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## **Tourism – Part of the Sustainable Local Development**

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### **Abstract**

*Local development could be described as an attempt of global territorial development including economic, social, cultural, political aspects, encouraging the endogenous development -involving all human and financial means which contribute to it and assuring their convergence. It is a process based on the involvement of all interested actors (persons elected at local level, socio-professional groups, associative groups, initiators of projects on a certain territory) but also of the local population.*

*Tourism is one of the most important branches in Romanian economy, having at its disposal a huge development potential. This field can represent a development chance for many areas. The diversity of tourism activities as well as the presence of some of them in the structure of other branches of economy offers tourism the character of an interference branch, having complex, ample connections with the other economic branches, connections that must be taken into account when local development strategies are drawn up.*

*Local authorities are increasingly involved in the development and running of several aspects connected to tourism. This fact is based on the decentralizing tendency found in many countries, which refers to granting more responsibilities to local authorities. They know best what is important for the areas they manage and will do their best to achieve the local development objectives. At the same time, this reflects the stress laid on the involvement of communities in planning tourism and in the developing process of their areas.*

*Tourism has many positive effects and contributes to the economic development of the areas that contain tourism sights directly and indirectly. The currency contribution of tourism, its contribution to forming the community's income, the generation of business and employment opportunities are only a few of the aspects that show the part played by tourism in the overall economic development of an area.*

*Tourism contributes to the sustainable local development. Tourism development must take place both in rural and urban environments.*

Keywords: local development, sustainable tourism, local communities.

JEL Classification: H11, L83, O18.

Tourism has many positive effects and influences directly and indirectly the economic development of the areas that have tourism sights. The supply of currency, its contribution to community's income and to creating business and employment opportunities are only a few elements that show the place played by tourism in the overall economic development of a county, town or village.

## Arguments in Favour of Local Development Policies

Local development could be described as an attempt of global territorial development that is including economic, social, cultural, political aspects, by encouraging endogenous development, mobilizing all human and financial means which contribute to this and making them work together. It is a process based on the involvement of all actors concerned (elected persons, socio-professional groups, associative groups, the promoters of projects referring to a certain territory), but also of the local population.

In view of better analyzing local development, we can give a few definitions of this concept:

- *Local development* is a process of diversifying and developing social and economic activities at the level of a territory, starting with the mobilization and coordination of the existing resources and energies (Profiroiu, 1999, p.8).
- *Local development* is defined as a process of domestic growth and structural changes which lead to an improved standard of living inside the local and regional community (Romanian Academy, 2000, p. 6).
- *Local development* shows the capacity of local groups to adapt to the limitations caused by internationalizing competition, starting with the organizing potential which is characterizes them (Pușcașu, 2000, p. 34).

For a long time, people thought that the development efforts made at local level could hardly be efficient because of globalization. Many local initiatives have shown that local economic initiatives and the involvement of population in local development are essential for any national program of economic revival, which have to adapt and answer a variety of local programs and of various opportunities to solve them. However, this does not mean that local initiatives do not need to be helped by the state. Therefore, local development can not be entirely the task of the central government or of private companies. As a matter of fact, local communities should involve to a larger extent.

We will proceed by analyzing which are the reasons for which the policies of central resources allotting are not capable of obtaining satisfactory results as regards tourism development at local level. These reasons are:

- In many cases, local development policies represent only the result of the central power, capable only to assure the coordination of tourism development programs but unable to mobilize and coordinate local resources. Tourism development at local level refers to the predominant involvement of the local companies and of the local labor force, taking into account the local tourism development decisions, the local control of resources and of the benefits generated by the development of a sustainable tourism;
- The central resource allotting policies aiming at tourism development at local level are not efficient to diminish the social differences existing in the respective zone, are unable to change the local structural circumstances, therefore they are unable to change the life quality of the members living in the respective community;

- The central resource allotting policies are inefficient because they rather kill than encourage the local individual initiative, the principles and action plans being settled at a central level, without taking advices from the local community.
- Tourism development can cause big problems if it is not supported by local community and if a development plan is imposed by the central power. Tourism development at local level must be achieved with the involvement of the natives in all the phases of the planning process.

At local level, the coherence of actions is helped by the relatively low number actions that must be put into practice, by the fact that the tourism sights are close in space, by the easy identification of the main opportunities and problems and by the fact that the responsible tourism factors can be easily reunited and consulted about the future plans.

In order to achieve the local development objectives in view of encouraging tourism, our opinion is that local public authorities should take action mainly for:

- developing the capacity of institutions to draw up and enforce tourism development programs and projects, having in view to diversify the objectives and tourist attractions, the taking over by the state or communities of the material effort for creating infrastructure elements (access ways to areas in which tourism objectives are to develop, creating theme parks, the management of some waste elimination units, etc.);
- improving and developing local infrastructure (road infrastructure, communication infrastructure, the infrastructure represented by the lands that must be rearranged), so that it meets the requirements of tourism;
- developing human resources in view of generating opportunities for sustainable employment, by means of implementing some active policies referring to employment in the tourism field;
- making marketing researches and pre-feasibility and feasibility analyses assisted by some international experts who will gather the development strategies of all the public and private actors involved in tourism development in a coherent framework;
- promoting policies which are in accordance with the particularities of each area.

In our opinion, some tourism development policies of central authorities may kill local initiative. Perhaps, a retirement of central power could help the local initiative. But I can not help thinking about the undeveloped areas with insufficient resources, with low potential for supporting tourism development initiatives. Can this lead to increasing the differences among zones and regions? That is why my opinion is that some local initiatives, especially those regarding the undeveloped zones, must be supported by the central power and not coordinated by it.

Local development has become a major problem in Romania, taking into account the accession to the European Union. It must become one of the strategic priorities for the regional policy, as important as infrastructure and environment. Tourism is one of the important branches of Romania's economy, which has a huge development potential. The diversity of tourism activities as well as the presence of some of

them in the structure of other branches of economy makes tourism an interference branch, having ample, complex connections with the other economic branches, connections that must be taken into account when drawing up local development strategies.

Tourism contributes to the development of areas that are not very rich in economic resources, but with natural and anthropoid resources which. If these resources are made profitable, the respective areas can become tourism attractions and contribute to the development of some localities. By means of tourism, some areas with tourism resources important from the cultural and historic point of view are made profitable. These areas can be included in the tourism tour with relatively small investments for building and arranging some rural tourist boarding houses or some handicraft centres for rural tourism. Thus, tourism is considered a means of diminishing the differences among various regions, those inside regions and the local differences. Apart from including in the tourism tour some tourism sights, tourism development influences territorial development. Mention can be made of the ecologic vocation of tourism which influences local development, because any planning or developing strategy of tourism development must take into account the protection of environment, the spiritual and economic values of local communities, the best use of resources by means of a sustainable approach.

The local development strategy, especially that for the areas that include highly valuable tourism sights, must take into account the fact that an increased number of visitors has positive effects on the economy of the respective area, both directly, by the total receipts from tourist consumption, and indirectly, by the contact and the local bilateral cultural influences, by the possible business opportunities, employment and creating a favourable image of the respective area.

Therefore, tourism contributes to encouraging production in other economic fields, and the need of adapting to tourists' requirements leads to the development of some branches with special destination for tourism, tourism becoming a means of diversifying local economy.

Thus, tourism acts as a stimulating factor for the global economic system, and is essential in the structure of the economic mechanism, being actively involved in the process of developing and modernization a country's economy (Glăvan, 2003, p. 216).

The reform of tourism in Romania will have to create the general framework for a sustainable development in this field, by drawing up some strategies that have in view, among other things, the increase of the living standard of local collectivities, the preservation of natural and anthropoid tourism resources in view of a continuous future exploitation, a better awareness of the idea of preservation by the local population and tourists.

In order to be *local*, an action must have the following characteristics (Romanian Academy, 2000, p. 6):

- to provide means for the economic structure which enables it to adapt to trade internationalization;
- to fight against unemployment and promote employment integration;
- to develop areas in such a manner as to obtain a multiplying effect;

- to answer the people's needs to master the environment they live in, in this period of rapid changes;
- to help diminishing the differences among zones.

The persons that initiate local development actions, including tourism development actions, try to achieve several goals which can be classified into four large fields: development, protecting the existing patrimony, the consolidation of means, improving social cohesion (Romanian Academy, 2000, p. 9).

In the first field, development, there are all those experiences that have in view:

- to create new activities, companies, opportunities;
- to develop local economy, the small and medium-size companies;
- to modernize infrastructures.

The creation of new jobs is implicitly one of these initiatives, but most of the times it is set as a goal directly.

The second field, protecting the existing patrimony, has the following goals:

- to preserve the structure of local economy in order to revive commercial activities and handicraft companies;
- to convince population, either old people or youngsters, to remain in their country, not to emigrate;
- to protect environment.

As regards the third field, the initiatives aim at consolidating the means and the resources of the territory in order to contribute to its development. Such objectives are:

- improving human capital, especially by training, qualification and cultural activities;
- spreading information by means of proper instruments;
- choosing investments in territory in view of development;
- functional services at the population's disposal.

Analyzing the fourth objective, certain initiatives can lead to improving the cohesion of social groups or territories:

- social and professional insertion of persons that have been excluded from work or society, or of those who are about to be excluded.
- a better integration of the undeveloped territories inside a region or a country.

Tourism contributes to sustainable local development. Tourism development must occur both in the towns and in the villages.

### **Sustainable Tourism and Urban Development**

In the present, some of the most popular tourist locations in Europe are the big cities. We can say that these are compulsory destinations for tourists and can be considered advertisements for the respective country. Big towns are important for tourism because they are

residences of national or regional governments, possesses monuments and important buildings; they are places which host important events and various ceremonies. They are business and commercial centres, host night life and provide multiple possibilities for fun. They are preferred because they provide a large variety of entertainments and full services in a relatively small area.

In the last decades, towns have been involved in a fierce competition. Officials decided to take part in it, spending public funds. Towns can be more aggressive than the government in their competition to attract tourists.

Urban tourism can bring important benefits to towns, by means of (Stănciulescu, 2004, p. 34):

- employment and obtaining supplementary income for local community, due to the income it obtains from tourism (entrance taxes for museums and theatres, tourists' expenses in the public administration units, etc.);
- physical and economic regeneration of older towns or of some neighbourhoods, of smaller localities, if they have tourism sights;
- the preservation or restoration of historic buildings and of archaeological sites, keeping thus the historical inheritance of the town;
- the development of some new facilities (cultural canterers, theatres, museums, zoological and botanical gardens, commercial centres, etc.) which can be used not only by tourists but also by natives.

Our opinion is that, if urban tourism is to contribute to the development of localities, then local authorities must take into account:

- the creation or improvement of some tourism attractions specific to urban environment and the expansion of shops networks;
- the focus of tourist facilities in a few areas considered main attractions to assure an efficient infrastructure;
- the achievement of an efficient and ecologic transport system to provide access to the areas that have tourism sights;
- the preservation of the cultural patrimony;
- the improvement of the quality environment in the urban area, especially by controlling the air pollution;
- the creation of efficient information services and of some maps of the area.

However, towns must invest in all or in most of the components that make up the tourism area. It is not enough to invest in one or two components. The main quality of urban tourism does not consist in the fact that the existence of a big concentration of tourists cuts down the costs or increases the business efficiency, but in the fact that a large variety of services is necessary for a limited space, which is very attractive for tourism consumers.

*Cultural tourism* is the form of tourism that can contribute to the development of urban communities. This form of tourism has in view the travel in view of improving knowledge about other places and people, about their life level, their culture and includes travels to destinations that contain historic sites, art masterpieces, monuments,

religious objects and other civilizations (Cosmescu, 1998, p. 68). The tourists' visits can bring important benefits to local communities. The incomes obtained in this manner can be used to improve the facilities, the town infrastructure and to preserve the cultural inheritance. At the same time, they can contribute to increasing the inhabitants' life quality.

### **Sustainable Tourism and Rural Development**

Rural tourism is not a new phenomenon in the EU countries or in Romania. It has been practiced for a long time either spontaneously or organized, as a tourism activity in the rural environment. But what is new is rural tourism. This expansion has a double explanation: on the one hand, the revival of rural regions development and, on the other hand, the diversification of the ways of practicing tourism, rural tourism being an alternative form of tourism which is useful for various categories of tourists. That is why local communities must include tourism in the local development policies.

Tourism development is important for the rural space, both economically and socially. Thus, rural tourism contributes to the economic life of localities by means of (Bran, 1997, p. 131):

- achieving a tourism development policy on short term, closely connected to other sector policies: agriculture, infrastructure, environment protection;
- becoming a support for new businesses and jobs which contributes to a new local and regional development;
- encouraging local traditional activities, especially handicrafts, but also those that can contribute to the development of a specific commerce and new jobs;
- increasing income in the case of the inhabitants of rural areas generated by the use of local resources, agricultural ecologic products for tourists' consumption and the existing tourism potential;
- spurring the process of increasing life quality in the rural environment.

But, on the whole, rural tourism, by means of its seasonal and permanent activities, must develop contributing to the development of localities, by means of (Bran, 1997, p. 176):

- rational exploitation, so that industry - of any type and especially the tourism one, do not degrade resources, but to develop in such a manner as to protect environment;
- equal development chances, the economic activities should bring benefits for resources, local communities and industry on the long run.

Our opinion is that tourism must meet a series of preliminary requirements in order to become a factor of local development:

- preserving an optimum equilibrium among the ecologic, socio-economic and cultural systems of the area when a development process of the respective area is introduced;
- assuring supplementary income sources for the local population;



- diversifying economic activities by increasing the offer of local products and services, this leading to the increase of the tourist attractiveness of the area;
- promoting the exchanges between cultures and populations as a solidarity and social cohesion factor;
- encouraging a coordinated policy of preparing the territory which allows the improvement of competitiveness of the economic activities in the less favoured areas and the supply with infrastructure elements and equipments essential for life quality both for local population and visitors;
- settling partnership agreements among the territorial centres both in the country and abroad to obtain an information flow regarding the new changes in the field, to promote the tourism offer, to collaborate to staff training and to promote some common points of view;
- attracting experts capable of offering professional consulting on marketing matters, preparing accommodation places, catering places, relation with tourists, informative system;
- including of the rural tourism offer - with folk, religious, cultural manifestations of the respective area, which can attract tourists and individualize the respective area - in the possible catalogues or guides issued by the National Authority for Tourism, the Mountain Area Commission and the National Association of Ecologic, Rural and Cultural Tourism;
- financing some training and education programs for specialists in crafts and handicraft activities or in other related activities.

As concerns the rural environment, we mention a type of tourism which has positive effects on local communities: the ecotourism. In the last decades of the last century the tourism industry developed by focusing on nature and on the real cultural values. Eco-tourism is, in fact, the most valuable type of sustainable tourism. This type of tourism has as main goal to preserve the environment and lays stress on educating tourists in matters regarding environment protection and preservation.

Eco-tourism has in view the existence of local communities, especially of their traditions, having an important potential for developing local communities, providing environments interesting from the ecological point of view and associated with traditional ethnic settlements. Eco-tourism aims at diminishing the negative effects on the local and natural environment as well as on local population. The areas with eco-tourism are considered very important. This implies the existence of special rules with positive effects on the traditional life style of local population. The new tourism can facilitate a real interaction between local population and tourists as well as a real interest for protecting the natural areas, both emitting and receiving tourists.

Eco-tourism can diversify the range of traditional economic activities, without isolating or replacing them so that local economy is not subordinated to changes or to external or internal influences. The tourism activities carried out under the umbrella of eco-tourism provide specific opportunities. Local population and the tourism industry are forced to make use of the natural resources in a sustainable manner and to become aware of the valuable natural and cultural goals.

Local public authorities play an essential part in the ecologic tourism. They can act as supporters of eco-tourism principles by means of:

- identifying and arranging the tourism resources which can be exploited by observing the conditions imposed by eco-tourism;
- establishing strict measures of preserving natural environment, of protecting ecosystems and the archaeological and historical goals;
- integrating local communities in tourism development by attracting households, supplying jobs and obtaining incomes from tourism activities;
- not excessive developing of tourism facilities to prevent the overuse of environment by tourists;
- educating tourists about the biologic diversity existing in the area and the preservation means by drawing up and issuing some behaviour norms that tourists must obey.

A type of tourism that can contribute to rural development is cultural tourism. This can be a chance to revive and preserve the cultural traditions. The life style, the architectural one, the occupations, costumes and popular shows are important attractions for tourists. That is why they must be properly rendered valuable and preserved for the benefit of local population.

Rural tourism development can not be achieved rationally and efficiently without a public administration obeying general rules which are in accordance with the characteristics the tourism field, without a coherent, sable but versatile network of efficient institutions, without the control of the tourism activity and of its impact on the communities it manages.

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