EUROPEAN INTEGRATION – A NEW PROVOCATION FOR THE ROMANIAN TOURISM

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Abstract: a major impact upon tourism have the tendencies of economic, social or life style change, the last ones being integrating part of our society. It is important for the tourism sector to evaluate these changes and the implications of Romania’s adhering to EU upon tourism, the transportation, environment protection, social and regional policy having a major incidence in tourism development.

Key words: European integration, implications of Romania’s adhering to EU upon tourism

The tendencies of continuous change with major impact upon tourism are economic, social or related to the life style, the tourism being integrating part of our society. It is important for the tourism sector to evaluate these changes in their very outset, namely the implications upon tourism of Romania’s adhering to EU.

Although it was not a specific topic within Romania’s adhering negotiations to the EU (ended in December 2004), the negotiation chapters with a major impact upon tourism’s development were: transportation, environment protection, social and regional policy, and others.

Among the most significant implications of Romania’s adhering to EU that concern the tourism in Romania, there are:

− the growth in number of the foreign tourists coming from the European Union and visiting Romania, not spectacularly nor suddenly, the explication being that the population of the old member states still prefers “the old destinations” (Spain, Italy, France, etc.);
− the growing competition both between destinations and tour operators as well, which will determine the competition between any Romanian tourism destination and the ones of the EU;
− the rising quality of the tourism services and staff;
− the tourists will become aware of their rights as costumers, that being a direct result of applying the European legislation in the field of tourism but also of the justified growth in tourists’ exigencies towards the received services;
− the environment protection and lasting development will condition tourism’s development and became a major imperative to assure the viability of any touristic arrangements;
− the access to the financings offered by the European Union will facilitate tourism’s development and infrastructure in areas with touristic potential in Romania.
− another implication of Romania’s adhering to EU, direct reflected upon the Romanian tourism, is making the touristic marketing a priority both for the central authority (National Authority in Tourism) and for the touristic destinations, and furthermore for each tour operator.

Knowing the fact that the image is playing a very important role in coming to a decision regarding choosing a holiday destination (the connection between holiday reasons and image being evident), there it is time for a quality and more aggressive marketing to convince the potential tourists of the European Union’s countries.

− tourism development at the regional level – within the context of the decentralization / regionalization of the competences in tourism, one of the economic sectors of Romania that needs “more action”!

The tourism development at the regional level

The tourism is considered a “peak field” of the regional development, and, within the future years, it is foreseen that the tourism to actively contribute to the economic diversification and to the increase of the employment opportunities in Europe.
Or, with a view to the regional development for stimulating the economic development of the less developed regions, EU supports the activities that bring about multiple effects – it is known that the tourism is a sector with a high potential for generating both economic development and finding new labour places.

A considerable space is given to both the priority objectives in matters of EU tourism policy and to the regionalism policy – in the meaning of the regional promotion of the tourism as a stimulation factor in the development of the under-privileged areas, but, nevertheless, with real elements related to their touristic vocation (the region being thus able to remove the economic unbalance). For this reason, the regions and the local authorities play a major role in defining the policies, organizing and developing the tourism (for this reason we consider appropriate to quote the situations of the Federal States Germany and Belgium but also the case of other countries – France, Italy or Spain).

Moreover, it is important to remember that the experience of the countries with a long touristic tradition proves us that the touristic planning is necessary, on all the economic levels, to achieve a durable tourism, since the inappropriate consideration given to those planning methods in the touristic fields leads to certain social and environmental issues and also causes an insufficient development of the touristic activities in comparison to the already existing resources.

It is obvious that the Romanian government can play an important role in the development of tourism, but the current tendency is “to delegate” more and more tasks to the local authorities, who, indeed, know better the communities and the areas they administer. The efficiency of a public local administration shall provide the prosperity of all the activity sectors, including here the tourism. The so wanted and so advertised and announced reform of the public administration has to lead to determine the setting of certain efficient structures and modern methods for mobilizing the material and financial human resources for the purpose of appropriately meeting the society requirements. And, for that reform to have a positive impact upon the tourism development, it has to focus on three major directions (presently, we face a reduced involvement of the local authorities in the development of this sector):

- decentralization + consolidation of the local autonomy;
- successful completion of the human resources management;
- introduction + development of the public management in administration.

By means of a long – lasting touristic planning and an intelligent management, the benefits can be maximized and the issues can be also considerably diminished.

The regional development policy strengthens the role and the responsibilities of the local public administration and of the regional bodies in the economic and social development of all the development regions, and in particular, of every development locality.

Although all the eight regions of our country dispose of a valuable potential for the touristic development, in 2003, the contribution of the tourism in the development of the national economy was unfortunately reduced (2,19% din PIB)\(^1\).

The regions are endowed with a remarkably touristic potential related to the natural setting, the cultural and historical background. The differences between the regions, with a view to the valuation of the touristic capital are determined by their historical development conditions and the country general infrastructure, an aspect that often hindered the development of several areas of high touristic attractiveness, but with low degree of accessibility, and at the same time, facilitated the development of others. An obvious example here is given by the evolution of Valea Prahovei (Prahova Valley), in comparison to Rucar – Bran Couloir and the upper valley of Buzau.

The statistic data indicate an increase of the interest towards the Romanian touristic attractions, aspect proven by the increased number of the arrivals in the accommodation facilities after 2000. Therefore, in 2005 the number of tourists reached 5.805 million (from which 24,6% foreign tourists). The number of the accommodation requests increased, reaching 18.37 million. It is worth to mention here the increased number of the foreigners’ accommodation demands– 3,46 million (2005), representing a rate of 61,6 in comparison to year 2000.

The tourism infrastructure faced major changes after 1990. Therefore, in 2005 the existing accommodation capacity was with 10,3 less than in 1991. Although quantitatively reduced, it subsequently improved, an aspect underlined by the study carried out observing a Phare Program” granted to The Ministry of The European Integration. In 2005, the effective accommodation capacity (number of beds – days) indicates that an approximate 18,04% of the Romanian accommodation capacity is found in the Black Sea Resorts (fact that is valued only during 2-3 months/year), 29,79% in Bucharest and in major county cities (excepting Tulcea), 19,4% in the spa resorts , 0,9% in The Danube Delta and 15.0% in other touristic destinations.

**Graphic 1 – Accommodation capacity according to the Development Regions , 2005**

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1. The National Forecasting Board
2. The study was made within the Phare Programme RO2002/000-586.05.01.04.02.02, by the project „Schemes development for the Regional Operational Programme”.

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The accommodation capacity (number of places) according to the regions underline major differences between different country areas. The South – Eastern Region holds the highest accommodation capacity (46%), being followed by far by the Central Region (13%) and by the North – Western Region (9%).

It is known the fact that the existence of a high accommodation capacity does not automatically attract a touristic activity, and therefore, the major differences from this point of view, can be determined both by the consumers’ preferences and by the existing infrastructural facilities, atypically distributed. Nevertheless, it can be stated that these regions hold a more balanced capacity of touristic development than the existing one, in spite of the prognoses according to which the region that is to develop further is the sea side and the Danube Delta, as well as the Carpathian and Sub-Carpathian areas.

The regional evolution of the main markers in the touristic fields, also performed within the Regional Operational Program 2007-2013 underlines the regional differences related to the means of attracting the tourism and the manner of using the accommodation facilities, in the context of the massive decline of the touristic activity, after the 90’s.

### Table 1. Evolution of the main touristic markers between 1993-2005

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>North-East</td>
<td>18.718</td>
<td>-11,43</td>
<td>1.435,8</td>
<td>-34,01</td>
<td>624,5</td>
<td>-32,7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South-East</td>
<td>132.965</td>
<td>-4,53</td>
<td>5.139,1</td>
<td>-32,87</td>
<td>1.107,9</td>
<td>-20,8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South</td>
<td>22.292</td>
<td>-5,16</td>
<td>1.807,2</td>
<td>-30,80</td>
<td>573,5</td>
<td>-36,5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South-West</td>
<td>14.672</td>
<td>-18-69</td>
<td>1.601,8</td>
<td>-22,61</td>
<td>334,1</td>
<td>-41,9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>West</td>
<td>21.291</td>
<td>-8,75</td>
<td>1.835,3</td>
<td>-12,67</td>
<td>535,1</td>
<td>-24,1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North-West</td>
<td>26.019</td>
<td>+11,39</td>
<td>1.754,6</td>
<td>-15,61</td>
<td>733,3</td>
<td>-30,4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Centre</td>
<td>36.012</td>
<td>+2,17</td>
<td>2.782,1</td>
<td>-20,89</td>
<td>1.067,9</td>
<td>-9,3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bucharest – Ilfov</td>
<td>11.225</td>
<td>+22,9</td>
<td>1.481,2</td>
<td>-22,83</td>
<td>831,3</td>
<td>+0,7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Romania</strong></td>
<td><strong>283.194</strong></td>
<td><strong>-3,35</strong></td>
<td><strong>18.372.9</strong></td>
<td><strong>-25,82</strong></td>
<td><strong>5.805,0</strong></td>
<td><strong>-23,2</strong></td>
</tr>
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Source: INS

Summing up, a durable regional development need to correlate and integrate the tourism of Romania among the other components of the local economy, also considering the fact that this clean industry (also called „the un-foggy” industry) does not bring any prejudices to the environment, and basically, it does not assume and involve major investments.
Or, an appropriate touristic planning and a good durable development project, both comprised in a regional development program involve investments which, the more harmoniously is the integration made, the cheaper are the aforementioned investments.

Or, the lack of action and the contemplation of the natural scenery lead to the aggravation of the touristic condition in our country, and the permanent postponing of the decision-making processes deepen this crisis … fading away the possibilities of a possible and well-deserved straightening, and, also bring about the exponential increase of the prices of an imperative intervention pushed to an unknown future.

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