-Types of existing tourist accommodation structures in the analyzed counties we present the situation of the analyzed counties regarding the types of tourist accommodation structures existing in 2018. Harghita County is ranked 6th on the total number of places according to the counties of Braşov, Prahova, Suceava, Sibiu and Mures. However, we observe a gap in the Harghita County to bed and breakfast hostels, cottages, villas, which represent 57.94% of the total offer, and hotels represent only 37.33%. This gap is unique on the territory of the Szekler Land. In the counties of Covasna and Mureş, we notice exactly the opposite where hotels, hostels and motels represent 68,25% and 65,09%, while pensions, chalets and villas represent 28,22% and 31,53% respectively. In the rest of the counties the hotels are best represented in a quote of 40-50% and the ratio of the pensions is between 10-40% of the total.





The type of accommodation places in Harghita County are suitable for smaller groups of tourists, with relatively few places in hotels we can not rely on attracting large numbers of tourists. The gap between the type of accommodation places also stands out when we look at the percentage ratio. Of the total number of accommodation places in Romania, Harghita County has 2,95% and in the pensions category 5,09% of the total, being surpassed by the counties of Brasov, Sibiu and Suceava by 18,18%, 5,89% and 6,23% respectively. In the counties of Covasna and Mureș, the situation is contrary to Harghita County.

#### **6.2.2. LAND OF SAXONY**

There are large differences between the counties presented in this subchapter. In Brașov County there are 3.15 times more accommodation than in Sibiu County, there are twice as many arrivals but the average use of capacity in service is 9% better in Sibiu County

The number of accommodation in Saxon and Szekler Land is 35,581, respectively 11,654 places. and the average overnight is similar, 1,489 thousand, respectively 1,338 thousand overnight stays. In the other data, however, there are significant differences. While there are 5.911 thousand places in Saxon, Szekler Land is 40% less. The arrival data is a 66% advantage in favor of the southern neighbors. We have one index that is best for the Szekler Land, namely the use of capacity. While in Brașov and Sibiu counties the average use is 23.3% and 31.4% respectively in the counties of Harghita, Covasna and Mureș is 27.7%; 57% and 34.8%

#### **6.2.3. MOLDAVIA**

In this region there are large differences between counties in terms of accommodation. Suceava County has almost double the number of accommodation places in front of each of the counties analyzed in Moldavia. This difference is felt for almost all data related to accommodation capacity, eg. Places in operation, arrivals, overnight stays. We can see a turning point in the capacity utilization in the counties that led to accommodation capacity. The Suceava and Neamt counties use a rate of accommodation of only 24.5% while the counties with fewer accommodation places (Bacau and Iasi) have a utilization rate of 38.4% and 39.8% respectively.

In the Moldavian and Szekler Land regions the accommodation capacity reached 2: 1, 22,756 and 11,654 respectively. In the counties of Moldavia, twice as many tourists arrived (623 thousand compared to 277 thousand). Regarding the rate of use of the accommodation places, Szekler Land is advantageous with rates ranging from 27.7% to 57%, compared to 24.3% - 40.1%.

#### **6.2.4. PRAHOVA VALLEY**

The accommodation capacity is steadily increasing. While in 2006 there were 9,234 seats, in 2018 there were 12,190 seats, that is, an increase of nearly 3,000 seats. In the County there are about the same places as in Szekler Land, but they have registered almost 30% more arrivals. At



the same time, the capacity utilization was lower than the average of the counties of Covasna, Harghita and Mureș, but it was higher than the value in Harghita County.

### 6.3 WINTER TOURISM

The relief of Harghita County is rich in mountains, which is a good factor for winter tourism. There are the most ski slopes in the country (36) in 10 resorts. Every year we hear news about setting up new ski slopes, but unfortunately not all of them are still approved. Below we will present the approved slopes in the counties analyzed.

In the following table we present the situation of the analyzed regions regarding their ski piste facilities.

Table no. 16. Ski slopes in counties, analyzed regions

<b>Types of Structures 2018</b>	<b>Harghita</b>	<b>Szekler Land</b>	<b>Saxon Land</b>	<b>Prahova</b>	<b>Moldavia</b>
Nr. Ski slopes (in County / region)	36	37	37	30	14
Total length (meters, in County / region)	23.249	25.009	48.695	36.830	35940
Nr. Ski slopes (in County / region)	10	12	9	3	9

#### 6.3.1. COMPETITION OF THE COUNTIES IN THE SZEKLER REGION

The ski slopes are equipped with modern ski lifts, pedestrian or teaser ski lifts, baby ski lift with boats, but there are no cable cars. The relatively large number of slopes is impressive compared to those present in the counties of Covasna and Mureș, but their length is not so good. Most of them are under 500 meters long, only one reaches 1,000 meters but there is no longer than 1,000 meters. The total length of the ski slopes is 23,749 meters. Their accessibility is not satisfactory, most connecting roads fall into the category of forest roads with one direction of walking in the winter. Parking infrastructure is still at a minimum, there are not enough parking spaces for the tourists' cars. Harghita County has almost as many slopes as the two counties together. It has almost as many resorts as slopes as the other two counties together. It has almost 50% of the total length of the ski slopes.

Covasna County: The mountains in the County are not as tall as their northern neighbor, so the number of snow days is not too high. We can remember three ski slopes, one of which (Comandau) does not currently have a functional lift because of the failure. The length of the slopes as well as their altitude is small, the best in this respect is the Comandau slope. The total length of the slopes in the County is 3.799 meters.



The accessibility of the public transport is very bad, for example, the buses run only at the end of the week. At the slopes of Ghelinta and Șugaș Băile, there is a paved road, and at Commandau a macadam road. Here too, parking problems are not solved. Suggested Băile Șugaș parking places are available but relatively small. These slopes are mostly used by locals and in this way parking spaces are somewhat sufficient, but in the case of a larger mass of tourists these are exceeded in number.

Mureș County: neither Mureș County has good conditions for ski slopes, but the ski slopes are of interest to the locals. Unfortunately, the access road is very poor due to the intense circulation of the stone-carrying trucks. There are no public transport links at the slopes, it can only be reached by car on a macadam road.

The length of Alunis1 is acceptable, but parking infrastructure is under any criticism. Not only are there not enough parking spaces for 10 cars, but the slope also does not have a suitable route, the slopes are quite small. The total length of the ski slopes is 21,210 meters.

From Harghita County, Harghita County has the best ski slopes both in number and quality and length. In terms of accessibility, there are not many differences, there are major deficiencies in each County.

### **6.3.2 LAND OF SAXONY**

Brașov County: this County is very rich in the high mountains, which offers a very good climate for winter sports lovers. The length of the slopes in the mountain resorts is optimal, there are 6 pistes with a length of more than 2,000 m, a 1,200 m slope and the rest between 200 - 900 m. Most of the slopes are in 2 resorts, so they are somewhat grouped, while the slopes in the Szekler Land are located in several localities. The diversity of slopes and the cable transport infrastructure is much better.

Neither Brasov County can escape the inability to manage the mass of cars that sosesc in resorts, there are not enough parking spaces, roads are overcome by huge traffic especially on weekends and holidays.

Sibiu County: There are fewer slopes in this County than in Brasov, but this is balanced by the quality and length of the slopes. There are only two slopes under 1,000m long. Most of the slopes are longer than 2,000m. The cable transport infrastructure, the ski lift is of good quality and it. The accessibility of the area is good, there are paved roads, but traffic management and car parking leaves much to be desired.

The snow conditions are much better in this region, as can be seen in the data on the ski slopes. The Saxon countryside has 50% more ski slopes, with a total length of 48,695m, ie almost twice as many. These clues are made in 9 resorts compared to 22 in Szekler Land, which means better structuring them. The cable transport infrastructure is clearly superior to its southern neighbors.



### **6.3.3.MOLDAVIA**

The Moldovan counties are known by the old monasteries, but there are also some mountain resorts that can be used in the winter season for the lovers of winter sports.

Suceava County: in suceava County are 10 boats in 5 stations, the length of the parts varies from 530 to 3,000 meters. The accessibility of the areas is better, they are modernized, away. Media length of the parts is more than those in the second site, but their number is more more.

Neamt County: there are few ski slopes (4) in Neamț County, which are not for professional skiers. The Cozla slope is long enough for tourists to go there. The accessibility infrastructure is permissible, it is a paved road. As far as the offer in Szekler Land is concerned, we can say that it is richer in terms of the number of slopes, but there are no slopes as long as Cozla.

There are no approved ski slopes in Bacău and Iași counties.

Regarding the absolute numbers, the Secuiesc area is in favor of Moldavia, because it has 23 more slopes. The number of resorts with slopes in Moldavia is 45% of the Szekler Land. If we analyze the rates between them, we have another situation. In Moldavia we have almost 2 pistes per resort, and in Szekler Land we have 3 resort resorts. The total length of 35.940m is divided into 14 resorts, respectively 25.009m in 12 resorts. In absolute numbers Moldavia is in the advantage. Regarding Szekler Land rates is in a favorite position.

### **7.3.4. PRAHOVA VALLEY**

There are many ski slopes in Prahova County (30), thus being second in the County of Harghita. The variety of slopes in Prahova County is very rich, there are 11 slopes less than 1,000 m long. Half of the slopes are longer than 2,000m. The slopes are grouped around 3 resorts giving tourists more chances of choosing. The offer of the ski slopes is much richer and more valuable than the offer of the Szekler Land. The cable and ski lift infrastructure is also much more developed. Prahova Valley is full of different mountain resorts, has good accessibility and is relatively close to the capital, with potential tourists in excess of 2 million.

Prahova Valley has an advantage that can not be reached by the Szekler Land. Prahova County has 30 ski slopes in three tourist resorts and a total of 36,830m of slopes. The total length of the slopes is approximately 2 times higher than in Harghita County.

## **6.4 MINERAL WATERS - BALNEAR TOURISM**

### **6.4.1 SZEKLERLAND**

In the counties of Szekler Land there are mineral water deposits and important gaseous emissions (mosses), most springs in Romania are concentrated here. There are also thermal waters, but they are smaller in number and are largely mezothermal. There are also important



amounts of saltwater springs in some areas, but their frequency is inferior to mineral waters. Below we will briefly outline the localities that have these natural resources.

Harghita County ([www.e-calauza.ro](http://www.e-calauza.ro))

#### Gheorgheni Depression

Hydrogeological studies have shown that there are many gaseous CO<sub>2</sub> eruptions in the Gheorgheni depression in the valley of the Mures River, which mix with the groundwater and form mineral waters. Mofetic emanations are characteristic of the localities of Remetea ([www.rotur.ro](http://www.rotur.ro)), Joseni, Ciumani, Voşlobeni, Gheorgheni, and the Red Lake.

#### Ciuc Depression

Here are especially baths with mineral water. The Miercurea Ciuc baths with 21-23 degrees C water, Jigodin Bai, Madaras Ciuc - currently does not work, but the water has 26 degrees C, Băile Tuşnad, Băile Madicea, Cârța, Ciucsângeorgiu, Iacobeni, Merești, Sâncrăieni, Sântimbru Băi, Băile Harghita . We must also mention Bilbor, Vlăhița, Băile Chirui, Băile Szejke, Cristuru Secuiesc, Toplita, Bradu, Homorod,

Covasna County: The most important spa resorts are: Covasna, Fortyogo - TârguSecuiesc, Băile Șugaș, Biborțeni, Bodoc, Vâlcele, Micfalău, Bixad, Ozunca Băi, Malnaș Băi.

Mureș County: the most important spa resorts are: Sovata, Sângeorgiu de Mureș, Lăpușna, Idecu de jos.

Below we will present the facilities and procedures for treatment that resort visitors can call:

- Balványos (CV): electrotherapy, hydrotherapy, thermotherapy, kinetotherapy, aerohelioterapia, medical gymnastics, medical massage. The best western hotel in Balványos is in the modernization phase.

- Băile Tuşnads (HR): electrotherapy, hydrotherapy, physiotherapy, massage, magnetotherapy.

- Borsec (HR): electrotherapy, hydrotherapy, physiotherapy, electropuncture, vibromassage, manual massage.

- Praid (HR): speliotherapy, climatotherapy.

- Sovata (MS): electrotherapy, hydrotherapy, kinetotherapy, aerohelioterapia.

In the following table we have information about the balneal-climatic properties in the analyzed regions.

Table no. 17 - Accommodation capacity of localities with natural therapeutic factors



Types of Structures 2018	Harghita	Ținutul Secuiesc	Ținutul Săsesc	Prahova	Moldavia
No. resorts	7	15	11	7	10
No. Accommodation units	80	112	264	298	75
No. of rooms	799	2461	3651	3487	1439
No. places	1684	5161	7415	7245	2991

Source: Spa tourism strategy, INCDT

Most accommodations are Covasna County, where a new 4-star hotel was opened in 2008 but does not appear in this table. The strong points from this point of view in Harghita County are the Băile Tușnad and Praid localities, where 75% of the places are located on the County level. On the third place is Mureș County with a locality that holds 95% of the accommodation places in the spa resorts in the County.

#### 6.4.2. LAND OF SAXONY

Brasov County: the most important spa resorts are: Perșani Baths, Rodbav Bath, Fundata.

Sibiu County: the most important spa resorts are: Miercurea Băile, Gura Raiului, Ocna Sibiului.

Below we will present the facilities and procedures for treatment that resort visitors can call:

- Predeal (BV): electrotherapy, hydrotherapy, thermotherapy.
- Bazna (SB): hydrokinetotherapy, hydro-massage, diet therapy, kinetotherapy, home therapy, philotherapy, acupuncture, aromatherapy.

In Saltland there are more saltwater resorts than mineral or thermal waters. These localities are in the territory of Sibiu County. The Neighbor in the East has especially mountain resorts with microclimate suitable for rest and recovery. These resorts are mainly used by athletes for campings.

As regards the places of accommodation in these resorts, Brasov County has an absolute advantage over Sibiu County, being a difference of more than 6 thousand seats.

In Saxon, there are 50% more places in these resorts than in Szekler Land. The difference is not so great considering that part of the accommodation places in Brasov County are used by tourists who practice winter sports.

#### 6.4.3. MOLDAVIA





Below we will present the facilities and procedures for treatment that resort visitors can call:

- Bălătești (NT): electrotherapy, hydrokinetotherapy.

From the counties analyzed in this subchapter two thirds of the accommodation capacities are present in Suceava County. The offer of places is also low compared to Szekler Land where there are 40% more accommodation.

#### **6.4.4. PRAHOVA VALLEY**

Below we will present the facilities and procedures for treatment that resort visitors can call:

- Slănic Prahova (PH): hydrotherapy, hydrokinetotherapy, thermotherapy, electrotherapy, laser therapy, masotherapy, aerosolotherapy, kinetotherapy, medical massage.

- Sinaia (PH): electrotherapy, hydrotherapy, massage.

In Prahova County there are several places of accommodation in localities with natural therapeutic factors than in Szekler Land. The difference is 50%, that is, more than 2,100 seats. Most of the accommodation is present in the Sinaia resort, followed by Bușteni.

#### **6.5. ACCESSIBILITY**

##### **6.5.1. COMPETITION OF THE COUNTIES IN THE SZEKLER REGION**

Harghita County: road accessibility: DN12, DN13, DN15, DN11 / B, DN15. In the south-north direction cross DN12; DN12 / A; and DN12 / C makes contact with Moldavia. DN13 / A provides connection with Odorheiu Secuiesc. European road E578 crosses the city of Miercurea Ciuc going north.

Covasna County: national roads: DN 2D boundary Vrancea - Ojdula County, DN 10, Buzau County Limit - Brașov County Limit, DN 11 Limita Brașov County - Bacau County Limit, DN 11BTârgu Secuiesc (DN 11) Harghita, DN 12 Chichiș - the Harghita County boundary, DN 13E limits Brașov County - int. Buzau.

Mureș County: DN 13 Limita Brașov - Târgu Mureș County, DN 13ABălăușeri - Harghita County Limit, DN 13CVânători - lim. Jud. Harghita, DN 13DSovata-Săcădat, DN 14 limit Sibiu County - DN13 (Sighișoara), DN 14A Sibiu - Iernut County boundary, DN 15 County boundary Cluj - Harghita County limit, DN 15A between DN 16 (Reghin) - Năsăud , DN 15ETârgu Mureș - Satu Nou - int. DN16, DN 16 limit Cluj - Reghin County.

Rail access: Line 400 crosses the region in the south-north direction. From Ciceu railway line, line 501 connects with Moldavia, line 405 connects Deda - Războieni, line 300 connects Bucharest - Nord - Brașov - Sighișoara - Teiuș - Războieni - Cluj Napoca - Oradea, line 308 between Sighișoara - Odorheiu Secckler.



Air accessibility: International airports in Bacau and Târgu Mureş are closest to 124 km and 157 km respectively from Miercurea Ciuc. From Sfântu Gheorghe, Bacau airport is 152 km, Sibiu 179 km and Ghimbav Airport (40 km) will be in operation in 2020.

### **6.5.2. LAND OF SAXONY**

Road accessibility:

Braşov County: international roads: E60, connecting Oradea - Braşov - Bucharest - Constanţa, E68 between Nadlac - Braşov. National roads: DN1 connecting Oradea - Cluj-Napoca - Brasov - Bucharest; DN1a between Braşov - Bratocea - Ploieşti Pass; DN10 between Braşov - Buzău, DN11 between Braşov - Onesti, DN73 between Braşov - Piteşti; DN73A between Predeal and Sercaia.

Sibiu County: international roads E60, E68. National roads: DN1, DN7 between Bucharest - Piteşti - Râmnicu Vâlcea - Arad - Nadlac, DN7C (Transfăgărăşan) between Bascov - Curtea de Argeş - DN1, DN 14 between Sighişoara - Sibiu, DN 14A between Mediaş - Iernut, Copsa Mica.

Rail accessibility: The main line 200 crosses the counties of Brasov and Sibiu in the eastern direction, ensuring the connection on the route Braşov - Sibiu - Arad - Curtici. The main line 300 crosses the area in the direction of Bucharest (North) - Braşov - Sighişoara - Cluj Napoca - Oradea, and the main line 400 connects Brasov - Ciceu - Deda - Satu Mare.

Air accessibility: International airports in Sibiu, Tirgu Mures (132km from Sibiu and 173km from Brasov) and Cluj Napoca (168km from Sibiu and 280km from Brasov) are the closest to this County. Ghimbav International Airport (144km) will be operational in 2020.

### **6.5.3. MOLDAVIA**

Road accessibility:

Suceava County: the E85 international road connecting the border with Ukraine - Suceava - Bacău - Buzău - Bucharest - the border with Bulgaria. National routes: DN2 between Bucharest - Buzău - Bacau - Suceava - border with Ukraine, DN17 between Dej - Bistrita - Vatra Dornei - Campulung Moldovenesc - Suceava, DN29 between Suceava-Botosani-Săveni - Manoleasa DN29A between Suceava - Dorohoi - Rădăuţi - with the Republic of Moldavia.

Neamţ County: national road: DN15 Turda - Târgu Mureş - Toplita - Piatra Neamţ - Bacau, DN15D between Piatra Neamţ - Roman - Vaslui.

Bacău County: international road: E85, E574 Bacău - Târgu Secuiesc - Braşov, national road: DN2, DN11 between Braşov - Târgu Secuiesc - Bacău, DN15.

Iasi County: national road: DN24 between Măreşesti - Vaslui - Iaşi - Sculeni - the border with the Republic of Moldavia, DN28 between the border with the Republic of Moldavia - Iaşi - Teţcan.



Rail accessibility:

Suceava County: Line 500 crosses the County in the south-north direction.

Neamt County: Main line 500, line 509 Bacău - Piatra Neamț - Bicăz, 517 Pâșcani - Târgu Neamț.

Bacău County: main line 500, line 509.

Iasi County: the main line 600 Făurei - Tecuci - Bârlad - Crasna - Vaslui - Iași - Ungheni.

Air accessibility: International airports in Bacău, Iasi, Suceava are closest to these counties.

Table no. 18. Distance between County municipalities and airports

County seats	Suceava (km)	Iași (km)	Piatra Neamț (km)	Bacău (km)
Suceava (km)	-	148	111	148
Iasi (km)	148	-	185	125
Piatra Neamt (km)	111	185	-	60
Bacău (km)	148	125	60	-

#### 6.5.4. PRAHOVA VALLEY

Road accessibility: national road: DN1, DN1A connects Bucharest - Ploiesti - Valeni de Munte - Săcele, DN1BPloiesti - Buzău, DN 1Delbești - Urziceni, DN72 Găești-Targoviste - Ploiești.

Railway accessibility: The main line 500 crosses the County in the south-north direction, the lines 302 Ploiești-Targoviste, 304 Ploiești (South) - Mâneciu, 306 Ploiești (South) - Plopeni - Slănic.

Air Accessibility: At just 57 km the international airport in Bucharest is the closest to this County.

#### 6.6. CONCLUSIONS

##### 6.6.1. COMPETITION OF THE COUNTIES IN THE SZEKLER REGION

In recent years there has been a decrease in accommodation places in the region of the three counties, but this decrease was mainly determined by Mures County, while the other counties managed to achieve a smaller increase. The decrease in the number of places did not affect the rate of their use, but we can talk about an increase of 3.9% in Harghita County, 10.2% in Covasna County and 2.6% in Mures County. The impressive rate of use of seats by the



southern neighbor can be explained by the large number of tourists who come with treatment tickets at Covasna. Even if we do not consider these people, the position of Harghita County remains unchanged, but the difference drops to only a few insignificant percentages. When looking at the type of accommodation structure, we notice a great gap to hostels in Harghita County, almost 40% of the accommodation places are in hostels. This means that the hospitals in the County are ready to receive smaller groups, families instead of bigger tourists. The prevalence of pensions on the market also means that the level of services offered to tourists is somewhat lower than in other counties, because in a hotel can be requested more types of services and of higher quality. Going forward means that tourists spend less money, domain revenue can not be increased in this way. From this point of view the neighboring counties are in the advantage because the division of the types of accommodation structures is exactly the opposite of Harghita County, the pensions represent only one-fourth of the offer and the hotels represent 40% in the Mureş County and 80% in the County of Covasna.

Winter tourism is a strong point of Harghita County towards the counties of Covasna and Mureş. In the neighboring counties there are few ski slopes, the snow conditions are not as good as in the mountains of Harghita. The infrastructure of the slopes is desirable in each County, but the best conditions are still in Harghita County. Winter tourism in the Székely region has a deficiency linked to the area of attracting tourists. The slopes are local, most of the visitors come from the neighboring villages, and at least some tourists from neighboring counties arrive. There are several ski slopes in Harghita County, there are some punctenoes from where several runs start, which strengthens the position of the County towards the neighbors. The offer of the counties of Covasna and Mureş is also from this point of view.

The lack of network or ski system character is another problem, which affects the quality of practiced winter tourism. By introducing a card system whereby the tourist has to make payments at one place (eg the Tourist Information Center) and therefore receives a card that he can use on all slopes. this problem would be removed. The accessibility of the ski areas is not very good, most of the locations are linked to the main road through forest roads, macadam roads. Some roads are so narrow that winter can only travel in one direction. Parking infrastructure is also on a low level of compliance.

From the point of view of spa tourism, there are many aspects that need to be taken into account. From the point of view of natural resources, Harghita County has an advantage, having several important resorts on its territory (Băile Tuşnad, Praid). From the point of view of the places of accommodation in these localities, Covasna County is the first and from the point of view of the services offered, Mures County is the first place through the Sovata resort and the 4-star hotel. Covasna County is not far behind Covasna and the new 4-star hotel inaugurated in 2008. The services offered by Harghita County resorts and the used equipment are old, obsolete and need to be changed, modernized.



The accessibility of Harghita County is the worst of the three counties. Covasna County is very close to Braşov's nodal point, where many national roads, highways and railroads meet and will be nearly 40 km from Ghimbav Airport. Mureş County is well accessible on the road, it is less advantageous from the point of view of railways, but the international airport near Târgu Mureş is a strong point. Harghita County is closer to internationally functional airports than Covasna County, but it is further on the road and railway lines of the Braşov nodal point.

#### **6.6.2. LAND OF SAXONY**

Accommodation places in Saxon Land are at a level equal to those in Szekler Land. In recent years, both the accommodation and the rate of use have increased. Although the level of overnight stays and places of accommodation were somewhat equal in the two countries, in the thousands of places / days in operation, the southern neighbors have an impressive advantage of 40%, which is also reflected in the arrival data where we are talking about a difference of 30%. There are differences and the structure of accommodation types. Regarding the total number of accommodation places, the County of Harghita is ranked 6th among the counties analyzed, being surpassed by Braşov, Prahova, Suceava, Sibiu and Mureş. They are in the same position for the presence of accommodation in hotels. The number of pensions in Harghita County that is attributed to Romania's total offer in the same area is 5.09%, but it lags behind the hotel category. Looking at the total data in the lands, the situation is the following. The southern neighbors have 12.05% of the total number of accommodation in hotels in the country compared to 5.43% obtained by the three counties in the Szekler Land.

Szekler Land is probably the best place for skiers, here are the most ski slopes. Saxon and Prahova County can compete with its slopes. Much of the ski area is made up of long slopes of up to 4,600 m while the offer in the Szekler Land is much weaker, most of the slopes are under 1,000 m long. Cable ski infrastructure of skiers is much more developed. The number of visitors is very high, much of it comes from the capital's area and it is more expensive. This advantage can be counterbalanced by the big crowd that occurs every weekend or on holiday days. The counties of Covasna, Harghita and Mures are from this point of view more fortunate, usually the agglomeration is not so great, the atmosphere in circulation is more bearable. Ski resorts are accessible via well-maintained, paved roads. The problem is just finding a parking space, because they are not present in a large enough number.

In spa resorts in Saxon, there are many more places to stay, but we must not forget that these resorts also function as mountain resorts and serve winter tourism. For this reason we can not say that the difference in the number of places is real. The competition factor is represented by the salty waters of the Bazna, Ocna Sibiului resorts, but also Harghita County Mineral Waters and the region of which it is part has a better position. Regarding the use of salty waters and the offer of complementary and complementary services, Sibiu County is in a favorite position.



The accessibility of the counties of Brasov and Sibiu is much better than the three. We need to think only of Brasov where there are several national, European roads, but also several railways. Sibiu is an international airport, and another airport is in progress at Braşov (Ghimbav).

### **6.6.3. MOLDAVIA**

The number of places has increased in recent years in the counties analyzed in Moldavia, but the use rate has fallen. Despite the fact that the number of accommodation places is almost equal between the two regions, there was a double arrivals volume in Moldavia. This means that the places in the Szekler Land are not used efficiently.

The offer of ski slopes in these counties is more modest, there are 14 slopes in 2 counties, and Bacău and Iaşi counties do not have slopes yet. The average length of the slopes is higher than those in the Szekler Land, but their number is much smaller. The infrastructure of the connecting roads is good.

There are international resorts such as Slanic Moldavia, Vatra Dornei. This region is rich in mineral water resources, but the counties of Iasi and Neamt are not so lucky. The tourist reception infrastructure is not as developed as in the Szekler Land, here are 40% less accommodation.

The national road network is more remote in the analyzed region of Moldavia than in the counties of the Szekler Land. Not only is the number of national and European roads bigger but the link between them is more frequent. Accessibility of the County by railway is ensured on bus 500, the density of main and secondary lines is higher. There are 3 airports at a distance of 60-185 km from County residences. The average distance from airports is lower than in Harghita or Covasna County.

### **6.6.4. PRAHOVA VALLEY**

Prahova County registered a slight decrease in the total number of accommodation places, but their use rate has increased. We can observe similar trends in the Moldovan region. They have obtained 30% more sights than Szekler Land.

Prahova Valley is a masterpiece of mountain and winter tourism. Here are the most pistes, their length exceeds in most cases 1,000m. These resorts are in a better position than the Szekler Land or even the Saxon Land, it is closer to the capital, where more than 2 million potential tourists live. The ski infrastructure, the cable transport is much higher than in Harghita County, the problem being solved here also huge traffic and lack of parking.

Prahova County can compete with the Szekler Land for salt lakes, salt mines. However, the salt mine in Praid is better known and loved by tourists. There are 40% more accommodation in the spa resorts in Prahova County, but most of these resorts are also used as a destination for mountain tourism and winter tourism, a large part of which is dedicated to these tourists.





The accessibility of the Prahova Valley is much easier because of the fact that it is exactly between Bucharest and Brasov County. The main national and European roads pass here. The County linking Transylvania, Muntenia and Moldavia. Accessibility is also better on railways and airports, except for Mureş County.

On the basis of the analyzed features, we present the complete comparison of the regions. To signify the differences we chose the score method. Points are allocated between 1-5 (1 point - the weakest qualification, 5 points - the best qualification).

In the following tables we compare the counties of Covasna, Harghita and Mureş, and in the following regions.

Table no. 19. Comparison of the counties of Covasna, Harghita and Mureş

Analyzed factor	Covasna	Harghita	Mureş
Attractions	3	5	4
Tourist infrastructure	4	3	5
The variety of services offered	3	4	3
Winter tourism	2	5	2
Mineral waters – balneoclimatic tourism	5	5	4
Accessibility	5	4	5
Total points	22	26	23

At the same time, we can do the analysis corroborated with the weight of the factors named in the previous table

Table no. 20. Comparison of the CV, HR and MS counties with the weight of the factors

Analyzed factor and its weight	Covasna	Harghita	Mureş
Attractions (15%)	0,45	0,75	0,60
Tourist infrastructure (25%)	1,00	0,75	1,25
Diversity of services offered (20%)	0,60	0,80	0,60
Winter tourism (10%)	0,20	0,50	0,20
Mineral Water - Balneoclimatic Tourism (10%)	0,50	0,50	0,40
Accessibility (20%)	1,00	0,80	1,00
Total points	3,75	4,10	4,05

In the following table we will present the comparison of analyzed regions:

Table no. 21. Comparison of regions

Analyzed factor	Szekler Land	Saxon Land	Moldavia	Prahova Valley
Attractions	3	5	3	4



Tourist infrastructure	4	5	3	4
The variety of services offered	4	5	2	4
Winter tourism	4	5	3	5
Mineral waters – balneoclimatic tourism	5	3	3	2
Accessibility	4	5	4	5
Attractions	24	28	18	24

The following table also takes into account the weight of factors analyzed.

Table no. 22. Comparison of regions with the weight of analyzed factors

Analyzed factor	Ținutul Secuiesc	Ținutul Săsesc	Moldavia	Valea Prahovei
Attractions (15%)	0,45	0,75	0,45	0,60
Tourist infrastructure (25%)	1,00	1,25	0,75	1,00
Diversity of services offered (20%)	0,80	1,00	0,40	0,80
Winter tourism (10%)	0,40	0,50	0,30	0,50
Mineral Water - Balneoclimatic Tourism (10%)	0,50	0,30	0,30	0,2
Accessibility (20%)	0,80	1,00	0,80	1,00
Total points	3,95	4,80	3,00	4,10

To understand the categories of comparison, a brief explanation of the listed categories is required.

Attractions - we are attracted to both natural and anthropic attractions. Natural attractions include mountains, river valleys, national parks, nature reserves. By anthropic attractions we understand everything about human creation, the anthropic tourism resources are the result of technical, cultural and economic efforts (archaeological vestiges, historical, architectural or art monuments, etc.).

Tourist infrastructure is composed of several elements. The accommodation capacity of tourist resorts, the share of pensions, hotels in the national total, the tourist food structures were considered.



Diversity of services is a basic indicator of tourist units and stations. The range of alternative entertainment services should be included in the offer of tourism units. Here we have analyzed the diversity and complexity of services (the volume and quality of the information materials portfolio about the tourist possibilities of the localities, the existence and usefulness of tourist information offices, the possibilities of therapeutic treatment, the possibilities of entertainment, tourist routes, brochures, signposts, tourist maps, tourist trails, etc.).

Winter tourism: In this chapter we analyzed the presence of ski slopes and their diversity, related services, the amount of accommodation available in these resorts, the accessibility of resorts, the traffic volume, the presence of parking lots, etc.

Mineral water-balneo-climatic tourism: We analyzed the presence and diversity of mineral water springs in the counties and regions listed above. We have compared the number of existing accommodation places in spa resorts, as well as the variety of facilities and treatment procedures that visitors can resort to.

Accessibility: We have taken into account the accessibility of the locality through national and European public roads, the main railway lines, the distance from the international airports, as well as the number of directions to reach the resort, and how many types of transport are available for it.



## VII. LONG TERM VISION OF DEVELOPMENT OF TOURISM IN HARGHITA COUNTY

For tourism development to be effective in Harghita County, the need for sustainable development must also be taken into account, which is the basis of all the economic and social growth envisaged in the tourism strategies.

The long-term vision of tourism development in Harghita County is centralized by developing the region, as a whole, into a competitive tourist destination at national and international level, capitalizing on the resources.

### Operational Plan for the fulfillment of the objectives established in Harghita County Integrated Tourism Strategy

#### Development Axis:

1. Arrangement and capitalization of natural and anthropic tourism resources
2. Stimulating the development of tourism reception structures and other related infrastructures
3. Development of the organizational system of tourism in Harghita county
4. Improving the conditions for the formation of human capital employed in tourism
5. Harghita destination marketing

Specific objectives	Activities	Responsables	Partners	Term	Source of funding
1. Arrangement and capitalization of natural and anthropic tourism resources	1.1. Restoration, conservation and enhancement of historical monuments, conservation of architectural, religious and ethnographic heritage <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Prevention of irreversible degradation</li> <li>• Adaptation of infrastructure, renovation of buildings, improvement of the image of the area, of the environment</li> <li>• Accessing the necessary funds for</li> </ul>	Local Councils from Harghita county	Harghita County Council  Ministry of Culture  European Union Health Institutions, Public-Private partnerships, hospitals or private	Permanent	Harghita County Council  Grant funds



	<p>rehabilitation and for the interventions necessary for restaurantion and management of these monuments in the historical network</p> <p>1.2. Digitization of the heritage goods and / or arhives, and establishment of data bases</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Utilization of the new information tehcnologies, diversification of the communication channels</li> <li>• Creative utilization of the media communication tools</li> <li>• Development of databases in which the digitized heritage object is associated with all scientific analyzes, studies and publications related to it</li> </ul> <p>1.3. Establishment and development of museums and cultural spaces (interior and exterior)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Establishment of living museums in various periods of the year, near the main historic monuments</li> </ul> <p>1.4. Compiling a collective and interdisciplinary history of the county's heritage</p> <p>1.5. Arrangement of the protection areas through the delimitation and fencing of the historical monuments</p> <p>1.6. Assisting and promoting of the public and private initiatives through the utilization of the</p>		hospitals		
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	<p>cultural heritage as a place of reflection, exchange of ideas and creation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Organization of the traditional cultural events</li><li>• Encouraging youth access to spaces where they can express their creative and innovative potential</li></ul> <p>1.7. Creation of the synergy between culture and tourism through the establishment of significant regional events</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Establishment and development of big events in the territory of the county</li><li>• Valorization of these events through the elaboration of tourism packages</li></ul> <p>1.8. Assisting of the sustainable development through cultural tourism and/or religious tourism</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Establishment of cultural-tourism routes, which promote the cultural-historical heritage</li><li>• Modernization of the thematic, pilgrimage route Via Mariae</li><li>• Development of the cultural infrastructure through the construction of new cultural spaces and facilities</li><li>• Refunctionalization of the abandoned cultural spaces</li><li>• Assisting the balanced development of the cultural infrastructure through the examination of the cultural needs of the</li></ul>				
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	<p>community members, of their implication in cultural planification</p> <p>1.9. Facilitation of the access of the general public to the natural and anthropic heritage</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Creation of the institutional framework in which the owners of the historical and cultural objectives collaborate with local and central public administrations and cultural institutions (ex. Lázár Castle of Lăzarea)</li> </ul> <p>1.10. Landscape conservation of the national parks and of the natural reserves;</p> <p>1.11. Efficient integration of the existing natural resources (mineral water, thermal water, traditional baths, mophettas, etc.) in tourism circuit</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Modernization and rehabilitation of the balneary infrastructures and of treatment resorts</li> <li>• More efficient valorization of the mineral water and/or healing water from the county</li> <li>• Assisting the projects that intend to make more efficient the balneary treatments</li> <li>• Renewal of the tourism infrastructure in tourism and balneary resorts (Băile Tuşnad, Băile Homorod, Harghita Băi, Borsec) and reorientation of the branch towards high income tourists</li> </ul>				
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Involvement of the investors and of the know-how for the development of the treatment plants and increasing of the cality of the services provided</li> </ul> <p>1.12. Modernization and rehabilitation of the traditional baths existing in the county; improving the attractiveness of the area through the growth of the number of interested people for specific treatment and tourism attractivity</p> <p>Valorization of the unused traditional baths (Nadas, Tuşnad village, Băile Chirui, Remetea, Toplița, Sânsimion, Păuleni Ciuc, Suseni, Baia Dugas from Dănești village, Băile Madicsa, salt bath of Sósút from Cristuru Secuiesc town, etc.</p> <p>1.13. Arrangement of the treatment centers in the localities that have balneary resources</p> <p>1.14. Rational exploitation of the forestry resources for ecotourism purposes (forestry tourism)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Stimulation of the forestry tourism through the establishment of some strategic points for tourists</li> </ul> <p>1.15. Creation of the necessary conditions for the development of active tourism and of the winter sport tourism for the valorization of the mountain tourism</p>				
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Arrangement of the existing ski slopes and development of new slopes (ex. Lacu Roșu) with the necessary facilities, according to the European regulations for tourist safety</li> <li>• Arrangement of the ski lifts and transport facilities also in the summer period</li> <li>• Development of a network in the ski area through a joint card system</li> <li>• Providing the ski slopes with necessary, technologically advanced equipment</li> </ul> <p>1.16. Establishment of cyclotourism routes in the towns, resorts and out-of-town areas, respectively establishment of cyclotourism networks that cover the whole county</p> <p>1.17. Development of the tourism resorts of national and local interest from the county and attestation of more resorts from the county</p> <p>1.18. Arrangement of the roads and of the access ways to the natural tourism resources, of the recreation spaces and stands</p> <p>1.19. Construction of tele gondolas for facilitating the access to different locations that are not easily accessible, arrangement of the parking places near these</p>				
2. Stimulating the development of	2.1. Assisting the investments in accommodation infrastructure through	Local Councils from Harghita	Harghita County Council	Permanent	Harghita County



tourism reception structures and other related infrastructures	<p>financing opportunities that offer sources for the modernization, equipment or even construction of accommodation units.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Implementation of the projects that contribute to the diversification of the tourism service offers at the accommodation units level</li> </ul> <p>2.2. Assisting of the "white" tourism and reducing of tax evasion by providing support from the authorities regarding the legal functioning of tourism activities</p> <p>2.3. Training and vocational training of the employees form HORECA sector for the improvement of the quality of services and of tourism facilities, especially of the hospitality facilities, interpretation and marketing</p> <p>2.4. Creation of career opportunities in the hospitality sector through partnerships and twinning programs for the development of the learning process and of practical knowledge</p> <p>2.5. Development of hospitality structures with public catering functions, offering local and national specialties, hunting and fishing specialties, etc. and high quality</p> <p>2.6. Assisting the construction of the hospitality structures that offer balneary treatment or wellness</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Construction of the balneary centers</li> </ul>	county	<p>Non-governmental organizations for local development and nature conservation</p> <p>Tour operators from agro tourism sector</p>		<p>Council</p> <p>Grant funds</p>
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	<p>2.7. Stimulation of the renovation, arrangement and establishment of accommodation units addressed to youth (hostels, campings, camps)</p> <p>2.8. Assisting the niche tourism, development of the complementary activities and integration of the tourism activities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Establishment of the necessary conditions in the natural parks and reserves for tourism activities, learning activities, researches and recreation (hikes on marked tourism routes, excursions with tourism guides, horseback riding on designated routes, cycletourism in forest routes, mountain climbing, etc.)</li> <li>• Arrangement of the routes and of the eco-educational route networks in the natural reserves and their modernization</li> <li>• Arrangement of a bear park</li> </ul> <p>2.9. Establishment of the ecological destination (in the area of Ghimeș, Vârșag, Inlăceni) through the elaboration of the ecotourism development plans</p> <p>2.10. Promotion of the sustainable development concept for the assistance of the rural tourism and development of agro tourism</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Promotion and stimulation of the local economies, of the processing plants of</li> </ul>				
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	<p>food and nonfood products</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reactivation of crafts and development of diversified services, micro family farms, stimulation of alternative activities and parallel activities for additional incomes (rural tourism, agro tourism);</li> <li>• Assisting the rural localities to formulate the uniqueness that they can offer</li> <li>• Stimulation of the folk programmes and of the local gastronomy</li> </ul> <p>2.11. Reducing the seasonal character of the tourism demand</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reducing the seasonality through the introduction of new tourism attraction and recreation forms by diversifying the tourism services</li> <li>• Creation of new product categories, which are attractive during the whole year</li> <li>• Reducing the seasonality through the development of tourism products and organization of some events outside tourism season</li> <li>• Development of the mountain areas and of the mountain resorts in order to offer attractions and services for tourists during the whole year</li> </ul> <p>2.12. Organization of awareness raising campaigns for a better information of tourists on destinations</p>				
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	<p>2.13. Strengthening of the professional cooperation for the development and promotion of the gastronomy tourism through the involvement of potential tourism actors interested in destination development: producers, farmers, fisherman, cooks, public administration</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Establishment of local gastronomy centers in Harghita county</li> </ul>				
3. Development of the organizational system of tourism in Harghita county	<p>3.1. Stimulation of the partnerships with national and international organizations, strengthening the local, county and regional partnerships between local and national level public authorities</p> <p>3.2. Stimulation of the different partnerships in the county on various topics and interests</p> <p>3.3. Creation of an organization system for tourism destination management (OMDT) with the establishment of Tourism Consultation Council of Harghita County</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Development, promotion and valorization of tourism potential in tourism destination</li> <li>Coordination of the tourism destination</li> <li>Establishment and management of an image at destination level</li> <li>Development of product planning, management capacities and processes</li> </ul>	<p>Harghita County Council</p> <p>Local Councils from Harghita county</p> <p>Professional associations</p> <p>Organizations /federations of tourism employers</p> <p>Academic sector and vocational training sector</p>	<p>Tourism Information Offices</p> <p>Tourism enterprises, organizations, NGOs</p> <p>Representatives of the civil society</p> <p>Representatives of the tourism SMEs</p> <p>Universities</p>	Permanent	Harghita County Council



	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cooperation with the private sector for the coordination of promotion campaigns</li> <li>• Sustainable development of the tourism destination through the establishment of conditions for the implication of all decision makers from the public and private sector as well</li> </ul> <p>3.4. Elaboration of a collection of indicators for the evaluation of sustainable tourism development management, which can satisfy the specific needs existing in Harghita county</p> <p>3.5. Conception and development of an informatics system for the sustainable tourism development management in Harghita county</p>				
4. Improving the conditions for the formation of human capital employed in tourism	<p>4.1. Providing human resources through organization of training programmes and vocational training programmes in tourism; Development of human resources, organization and coordination of the professional training; Improvement of the job qualities in tourism sector</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Development and training of the human resources in hospitality and tourism sector, to develop the level of skills and quality of services in whole HORECA sector;</li> <li>• Increase the quality of the work force in tourism, through training and</li> </ul>	<p>Vocational training institutions in tourism</p> <p>Organizations with accreditation, that provide educational services in Harghita county</p> <p>Consulting companies</p>		Permanent	Grant funds



	<p>vocational training programmes, in partnership with SMEs</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Making awareness of the training needs and of the education culture in tourism sector at county level; training courses in the field of tourism product development marketing and e-marketing; organization of vocational training courses in different professions (receptionist, tourism guide), and in hospitality (cook, waiter, sommelier, barman preparator, housekeeper) by specialized and accredited companies</li> <li>• Diversification of the specializations offered according to market needs, through the improvement of the quality of training structures by all possible means</li> <li>• Cooperation with classified accommodation units and restaurants, inclusively with the tourism agencies from Harghita county, for education and practical training</li> <li>• Improvement of the existing programmes for training of tourism guides, in the framework of institutionalized programmes addressed to tourism guides in professional high schools, colleges and universities, through the integration of specific curricula for tourism guides</li> <li>• Elaboration of a training programme at county level for the employees of tourism information centers, by an expert / instructor skilled in training of</li> </ul>				
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	<p>tourism information centers employees</p> <p>4.2. Establishment of partnerships between vocational training institutions in the field of tourism and labor market</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Elaboration of efficient practical education programmes addressed to pupils and students</li> <li>• Adaptation of the university offer to the needs of the labor market, by introducing of specializations that are in lack</li> <li>• Keeping the graduates of tourism highschoools and universities in the tourism services area</li> <li>• Extension of the accessible tourism specializations in the county at pre-university and university level</li> <li>• Extension of the infrastructure and of the vocational training facilities in high schools and university courses</li> <li>• Establishment of a strong tourism school at high school level but also at university level</li> </ul> <p>4.3. Organization of the exchanges of experience with national and international professional associations and networks (study tours and participation in international conferences)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Exchange of good practices and experiences with the national and international organizations</li> <li>• Undertaken studies, researches and</li> </ul>				
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	<p>innovation activities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Organization of multidisciplinary seminars and conferences in order to provide knowledge transfer in the topic of tourism</li> </ul> <p>4.4. Providing consultancy in employment and vocational training of the work force</p> <p>4.5. Providing the necessary funds for continuous vocational training of the participants from HORECA sector</p> <p>4.6. Assisting the development of vocational training programmes</p> <p>4.7. Organization of yearly motivation events for participants and offering them prizes according to different criterias and categories for the best operators that are activating in this sector</p> <p>4.8. Encouraging the experienced persons in the field of tourism to find a job in this sector in order to assure a sustainable balance of the field</p> <p>4.9. Researches regarding training needs in the public sector, in the professional activity, management, marketing, and administration activities</p>				
5. Harghita destination marketing	5.1. Promotion and strengthening of the Visit Harghita tourism brand for a competitive	ADI Harghita	Harghita County Council	Permanent	Harghita County



	<p>tourism destination at national and international level, offering a better monitoring of tourism. Participation in joint promotion activities of the tourism destination Ținutul Secuiesc - Székelyföld - Szeklerland</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Establishment of a strong partnership between the public and private sector for the efficient utilization of tourism destination brand</li> <li>• Promotion of the tourism platform and of the mobile application <a href="http://www.visitharghita.com">www.visitharghita.com</a>, the official tourism site of Harghita county, as major information and promotion instrument</li> <li>• Elaboration and implementation of an integrated marketing and communication strategy, which can actively promote the tourism potential, the attractivity and identity of the county at national and international level</li> </ul> <p>5.2. Creation of a positive, differential and attractive image of the county both at internal and external level as a competitive tourism destination</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Elaboration of the online and offline promotional materials</li> <li>• Elaboration of high quality audio-visual materials</li> </ul>		<p>Tourism Information Offices</p> <p>Tourism enterprises</p>		Council
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Creation of joint visibility elements of the Visit Harghita site and brand for offline promotion (stickers, inscriptions, publicity pannels)</li> <li>• Providing information for tourists in the most cost-effective way, through communication</li> <li>• Development and updating of the web pages dedicated to the tourism of Harghita county</li> <li>• Participation in national and international tourism fairs and exhibitions</li> <li>• Promotion of the activities / events that can attract tourists: elaboration of the yearly events agenda, organization of events</li> <li>• Promotion of the multiculturalism of county through the valorization of the historic and ethnographic traditions (traditional events, ex. Carnival)</li> <li>• Promotion of Harghita county tourism through different types of tourism: agro tourism, cultural tourism, equestrian tourism, pilgrimage tourism, sport-mountain tourism, gastronomy tourism, ecotourism, cycletourism, etc.</li> </ul> <p>5.3. Cooperation with non-governmental sector and public sector for the organization of general promotion actions at national and international level</p> <p>5.4. Introduction of some special tourism taxes</p>				
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	<p>in Harghita county, especially in the resorts of local and national interest, and following this action the collected amount of money is going to be utilized for the tourism promotion of the area</p> <p>5.5. Promotion of the tourism offers through their inclusion in the offers of incoming tour operators</p> <p>5.6. Development of the active role of promoters such as tourism information and promotion centers and offices</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Establishment of new tourism information centers in towns (Miercurea Ciuc, Cristuru Secuiesc), in resorts of tourism interest (Praid, Lacu Roșu), and tourism information centers in important tourism destinations (Șumuleu-Ciuc)</li><li>• Establishment of a network of tourism information and promotion centers and offices at county level, coordinated by a tourism organization, with the aim to improve the quality of tourism information services, for the extension of the hospitality message towards guests, offering them correct information, assisting them in orientation, making them to enjoy and appreciate the destination</li></ul>				
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	<p>5.7. Extension of the signal system of the natural and / or anthropic objectives from Harghita county, in order to make them more accessible for tourists and to provide a more efficient promotion of these</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Authorization and installation of the tourism indicators in brown color with white letters and pictograms, according to the European regulations at local level</li> <li>• Elaboration of the visibility instruments of the tourism objectives (indicators and information panels)</li> </ul> <p>5.8. Digitization of the thematic tourism routes through the creation of mobile application systems</p> <p>5.9. Periodic organization of infotrips addressed to bloggers, journalists and influencers, in order to stimulate the tourism visibility of the county on the online platforms and social media platforms (Facebook, Instagram, Tik-tok, etc.)</p> <p>5.10. Utilization of the innovative promotion methods of the tourism destination (virtual reality, augmented reality) combined with advanced technologies that are existing on the market and will be developed in the near future</p>				
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## **VIII. THE STRATEGIC DEVELOPMENT OF TOURISM IN HARGHITA COUNTY**

Harghita County will become one of the most important tourist destinations in Romania, with Covasna, based on an active tourism and ecotourism specific, but also other complementary elements in the area: spa, cultural, rural.

### **Strategic objectives**

- Increased tourist traffic, especially overnight stays in all destinations in the County (city, state, agritourism destinations)
- Increasing the multiplier effects of tourism, economic and social, by integrating local tourism phenomenon as profound
- Forming a distinguished and attractive tourism image to another County or territorial delimitation viable
- The development of ecotourism and active tourism in all its dimensions intervention: locations, programs, guides, natural attractions and man
- Spas and mountain development: infrastructure, organizations, specialized investment
- Diversification agritourism: stimulating folklore programs, entertainment, local gastronomy and improving accessibility villages.

### **8.1 DEVELOPMENT AXIS NO. 1 FACILITATION AND VALUATION OF NATURAL AND ANTROPICAL TOURIST RESOURCES**

#### **8.1.1 Synoptic Presentation**

The purpose of accomplishing a durable tourism have to be subordinate to national and regional plans of economic and social development. The actions can cover economic purposes (increasing revenue, activities diversification and development zoning), social purposes (amelioration of poverty and inequality of income distribution, protection of socio-cultural patrimony, participation and involvement of local communities) or ecological purposes (protecting the environment, preservation and durable utilization of biodiversity).

The County's touristic potential is very high:

- numerous reserves and monuments of nature, as well as the great complexity of natural resources, areas with outstanding landscapes and historical, cultural, religious, architectural and ethnographic heritage
- there are important tourist and spa resorts, they are not used at their full capacity due to inadequate technical endowment, insufficient tourism advertising or poor quality services
- Mountain tourism is a great variety of landscaping that expects to be exploited



- the development of rural tourism after 1990 in rural localities is the basis for the continuous development of this form of tourism that has a complementary role on the economic market of the County
- from an ecological point of view, there is a rich forest fund in the area, which contributes to the maintenance of a long-term equilibrium, conditioned by the rational exploitation of forest resources
- the forest vegetation has favored the development of a wide variety of wildlife.

At the same time, certain *shortcomings* or even *problems* can be identified in the Harghita County, in this field, among which the most important are:

- *Existing natural resources are not effectively integrated into the tourist circuit.*
- *The potential of health tourism is not developed according to the needs identified within the target group.*
- *Low quality of offers / services due to living or environmental conditions.*
- *Local isolated identity due to inefficient communication.*
- *Unseen historical sites, hard to access.*
- *Constant isolation between stakeholders, leading to lack of cooperation.*

The strategic objective of the County is based on the main tourism products as the development of active tourism and specific ecotourism complemented by other forms of tourism such as balneary, cultural, religious and rural tourism. Tourist products have been chosen which have a growing trend on the international tourism market, but the County facilities have been thoroughly analyzed. This specific objective implies the development of tourist destinations through the capitalization of the existing resources, which are based on the evaluation of the basic resources in the County and the attractiveness of the tourists. So the tourist planning of the territory encompasses all the systems of the natural, historical and cultural components of an area, the resources that represent the main attractions and motivate the tourists.

This objective aims at financing, identifying and promoting the natural and anthropic areas with tourism potential and their inclusion in the national and international tourist circuit, awareness campaigns for the general public in general and for the inhabitants of the areas in the vicinity of the natural, cultural and anthropic objectives. Besides this, the primary purpose of this objective is to ensure attractive uniqueness and diversification for areas with lower natural potential, attracting weaker tourists, to ensure a balanced development of the territories.



### **Specific Objectives:**

- S.O. 1. To valorization of the potential of existing natural resources (caves, mineral waters, natural reserves) and to promote natural objectives in order to develop ecotourism.*
- S.O. 2. Valorization the mountain tourism potential by creating the necessary conditions for the organization and development of active tourism.*
- S.O. 3. Identifying and capitalizing on the existing therapeutic and spa potential in the County (mineral waters, mofets) for the purpose of organizing health tourism.*
- S.O. 4. Supporting rural tourism in the County and at the same time stimulating the development of agrotourism in order to promote the concept of sustainable development.*
- S.O. 5. Save and revive cultural, religious, folkloric traditions and restoration of historical sites and their inclusion in the tourist circuit, thus enhancing tourist attractions.*
- S.O. 6. Increasing the number of tourists, increasing the duration of stay by improving and diversifying the tourist offer.*
- S.O. 7. Improving living conditions by improving the quality of the environment and the beautification of localities.*
- S.O. 8. Strengthen the responsible attitude towards the environmental protection of the inhabitants.*
- S.O. 9. Improving the attractiveness of localities by offering new opportunities for leisure and recreation for tourists.*
- S.O. 10. Increase the responsible attitude towards the historical and cultural heritage by refurbishing and renovating the anthropic objectives.*
- S.O. 11. Increasing interest in folk traditions and local crafts.*
- S.O. 12. Increasing the local identity of the population.*
- S.O. 13. Strengthening cooperation and closer ties between the economic sector, non-profit organizations and Local Councils.*
- S.O. 14. Strengthening the competitiveness and tourist attractiveness of the County.*
- S.O. 15. Introduction of building regulations, facilities, facilities, without damaging the rural landscape.*





### ***Main areas of intervention / programs (measures)***

For many people holidays in recreational resorts are a relaxation, but for others mineral water belts, mofetes (natural sources of carbon dioxide) as well as mud baths are the components of complex treatment of various diseases. Considering the necessity of developing this segment of tourism - health tourism in the County, as well as the advanced degree of wear and tear of the spa companies, investments are both strictly and obligatory, as a way of recovering from the point of view of the material base, and spa treatment.

Harghita County is one of the richest counties in spa and therapeutic resources (springs of mineral water, mofetes, clean air). The County has 6 local resorts (Băile Homorod, Harghita Băi, Izvorul Mureșului, Red Lake and Praid and the Banffy-baths area) and two resorts of national interest with treatment base (Băile Tușnad and Borsec). In addition, there are several localities with resources and balneary roles in the County. The County has a special spa potential which is not sufficiently exploited and many of the old resorts have been closed (Borsec, Baile Banffy, Toplița, Baile Sântimbru-Pucioasa, Sâncrăieni). Other places with balneary but non-functional roles or activity are Băile Selters, Băilele Chirui, Remetea, Baile Szeredai (Miercurea Ciuc), Băile Dugaș, Baile Madicea, Cârța, Baile Sărate, Cristuru Secuiesc, Băile Arcio, Corund, Iacobenii, Cașin. By capitalizing the adequate spa resources, the County has the possibility to develop a very attractive tourist (health and wellness) tourism activity.

The main problem of these spa treatment structures is their advanced degree of wear, the physical degradation of spa resorts that do not meet the requirements for treatments.

#### **Development opportunities:**

Rehabilitation and modernization of non-functional mofettes and bases

The rehabilitation and modernization of existing and / or non-functional treatment mopedes and bases is a priority of the County, being correlated with the *specific objective 1* and the *specific objective 3*.

Requires investment in rehabilitation and modernization works:

- Băile Selters
- Băile Chirui
- Remetea
- Baile Szeredai (Miercurea Ciuc)
- Băile Dugaș
- Băile Madicea
- Cârța
- Salted Baths (Băile Sărate)



- Cristuru Secuiesc
- Băile Arcio
- Corund
- Iacobeni
- Cașin
- The Dark Valley
- Sântimbru Băi

At the same time, it is necessary to arrange treatment centers in other localities, which have spa resources, such as **Băile Banffy** or Sâncrăieni. The establishment of these treatment centers, or even spa resorts, also requires cooperation with health institutions, even partnerships (Public-Private Partnerships), in order to obtain financing or to offer unique, specialized and personalized services according to the identified resources, ie mineral waters.

In this case, potential hospitals can be identified as potential partners such as:

- Gheorgheni Municipal Hospital,
- Tulghes Psychiatric Hospital,
- The Municipal Hospital in Odorheiu Secuiesc,
- Or even private hospitals.

These public-private partnerships must not necessarily be limited to the County, with the possibility of a national collaboration with several large, public and / or private hospitals. Within the partnership, some services offered (on the part of resorts) can be included, with relatively low prices (10% -50%) for patients sent or received through the partnership framework.

In addition to partnerships, it is possible to introduce and promote complex health tourism packages in all spa resorts, involving hospitals and health institutions, or even introducing package-like tickets to the tourist circuit could be an advantage in attracting the target group, ie tourists / visitors aged over 40 (seniors) with different health problems, with a limited budget, but with medium capabilities. These packages may include accommodation / meals and health services, the shortest period being 4 days and the longest period of 14 days.

Another measure would be the restoration and arrangement of access routes to the mineral resources of the field trails, recreation and leisure facilities, facilities for the use of mineral springs, including organizing the accessibility of these resorts in order to ease the access of the elderly population to existing therapeutic services.

Harghita County has a rich potential for the development of spa tourism, but it will require a series of complex investments and developments. The main objective in this area is that Harghita County will become one of the most well-known counties with various offers of spa



services and treatment combined with or complemented by wellness services. The achievement of these priorities will increase the quality of life of the population in these resorts, increase the number of jobs and, last but not least, the tourist competitiveness of the County will be stronger.

At the same time, there is a need for the proper erection of several eco-tourism destinations and the elaboration of the ecotourism development plans of these destinations (ecological villages: Vărșag, Inlăceni, Ghimeș), the proper arrangement of the protected natural areas or areas, ensuring their accessibility in an organized way (St. Anne, marshlands), offering ecotourism complex programs (collaboration with tourism agencies and service units), arranging ecotourism trails of natural reserves and their mediatization, organizing actions that lead to the population's awareness of the environment and respecting the nature, publishing and promoting an ecotourism guide of Harghita County (presentation of all ecotourism routes offered and organized in the County), respectively the organization of camps for youth (with the educational function), for the formation of pro ecological attitude.

## **8.2 DEVELOPMENT AXIS NO. 2 STIMULATION OF THE DEVELOPMENT OF TOURISM ACCOMODATION STRUCTURES AND OF OTHER CONNECTED INFRASTRUCTURES**

### **8.2.1 Synoptic Presentation**

At County level differences were found in terms of quality of tourist reception services they offer, location or lack thereof. It takes correlation structures identified needs and available resources, thus supporting investments in this sector should contribute to the local economy, reduce unemployment and improve the tourism offer.

At the same time, there is a problem of economic operators working in the gray area, which means that they carry out economic activities without keeping records. Therefore, it is necessary to authorize and legalize all the tourist accomodation facilities, to declare the revenues, to obtain the approvals and all the necessary documents. In order to have this result, some measures are needed to support this goal, including:

- Support from the authorities as regards legal measures - information period within the public entities, once a month, for 2-3 hours explaining the requests, opinions and documents required, the presentation competent entities and answers to any questions from participants. These sessions have to be publicized effectively and popularized especially among potential entrants, with posters or flyers involved.
- Elimination of the possibilities of popularization (through newspapers, via the on-line environment: ex .: Booking) of those tourist reception facilities, which do not prove the legality of the activities.
- Various partnerships with owners of reception facilities (operating on a legal basis) can be involved in organized events such as Tusvanyos, Tusnad Marathon, Battle on Snow, Ditrox, The Olympics of Fools, the Old Music Festival, etc.



encouraging economic operators to leave the gray area of the field (providing profit and activity throughout the year).

At the same time, in order to remove non-legal structures from the economic area, investments in this area (from both governmental and European funds) must be supported. There are several funding opportunities, where possible upgrading, equipment and units or construction of tourist reception. Some of these opportunities are not relaunched annual or biennial, but can identify those that will be launched with a high probability in the future:

- a. NRDP (National Rural Development Programme) - Sub-measure 6.2 - Support for the establishment of non-agricultural activities in rural areas
- b. NRDP - Sub-measure 6.4 - Investments in creation and development of non-agricultural activities
- c. Regional Operational Program, Priority - Improving the competitiveness of SMEs, investment priorities - promoting entrepreneurship in particular by facilitating the economic exploitation of new ideas and fostering the creation of new firms, including through business incubators
- d. Start-Up Nation

#### 8.2.2. Detailed presentation intervention areas / programs

- a. NRDP - Sub-measure 6.2 - Support for the establishment of non-agricultural activities in rural areas

In this opportunity, the boarding (accommodation facilities for vacations and other short term on CAEN code 5520) are classified in Annex 1 of the draft guidelines applicant and may be financed including construction. Investment goal supported under this sub-measure is to help facilitate diversification through the establishment and development of micro and small enterprises in the non-agricultural sector in rural areas, for sustainable economic development, creating jobs and reducing poverty in rural areas.

Aid intensity may be 100%, meaning that the applicant is not obliged to co-finance the eligible costs of the project, but was necessary to meet several conditions and that certain aspects<sup>37</sup>:

- The beneficiary / applicant must carry out an agricultural activity - breeding, cultivation of various kinds of plants, fruit trees - at the time of submission of the application. After conclusion of the contract, the beneficiary may give up farming provided with activity as an artisan workshop which shows various handicraft items (to comply oanta 65/2013);

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<sup>37</sup>Startup Cafe, ideas and entrepreneurs <https://www.startupcafe.ro/stiri-idei-21696845-pensiune-agroturistica-agropensiune-fonduri-europene-6-2-6-4-pndr.htm>, Accessed May 28, 2019.



- If start-ups, agricultural activity can be proved also when the shareholder absolute (holding 50% + 1 stake / shares of the applicant) conducted agricultural activity at the time of submission of the application;
- Agropensiunii related holding must be placed across the same administrative - territorial units (village) with the location that will be achieved and investment (in accordance with Order No. 65/2013 Authority, as amended and supplemented);
- Tourist reception with functions of tourists on the type of rural tourism must meet the minimum criteria stipulated in the Order of the National Authority for Tourism (NAT) No. 65/2013, as amended and supplemented. Level of comfort and quality of services offered by the project must meet the minimum criteria for rural locations classified at least a daisy;
- Guesthouse is a structure of tourists, with a capacity of up to 8 cameras operating in the homes of citizens or independent building, which provides dedicated facilities, tourist accommodation and conditions for preparing and serving meals and possible participation household activities and crafts;
- In agro hostels, tourists are offered meals prepared from natural products, mainly household items or from authorized producers locally and hosts deal directly receiving guests and their program throughout your stay they spend on site. In the second installment payment beneficiaries will submit authorization required veterinary officer;
- Throughout the period of validity of the contract as part of rural tourism will be held at least one activity related to agriculture, animal husbandry, cultivation of various types of plants, fruit trees or activity craft, the workshop, which results in different handicrafts;
- Changing the destination of a housing structure of tourist type guesthouse is considered new investment;
- New investments in the tourist reception type guesthouse (new building / change of use of buildings) area of land for tourist accommodation structure must be in accordance with the provisions of NAT Order No. 65/2013 modified and supplemented in order to avoid over-agglomeration and excessive fragmentation of the natural;
- The beneficiary will undertake the investment objective will be introduced in the touristic circuit;
- The beneficiary must meet specific environmental investments in area of protected natural areas.



Funding will be awarded in the first two installments, so 70% of the funding after signing the contract, and 30% of the funding will be allocated provided the correct implementation of the business plan, not exceeding five years from the date of signing the Contract financing.<sup>38</sup>

The amount of funding will be between 70,000 Euro (for projects with production activities, medical services, veterinary and agro-tourism) and € 50,000 (for projects with other activities).

b. NRDP - Sub-measure 6.4 - Investments in creation and development of non-agricultural activities

The purpose of this sub-measure is to support micro and small enterprises in rural areas that create or develop non-agricultural activities in rural areas<sup>39</sup>. Amount of support will be maximum 90% of the total value of the project and will not exceed 200,000 Euro / beneficiary 3 fiscal years.

To sub-measure 6.2., The boarding must îndeplinescă in addition other conditions:

- Sub-measure 6.4 beneficiaries will submit during the monitoring period, annual monitoring report for projects aimed at the establishment and development of the boarding, compartments Ex-post of the Regional Centers for Rural Investment Financing.
- They will enter and architectural plans - plans levels sections for the main objects of construction and location of equipment on the technological process will take into account the sanitary Veterinary and Food Safety Authority of December 16, 2008 - 1 units catering units food marketing.

However, the minimum conditions to be met by a pension of one daisy (star rating) according to NAT Order 65/2013, are:

- ensure permanent hot and cold water in the toilets within the functions of tourist accommodation and catering;
- to ensure the units occupied spaces serving in the joint, a minimum temperature of 21 degrees C and for tourist reception the equipment with air conditioning / air conditioning is required, a maximum temperature of 25 ° C ;

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<sup>38</sup>ARIF (Agency for Rural Investment Funding), the NRDP Investment [https://portal.afir.info/informatii\\_generale\\_pndr\\_investitii\\_prin\\_pndr\\_sm\\_6\\_2\\_infiintare\\_activitati\\_neagricole](https://portal.afir.info/informatii_generale_pndr_investitii_prin_pndr_sm_6_2_infiintare_activitati_neagricole), Accessed May 28, 2019.

<sup>39</sup>ARIF (Agency for Rural Investment Funding), the NRDP Investment [https://portal.afir.info/informatii\\_generale\\_pndr\\_investitii\\_prin\\_pndr\\_sm\\_6\\_4\\_modernizare\\_activitati\\_neagricole](https://portal.afir.info/informatii_generale_pndr_investitii_prin_pndr_sm_6_4_modernizare_activitati_neagricole), Accessed May 28, 2019.



- to provide qualified personnel. Staff serving in the tourism accommodation wear specific clothing established by the trader concerned, differentiated according to the conditions of work and badge comprising at least first name and function, and other personnel Wear specific work activity;
- conditions so that guests are not disturbed by noises technical equipment of the building or other factors of pollution;
- accommodation with direct natural light and ventilation;
- not locate accommodation in the basement of buildings;
- to provide a wide range of additional services, free or paid separately according to guidance given in Annex 1.1.1 at least 5 services (this includes Internet access, gym, laundry, table tennis, solarium, services free as keeping valuables waking at certain times, lost property office, etc.);
- to ensure connection to the integrated record of tourists within 60 days of implementation and its operationalization;

c. Regional Operational Program, Priority Axis - Improving the competitiveness of SMEs, investment priorities - promoting entrepreneurship in particular by facilitating the economic exploitation of new ideas and fostering the creation of new firms, including through business incubators

For this call for projects will require financing companies and cooperatives which fall into the category of micro, for construction, modernization and expansion of the manufacturing facilities or provide services, provision of tangible assets, intangible assets, including online marketing tools. The minimum eligible project will be 25,000 euros and the maximum amount of 200,000 euros. The grant requested will represent more than 90% of the eligible project and the applicant is required at least 10% of the eligible costs, plus costs ineligible.

#### d. Start-Up Nation

The project Start-Up Nation, the applicant will receive 44,000 euros for the implementation of a financial aid is 100% of the eligible investment beneficiary but must bear its own funds all costs incurred in implementing the project.

Given the low value of the grant and that only start-ups will be eligible under the Program Start Up Nation, a realistic project could be change of use of existing buildings and equipping them so that they can function as B (agro) tourist.

### **8.3 DEVELOPMENT AXIS NO. 3 DEVELOPMENT OF ORGANIZATIONAL TOURISM SYSTEMS IN HARGHITA COUNTY**

#### **8.3.1 Synoptic Presentation**





### Substantiation:

Organizational system development of tourism in Harghita involves a series of measures of coordination, stimulation, facilitation of dialogue between those concerned local, micro-regional, County and regional of tourism. Tourism development is the result of several factors: creating attractive targets materialized through resonance, the core of tourism products specific ecotourism, active, health, cultural, etc.

Creation, support and development resources and competence may be attractive targets different actors in the socio-economic life. Development of various forms of active tourism or ecotourism ex. It is the result of efforts of NGOs and public institutions. Cultural tourism can be supported by cultural institutions whose purpose, mission is not limited to serving tourists (eg. Museums), but can contribute to raising awareness of visitors to local values and by appropriate means may take even open to tourists and tour operators. Axis 3 is complementary to other development axes of the strategy as it facilitates the implementation of all objectives and measures envisaged in them.

Harghita County Council can play a role in initiating and coordinating, stimulating various partnerships in the County on different topics, different interests. Operational objectives outlined translate into areas of intervention or programs initiated by Harghita County Council but in their implementation partners differ depending on the content and scope of the program.

Without measures to be taken following the development of tourism in Harghita County will preserve its persistence spontaneously undesirable effects and delay benefits expected from tourism development. A good organization of activities related to tourism can ensure increased competitiveness of touristic offer of the County by streamlining the efforts of tourism product development, quality assurance and professionalisation of services, adequate training of tourism workforce, developing entrepreneurship, improving marketing destination. However, implementation of all measures envisaged - through mechanisms for cooperation between central government and local authorities, tourism authorities and businesses,

An organization for tourist destination management requires a relatively independent of political factors (political party), ensuring professionalism through specialized destination managers, motivated and financial resources to support programs initiated. Creating County organizational system can have alternative accents LPAs with a focus on SMEs or professional NGOs tourism. Event may be stages: a first phase consists of TDM micro-regional organizations, and the district and regional. Another alternative is to create the first organization TDM at the County level, followed by micro-regional organizations. To consider similar initiatives to date, such as the Inter-community Development Association Harghita, the Harghita County Council is a founding member and major supporter. Avoid creating organizations, bodies parallel to the same purposes, but can imagine the creation of additional structures that act on issues not addressed so far.



At present, the term soon apparently requires association of local government authorities to develop and implement strategies micro-regional and local derivatives County strategy, action plans on various topics (development conditions ecotourism development, or health tourism , cultural tourism, etc.). With the creation of an association of tourism development needs to be redesigned and agreed relationship between the organization / organizations TDM and AT Harghita, the latter being now concentrated on actions to promote participation in exhibitions and tourism fairs.

Partnerships between authorities and NGOs can contribute to a more effective implementation of legislation on nature protection, historical monuments and tourist resources they protect. On the other hand, specific voluntariatele civil society can be integrated action plans for tourist facilities planning, through financial support and control their technical-professional. NGOs are able to take over certain tasks from local government, taking advantage of looser operation, financial dependence and disadvantage of funding bodies. Harghita County is characterized by a relatively well-developed civic life, but in some aspects not integrated in Romanian civil society, not being able to use the resources available to it.

Measures / programs outlined below can be designed either as alternatives or as complementary aspects neexcluzându each other. For some, of course there are already premises; in several areas of tourist activity have emerged professional organizations, associations of entrepreneurs tour, as there are many associations with environmental profile, tourist, sporting, cultural or social, that have already accumulated some experience and promote activities related to tourism (enrichment regional tourism offer and stimulate citizens' participation in leisure-tourism).

A particular aspect of tourism development is the social aspect, namely to facilitate disadvantaged people to tourism activities and the rights of workers in tourism sector where trade union movement is less specific, especially SMEs. These issues require cooperation between various public institutions, NGOs and representatives of businessmen in tourism. Without those concerned tourism awareness to the needs of human resources in tourism tourism service quality will not move towards less competitiveness and sustainability.

Government Program includes courses of action Chapter Walking through institutional restructuring and establishing a marketing organization for tourism policy. It may involve taking seriously by the Government of Romania National Tourism Development Master Plan which provides for the creation of the National Tourism Organization with the Ministry responsible for tourism. Regional offices of the Department of Development will cooperate with inspectors territorial NTO with tourism inspectors appointed by local authorities, which in turn will coordinate local tourism and oversee the work of Tourist Information Centers.

Operational objectives:

1. Operation of local partnerships between the County and regional authorities



central and local public

2. partnership working between local authorities, tourism enterprises and non-governmental organizations
3. stimulating partnerships with national and international professional bodies
4. increasing environmental awareness and tourism
5. creating jobs with career prospects in the public sphere
6. Increase knowledge transfer, adaptation of innovations in tourism
7. partnerships between institutions of vocational education for tourism and employment

#### Measures and Recommendations

- creating organizational system of local tourism destination management, micro-regional, County and regional
- creation of the Tourism Consultative Council of Harghita County
- stimulating the creation and operation of local professional tourism associations
- job creation reviewers and inspectors tour
- establishing an organizational framework for research and tourism development  
establishing an organizational framework for research and development of tourism in the region
- organizing regular seminars and conferences on topics of tourism, environment and culture
- establishing a form of advisory tourism initiatives
- develop effective programs of practical education for students
- organizing exchanges of experience with international networks or associations

#### 8.3.2 Detailed presentation of measures and recommendations

Organizational system development of tourism in Harghita County will be implemented through the intervention areas described below, resulting in programs or projects at County and local level.

*Creation of tourism destination management organization at local, micro-regional, County and regional*

Although there are certain prerequisites in microregional and County cooperation between local governments, and between local entrepreneurs in tourism, Harghita County is still far from functioning models of TDM (Tourist Destination Management) structures. Experiences so far accumulated mainly through the work of Harghita Tourism Association focuses more on issues of promotion. Promotion, of course, within the competence TDM organizations, but by no means is limited to these. Under the current legislation on associations and foundations can imagine



creating a TDMO (Tourist Destination Management Organisation) titled Association for Sustainable Tourism in Harghita County, including representatives of business scope, authorities and civil society.

An organization can also be built from bottom to top, or from the County of Harghita County Council initiator role. One can imagine both as a County association, or a federation of associations County tourism micro-regional, regional. Structuring this should be based on general criteria common in associations (general meeting, board of directors etc.) and specific training through specialized committees:

- Committee for tourism product development and tourism promotion,
- Committee on Environment and Spatial Planning,
- Committee for Quality Assurance and regional branding issues,
- Committee on Human Resources Development
- Committee on legal and legislative issues,
- Committee for national and international relations etc.

In the case of a (not federation) County-local micro-regional interests can be highlighted by creating committees or commissions micro-regional (area Ciuc, Odorhei Giurgeu, Toplița etc.) but have specialists for thematic issues mentioned. The main tasks of an association derived from the organization, the structure of functional committees and legislation of tourism, environment, regional planning, consumer protection, the vocational education, health and social security, labor law, especially the local public administration.

Given that decision makers in public administration will remain local councils or County (regional Regional Development Council) and mayors, respectively Presidency County councils TDMO will actually be a body of substantiating the decision, a framework collaboration with existing departments responsible for tourism, environmental protection, development of the municipalities and the County council specialized apparatus. Before creating an organizational framework there is also the possibility of establishing working groups with available Harghita County council president, which would be co-opted specialists from the County council specialized apparatus. So TDMO site or other similar forms could serve as a base for decisions, advisory role,

In the private sphere, competitive, decision makers approving measures, the implementation of policies and strategies of tourism will still remain within the competence of senior executives, their managers. TDMO site will therefore be for them a source of know-how factor for increasing the competitiveness of products and services.

**Deadline:** medium term, 3-5 years, but with immediate

**The desired effect:**



- achieving a sustainable development policy and competitive tourism
- supporting the implementation of environmental policies and strategies, planning and urbanism
- Local tourism policy effectiveness in ensuring quality of tourism services
- economic competitiveness of SMEs by professionalizing tourism activities
- rapid transfer of knowledge about sources of funding, promotion opportunities, market trends, facilitating knowledge of the target segments
- partnerships involving local communities in micro-regional, County, regional
- tourism prevent adverse effects on the natural environment and economic socio-cultural
- reducing seasonality by developing tourism products and organization of events outside the tourist season
- increasing the quality of tourism employment, through training and development programs in partnership with SMEs

**Responsible actors nominated:**

- Harghita County Council
- mayors, local councils
- institutions of higher education and research
- consulting firms
- civil society representatives
- SME representatives travel

- **Creating the Tourism Consultative Council of Harghita County**

An alternative or even a first step to creating system TDMO may be setting up a Tourism Consultative Council (TCC) of Harghita County, the Council of Harghita County, which is a consultative forum of debate for policy development and implementation County tour to prepare strategies and action plans with significant tourism. It could be the forum substantiation of decisions and preparing position papers in relation to regional bodies, national and international governmental and nongovernmental County council and as the case of the Association for Sustainable Tourism Development in Harghita County / Szekler Land. Such a council should involve representatives of public institutions that firms specializing in higher education, research and development and decentralized services of the Ministries (directorates, agencies, County inspectorates). The difference between TDMO and Advisory Boards is the fact that the latter



engages and decentralized services of ministries, but TDMO the form is based on local authorities and organizations, local self-government structure for performance in tourism. It certainly raises certain issues of incompatibility of functions that a person can not be both decision-makers in organizations representing local and territorial government agencies. This, however, does not preclude partnership between central and local power. The difference between TDMO and Advisory Boards is the fact that the latter engages and decentralized services of ministries, but TDMO the form is based on local authorities and organizations, local self-government structure for performance in tourism. It certainly raises certain issues of incompatibility of functions that a person can not be both decision-makers in organizations representing local and territorial government agencies. This, however, does not preclude partnership between central and local power. The difference between TDMO and Advisory Boards is the fact that the latter engages and decentralized services of ministries, but TDMO the form is based on local authorities and organizations, local self-government structure for performance in tourism. It certainly raises certain issues of incompatibility of functions that a person can not be both decision-makers in organizations representing local and territorial government agencies. This, however, does not preclude partnership between central and local power. It certainly raises certain issues of incompatibility of functions that a person can not be both decision-makers in organizations representing local and territorial government agencies. This, however, does not preclude partnership between central and local power. It certainly raises certain issues of incompatibility of functions that a person can not be both decision-makers in organizations representing local and territorial government agencies. This, however, does not preclude partnership between central and local power.

Advisory Board therefore can be imagined as a form of cooperation between governmental organizations and NGOs, including associations of tourism enterprises. Similar to the concepts outlined in the National Tourism Development Master Plan of Romania, the relationship between the TCC TDMO and County level would perpetuate that division of powers as NTO and the Ministry responsible for tourism. TDMO site as a development framework (preparation and substantiation decisions) and local tourism policy implementation and Advisory Board as a decision on approval for local travel policies-County. There is an apparent paradox in the character substantiation decision or decisions of local councils or County council. TCC has decision-making power in relation to TDMO, and in relations with public authorities is only part of the endorsement, substantiating the decision can be understood, even as a "filter" between TDMO and local authorities. TDMO the body would be more operational and strategic TCC body. TCC Secretariat may be provided by TDMO or tourism department of the specialized apparatus of Harghita County Council having the role TCC training sessions, records of the correspondence and minutes, the decisions of the TCC.

TCC operation will be characterized by quarterly ordinary meetings and extraordinary meetings and TDMO-operative has a permanent operation. Recommended structures for TDMO the County, the specialized committees, may be reflected in the structure of TCC on specialized



committees. That matters promotion, ex. development of annual marketing programs to return to the competence of the Committee for the development of tourism products and tourism promotion in cooperation with the Quality Assurance and regional branding issues within TDMO and TCC to take decisions after the Committee marketing within it. Committees of the TCC will hold regular meetings with labor intensity required TDMO contacting their members as possible electronically (online).

As another example, the initiation of a program of awareness, and tourist tourists or population, the task of training technical basis pertains to the environmental and land management, and the Committee on Human Resources Development and the Committee on Environmental Protection the TCC to rule before approving such a program. Prepare a set of regulations on the construction and use of spaces resorts lies within the competence of the Committee on Environment and Spatial Planning in cooperation with the Committee for legal issues and legislation being approved by the Judiciary Committee and the Committee of Planning following the regulations to be adopted by CJ Harghita and / or local council concerned.

For preparing the setting TCC Harghita requires a series of consultations between different departments of the specialized body of CJ that representatives of tourism sector and management consulting (expert consulting firms and higher education institutions), even as working groups under creation TDMO community. Following consultations envisaged can outline plan and the rules of organization and operation for both TCC and for TDMO.

Such a council can work if there TDMO and in the absence of the County. Advisory means not only query or micro-regional sectoral interests, and preparing the implementation of innovative programs, adapting best practices from international experiences.

**Deadline:** short term up to three years

**The desired effect:**

- improving cooperation with the Ministry responsible for Tourism and National Tourism Organization alleged
- facilitating involvement in national and international cooperation in tourism
- achieving a sustainable development policy and competitive tourism
- supporting the implementation of environmental policies and strategies, planning and urbanism
- Local tourism policy effectiveness in ensuring quality of tourism services
- economic competitiveness of SMEs by professionalizing tourism activities
- rapid transfer of knowledge about sources of funding, promotion opportunities, market trends, facilitating knowledge of the target segments





- partnerships involving local communities in micro-regional, County, regional
- tourism prevent adverse effects on the natural environment and economic socio-cultural
- reducing seasonality by developing tourism products and organization of events outside the tourist season
- increasing labor quality tourism through training and development programs in partnership with SMEs

**Responsible actors nominated:**

- Harghita County Council
  - mayors, local councils
  - institutions of higher education and research
  - representatives of ministries decentralized structures
  - consulting firms
  - civil society representatives
  - SME representatives travel
- **Stimulate the creation and operation of local professional tourism associations**

One aspect of detail, even the first step or an intermediate step in the creation of TDMO system described in section 3.1. is to stimulate local professional tourism associations, which in the absence TDMO can directly join the federations in the country and abroad, or if were established after the creation of the County's TDMO can join it, benefiting from lessons learned through this organization. Current associations should diversify in addition to promotional efforts and quality assurance, cooperation and spatial planning with local authorities.

Associations present include primary providers of accommodation, but must open to NGOs tourist, sporting, cultural institutions, SMEs specialized in leisure services (horse riding centers, ski slopes, sport equipment rental, guides specialized), resulting in a synergy of uncorroborated promotional efforts thus far. Collaboration between them is required regardless of the efforts made in establishing TDMO. The relationship between local associations and TDMO not be hierarchical, but only for projects initiated, funded and coordinated by Harghita County Council. Asked hierarchical effectiveness of marketing efforts should not mean the establishment of an exaggerated nature of the relationship between an organization or micro-regional districts and local associations must be collegial. The subsidiarity principle should manifest in practice coordinate tourism development efforts. Authoritarianism and excessive bureaucracy can lead to failure of cooperation initiatives.



County Strategy for tourism development during its continuous implementation must be flexible, integrating those ideas, project initiatives that will occur in the future. Inclusion or non-local efforts in a County strategy will determine the extent to which policy makers at the County level or will support local initiatives. It should be considered that any area of intervention designed at County, regional or even national level will be implemented locally and implementing programs based on individual projects must comply with local interests. Reducing the risk of conflict, failure is possible through the collaboration of local decision-making levels, characterized by mutual respect.

Current associations support takes the form of technical assistance, training and financial support based contests application. In places of tourist interest will stimulate the creation of new associations, especially between family tourism enterprises, SMEs, to facilitate the transfer of knowledge needed to increase competitiveness in the tourism market, as well as their engagement in professional training programs. Locally reviewers / inspectors travel within municipalities are the key people in relation to local entrepreneurs, are responsible for organizing local forums (see section 3.4). Also stimulate citizen participation in youth NGOs, cultural, sports, environmental,

**Deadline:** short-term immediate effect, achieving continuous

**The desired effect:**

- economic competitiveness of SMEs by professionalizing tourism activities
- rapid transfer of knowledge about sources of funding, promotion opportunities, market trends
- facilitation of knowledge about the target segments
- Local tourism policy effectiveness in ensuring quality of tourism services
- partnerships involving local communities in micro-regional, County, regional
- supporting the implementation of environmental policies and strategies, planning and urbanism

**Responsible actors nominated:**

- Harghita County Council - initiation and consultancy
- mayors, local councils - initiation and consultancy
- civil society representatives - initiation and implementation
- SME representatives Attractions - initiation and implementation
- **Establishing stations for tourism reviewers and inspectors**

In the decision making process of local government decisions is the responsibility of mayors and councilors. Substantiation of decisions related to issues of land use planning,



environmental protection, authorization or ban investment - especially in localities of tourist interest - requires a foundation in terms of tourism development conditions improve. In such places would be required to employ at least one person with special training (higher education bachelor in rural areas, master level for resorts and cities) as the inspector, offer human resources is accessible by the existence of higher education the County tourism profile.

This person would coordinate local Tourist Information Office's work would represent the town in the forums micro-regional, County and regional tourism related works Advisory Board (8.3.2.) Or TDMO (8.3.1.) Would keep in touch with the specialized compartment specialized system Harghita CJ. With the advent of these channels with the functions and duties set out with the support of the tourism in the specialized apparatus of Harghita County Council will be initiated partnerships with higher education institutions and consulting firms to develop curricula specific necessary training of specialists, even named after Western models of destination managers. If that is network TDMO sites in the County and region managers destination will be specialists from the TDMO, and the LPA will work reviewers or inspectors tour, which will liaise with managers of destination responsible for many LPAs, micro-regional level. Given that of the 67 administrative units, not all tourism potential quite high, not necessarily need 67 reviewers / inspectors, but for some entities more complex (Miercurea-Ciuc in Harghita Bai or Gheorgheni with Red Lake resort justify the division of tasks between the two reviewers). Human resources, of course, be inventoried and adapted to local specificities. and in the LPA will work reviewers or inspectors tour that will keep in touch with destination managers responsible for more LPAs, micro-regional level. Given that of the 67 administrative units, not all tourism potential quite high, not necessarily need 67 reviewers / inspectors, but for some entities more complex (Miercurea-Ciuc in Harghita Bai or Gheorgheni with Red Lake resort justify the division of tasks between the two reviewers). Human resources, of course, be inventoried and adapted to local specificities. and in the LPA will work reviewers or inspectors tour that will keep in touch with destination managers responsible for more LPAs, micro-regional level. Given that of the 67 administrative units, not all tourism potential quite high, not necessarily need 67 reviewers / inspectors, but for some entities more complex (Miercurea-Ciuc in Harghita Bai or Gheorgheni with Red Lake resort justify the division of tasks between the two reviewers). Human resources, of course, be inventoried and adapted to local specificities. not all tourism potential quite high, not necessarily need 67 reviewers / inspectors, but for some entities more complex (Miercurea-Ciuc in Harghita Bai or Gheorgheni resorts Red Lake justify the division of tasks between the two reviewers). Human resources, of course, be inventoried and adapted to local specificities. not all tourism potential quite high, not necessarily need 67 reviewers / inspectors, but for some entities more complex (Miercurea-Ciuc in Harghita Bai or Gheorgheni resorts Red Lake justify the division of tasks between the two reviewers). Human resources, of course, be inventoried and adapted to local specificities.



This area of intervention should be linked with the development of places, offices and tourist information centers, must be integrated into the marketing mix of County-regional tourism as the 5th element policy that human resources staff.

**Deadline:** short-term, immediate start

**The desired effect:**

- improving local tourism policy
- increasing the administrative capacity of local government
- rapid transfer of knowledge
- contribution to the economic competitiveness of SMEs tour
- partnerships involving local communities in micro-regional, County, regional
- supporting the implementation of environmental policies and strategies, planning and urbanism
- support to attract investors (if necessary)

**Responsible actors nominated:**

- mayors, local councils
- Harghita County Council

**• Establishing organizational framework for research and development of tourism in the region**

Research socioeconomic phenomena and processes related to the functioning of tourism professionals entering the concern of geography, economics (including management and marketing), sociology, cultural anthropology, political science, etc. Harghita County there are several research bases or in higher education institutions or associations / foundations or companies with a research and consulting in business and management. Of these the highest affinity to tourism development has / can have extension of Gheorgheni Babes-Bolyai University of Cluj-Napoca.

Basic concern is to serve the institution training specialists of tourism geography and geodesy at undergraduate level in the nearest future organizing courses at Master profile Ecotourism and Sustainable Development. As Sapientia University of Miercurea-Ciuc branch (Faculty of Science with majors in sociology and communication, environmental engineering etc. and the Faculty of Business and Humanities different programs economy, Romanian language and literature and English) and Department of Modern Economics Tatabánya branch Székelyudvarhely, along with teaching, teachers are encouraged to participate in research,



This human potential can be harnessed for County tourism development by involving those institutions in public life in various forms, of which here only highlight the issue of research. Although the prestigious university centers (Bucharest, Cluj Napoca, Iasi, Timisoara, etc.) and national academic institutions are undergoing major research programs, their results in relatively few cases are used in the foundation of decision-making processes in public administration or management businesses in the County. A greater impact may have institutions subordinated to ministries, government agencies or central authority that the National Institute for Tourism Research and Development, National Institute Urbanproiect or National Institute of Rehabilitation and Physical Balneoclimatology. Of course not excluded any closer collaborations between LPAs and these institutions, nor the transfer of knowledge from these research centers in the County by the local communities.

By organizing the County level of a series of conferences, workshops, seminars etc. knowledge gained can be transferred not only to the academic community but also to local communities and especially by local stakeholders. This form of information dissemination can stimulate local partnerships between LPAs, SMEs, NGOs having an impact on tourism activities, especially by promoting the concept of sustainable tourism and tourism destination management model adaptation.

The organization and financing of research tour is offered by national institutions such as the National Research Council Științifică Higher Education of the Ministry of Education and Research. Grants managed it offers opportunities for funding from EU sources (the 7th Research Framework Program), but these programs are somewhat tricky, especially because the national competition and diversity research areas. With a system of TDMO and TCC in Harghita County can conceive the development of research programs for smaller projects with topics related to the development of tourism markets, the perception of tourism destination and product specific impact study of tourism development in different locations, spatial planning of tourism etc.

Given that higher education institutions teachers are overburdened local development centers of excellence it is somewhat cumbersome. However, there are prerequisites for the creation of research networks, initiatives Conferences, which will be further developed through their own efforts institutions, but encouraging partnerships with APL, public institutions, civil society and SMEs will be welcome. So will create partnerships for research and dissemination of knowledge partnerships respectively for vocational education and training program. It is recommended to complement current offers scholarships for research, meaning subordination potential themes chosen theme scholars announced TDMO the County or regional level.

Founding a public library specialized in tourism and regional development would be a factor stimulating training experts, tourism experts. This library would collect only those publications that link two broad areas, both specialized books published in the country and abroad by publishing houses and periodicals recognized and quoted in international databases. The initiative of founding such an institution can be CJ Harghita, supported by higher education



institutions, research centers and consulting firms. Such investment would create an institution of national or regional importance, if procurement policy should be based on strictly professional criteria,

An important aspect of applied research related to the tourism and territorial development (regional and rural development, land) is the work of consulting firms specializing in development strategies, feasibility studies, consultancy in preparing the necessary documentation of applications, especially in For grants from the Regional Operational Program. Specialized companies cultivate a relationship of "collaborative competition" with universities on research in the areas mentioned. It is therefore recommended collaboration between them in the form of research consortia.

**Deadline:** Short-term, immediate start

**The desired effect:**

- improving local tourism policy
- increasing the administrative capacity of local government
- rapid transfer of knowledge
- contribution to the economic competitiveness of SMEs tour
- partnerships involving local communities in micro-regional, County, regional
- supporting the implementation of environmental policies and strategies, planning and urbanism
- support to attract investors (if necessary)

**Responsible actors nominated:**

- Higher Education Institutions
  - public and private research centers
  - consulting firms
  - County Council (by TDMO and TCC)
- 
- **Organizing regular seminars and conferences on topics of tourism, environment and culture**

There are prerequisites for thematic seminars related to tourism, environmental protection, which is supported mainly by NGOs based financing programs for them. Seminars are beneficial for the transfer of knowledge, sharing positive experiences or negative acquisition of professional skills and development of interpersonal communication skills required. It should,



however, an opening for multidisciplinary, that is an approximation of specialists in different fields geography, economists, social scientists, architects, planners, environmental, Exchanges facilitates integration of different views, interests in the development of local development policies (see experiences Local Agenda 21 programs).

Multidisciplinary and intersectoral seminars organized on tourism and sustainable development should be widely publicized, contributing to local implementation strategies for sustainable development and international programs. For local tourism that would attract local communities in local tourism economy (see the transition from rural tourism to tourism) would contribute to raising awareness of local heritage values of natural and cultural (material and spiritual).

Engage youth in such programs (even in camps thematic) contribute to the emergence of a more eco-conscious generation, more open to change, more responsible and ambitious. It would also contribute to strengthening local and regional identity, endogenous development factor recognized by regional science specialists. Of course, a better educated generation on the basis of international experience will show a more developed civic spirit and their penetration in managerial and administrative capacity will favor more developed entrepreneurial culture. Experiences such programs promoted. Foundation for Partnership Miercurea-Ciuc (Local Agenda 21, Living Heritage, Greenways, Eco-Business Environmental Partnership etc.

An initiative for the cultural tourism and sustainable development is organizing the first international conference tourism role in territorial development by extension of Gheorgheni BBU and conferences organized in the early 2000s, for debate issues socio-economic life of the Székely and conferences organized in collaboration with Harghita County Council at County days Sapientia University. Both initiatives deserve further supported as it facilitates the transfer of knowledge, best practices, contributing to the formulation of local policies with effect mobilization of endogenous resources of regional development.

**Deadline:** Short-term, continuous achievement

**The desired effect:**

- improving local tourism policy
- increasing the administrative capacity of local government
- rapid transfer of knowledge
- contribution to the economic competitiveness of SMEs tour
- partnerships involving local communities in micro-regional, County, regional
- supporting the implementation of environmental policies and strategies, planning and urbanism
- support to attract investors (if necessary)



**Responsible actors nominated:**

- NGO
- Higher Education Institutions
- County Council (by TDMO and TCC)
- County Cultural Center

**Establishing a form of advisory tourism initiatives**

Initiatives to develop tourism in Harghita County belong either NGOs, especially promoting forms of tourism (active tourism, ecotourism, cultural tourism, youth), management of protected areas or SMEs through investment in infrastructure accommodation, food, recreation (ski slopes, riding centers), travel agencies or LPAs through the establishment of tourist information offices, investment in basic infrastructure of tourist resorts, development projects and rehabilitation of structures treatment spa.

Technical assistance for development efforts is provided by some public services, various departments of the specialized body of CJ Harghita offices of the Agency for Regional Development, the Department of Agriculture and Rural Development, territorial inspectors of the decentralized services of the central government, companies business consultancy and management, and in some cases environmental associations and foundations, cultural. Counseling informal entrepreneurs, mayors, local councilors, representatives of civil society may be offered by specialists from higher education institutions, but the latter has a random character, knowledge transfer can be cumbersome and inefficient.

Assistance for identifying funding opportunities and project management will remain a business support service, achieving on a contractual basis, but with consulting firms TDMO the proposed paragraph 8.3.1. We can provide these services. Until these tasks are assigned TDMO network of public bodies, in their field of activity (construction, urbanism, environment, attracting and stimulating investment) and currently provides assistance. If there are these sources of information and dissemination of information, what to do is only publicizing them more efficiently, especially in the field of state control and authorization of construction and planning. Advice not only serves to ensure compliance with various legal regulations, and implementing the best practice guidelines outline style buildings and establishments in the form of recommendations (see the work of associations of architects). The construction is recommended for taking an interest in green building (see Romanian Green Building Council).

Consultancy services to disseminate an urgent task is to create sites on the Internet and their mutual relationship through "links". Know-how networks can be effective in promoting various communication channels, especially electronics.



**Deadline:** Short-term, continuous achievement

**The desired effect:**

- rapid transfer of knowledge
- supporting the implementation of environmental policies and strategies, regional planning and improving local tourism policy
- economic competitiveness of SMEs tour
- increasing the administrative capacity of local government
- partnerships involving local communities in micro-regional, County, regional
- support to attract investors (if necessary)

**Responsible actors nominated:**

- County Council (by TDMO and TCC)
- consulting firms
- NGOs, professional associations
- Higher Education Institutions
- press organs

**•Developing effective programs of practical education for students**

From the results of primary research with qualitative character known to local-regional tourism supply operation are facing unfavorable report price-quality local services not competitive offerings on the international tourism market. One of the main causes of competitiveness of local SMEs comes from personnel policy (HRM) inadequate. Criticism from entrepreneurs are turning to the manner and content of vocational education, the lack of practical training in hospitality (in the wider including both catering and accommodation services and leisure), government agencies. Human capital available to the business sector is unsatisfactory,

If firms hospitality employees in many cases there is lack of professional training and shortcomings in behavior, attitude to guests. Likely causes are feeling free atmosphere of trust and mutual respect in the workplace, relationship management and inadequate staff execușie manifested in the value of salaries, lack of mechanisms for recognizing individual performance. SMEs are facing tourism human resources management, recommending the use of services of training, team-building.

An important factor of competitiveness of the staff and thus the company is once decompetențele communication, knowledge of foreign languages and speech deficiencies in the



Romanian language, the probable causes can be improper system evoked methodologies schools. It puts too little emphasis on developing oral communication skills, to express their ideas. The education system in curricula and teaching methods apparently disregards the information explosion and changed lifestyle in the context of internet penetration and supply of TV channels. Language skills must be developed later high school graduation, in many cases by financial effort and personal time management,

All these aspects can be improved by measures outlined in the development axis no. 4 of the present strategy, but we must emphasize and organizational aspect, the requirement of a coordinating nature. Without a system TDMO County Council can act near businesses and educational institutions to develop a cooperation program in vocational education foundation practical activities. Establishing a framework agreement of cooperation can bring benefits for entrepreneurs and for schools, pupils and students are motivated in different ways to take the job seriously. Partnership operation primarily involves entrepreneurs commitment to support this collaboration. The County Council may initiate actor,

**Deadline:** Short-term, continuous achievement

**The desired effect:**

- economic competitiveness of SMEs tourism boards
- improving human capital
- Local tourism policy more efficient by increasing the quality of tourism services
- support to attract investors (if necessary)

**Responsible actors nominated:**

- County Council (by TDMO and TCC)
- SMEs tourism boards
- professional associations
- vocational education institutions

**•Organizing exchanges of experience with networks and national and international professional associations**

Exchange of experience with various organizations nationally or internationally covers the whole picture of tourism development activities initiated by the authorities, the public institutions, from churches, civil society and the business sector. Each type of local-regional actor has its own international relations, institutions and settlements from twin to European territorial cooperation, transnational.

International relations can and should be used both for the cultivation of relationships, and for imports - and why not: export - knowledge in areas related to management situational



problems. Local associations without elaborating relationships with national and international must emphasize that civil society can exercise democratic control, active and strong only if it has the necessary energy monitoring exercise of political factors. NGOs should not restrict the search to financing activity, the development of applications and participation in programs sometimes influenced by political parties. By contrast, techniques for marketing must ensure independence from political and economic interests.

Exchanges of experience between local and national-international can be facilitated by study trips and participation in international conferences of specialists in the County of the LPA, NGOs and SMEs, on the other hand and inviting specialists from other regions country or abroad. Links multiple professionally in the County with research institutions, universities, non-governmental associations, public authorities in Hungary is natural through membership most residents of the County to the largest national minority in Romania, Hungarian.

Harghita, Covasna and Mures counties represent a strength of Romanian tourism, being an attractive destination, which cannot compete with the well-known European tourism attractions, but offers an adequate field for tourism service providers, that combines the cultural and patrimony tourism with VFR tourism (visit of family and relatives).

The presence of Hungarian community in the eastern part of Transylvania is a bridge between tourists from Hungary and Romanian destinations situated in the neighbourhood of Harghita, Covasna and Mureş counties (Bucovina, Moldavia, Prahova Valley area Brasov-Bran).

To integrate local stakeholders in tourism in Harghita Romanian tourism is considered necessary on the one hand destination management professional (see point.3.1.), On the other hand national membership of professional organizations such as the Federation of Associations of Tourist Promotion of Romania made in 2008 similar local organizations in different parts of the country (Seaside, Bucovina, Maramures, Banat, Sighisoara, Sibiu, Prahova Valley, Oltenia at the foot of the montains etc.).

May be close relations with the National Association for Rural, Ecological and Cultural Association of Bed & Breakfast in Romania, the National Association of Travel Agencies, the Association of Ecotourism in Romania and others. Professional organizations have multiple roles that emphasize partnerships between the ministry and the upcoming National Tourism Organization. Construction on different territorial levels of some joint work thematic facilitates the involvement of local communities - even indirectly - in various international projects initiated, managed or financed by the bodies of the European Union or European level, involving collaboration with actors from other European non-EU .

Regarding business opportunities County Council stands knowledge transfer and best practices shaping European tourism policy by Assembly of European Regions and the Committee of the Regions, an advisory body of the EU with the European Commission, European Parliament



and Council. The internationalization of labor relations is a general trend, a challenge and an opportunity for LPAs, NGOs, and associations of entrepreneurs

We recommend, therefore, stimulate representatives socio- economic openness to international collaborations, requiring an attitude of lifelong learning and receivers for innovations arising in various areas of technology, quality of management and others.

**Deadline:** continuous achievement

**The desired effect:**

- achieving a sustainable development policy and competitive tourism
- supporting the implementation of environmental policies and strategies, planning and urbanism
- Local tourism policy effectiveness in ensuring quality of tourism services
- economic competitiveness of SMEs by professionalizing tourism activities
- rapid transfer of knowledge about sources of funding, promotion opportunities, market trends, facilitating knowledge of the target segments
- involvement of local communities in international partnerships
- tourism prevent adverse effects on the natural environment and economic socio-cultural
- reducing seasonality by developing tourism products and organization of events outside the tourist season
- Forced labor quality growth in tourism through training and development programs, in partnership with SMEs.

**Responsible actors nominated:**

- County Council (by TDMO and TCC)
- NGOs and professional associations
- vocational and higher education institutions
- **Partnership for implementing legislation on holiday vouchers**

Following the appearance Government Emergency Ordinance no. 8. The 2009 created the legal framework needed to introduce a tool to stimulate domestic tourism demand by outlining some mutual interests of employers, employees, affiliates program implementation units (units of tourists that holiday vouchers are accepted as payment) and state. Arguments GEO 8/2009, addresses the issue of state personnel pressure for wage increases and with it the need to increase wages in the private sector, to avoid loss of skilled labor, especially the employers have invested to improve professional. Emphasized national phenomenon of labor migration emphasizes



competition companies share not only in increasing sales and market share, but competition for resources necessary to conduct business, including human resources are of strategic importance. And if paves decreasing available supply of skilled labor, the wage costs will increase competition from the public sphere and jobs abroad. The outlook of the bill introducing Holiday voucher will be an incentive for workforce stability to existing jobs, offering these vouchers besides regular salaries means a less expensive means of motivation for the employer than other forms of awards.

Expected effect of the introduction of holiday vouchers is on the one hand stimulate domestic tourism demand, since these bills with value can be used only for travel services provided by establishments of tourism in the country. The economic agents tourist assigned or licensed are called affiliated units they may join the program of the Ministry, can not be forced to participate, but on the other hand, non-attached the can to lose their competitiveness against units that support this payment method, the flow of tourists Holiday ticket holders heading for places acceptance of these tickets. Boosting tourism consumption will manifest and bill amounts exceeding value tickets available to tourists. Because payments between units issuing tickets and employers who procure them for their employees or payments between affiliated units, which must settle on a issuers vouchers used for payment of services rendered to tourists will be done through the banks flow amounts paid for services will be helping to reduce tourism transparent "black". We can assume that employers will live with these tools to motivate employees will come primarily from companies that already have a legal management, entrepreneurial culture developed where the qualified human resources is recognized. Perhaps tourists will have a first phase of these tickets will be the much more educated, middle class with requirements for quality service. On the other employees in the public sector will benefit the most likely of these facilities and for families with a budget sector salaries and husband / wife of the employee / D in the private sector, which receives from the employer Ticket Holiday the holiday party ticket received by a family member will stimulate the consumption of others.

So one can predict with high probability that depending on the availability of tourist to join the program and opening private employers to provide employees with this form of compensation, the government program in partnership with businesses will bear fruit within a year, and this process can be an actor County council stimulus to catalyze the development process.

Harghita County interest is to be as many tourist accommodation in the County to join the ministry program because you can expect an increase in domestic tourist traffic. Method of payment holiday vouchers are attractive to tourists, will create another prerequisite for choosing Székely as a holiday destination. Harghita County Council can support the government program by disseminating holiday vouchers and for companies employing the local labor force to provide excellence awards depending on the use or not of those means of motivating human resources (after discussions with Camera Trade and Industry Harghita). How the practical implementation of the program County stimulation of tourist reception affiliation to the national program, we can



define concrete measures after the occurrence of the methodological norms related to the implementation of GEO 8/2009. Until then, be promptly released press statements, information campaigns, awareness of socio-economic efficiency of the program.

**Deadline:** short term with immediate

**The desired effect:**

- Local tourism policy effectiveness in ensuring quality of tourism services
- economic competitiveness tourism SMEs by increasing sales of services

**Responsible actors nominated:**

- Harghita County Council
- representatives of businesses and local budgetary institutions as employers
- SME representatives travel

#### **8.4 DEVELOPMENT AXIS NO. 4 IMPROVING THE CONDITIONS OF FORMATION OF HUMAN CAPITAL EMPLOYED IN TOURISM**

##### **8.4.1 Substantiation**

Developing the skills, qualities and human capital formation through existing educational systems, in order to meet the requirements reflected trends in the labor market is an obvious priority of the tourism strategy. Thus, we can not talk about infrastructure investment, improve logistics or any measures to develop without the active participation and presence of the current workforce and future for a region or subregion. The tourism sector in Romania in general and that of Harghita County, is in a special situation and in light of the fact that a large number of hotels and other structures registered in the national system, there is therefore a large number of employees unregistered different reasons. These market failures are detrimental to the competitiveness of the sector

Analyzing the theme of human resources in a particular economic sector, particularly in the tourism sector, which will focus PRIORITIES human capital development in tourism will be:

- diversification of the higher education systems and education and training
- focusing on expanding palette of specialized tourism - avoiding excess demand in occupations considered "traditional" such as cook, waiter
- the labor market, will focus - if the present economic crisis - short and medium term, the maintenance and diversification of jobs in tourism and in the long term, increased number of jobs. It would be unrealistic and unfounded to say that the labor market demands in tourism will increase the amount significantly in the next period, if we consider the growing rate of unemployment and the financial crisis on a global scale, which, although





it has a direct negative impact on entrepreneurs in the region, but still causing uncertainty and pessimism in this regard.

- maintaining the graduate and universities specializing in tourism within tourism services; at present, this indicator shows the estimated percentage of 20% doing so on a national scale, according to the National Tourism Development Master Plan 2007-2026. It can be estimated that this indicator shows a similar percentage in our County because incoherențelor education between supply and actual demand which manifests labor market at the moment.

#### 8.4.2 Operational objectives

Objectives of the strategy in terms of human resources in the tourism sector shows the most important principles to which should guide the development of human capital and the conditions and characteristics that describe their work through employment or conditions of training - training potential group employees and experts in tourism. Thus, in what follows, we will focus basically on two groups of people: active or inactive workforce in the tourism sector and human capital involved in training and education system facing the tourism sector.

The objectives and principles of the proposed development in accordance with intervention measures or programs, projects, which are to achieve them must be initiatives real, based on the analysis of the situation and adequate data, offering an integrated development, sustainable sector supporting tourism and, above all, increasing the quality of life of local residents, the population of the County were held.

Issues related to labor market

##### 8.4.2.1. *Specific Objective 1*: Increasing the number of jobs and quality of life through tourism

It aims primarily DIVERSIFICATION OF SERVICES provided at County and regional level, in the major fields of tourism activities, by linking labor supply in all sectors of employment in tourism:

- catering and food service - optimizing the number of people with the following qualifications: waiter, waiter, cook, bartender, by employing well-trained staff with practical experience.
- organizing conferences and events - This field is relatively new tourism district and Székelyland; It has developed a package of practical and theoretical training, involving economic actors who provide such facilities for education occupations: hostess, interpreter, etc.
- accommodation - maids, receptionists
- Tourism & Travel - Travel agency staff, ticket agents, tour guides
- attractions - personally related ecotourism, cultural tourism, equestrian, active, rescuers



- administration and tourism organization - staff, tourist information centers

Another aspect to be considered under this objective is to improve the status of hired through steps of:

- wage growth within existing possibilities, due to the development and evolution of the sector, in order for occupying a job in tourism is a profitable decision for individuals.
- obtaining forms of legal work for all the activities in tourism, not yet registered by a monitoring system and more effective coordination at the County level is a goal that targets raising the prestige and competitiveness in tourism occupations.
- decrease fluctuations, especially in the hospitality sector, seasonally can be achieved with the two measures mentioned above
- with mandatory for employees to attend training and in the business improvement
- attracting qualified personnel in the tourism sector through various approaches, such as those mentioned above.

#### 8.4.2.2. *Specific Objective 2*: Facilitating access for disadvantaged groups on the labor market tourism

Another objective in improving human capital in this sector, refers to conditions to attract groups who are in disadvantaged situations in the labor market. In this case we can talk about:

Unemployed specializing in tourism, ie the group of people who can not engage in their area of specialization or because they can not find a job according to the level or nature of training acquired, or are not paid adequately and prefer status inactive. For these are necessary initiating retraining courses, or oriented tourist facilities that provide decent wages from development processes.

If beginners labor market situation that confronts them is similar in all sectors of the economy: lack of experience and practical skills to fill positions that require some routine activity. Thus, it may propose to encourage hiring new recruits and introducing practical training in the first period (max. 6 months) employment.

People with mild disabilities can also be integrated in the sector, provided that the activities performed to consider the real potential and real abilities of individuals and the performance limits in work activities.

Minority ethnic groups - in this respect, we refer to the Roma group, which usually are not "welcome" in the sector, but nevertheless may be integrated as unskilled workers.

Another group of people who have mentioned are students looking for jobs half-time or seasonal; this group may be a priority for businesses in tourism, faced with large waves of



tourists in a certain period of the year; or they can be employed for carrying out activities typical seasonal character. Part-time work is also a possibility in this regard for many people.

#### 8.4.2.3. *Specific Objective 3:* Optimizing labor market needs with an educational offer

This objective, a strategy optimization in accordance with the specific objectives of human capital development, is revealed as an intervention measure to be adapted to the situation in the County.

Another goal, which we have spoken, but keep maintaining a sustainable balance in the sector is to encourage people with experience in the tourism sector to engage in this field, either as entrepreneurs or as employees of various facilities.

Aspects of education and training continues

The first priority of human capital development is primarily high-quality services and tourism products, basing competitiveness of County and improving the training of career individuals and businesses involved in tourism. Remodeling mentality, infrastructure development, skills, abilities and a whole package of services can only be achieved through a modern educational system and the requisite real labor market. In this sense, to obtain a flexible training system, modern and adaptable current requirements, need suggestions and initiatives rethinking and reshaping the structures of education and training and continuous development.

It should be noted that there have been and are involved in further projects and programs in order to optimize the educational system to adapt to economic trends existing these programs at national level should be reflected at the County level (training program for adults in and tourism and education support tourism 2007 - [www.mturism.ro](http://www.mturism.ro)).

Education and training in tourism objective is focusing on qualitative aspects rather than on quantitative thus aims to diversify specializations offered based on market demands, improving the quality of training facilities by all possible means.

#### 8.4.2.4. *Specific Objective 4:* Widening interest specializations available in the County, and university level

- adapting the education system to the requirements of European standard tourist
- establishment of new structures for training outside the educational system and training institutions.

#### 8.4.2.5. *Specific Objective 5:* Promoting quality education and training

- updating teaching curriculum by adapting to current needs and requirements and focusing on practical training of pupils and students or learners
- remodeling system only focused on getting degrees instead of a qualification competitive labor market.



- widening infrastructure and training facilities in colleges and university courses
- increasing the skills acquired after graduating from schools specializing in tourism or training courses
- acquire the necessary professional skills in the occupation of tourism

8.4.2.6. *Specific Objective 6:* Improving quality and productivity through job training of employees in tourism

- CVT (Continuing Vocational Training) at work for staff who require professional qualifications in the tourist structures. The goal is that every employee should have all the powers of a hotel or restaurant manager, but to be qualified according to the requirements and standards of occupation by organizing training courses, thematic modular courses, practical demonstration activities, study visits and exchanges
- use and awareness terminology accepted global scale
- training personnel to address the right people with special needs

#### 8.4.3 Intervention measures

In the following, we take stock and analyze the possibilities of implementing the objectives listed above. In principle, it is desirable, in the development of human capital, the development of framework programs and packages to intervention which two target groups targeted by these initiatives, namely the workforce or off in tourism or people involved in education and training involved in tourism, they could get up to European standards in terms of their future or current.

##### 8.4.3.1. Programme for workforce development

To obtain another approach and mentality in terms of tourism and prestige occupations in this sector, I stressed the need for a campaign of rehabilitation which means worker in tourism. Initiating a campaign of awareness and prestige importance tourism, which is finally a mirror of our character to tourists from abroad would be the responsibility of local authorities and County. Such a campaign of dissemination and promotion can be achieved by organizing meetings, debates on the subject, publication and dissemination of information materials, brochures, posters, which would draw attention to that huge potential available in this County and region. Its aim as raising awareness.

The desired effect:

- promotion of the County tourism
- the prestige occupations in tourism
- attracting qualified staff in the sector
- encouraging initiatives in training and tourism.



Deadline:

- short term to achieve in the next five years.
- it should have an aspect underlying the awareness of the value and tourism potential; it is to be repeated periodically in order to attract attention to current issues facing tourism (eg. employees unregistered lack of knowledge of international languages, etc.) targeted certain segments of society.

Responsible actors:

- Harghita County Council
- local councils
- tourism associations
- tourist information centers.

#### 8.4.3.2. Strategy system optimization training, formal and informal market needs

Developed by Harghita County Council. Under this program, we wish to analyze the educational system and training formal and informal inventory of existing specializations oriented tourism and the needs of the labor market: job opportunities in tourism related posts published in various newspapers, publications.

The desired effect:

- balancing needs and existing offers in the tourism sector
- Tourism training systems orientation to the real needs of the labor market absorption
- avoiding surplus of people with the same specializations that no longer find jobs in today's market
- realization of County level analysis and research that can be used for many purposes.

Deadline:

- short term to achieve in the next two years.
- Responsible actors:
  - Harghita County Council in partnership with Harghita County School Inspectorate
  - County Department of Employment Labor.

#### 8.4.3.3. Training local tour guides - rural interpreters

Cuisines, traditions, culture, demography and other aspects of the region. This intervention measure aimed at diversifying tourism specialization and can be easily implemented in rural areas of the County. This training package is not just for people with a prior



specialization in this field, but can be practiced by anyone with skills and knowledge on matters of local life.

The desired effect:

- diversified services within cultural tourism and ecotourism
- diversification of tourism specialization
- hiring referees tourist local authority interest
- developing an educational module adaptable and neighboring counties, to tourist character similar to the County.

Deadline:

- medium term aporximativ five years.
- Responsible actors:
- Harghita County Council
- economic actors involved in tourism by encouraging staff to take the course; County training centers which can provide continuity in these courses and after running the program itself.

8.4.3.4. The practical training of students, students who want to gain competencies in tourism and related activities.

This measure is a more effective means of teaching practical skills needed in various occupations in tourism; the proposed program is intended to resolve certain extent weaknesses facing debutants tourism market, which are requested competences, skills and routine attainable only by a period of practical training. The program also aims at analyzing existing practice in this area to find out the reasons due to which the present system is dysfunctional and not done in qualifying for target practice specialties. In this way, you can fit more items and general knowledge to be acquired by staff in tourism, such as knowledge of European terminology in tourism.

The desired effect:

- developing an educational module optimization practical training, which combines theoretical knowledge with practical skills acquisition necessary
- facilitating new entrants to the tourism sector by following this course
- interest in the practical training of future employees
- long-term collaboration between education authorities and bodies to absorb skilled or unskilled personnel.



Deadline:

- medium term, the next 5-10 years.

Responsible actors:

- Harghita County Council involving education and training institutions and enterprises with tourist activity.

#### 8.4.3.5. Establish an educational center for vocational training of entrepreneurs in tourism

This measure is intended establishment and coordination of training and specialized infrastructure dedicated to economic actors with tourist activities. This center can be achieved through this inventory requirements expressed by entrepreneurs and be focused on the development of educational modules and organize seminars and exchange of experience meeting the requirements that may arise at the moment in order to develop businesses. Theme courses, modules or debate may be: acquiring managerial skills, knowledge bases related to budget and finance consulting drafting EU or national credit possibilities, knowing international languages but also features Romanian language properly.

The desired effect:

- increasing professionalism of entrepreneurs active in tourism
- acquire those professional skills which County tourism can rise to international standards
- detailed knowledge of the needs, training requirements of tourism in the County economic actors
- Enhancing the competitiveness of the County area

Deadline:

- medium term, achievable in the next 5-10 years
- Responsible actors:
- tourism entrepreneurs
- Training experts in various fields.

8.4.3.6. Develop and initiate training packages in tourism for specialization in this sector and an inventory of qualified persons in different specific areas, such as guides specialized in ecotourism; Szeckler the presentation of traditional crafts; majors in professional spas, culinary curiosities, etc.

The desired effect:

- professional services





- laying the foundation for cooperation of mutual interest, in order to develop tourism by contributing all the local, natural and legal persons.
- involve existing know-how in order to capitalize on their palette tourism
- increased opportunities for income from tourism as a complementary activity
- diversification of services offered by County and regional level.

Deadline:

- long term; the next 10 years.

Responsible actors:

- vocational training centers
- experts in various fields
- public authorities responsible for coordinating these activities.

## **8.5 DEVELOPMENT AXIS NO. 5 THE HARGHITA DESTINATION MARKETING**

### **8.5.1 Substantiaion**

Harghita County as a tourist destination has a number of unique resources and local knowledge, partially conferând an advantage nationally and internationally. However, it is necessary to develop marketing measures, implemented or being implemented, the stagnation level of quality being equal to step back into an era of aggressive promotion of all products and services.

Promoting Harghita County is poor, with significantly reduced visibility internationally than competitors like tourism potential. It is therefore important that the strategic plan to be used all resources, including those offered by technological developments, to convey information to different target groups.

To improve the situation, we identified specific goals and measures or ways to implement them:

### **8.5.2 Operational objectives**

S.O. 1: Increase the tourism capacity of Harghita County by developing and applying some measures in the field of professional marketing and by promoting it at national and international level.

S.O. 2: Transmit an image of the County to facilitate the attraction of different types of visitors (family-friendly, kid-friendly, etc.).

S.O. 3: Highlight and promote unique tourism offers, and provide area-specific experiences.

***Measures:***



1. Promoting the official brand of Harghita County, VisitHarghita, on all possible channels. Lack of the existing brand visibility has effects on the number of tourists as well – increasing visibility will lead to increasing the number of tourists and visitors.
2. Creating an interactive platform to facilitate bilateral communication with tourists, the sites involved and the most important social like Facebook and Youtube. At the same time, in these platforms or in a way connected to these platforms, different trends in online / offline promotion can also be involved, such as VR and AR games or visits, digital interactive maps, smart ads, interactive hiking maps, video 360 °, respective promotion videos in hologram or 3D format.
3. Participation during international tourism fairs, using both County brand, and brands and local brands.
4. Creating partnerships with major tour operators in Europe, to include tourism offers in Harghita County.
5. Promoting offline (posters, brochures, toys, books, etc.) and online (promotional videos, commercials on TV, radio spot sites, applications, etc.).
6. Developing customized promotional packages of different types of visitors.
7. Organising events (festivals, fairs, meetings) of different sizes, from small to medium, with access for European citizens.
8. Improving educational infrastructure and supporting research.
9. Organizing culture and history of specific events (contests gastronomic fairs historical).
10. Promoting locations with high tourism potential and activities offered by them through national travel agencies.

#### 8.5.3 Detailed presentation intervention areas / programs

##### a. MBETE: Funding for participation in international fairs

There are three schemes minimis support economic operators, Program export promotion managed by the Ministry for Business Environment, Trade and Entrepreneurship (MBETE), in accordance with EU legislation covers the following types of action: international trade fairs, participation in missions and studies market.

Financial support is granted lump sum grant and types of activities. For companies presence at international fairs and exhibitions, with stand presentation of products or services shall be granted 25,000 lei. Companies are not limited to one session participation application or the type of activity.



If companies take part in international missions, allowance is 10,000 lei. But a person can not represent twice as many companies in the same action, and the beneficiary can not claim twice as many grants the same travel allowances.

After being analyzed, applications receive scores by type of activity, place of action, geographic region, industry, holding or own brand and number of previous participations.

#### b. European Fund for Strategic Investments

EFSI is an initiative launched by the European Commission, funding and strategic infrastructure development (digital, transport, energy), education, research, development and innovation.

Eligible under this program are several activities related to tourism, such as:

- Infrastructure development travel (airports)
- Development, modernization of hotels and guesthouses - energy efficiency
- Supporting recreational activities,
- Online platform for regional tourism development.

### Problem tree, objectives and measures

No.	Axis	Description of deficiencies and identified problems	Identified Objectives	Projects/measures to be implemented
1.	Development Axis no. 1 - Arranging and valorisation on natural and anthropic tourism resources	Existing natural resources are not effectively integrated into the tourist circuit.	Exploiting the potential of existing natural resources (caves, mineral waters, nature reserves) and promoting natural objectives in order to develop ecotourism.	Rehabilitation and modernization of existing and / or non-functioning treatment bases and bases: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Băile Selters</li> <li>• Băile Chirui</li> <li>• Remetea</li> <li>• Băile Szeredai (Miercurea Ciuc)</li> <li>• Băile Dugaș</li> <li>• Băile Madicea</li> <li>• Cârța</li> <li>• Băile Sărate</li> <li>• Cristuru Secuiesc</li> <li>• Băile Arcio</li> <li>• Corund</li> </ul>

			Increasing the number of tourists, increasing the length of stay by improving and diversifying the tourist offer.	Arrangement of treatment centers in other localities, which have spa resources: Sâncrăieni.
			Improving the attractiveness of the localities by offering new opportunities for leisure and recreation for tourists.	Introducing and promoting complex health tourism packages in all spa resorts, involving hospitals and health institutions, or even introducing package-like treatment tickets into the tourist circuit could be an advantage in attracting the target group, ie tourists / visitors with age over 40 (seniors), with various health problems, limited budget, but with medium capabilities.
			Valuing the mountain tourism potential by creating the necessary conditions for the organization and development of active tourism.  Strengthening the competitiveness and tourist attractiveness of the County.	Restoration and arrangement of ways of access to mineral resources of field cleaning routes, recreation and rest areas, facilities for the use of mineral springs, including organizing the accessibility of these resorts.

		The potential of health tourism is not developed according to the needs identified within the target group.	Identifying and capitalizing on the existing therapeutic and spa potential in the County (mineral waters, mofets) for the purpose of organizing health tourism.	In this case, potential hospitals can be identified as potential partners such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Gheorgheni Municipal Hospital,</li> <li>• Tulghes Psychiatric Hospital,</li> <li>• The Municipal Hospital in Odorheiu Secuiesc,</li> <li>• Or even private hospitals.</li> </ul>
		Low quality of offers / services due to living or environmental conditions.	Supporting rural tourism in the County and at the same time stimulating the development of agrotourism in order to promote the concept of sustainable development.	,
			Improving living conditions by improving the quality of the environment and enhancing localities.	Appropriate planning of several eco-tourism destinations and elaboration of eco-tourism development plans for these destinations (ecological saturation: Vărșag, Inlăceni, Ghimeș).

		Local identity isolated due to inefficient communication.	Saving and reviving cultural, religious, folkloric traditions and restoring historic sites and including them in the tourist circuit, thus enhancing tourist attractions.	Appropriate arrangement of protected natural areas or areas, ensuring their accessibility in an organized manner (Lake St. Ana, marshes).
			Increasing interest in folk traditions and local crafts.	
		Historical sites not seen, hard to access.	Raising a responsible attitude towards historical and cultural heritage by refurbishing and renovating anthropogenic objectives.	
		Constant isolation between stakeholders, leading to lack of co-operation.	Enhancing the responsible attitude towards the environmental protection of the inhabitants.	Elaboration of ecotourism (ecotourism) trails of natural reserves and their publicity, organization of actions that lead to public awareness regarding environmental protection and respect for nature, editing and promoting an ecotourism guide of Harghita County (presentation of all ecotourism routes offered and organized in the County) , namely





				the organization of youth camps (with the educational function), for the formation of pro ecological attitude.
			Strengthen co-operation and closer ties between the economic sector, non-profit organizations and Local Councils.	Providing complex ecotourism programs (collaborating with travel agencies and service units).
			Introducing building regulations, facilities, facilities, without damaging the countryside.	
2.	Development Axis no. 2 - Stimulate the development of tourism reception facilities and other related infrastructure	Differences in the quality of the tourist accommodation structures, the services provided by them, their location or even lack thereof.	Linking structures to identified needs and existing resources by supporting investment in the sector, contributing to the development of the local economy, reducing unemployment and improving	<p><b>Borsec:</b></p> <p>1. 1. Increase in the number of restaurants</p> <p>The number of tourists increases due to the fact that it is a balneary city with increasing opportunities for promotion, but the present capacity can not meet the needs of the tourists, thus generating the constant problem of the small number of dining and the uninterrupted agglomeration, which can affect negative image area of the area.</p>

			tourism supply.	<p>2. Building / Establishing a hotel</p> <p>The lack of a high-capacity accommodation (hotel) includes the need to establish such a place, with the aim of improving and extending the stay of tourists. The existence of a hotel could also generate and develop business-tourism in the area.</p> <p>3. Traditional Street-food</p> <p>Local gastronomy and related facilities have a significant impact on accommodation structures, some not offering dining options. Therefore, as an alternative, we can identify the kiosks, the so-called street-food entities, which, using traditional gastronomy, offer tourists specific food, such as kürtöskalács, lángos, csöröge, in a practical and short time .</p>
				<p><b>Sândominic:</b></p> <p>1. Wellness Centers</p> <p>The thermal waters in the area are not sufficiently used, as they could contribute to the creation of a wellness center that includes both hotel and dining (restaurants) in both Sândominic and Madaras.</p> <p>2. Camping development</p> <p>The area offers potential and those who want to follow camp activities. Setting up an area for this activity with different facilities (ecological toilets, emergency points, etc.) could help</p>

				<p>attract more tourists with interests in this area.</p>
				<p><b>Miercurea Ciuc</b></p> <p>1. Parking Spots</p> <p>The city has a problem with the accessibility of various key points, from attractions to places of accommodation due to the limited number of car parks. It is necessary to strategically arrange new parking spaces as close as possible to the key points of the city.</p> <p>2. Establishment of reception halls, public baths</p> <p>It is necessary to establish and / or arrange the reception halls and public baths in at least 2 places in the city, offering tourists and visitors a resting place or meeting points.</p>
				<p><b>Ditrău</b></p> <p>1. Developing baths, beaches, wellness centers</p> <p>The area with potential for mineral waters, the development of baths, beaches, wellness centers, especially in the vicinity of the locality, would contribute to the development of the area and the strategic distribution of opportunities.</p> <p>3. Creation of sports complexes</p> <p>Sports venues, providing both accommodation and dining, would</p>

				<p>be an opportunity, thanks to sports clubs across the country.</p>
				<p><b>Gheorgheni</b></p> <p>1. Establishment of premises (restaurants, pubs, confectioneries)</p> <p>Increasing the number of visitors and their different types implies the compliance of the tourist offer with their needs, so it is necessary to set up restaurants (traditional and European type), pubs and confectioneries.</p>
				<p><b>Lunca de Sus</b></p> <p>1. Creating guesthouses</p> <p>The small number of boarding houses in the area, which provide services suitable for visitors, is a constant problem. The tourist offer must be adapted to the needs, so the establishment of boarding houses (even thematic ones) would contribute to the development of the area.</p>
				<p><b>Corund</b></p> <p>1. Restaurants</p> <p>Due to the history of the locality, the interest and number of visitors increases, but local offers do not. Different types of restaurants, such as fast food, fine-dining or traditional, are needed.</p> <p>2. Wellness Center</p> <p>The natural potential of the area would help to open a wellness center with accommodation and relaxation opportunities.</p>

				<p><b>Toplița</b></p> <p>1. Parking places The lack of specially arranged parking spaces contributes to the development of various problems, so the creation of new parking places, especially around the points of general interest, would contribute to the facilitation of tourist infrastructure.</p> <p>2. Authentic restaurants Local gastronomy offers an important advantage, being popular with visitors. Thus, offering opportunities through the creation of authentic restaurants would be a response to the needs of tourists and generate local economic prosperity.</p> <p>3. Spa centers A spa center can be built near the village due to natural resources.</p>
				<p><b>Praid</b></p> <p>1. Parking places Due to the crowd of visitors, it is necessary to arrange parking spaces.</p> <p>2. Rehabilitation of the bowling field Bowling is a local point of interest, providing activities for many types of visitors, and its rehabilitation and upgrading is necessary.</p> <p>3. Rehabilitation of the wellness center The Praid wellness center is renowned but needs to be adapted</p>

				<p>to the new tourist requirements generated by the development of technology. Its modernization and char filling with accommodation opportunities is essential for local development and image retention.</p>
				<p><b>Odorheiu Secuiesc</b></p> <p>1. Fine dining restaurants. Fine dining restaurants would attract tourists with higher financial potential.</p>
		<p>The existence of economic operators operating in the so-called "gray area".</p>	<p>Authorization and entry into force of all tourist accommodation establishments, declaration of revenue, obtaining the necessary permits and documents.</p>	<p>Support from the authorities in terms of legal steps - information period within public entities, once a month, for 2-3 hours, explaining the requests, opinions and documents required, presenting the entities competencies and answers to any questions from participants. These sessions have to be publicized effectively and popularized especially among potential entrants, with posters or flyers involved.</p>
				<p>Elimination of the possibilities of popularization (by newspapers, via the on-line environment: eg booking) of those tourist reception facilities, which do not prove the legality of the activities</p>
				<p>Organized events such as Tusvanyos, Tusnad Marathon, Battle on Snow, Ditrox, The Olympics of Fools, the Old Music Festival, etc. may involve various partnerships with the owners of</p>



				reception facilities (operating on a legal basis), thus encouraging economic operators to leave the gray area of the domain (offering profit and activity throughout the year).
3.	Development Axis no. 3 - Development of the organizational system of tourism in Harghita County	Lack of an organizational system of tourism destination management at local, micro-regional, County and regional level.	The operation of local, County and regional partnerships between central and local public authorities.	Creating the organizational system of tourism destination management at local, micro-regional, County and regional level.
		Lack of an advisory, consultative type, debate for the development and implementation of the County tourism policy, for the preparation of strategies and action plans with significant impact of tourism.	The functioning of partnerships between local authorities, tourism enterprises and non-governmental organizations.	Creating the Advisory Council of Tourism in Harghita County.
		Level of low private sector involvement through non-governmental organizations.	Stimulating partnerships with national and international professional bodies.	Stimulate the creation and operation of local professional tourism associations





		Few people with special education (upper secondary education in the rural environment, master level for resorts and towns) as an inspector involved in local and regional decision-making.	Increasing ecological and tourist awareness.	Establishing the organizational framework for tourism research and development in the region. Organization of regular seminars and conferences on tourism, environment and culture.
			Creating jobs with career prospects in the public sphere.	Establishment of reference and tourism inspector posts.
				Establish forms of advice for tourism initiatives.
		The lack of research into phenomena and socio-economic processes related to the functioning of the tourism system is a matter for the specialists of geography, economics (including management and marketing), sociology, cultural anthropology, political science etc.	Increased knowledge transfer, adaptation of tourism innovations.	Elaborate effective programs of practical education for pupils and students.
			Partnerships between vocational education and training institutions for tourism and the labor market.	Organize exchanges of experience with networks or international professional associations.



4.	Development Axis no. 4 - Improving the conditions of training human capital engaged in tourism	Existence of a specialized human capital deficit in the field of tourism.	Increasing the number of jobs and quality of life through tourism.	Programs for the development of the workforce: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Awareness campaigns</li> <li>• debates</li> <li>• publishing and disseminating informative materials: brochures, posters that would draw attention to the huge potential of the County and the region in this respect</li> </ul>
			Facilitating the access of disadvantaged groups to the labor market.	Strategy for optimizing the formal and informal training system with the needs of the market: analysis of formal and informal education and training systems, inventory of existing tourism oriented specializations and labor market needs: vacancies in tourism, related posts published in different newspapers, publications.
			Optimizing labor market needs with educational offer.	Establishment of an educational center for the vocational training of entrepreneurs in tourism: establishment and coordination of a training and specialization infrastructure dedicated to the economic actors with tourism activities. This center can be achieved through the inventory of the requirements expressed by the entrepreneurs and should be focused on developing educational modules or organizing seminars

				and exchange of experience that meet the requirements that can be developed at present for the purpose of enterprise development. The themes of courses, modules or debates can be: acquiring managerial skills, budget and finance knowledge basics, consultancy in the field of elaboration of EU or national projects, lending opportunities, knowledge of international languages, as well as the proper acquisition of the Romanian language.
			Enlarging the accessible tourist specializations in the County, at pre-university and university level.	Developing and initiating packages of training courses in tourism aimed at specializing in this sector, as well as inventory of qualified persons in different specific fields, such as: guides specialized in ecotourism; in the presentation of traditional Szekler crafts; specializations in professional balneary treatment, gastronomic curiosities, etc.
			Promoting the quality of the education and training system.	Practical training of pupils, students who want to be qualified in tourism or related activities: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>developing an educational module for optimizing the practical training, combining the theoretical knowledge with the acquisition of the necessary practical skills</li> </ul>



				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• facilitating beginners in the tourism sector by following this course</li> <li>• involving tourism enterprises in the practical training of future employees</li> <li>• long-term collaboration between educational authorities and bodies for the absorption of qualified or unskilled staff.</li> </ul>
			Improving the quality and productivity of work through practical training of employees in tourism.	<p>Formation of local tourist guides - rural interpreters:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Specializations in gastronomy, traditions, culture, demographics and other aspects of the region.</li> </ul>
5.	Development Axis no. 5 - Marketing of the Harghita destination	The promotion of Harghita County is deficient, with a significantly reduced international visibility, than competitors with similar tourism potential.	Increasing the tourism capacity of Harghita County by developing and applying some measures in the field of professional marketing and by promoting it at national and international level.	Promote the official Harghita County brand, namely VisitHarghita, on all possible channels. The lack of visibility of the existing brand also has an impact on the number of tourists - increasing the visibility will increase the number of tourists and visitors.
				Creating an interactive platform to facilitate bilateral communication with tourists, including the most important social sites, such as Facebook and Youtube. At the same time, in these platforms or in a way connected to these platforms, different trends in

				online / offline promotion can also be involved, such as VR and AR games or visits, digital interactive maps, smart ads, interactive hiking maps, video 360 °, respective promotion videos in hologram or 3D format.
				Off-line promotion (posters, brochures, toys, books, etc.) and on-line (promotional videos, TV commercials, radio spots, applications etc).
				Organization of events (festivals, fairs, meetings) of different sizes, from small to medium, with access for European citizens.
			Transmitting an image of the County to help attract different types of visitors (family-friendly, kid-friendly, etc.).	Develop custom promotional packages for different types of visitors (families, children, etc.).
				Organization of events specific to culture and history (gourmet competitions, historical fairs).
			Highlighting and promoting the unique touristic offers, and providing area-specific experiences.	Participation in international tourism fairs, using both the County brand, as well as local brands and trademarks.
				Creating partnerships with the biggest tour operators in Europe to include Harghita County in tourist



				offerings.
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#### **8.6. PROGRAMS, PROJECTS UNDERTAKEN OR INITIATED BY LOCAL COUNCILS IN HARGHITA COUNTY**

There are several projects planned or underway, initiated by local councils in Harghita County, including:

- Axis 1 arrangement and harness of natural and human tourism resources:
  - Rehabilitation of road infrastructure in order to develop spa tourism resort Tuşnad- started precontracting.
  - Modernization / construction and equipping of new bases in Harghita-Rescue started precontracting Tuşnad- bathrooms.
  - Modernization / construction and equipping of new bases in Harghita-Borsec- Rescue precontracting started.
  - Facilities parks and green spaces in a resort Tuşnad.
  - Rehabilitation of road infrastructure in order to develop tourist resort Băile Tuşnad

#### **Other projects undertaken or initiated by NGOs, public institutions, professional associations, tourism businesses**

The development of tourism in Harghita County is a priority, so there are several projects initiated or conducted by other entities, such as NGOs, public institutions, associations and businesses.

Among the most important projects include:

- Axis 2 arrangement and harness of natural and human tourism resources
  - The arrangement of tracks ecodidactice (ecotouristic) nature reserves and their coverage
  - Extiderea rehabilitation program marked trails in the mountains and hills: Plateau volcanic Gurghiu-Harghita, Tarnava Mica Hills, Odorhei and Homoroadelor,
  - Gurghiu- blue line Baraolt Harghita Mountains and / or Persani
  - Network planning cycling routes and equestrian tourism along the main rivers and their integration into national and international network Eurovelo
  - Proper management of existing ski slopes today and arrangement of ski slopes and other appropriate destinations



- Axis 3 Development of organizational system of tourism in Harghita
  - Establishment of micro-regional tourism associations professional areas in the County and County federal constitution, their regional
  - Organizing regular seminars and conferences on topics of tourism, environment and culture
  - Organizing exchanges of experience with networks and national and international professional associations.
- Axis 4 Improving conditions for human capital formation in tourism

Develop and initiate training packages in tourism for specializations in this sector.

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- - County Agency For Labor Force Employment, Harghita County;
- - Harghita Tourism Association
- - National Audiovisual Council Harghita
- - Department Of Statistics Harghita;
- - Harghita County School Inspectorate
- - Harghita County Office Of Consumer Protection
- - Network Of Foreign Representative MIMMCTPL
- - Public Service Rescue Harghita

#### **Webpages:**

- - <https://judetulharghita.ro/consiliul-judetean-harghita.html>
- - [www.e-calauza.ro](http://www.e-calauza.ro)
- - [www.harghita.anofm.ro](http://www.harghita.anofm.ro)
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- - [https://ro.wikipedia.org/wiki/Listă\\_de\\_aeroporturi\\_din\\_România](https://ro.wikipedia.org/wiki/Listă_de_aeroporturi_din_România)
- - <http://www.salvamontharghita.ro/ro>

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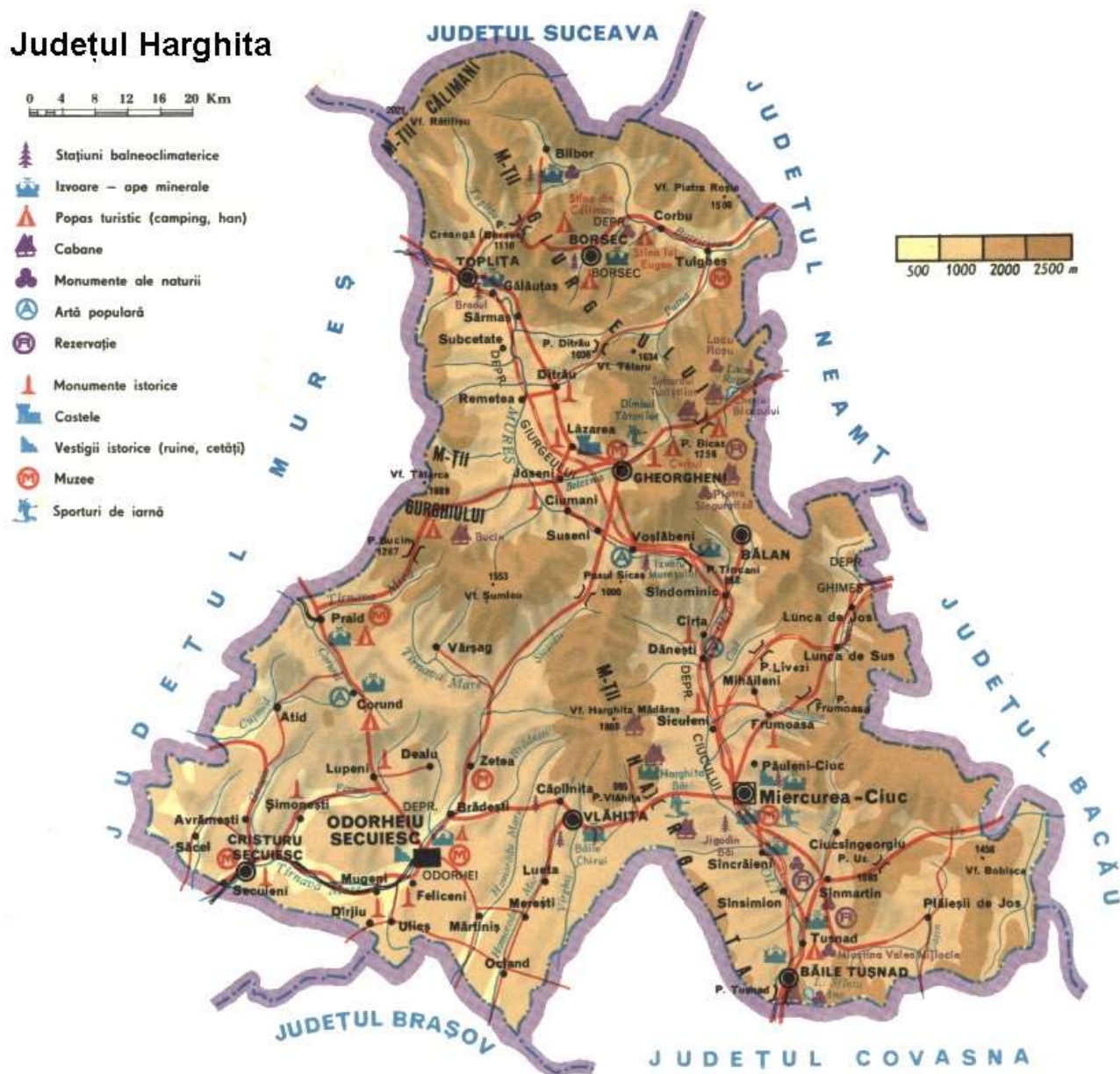
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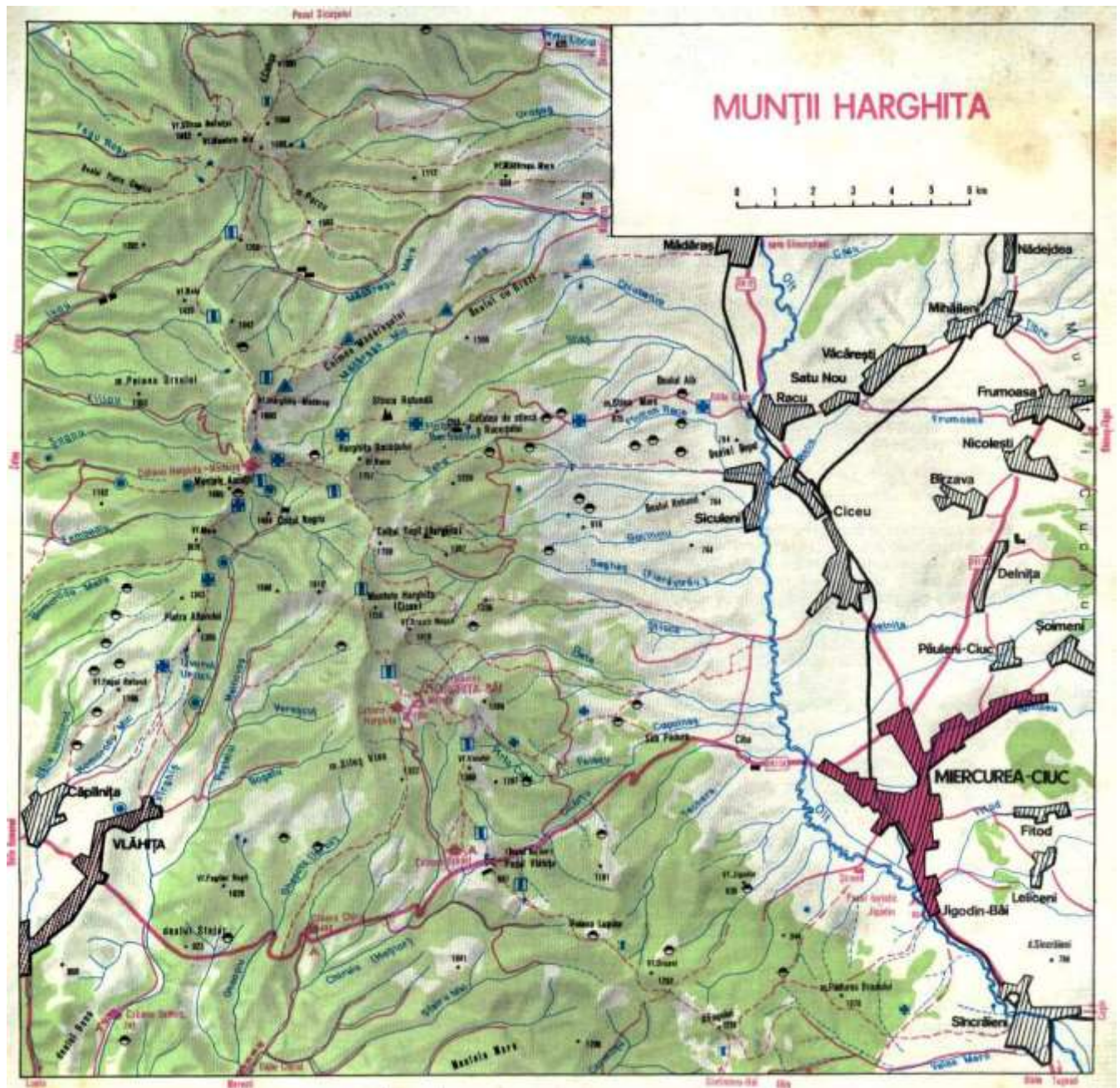
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Source: <https://pe-harta.ro/harghita/>

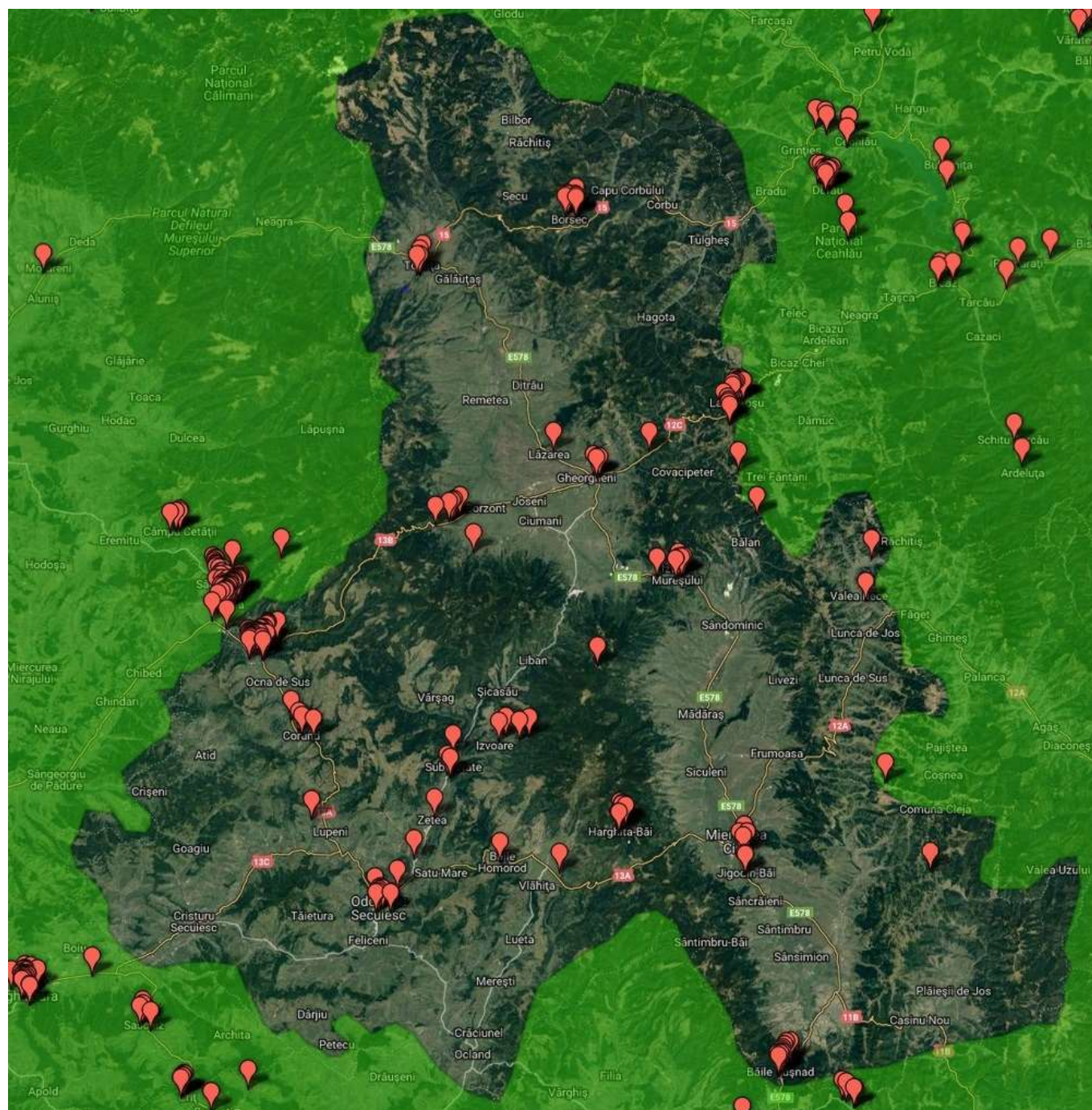
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Source: <https://www.harta-turistica.ro>

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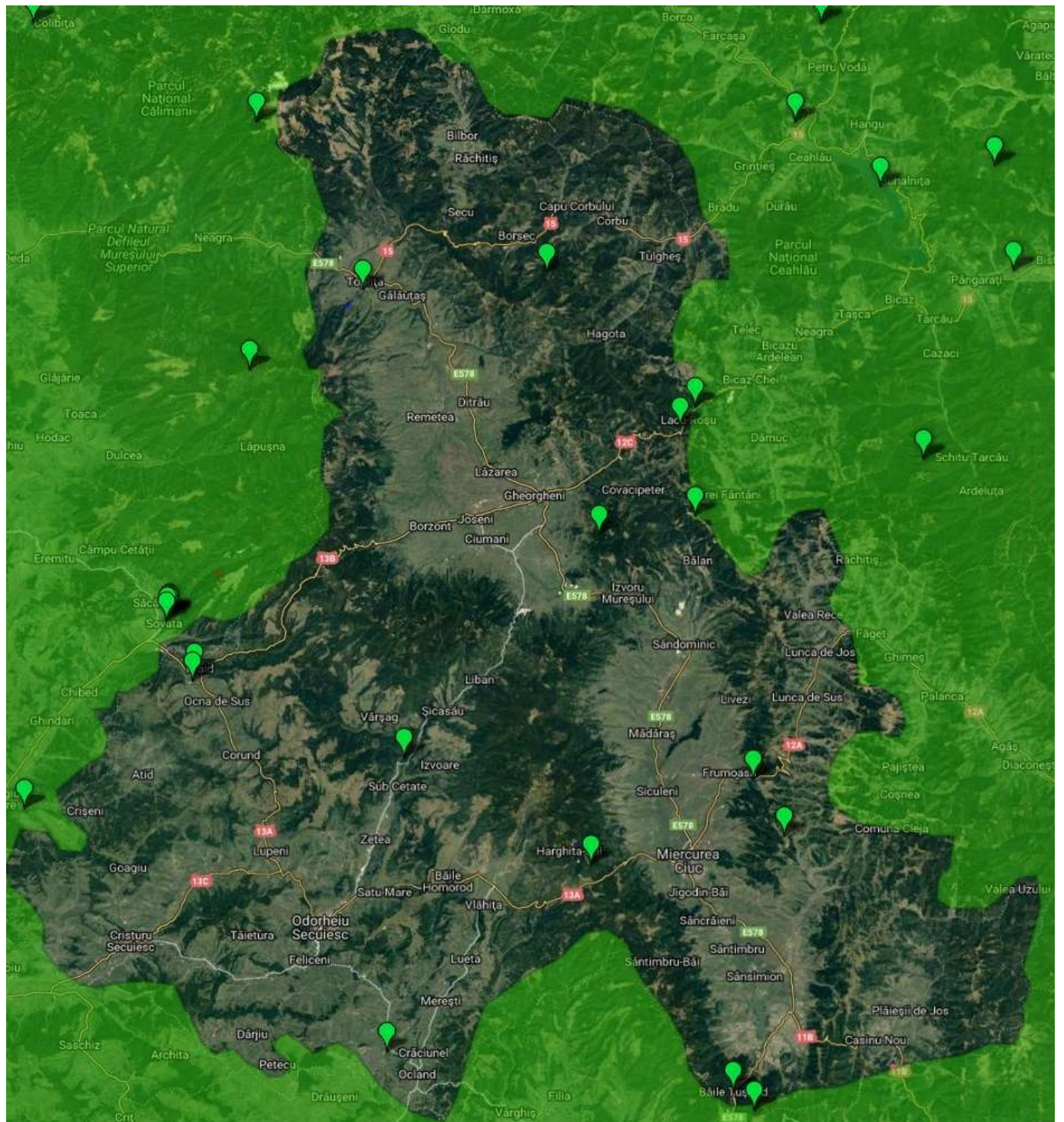




Source: <http://www.hartis.ro/hr/>

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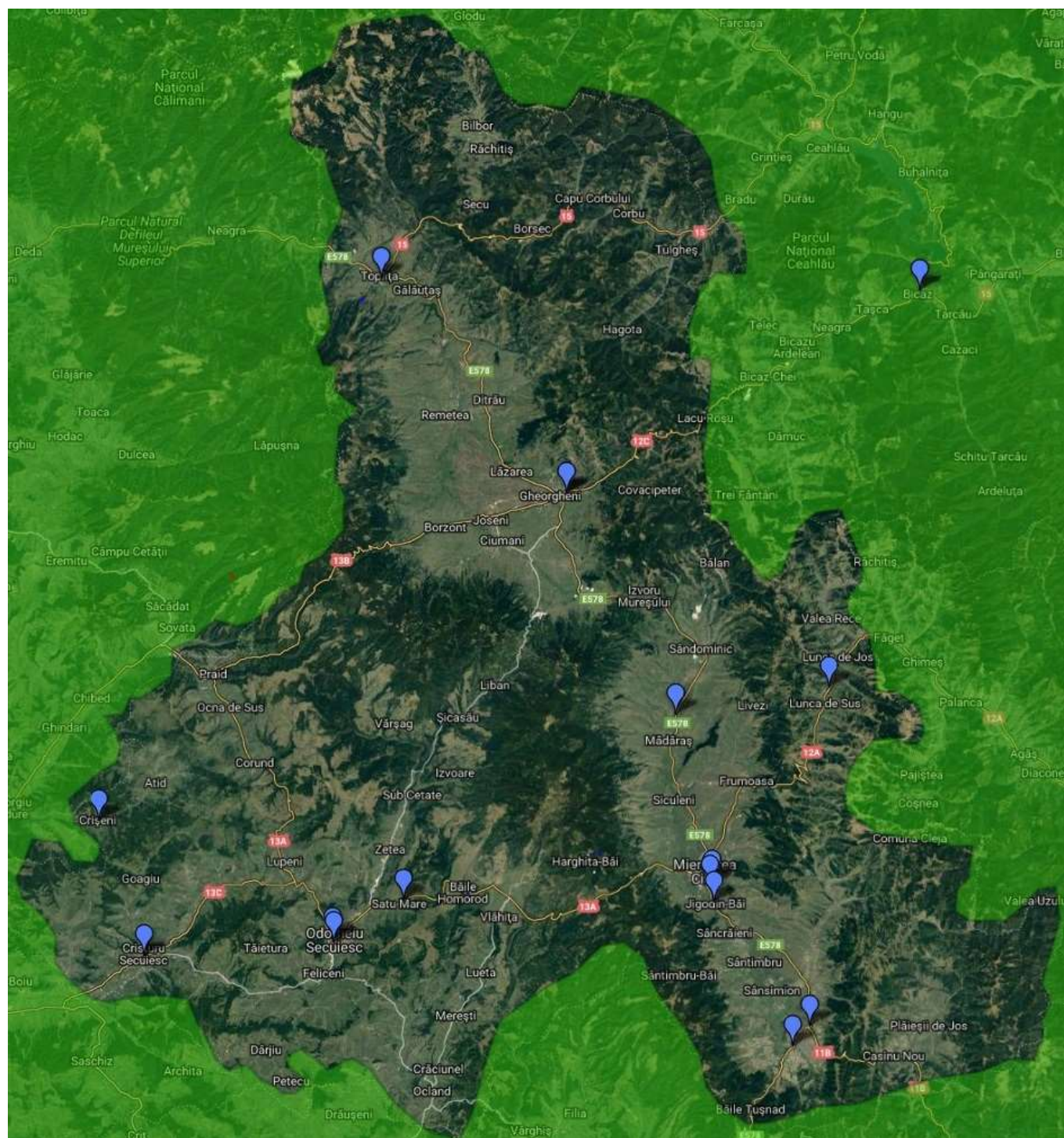




Source: <http://www.hartis.ro/hr/>

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Source: <http://www.hartis.ro/hr/>



