

THE ROMANIAN INTEGRATION IN THE EUROPEAN UNION AND THE INTERNATIONAL TOURISM

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Résumé: *L'intégration roumaine dans l'Union Européenne et le tourisme international.* Malgré toutes les valences attractive d'une grande variété, la Roumanie occupe, dans l'étape actuelle, une position assez modeste dans le circuit international. Partie d'une position qui avait placé la Roumanie parmi les 15 premiers pays touristiques du monde en 1981, avec un participation de 2,5% au marché touristique mondial, actuellement elle se situe en 20-e place en Europe et en 40-e au monde, ayant une cote de seulement 0,8% du marché mondial. Après 1989, en même temps avec l'ouverture politique internationale de la Roumanie et, dans le nouveau contexte international, le nombre des touristes provenus de la Roumanie est beaucoup augmenté, le maximum étant enregistré en 1990 (11,3 millions). Dans les années suivantes, après le dépassement du climat de la crise quotidienne, le nombre des Roumains partis à l'étranger a été en diminution, c'est ainsi que dans l'intervalle 2000-2007, ce nombre arrivait annuellement à 6-7 millions. L'adhésion de la Roumanie à l'Union Européenne a été accompagnée par l'élaboration d'une stratégie adéquate concernant le développement du tourisme, estimant que le nombre des touristes qui vont visiter notre pays va augmenter, mais non pas d'un façon spectaculaire, le phénomène étant lié à l'accroissement de l'intérêt pour notre pays. Pour cette fin, il est nécessaire que des investissements massifs fussent réalisés dans l'infrastructure spécifique, parallèlement avec la croissance de la qualité des services et la garantie d'un niveau correspondant de la formation professionnelle et de la diversification de la production.

Mots-clés: tourisme international, intégration européenne, balance des paiements, investissements, potentiel touristique, infrastructure, main d'œuvre.

1. The Place of Romania in the International Tourism

Romania holds a well-defined place as a part of the European and World tourism first of all because of the geographical position of its territory, but mostly because of its remarkable tourist potential. In the huge variety of natural landscapes and economical, cultural or social objectives, all of them of a remarkable tourist value, one can distinguish, in the first place, the tourist patrimony of the Carpathians, a chain of mountains, which is followed towards the end parts of the national territory, by lower and lower relief forms, which end with the plains, with the Danube meadow and Delta.

With all its attractive tourist valences, of a great variety, Romania is holding nowadays a rather modest position in the international tourist circuit, in comparison with the previous periods. In a first stage, generally corresponding to the 7th and 8th decades of the last century, which was characterized by a constant increase of the attractiveness, the tourism in Romania developed mainly as a result of the investments made in order to obtain a growth of the Black Sea Seaside. In those years, Romania registered among the highest rates of economical development (especially industrial development) at world level (10-15% yearly) to which we can add the intensification of trade activities and the granting of

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the clause of the most favored nation by U.S.A. The political context was also favorable, mainly as a result of the anti-Soviet attitude adopted in the 1970 s, which led to a positive image for the western governments. It is accepted that the 1975-1980 s determined important structural modifications for the Romanian tourism and 1981 represented the top year of the arrivals' dynamics.

After this stage, favorable for the amplification of the tourist phenomenon in Romania, starting with 1982 and up to the end of 1989 the investments in tourism diminished very much and implicitly the number of foreign tourists in Romania, all these because of the deteriorated economical situation of the country and because the buying possibility of people drastically lowered. The internal political situation, the increase of the tendencies towards an authoritative leadership of the country also overlapped, in the last but one decade of the previous century, with the politico-economical transformations which characterized the countries in Central and Eastern Europe, ex-socialist countries.

The period after 1990 is characterized by important transformations which affected the Romanian society, the evolution of the tourist phenomenon being recorded in the economical dynamics. Mostly the first years (1990-1995), which followed the planned economy, were characterized by an important inbound tourism decrease (-2,3%), a slight improvement of the situation characterizing the last decade, where according to I. T.O., the average yearly growth rate between 1995-2000 was of 3,5%, but this slight improvement (re-launching) didn't change to much the situation of the Romanian tourism. After 2000, the same situation is maintained, as the receptive flows have advanced very slowly, so that in 2005 it was recorded (compared to 2000) an addition of about 600,000 arrivals (inbound), respectively with 11% more. The international opening policy adopted by the Romanian State in the new international political context was facilitated by the resuming of the relationships with the European traditional partners in the European integration efforts, but this wasn't completely backed up by a material base to correspond with the international standards exigency and by services of high quality.

This evolution is also reflected by the place Romania occupies/holds among the receptive countries. From a position which situated Romania among the first 15 tourist countries in the world in 1981, with a quotation of 2,5% from the world tourist market, at present it is situated on the 20th place in Europe and in the 40th place in the world, with a quotation of only 0,8% from the world market.

Most of the foreign visitors arrive in Romania using road vehicles whose weight grew/increased from 72,3% in 2000 to 81,8% in 2007. The air transport occupies the second place, registering a continuous but modest/slight increase in time.

Identical tendencies are maintained regarding the number of Romanian tourists (on means of transport) gone abroad, meaning that the first place is occupied by road means of transport (73-88% from the means of transport used), followed by the railway means of transport (10-22%) air means of transport (2-8%) and naval/water means of transport (1-3%).

Analyzing the weight of the means of transport used by the Romanian tourists gone abroad, one can ascertain that there are oscillations, it's true, not so big, even for the relatively short periods taken into consideration. These fluctuations are connected, first of all, to a series of socio-economical phenomena, among which we can mention: the diminution of the buying possibility of the Romanian money (leu) compared to other international currency; the weak infrastructure of the country, the evolution of the living standard of the people etc. We can also add the high prices required by the tourism agencies, the advantages and disadvantages of the means of transport used, etc.

The majority of the foreign tourists who visit Romania, come from Europe, after 2000 every year approximately 95% of the visitors being from the continent. Out of these,

in 2007 about ¾ came from the five countries Romania borders upon, respectively Hungary (26, 1% in 2005) The Republic of Moldavia (24, 6%), Bulgaria (6,7%), Ukraine and Serbia. The weight of the countries from the European Union was in 2004 of 57, 6% (3,8 million out of a total number of 6,6 million arrivals), after Hungary, followed by Germany (4,5%), Italy (3,5%) and Poland (2%), fewer participation being from France, Austria (3,5%) Slovakia, Great Britain.

Besides the European countries, the market furnishing tourists for Romania is completed by the United States of America, with a weight of 20% in 2005, Israel (1%), an increasing number of tourists being those coming from China (0,2% in 2005).

After 1989, together with Romania's opening towards the international politics and depending on the facilities given to the potential tourists by the government, the number of the tourists coming from Romania has continuously increased getting in 1990 at 11,3 million compared to about 1 million yearly during 1985 and 1989, and almost 900,000 in 1989. In the following years it was also registered a relatively great number of departures abroad (9-10 million yearly for 1991-1995 period and 6-7 million for 2000-2007 period of time). This diminished number of the Romanian tourists gone abroad was possible because of the worse conditions of life.

Comparing the number of the inbound with that of the outbound tourists, it is obvious that Romania has become a tourist furnishing country which is somehow explained by the desire to encounter new realities, culture, to go abroad as a means of expressing individual and collective freedom.

The above mentioned data show that the international tourism in Romania is nowadays in total contrast with its importance in the 8th decade and in the first years of the 9th decade, Romania couldn't be found even among the first 25 countries. Compared to 1979, in 2000 the arrivals didn't represent but 75%, the most important diminutions being registered immediately after the events which took place at the end of 1989. This situation was actually maintained during all the last decade of the previous century, in 2000 the number of the foreign tourists being with over 8 million smaller than in 1979.

This point of view is backed up even by the fact that, although tourism and travels expressed by the number of the international visitors increased quite a lot, the revenue obtained by Romania from these activities is much more diminished than that of the neighbouring countries. Thus, in 2007 Romania's revenue from tourism was only a little over 500 million Euro, which represented 23% from the amount registered in Bulgaria, 12% from that one registered in Hungary and Czech Republic, and only 7% from Croatia's revenue. This shows that many foreign tourists don't stay in Romania overnight; they use our country only as a transit place or come back in their own (neighbouring) country by the end of the day.

The situation of the Romanian international tourism can also be analyzed from the point of view of the trade balance. It results that until 1985 the balance was positive, being over 100 million dollars annually. In the following decade (until 1995) the revenue from the international tourism outran a little the expenses (2-3 million dollars annually). Starting with 1995, the balance was negative, registering values of over 100 million dollars annually.

Till 1989, Romania was visited by many tourists coming especially from the ex-socialist countries, and meanwhile, the number of the Romanian tourists who went abroad was relatively small, which determined a positive balance for the trade balance. After 1989, because of the new conditions in our country, in Europe and in the world, we can notice a massive fluency of Romanian tourists which spend their holidays abroad, a diminution of the number of foreign tourists interested in visiting Romania, and this is explained by the relatively poor offer of goods and services.

In other words, although its tourist potential is important, Romania has a low level of international tourist movement. It is accepted that this situation is connected to a complex series of factors, among which we can mention: the privatization slowdown, the low quality of the provided services, the low level of qualification of the labor force correlated with the low revenue from tourism, low investment in the last years and their structural deficiencies, the inefficient implication of the state in promoting the tourist image of Romania on the basic emitent markets. We can also add the low quality of the transport and accommodation infrastructure, as well as the absence of a functional and operational strategy of tourist development. It is worth mentioning the fact that the neighboring countries, especially Hungary and Bulgaria, came up with a qualitatively high offer, easier adjusting to the new conditions which appeared in the last decades. This situation made an important part of the Romanian tourists decide to spend their holidays or even weekends in some proximity destinations (Bulgaria, Hungary, Greece, Turkey).

The analysis of the main travel reasons shows that these are part of the seaside tourism, itinerate tourism, cultural tourism, mountain tourism (especially for skiing), meeting tourism. A more extended practice has been lately represented by shopping abroad – commercial agreement – in the neighbouring countries (Bulgaria, Ukraine, Serbia, Hungary), but also in Turkey (Istanbul), United Arab Emirates/UAE (Dubai), Great Britain (London), France (Paris), Poland (Warsaw), Italy (Milano), U.S.A (New York), Thailand, China, Greece, etc. Yearly, up to 10,000 Romanians go abroad for shopping, especially in those periods when the big shopping centers have important discounts (October-March).

The last years (2001-2006), are defined by several aspects which characterize the economical impact of tourism and travels in Romania. Firstly, it is still maintained a very low level of tourist solicitations for personal purpose, depending on the general level of economical development of the country and the population's prosperity.

The personal consumption for tourism and travels in Romania's case represents only 3,9%, compared to 11,3% for U.E., and 9,5% at the world level. The number of the working places, during the analyzed period, increased a little more than twice (from 247,000 to 619,000), representing 3,15% of all professions. Meanwhile, the revenue obtained from the foreign visitors moderately increased, from about 370 million dollars to 420 million. A significant increase could be seen in the whole demand for tourism and travels, with about 30%, but the increase rate slowed down till 2005. Nevertheless the contribution of the tourism at GDP lowered from 4,92% to 4,81%.

Comparing these indicators with the situation of the neighbouring countries, one can see that tourism contributes to Romanian economy by far under Central and East Europe's average, as well as under European Unions average. Thus, on the whole, in Central and East European countries, the tourism generates, directly and indirectly, revenue of 9,1% from G.D.P., participating with 10,9% to labor force employment and with 5,8% to exports, while in the European Union the contribution of the tourism to G.D.P. is of 10,9%, with 8,6% to labor force employment and with 6,8% to exports.

Although in other countries tourism generates important funds for the national budget, in Romania this economical field brought in the last years about 281 milliard RON contributing with less than 2% to GDP, situation which seems to be maintained for the next years as well.

In 2006, the number of the tourists from the European Union countries, who spent their holidays in Romania, diminished with 4% while the number of the Romanian people who went abroad increased with 23% compared to 2005.

2. Directions of evolution for Romania's international tourism

In the perspective of the year 2016 it is estimated that Romania's situation concerning the international tourism will improve significantly. Thus, the activity for tourism and travels will increase in an average yearly rate of 7,9% compared to an increase of only 5,8% for Central and Eastern Europe and to a 3,5% increase for European Union countries (E.U.). The export generated by the international arrivals will increase with 8,5% yearly and the export of goods from tourist industry with 12,4%.

The governmental expenses for tourism and travels will increase in an average yearly rate of 1,7% and this fact will permit Romania to occupy the 4th place in the world, from this point of view, and thus overrunning the level of its regional competitors.

Tourism will trigger new working places (direct and indirect ones), that is almost 85,000 extra places, with an average yearly increase rate of 1,6%, very close to the world rate. Therefore, Romania is appreciated to hold the 119th position in the world, in terms of dynamics and the 142nd position in terms of employment.

Analyzing the investment evolution in tourism, one can see that Romania holds nowadays the 138th position in the world, and according to the estimated dynamics to be realized, it will hold the 21st position in the world and the 3rd position in the region, after Montenegro and Czech Republic.

Within the last years it became obvious that an excessive concentration of tourist programs initiated by the government was completely unproductive for the international tourism. Moreover, the failure of such programs as *Dracula Park* and *Europe Resort* emphasizes the aspect of an incoherent approach of the governments to the tourist policy, which fact generated especially instability. It is remarkable that lately the revenue from international tourism has increased and that there have been made important investments in tourism, which meant to build or to modernize tens of hotels. Several hundreds of rural agrotourist pensions were introduced in the tourist circuit, the business internationalization and integration process has increased, creating good conditions for the development of a competitive tourist market to assure the necessary dynamics for the receiving tourism.

Although Romania has at its disposal rich and varied human and natural resources, these are not valued and used according to their entire potential. Holding the 162nd place from 175 countries, if taken into account the contribution of tourism to GDP, it is obvious that Romania didn't make enough efforts in what tourist privatization is concerned, besides the absence of massive investments in the infrastructure, the low quality of the provided services, an inadequate skilled and trained labor force and the low degree/level of production diversification, all these aspects overlapping the prolonged crisis which has affected the national economy in the recent decades.

3. Romania's adherence to the European Union and its implications in the international tourism

European Union gives tourism a proper attention, this economical branch having the highest increase rate (between 2 and 4, 5% yearly, regarding the business number and 1-1,5% regarding the possibilities to create new work places). The interest shown by the European Union and by each member state in the development of the tourist industry, is explained by the possibilities given to the less developed regions to make economical progress by the contributions to the protection of the environment, to European vision and identity strengthening. Being European Union's specialized department, The Tourism Dissertation maintains a close relationship with the representative organizations in the tourist industry, as well as with other groups of interest, especially when specific actions are referred to in the context in which this domain contributes to the economical increase, to the trigger of new work places.

Person's free circulation (abroad) is accompanied by some advantages, among which the right to travel in other states, members of the E.U., the right to work and live there, a.s.o., factors which are estimated to encourage tourism development in Europe. The free circulation is also accompanied by some risks, among which the illegal immigration and human traffic and even drug traffic and visa abuse (working over the admitted term, without permit, etc). It can be added here the possibility that specialists in tourist domain work in other countries, members of E.U. in order to get new knowledge, skills and abilities, to accumulate experience in the field. In the same time, there is the risk that qualified and well-trained labor forces leave the country and therefore, the tourist activities may develop and maintain a lasting labor force only by an adequate employment and in proper work conditions.

Romania's adherence to E.U. could represent the possibility that the number of the tourists who will visit our country increase, but this is not estimated as a spectacular increase, but as a result of the increase of the interest for Romania and in the other countries recently integrated to Europe, some of them being great tourist destinations (Cyprus, Malta, Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland). Romania will compete with the 10 states which adhered in 2004 to E.U., as well as with Bulgaria, which adhered at the same time with Romania.

In order to analyze the competitiveness in tourism, several indicators had been taken into account, among which: prices, infrastructure, environment, technology human resource, social index, opening index, each country's performance being emphasized on a scale from 0 to 100. Romania's competitiveness in tourism was analyzed in comparison with 8 countries from Romania's neighbourhood, considered as competitor countries in this field. We refer here to Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Croatia, Serbia, Montenegro, Hungary, Slovakia, Poland, Ukraine. It was noticed the fact that, regarding the average index of competitiveness in tourism, Romania is outrun by almost all the other 8 analyzed states, for which the value were: 78,44 for Hungary, 74,47 for Czech Republic, 68,57 for Bulgaria, 68,04 for Croatia, 66,03 for Poland and 62,84 for Slovakia. Compared to some competitors, Romania is more competitive in the field of prices, environment, opening towards trade and tourism and less competitive in technology, human resource and infrastructure.

The National Tourism Agency must have a direct implication in the marketing activities and in the activities of promoting Romania as a tourist destination, our country having at its disposal human, natural and financial resources for this action. It must also orientate the local public authorities and the private investors towards the realization of tourist products, competitive on the European market. A remarkable role must be played by those 8 developing regions in order to develop the tourist field, depending on the existent tourist resources and on the desire of the inhabitants.

It is necessary to make adequate connections/relationships with the representatives of mass-media and with the opinion initiators who should relate favorably and encourage the tourism in Romania. The mass-media representatives in Europe should be financially supported to go on documentation travels in the country, in order to publish some materials for the tourist market interested in Romania.

The existence of some programs for Romania in the catalogues and on the Internet sites of some prestigious round-operators can offer extra-credibility and a stimulus for the potential foreign tourist.

The National Authority for Tourism must involve in the adults/grown-ups professional training from and for tourism, promoting the idea that they should learn during their entire lives in order to reach the standards existent in those states, members of E.U., with tradition in this field. The problem of qualifying and training adults for tourism is important in order to sustain the transformation of the labor force, adapting it to the new requirements. In its evolution, the tourism in Romania cannot leave aside the realities which

exist in this field in the neighbouring countries and even at world level. The National Authority for Tourism, the government will permanently have to develop and to make the cooperation relationship in this field efficient through actions such as:

- the extension of the geographical area of the cooperation agreement in tourism domain, including some regions which are economically developing;
- the renewal of some tourist agreements with countries such as Czech Republic, Slovakia, ex- Yugoslavian countries;
- within the mixed committees stipulated in the cooperation agreements between Romania and other countries the meetings will be intensified and will be made efficient;
- the materialization of the specifications stipulated in the agreements regarding staff training and perfecting, and information exchanges;
- the participations in activities of some international organisms in order to elaborate documents regarding European integration in what tourism is concerned;
- contact intensifications between the Romanian nongovernmental organizations with professional and scientific character and similar international organizations, between Romanian enterprisers and foreign economical agents in tourism;
- the elimination of the obstacles put against the free circulation of Romanian citizens who travel abroad, and of the foreign citizens who want to visit Romania;
- the integration of the Romanian tourist offer in the European tourist circuit and especially in confluence Euroregions such as Danubian, Carpathian and Black Sea zones.

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