

## **Evolutions of Rural Tourism in Romania and Europe**

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### **Abstract**

*Named the "smoke-free" industry, tourism, is a progress factor for any country, regardless of the stage of its development. Over the years, many conferences have been held internationally and have led to conclude conventions and declarations that have developed cooperation relations between states in the field of tourism that facilitate tourists' travel as well as their safety and security, respecting the ethics principles by all participants in the travel process.*

*Rural tourism has an upward trend, both at European level as well as in Romania. The rural accommodation units, especially the tourist boarding houses and the agrotourist hostels, are in great demand, and that is why their number has started to grow in our country too.*

**Key words:** evolutions, development, rural tourism, boarding houses, agrotourist hostels

**J.E.L. classification:** L83; Z30; Z32

### **1. Introduction**

At international level, the tourism industry is economically, socially and culturally important, as evidenced by international conventions and declarations that have been concluded since the beginning of the 20th century. (eg "Universal Declaration of Human Rights" - December 10, 1948, "Convention on Customs Facilitates for Tourism" - July 4, 1954, "International Convention on Cultural, Social and Economic Rights" - December 16, 1966, "Manila Declaration on World Tourism" - October 10, 1980, "Resolution of the Sixth General Assembly of the WTO from Sofia, which adopted the Declaration of Tourism Rights and the Tourist Code" - September 26, 1985, "Resolution of the Ninth General Assembly of the WTO from Buenos Aires regarding, in particular, travel facilities as well as the safety and security of tourists" - October 4, 1991).

According to Longand Lane (2000), rural tourism has moved in to its second phase of development, its first having been characterised by growth in participation, product and business development, and partnership.

World Tourism Organization statistics show that rural tourism is growing at a much faster rate than international tourism as a whole.

The objective of this paper is to analyse the evolution of rural tourism in Romania and European Countries, because tourism is a source of welfare, and Romania has a great potential in this development.

### **2. Theoretical background**

The literature is abundant in rural tourism, which highlights the importance of this phenomenon. The tourism is an interesting topic, with an intense concern for this issue. Lane and Kastenholz (2015) shows that rural tourism exists before 1970 and analyzed this evolution. Thus, Anghelache, Fetcu and Anghel (2012) conducted an analysis of the evolution of Romanian tourism.

Iorio and Corsale (2010) highlight the fact that rural tourism is an economic diversification strategy. Latkova and Vogt (2012) analyzed the attitude of residents to the development of rural tourism in several regions.

Saxena, Clark, Tove and Ilbery (2007) state that rural areas can do various activities such as tourism, recreation, amusement and consumption of natural foods. Sequeira and Macas Nunes (2008) mentioned the correlation between economic growth and tourism, showing that in all the country, rich or poor, tourism is produced economic growth.

The main components of rural tourism is a village, a farmhouse and holiday in the natural space.

"Agrotourism is a particular form of tourism that aims to combine tourist activity with the economic one practiced in the lodgings. By agrotourism, the natural and anthropic resources of the area are better utilized, contributing to raising the living standards of the rural population. Unlike rural tourism, agrotourism involves: accommodation in the farmhouse, consumption of agricultural products from that household and participation to a greater or lesser extent in specific agricultural activities." (Stănciulescu G.; Lupu N., 2002)

"Agrotourism activity is based on three interdependent elements:

- attraction to natural beauties, ethnography, novelty, charm and country-specific events;
- accommodation and meals, which, even if they are not at hotel standards, must be of high quality and offered with hospitality;
- transport, access roads to the countryside are vital to ensure a continuous flow of tourists."(Tureac C., and all, 2010)

### **3. Evolution of rural tourism and agrotourism in Romania**

The tourism industry in Romania has an accommodation capacity much higher than the number of tourists it manages to attract. Thus, in the first eight months of 2018, the net occupancy rate of accommodation places was 32.8% per total tourist accommodation structures, 0.9% up compared to the same period in 2017. Higher rates of occupancy were recorded in hotels (41.3%), bungalows (31.6%), tourist villas (27.4%), ship accommodation (25.1%), tourist stops (25.0%), hostels (24.7%) and tourist boarding houses (21.2%).

The most popular tourist accommodation units in the Romanian rural area are the tourist boarding houses and the agrotouristic hostels. "Statistic records the first boarding house in Romania in 1991, and in 2017 the number of tourist boarding houses, that is, 1666 exceeds that of hotels, i.e.1577 and the number of agrotourist boarding houses is even higher than 2556. Thus, the two types of boarding houses represent more than 50% of the total number of establishments with accommodation activity." (Dobrescu E. M., Nistoreanu P., 2018)

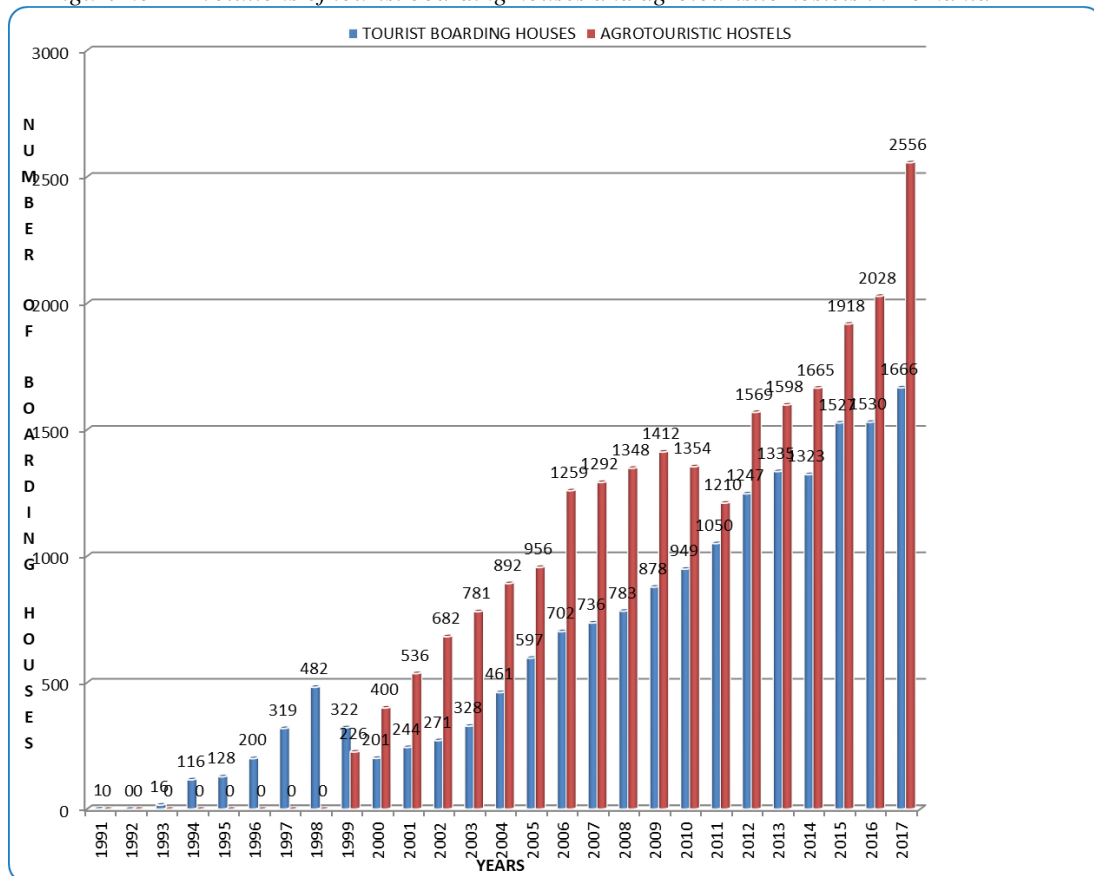
In Romania, tourist boarding houses grow significantly, in 2016 equalizing the number of hotels, i.e. 1530, and in 2017 exceeding by 89 boarding houses the number of existing hotels at national level, regardless of their classification.

Agrotourist hostels have started to be established since 1999, with a number of 226, and increasing values are observed throughout the analyzed period. In 2006, agrotourist hostels exceeded the number of hotels by 200 units and the number of tourist boarding houses by 557 units. In 2016 years the number of agrotourist hostels reaches to 2028. This shows the high demand for agrotourism tourists and the desire of rural people to become entrepreneurs in tourism. This increase in the number of agrotourist hostels is also due to the access of non-reimbursable funds through European projects, which came to support small farmers. (Figure no. 1)

Between 2001 and 2017, the most important tourist accommodation units (the hotel, the tourist boarding house and the agrotourist hostels) in the counties of Alba, Arad, Bihor, Cluj, Hunedoara, Sălaj know an important increase. In 2001 in Bihor county, there was no agrotourist hostel, reaching 90 in 2017, while in Bihor and Hunedoara counties only one tourist boarding house was established in each case. In Alba and Sălaj counties, 2 tourist boarding houses were set up in each case, being fewer than the agrotourist hostels in these counties, with 8 agrotourist hostels in Alba county, and 6 agrotourist hostels in Sălaj county. Most of the agrotourist hostels in 2001 were registered in Cluj county, with 8 units more than the tourist boarding houses in the same county.

In years 2017, Cluj county ranked first, with 121 agrotourist hostels. Alba county ranked second with a number of 108 agrotourist hostels, followed by Bihor county with 90 agrotourist hostels.

Figure no 1 Evolutions of tourist boarding houses and agrotouristic hostels in Romania



Source: INSSE, accessed on 12.07.2018

It is noted that the number of agrotourist hostels exceeds the number of tourist boarding houses and hotels in Cluj, Alba, Bihor, Sălaj counties.

The most sought-after hostels are those that offer tourists as many different and animated possibilities of spending their leisure time, thus the largest demand being recorded at the boarding houses with: organizing craft workshops, micro-farm, hiking, programs of picking herbs, horse riding courses, horse riding in the mountains, themed tours, folklore ensembles and dance lessons, cooking lessons with hosts, sport fishing, cycling, wine tasting, rides by cart / sleigh pulled by horses, holiday carols programs, preparing sponge cakes, decorating sweet gingerbread and much more.

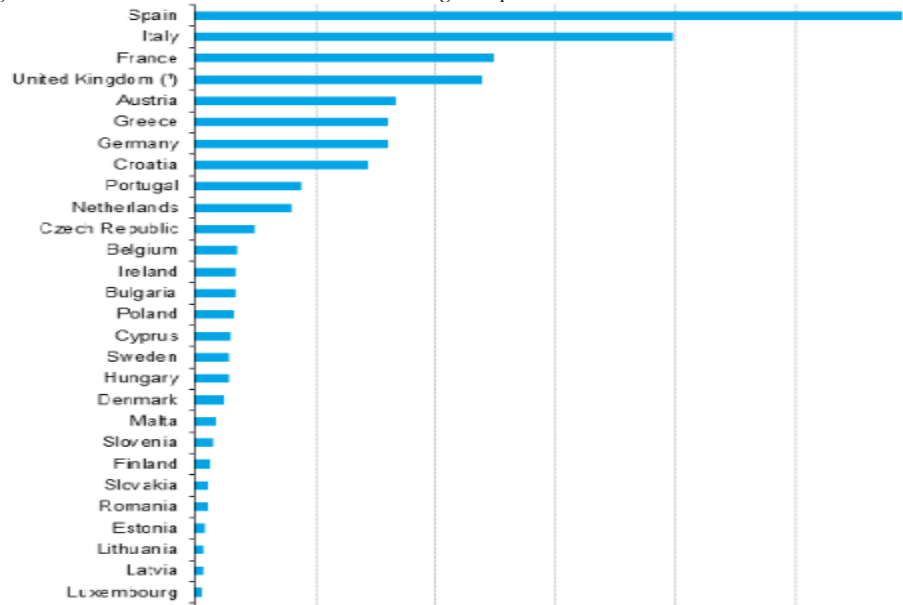
#### 4. Evolutions in tourism in the European Union

According to Eurostat, in 2016 in Europe was 608,000 tourist accommodation establishments and more than 31 million accommodation places. The most accommodations (32.2%) are located in France (5.1 million) and Italy (4.9 million), followed by the United Kingdom, Spain and Germany.

Spain, Italy, France and the United Kingdom hold the majority of the total number of nights spent by non-residents in the EU, with 55%. In 2016 year, Spain was the main tourist destination in the European Union 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.

In the top of the most popular destinations for non-residents in Europe were Spain (295 million nights), Italy (199 million nights), France (124 million nights), the United Kingdom (119 million nights), Austria and Greece.

Figure no 2 Tourist destinations in 2016- nights spent in tourist accommodation establishments



Source: Eurostat

## 5. Conclusions

Rural tourism has had an upward trend in Romania, having the potential to reach out and compete with countries with tradition in tourism.

Tourism in Romania has a huge potential and should represent an important area because it generates economic growth, income, provides jobs and can revive both economically and socially certain areas of particular natural potential, but which faces deindustrialization and depopulation.

Romania has all the prerequisites for rural tourism development - many people in the country, natural potential, low pollution, traditions, a short distance from the tourist offer in Europe.

Thus, tourism should become a national priority and thus turn into an engine for the development of the national economy.

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