

THE IMPACT OF EUROPEAN FUNDS UPON THE TOURISM DEVELOPMENT IN MACROREGION ONE FROM ROMANIA

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Abstract

The present research paper comprises a review of the financing tools that were accessed both by the public administrations and by private enterprises from Macroregion One in Romania for tourism related activities. The authors' attempt is to measure their efficiency by means of the tourist flows in the visited destinations. In its first part, our case study presents the current situation and the research methodology, while the last and most consistent part of the paper comprises the results obtained and discusses their implications and consequences. The last part of the paper highlights the conclusions that may be drawn given the findings of the undertaken research and analyses.

1. Introduction

The development of the European Union, together with the realities generated by the accession of new members into the Union has led to the need to support the less developed economies and to compensate infrastructural discrepancies among the Member States of the European Community. Given the need to ensure a better management of the budgets, respectively of an increased control regarding the manner in which the financial resources of the European Union are spent in the context of the resources' limits, there has been developed a complex system of their allotment based on the competition of projects in order to access available funds. Thus, financial support is granted by written proposals drawn up according to the requirements of the standardized forms designed for the elaboration of project proposals. Any application process concerning the acquiring of the European financial support implies a succession of clear stages, that enlist a series of compulsory activities both before receiving the financial support, during the development of the project and afterwards. The European Union has elaborated policies regarding its further development; starting from these ones, the priorities identified are being constantly supported by means of the allotted budgets. In order to gain access to these available funds, when elaborating their project proposals, applicant institutions must compel to the priorities established by the Community.

Like all other projects, any project financed by the European Union may be defined as "any activity that infers a complex and single one-time activity with a duration time (beginning and end) and cost (resources) constraints, and that aims to achieve a definite result. A project can be described and defined by the performance result to be achieved and by the time and cost constraints" (Görög and Smith, 1998, p. 10). According to specialized literature (Lock, 1996, p. 8), an efficient and performing project management must reach a balance among: time limitations (set by the European Union), established resources (the fixed budget) and constraints, procedures and standards (required by the European Union). Traditionally, there are three constraints that characterize any human undertaking and, consequently, any project is subject to being performed and delivered under these constraints: scope, time, and cost. This is also referred to as the Project Management Triangle, where each side represents a constraint. One side of the triangle cannot be changed without affecting the others. A further refinement of the constraints separates product "quality" or "performance" from scope, and turns quality into a fourth constraint (Lock, 1996, p. 8). The time limit refers to the amount of time available for project completion; the cost constraint refers to the budgeted amount available for the project, and the scope limitation refers to what must be done to produce the project's aimed result; obviously, these three constraints often compete against each other: increased scope typically means increased time and increased cost, a tight time constraint could mean increased costs, and reduced scope, and a tight budget could mean increased time and reduced scope (Lock, 1996, p. 8; Görög and Smith, 1998, p. 10).

Keeping in mind the increased complexity of the communitarian projects, as opposed to the projects carried out by private enterprises with private resources, when they are used for the purpose of spending European financial resources, elements such as: goal analysis, goal establishment, project proposal writing, establishing activities, the team and its members, budgetary reports, become all key stages within the analysis of the projects that will be financed. Because of the fact that the financing institution does not intend to gain any profit from the granted financial support, it only focuses on promoting a certain policy, this being its only means to retrieve its investment or credit. Therefore, when the community decides to support different projects, it mainly focuses on the anticipated results, on their long-lasting development, and on the means of their communication and promotion. The fact that the project is unique, has a limited duration and requires thorough planning offers very important control tools for the institution that grants a financial aid for its implementation. In our case, the European Union has the possibility to monitor closely the manner in which the European financial resources are spent. The human resources involved in the carrying out of projects are most often organized using a matrix structure. Therefore, projects benefit from the advantage of gathering a team of specialized persons, thus having better chances to become successful (Richman, 2002, pp. 17-26).

Financial aids granted to Romania by the European Union can be split into three types: European non-refundable funds (offered through project auctions; their beneficiaries are various local actors: public institutions, NGOs and private enterprises, or any combination among them), public investments (mainly aimed at infrastructure development and environment protection; the available financial resources are considerable), and direct institutional support (both through technical assistance and by means of equipments). The aid can also be classified as: pre-accession funds (established with the purpose of supporting the future member states to reach a level of development that enables them to integrate into the Communitarian space) and, respectively, structural instruments (aiming at continuing to support the development of the new member states, facilitating their proper development and granting them a chance to increase their competitiveness). The projects relevant for our case study are those that aimed at the development of tourism in itself and, especially, of rural tourism. Before Romania's integration into the European Union, tourism mainly benefited from two pre-accession programs: PHARE (with its component for social and regional development) and SAPARD (with the axis for rural development). Today, Regio, implemented within POR 2007-2013, is the most significant program for regional development and tourism; the rural tourism is supported by the National Program for Rural Development, implemented by the Ministry for Agriculture.

2. Material and method of the case study

Keeping in mind the essential role of the tourism within Romania's economic development (both at local and national level) on one hand, and the increased complexity of the financing programs implemented with the support of the European

Community during the pre-accession period and after joining the EU, on the other hand, our intent is to realize a case study regarding the efficiency of the tourism related European financing program implemented at the level of the counties that constitute Macroregion One.

From an administrative point of view, Romania consists of 41 counties and the Municipality of București; these ones constitute eight regions of development: North-East (Bacău, Botoșani, Iași Neamț, Suceava and Vaslui); South-East (Brăila, Buzău, Constanța, Galați, Tulcea and Vrancea); South-Muntenia (Argeș, Călărași, Dâmbovița, Giurgiu, Ialomița, Prahova and Teleorman); South-West Oltenia (Dolj, Gorj, Mehedinți, Olt and Vâlcea), West (Arad, Caraș-Severin, Hunedoara and Timiș), North-West (Bihor, Bistrița-Năsăud, Cluj, Maramureș, Sălaj and Satu Mare), Center (Alba, Brașov, Covasna, Harghita, Mureș and Sibiu) and București-Ilfov (București and Ilfov county). Further on, the eight development regions create four macroregions of development: Macroregion One (regions North-West and Center), Macroregion Two (regions North-East and South-East), Macroregion Three (regions București-Ilfov and South Muntenia) and Macroregion Four (regions South-West and West). Obviously, this type of administrative organization fully responds to the manner in which the European Union regards its development, respectively by focusing on local development (especially stimulated and supported by means of programs such as *Regio*); the key aims of the program are to eliminate existing disparities among Romania's different regions.



Figure 1: Romania's Eight Regions of Development

The authors intend to analyze the impact of European funds accessed in Macroregion One upon the improvement of the tourism infrastructure and for the increase of competitiveness and attractiveness of the local destinations and cultural attractions of this region. An attempt shall be also made to measure this impact.

Due to its characteristics, this case study is realized by the collection and analysis of secondary data from:

- the websites of the North-West and Center Development Agencies (which represent the intermediary organisms for implementing some of the analyzed programs), and the websites of the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development, respectively of the National Payment Agency for Rural Development and Fishing (for the selection of those projects aimed at rural development based on tourism);

- the Romanian National Institute of Statistics (NIS): facts and figures concerning the flows of tourists registered in the analyzed regions (the following indicators have been considered: arrivals in tourist accommodations, overnight stays in tourist lodging facilities and average durations of stay in accommodation facilities).

Our main goal is to determine to which extent the accessed European financial aids manage to increase certain destinations' competitiveness and attractiveness, to rehabilitate tourist attractions; to establish new accommodation facilities, or to modernize old lodgings, have contributed to the intensification of the tourist activity within the counties and regions of the beneficiaries (either destinations or enterprises, respectively both of them).

The research methodology implies several stages:

- to realize a comprehensive list of projects financed through the two Development Agencies, North-West and Center, and to identify the two types of beneficiaries: enterprises and destinations;
- to present the evolution of Romania's tourist accommodation facilities during the time-span 1990-2009 in general, and between 2004 and 2008¹ in particular;
- to identify the localities and destinations, respectively the counties that have benefited from European financial support and to select from among these three counties considered representative for each of the two regions of development, which are going to represent the actual basis of our current analysis;
- to determine the development of the tourists flows at national, regional (Macroregion One), county and local levels;
- to analyze the evolution of tourist demand for these destinations, based on the facts and figures provided by NIS in the *Tempo Online* database;
- to draw up certain conclusions regarding the results obtained and referring to the impact of the accessed financial resources upon the beneficiaries, both from the perspective of the various localities and concerning the development of tourism in the analyzed areas².

1 Most of the data used in this paper are provided by NIS; unfortunately, many of the figures cannot be used and interpreted because of the fact that throughout the considered time-span they were collected and reported in different manners; such situations are going to be properly pointed out when they are going to occur in this paper.

2 We ought to point out the fact that, throughout our analysis we are only going to refer to the destinations that have benefited from European financial support and for which statistics regarding the development of tourism are available as well.

3. Results and discussions

In order to be able to realize this research regarding the impact of the programs with European financial support upon the regions of their implementation, we have centralized the programs that were implemented starting by the end of the 1990s; two constituent though not exhaustive lists including the tourism related programs financed from European resources³ have been drawn up for Macroregion One; Appendix 1 contains a summarized situation of the tourism-related programs that have benefitted from European support in both of the analyzed regions of development (North-West and Center)⁴. According to the information contained in Appendix 1, we may present the situation of the identified financed programs in Macroregion One. Throughout the past ten years, a total number of 811 projects have received European financial support (290 in the North-West and 521 in Center) until now. Figures 2a, 2b and 2c present the main types of projects that have been financed:

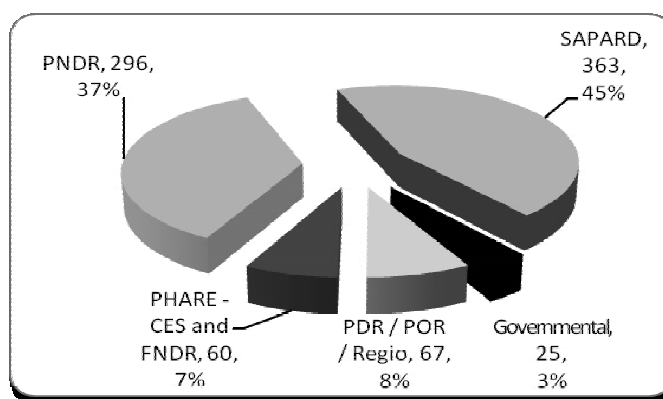


Figure 2a: Projects financed since 1998 by types of programs

Source: Authors' calculations

3 We should mention the fact that the two Development Agencies (North-West and Center), which represent the intermediary organisms established for the accession, implementation and monitoring of the programs financed by the European Union (through pre-accession, structural, cohesion and operational funds), do not possess complete lists of the programs thus financed. These institutions do not draw up reports concerning the fields of the implemented projects – such as tourism, in our case – nor do they have clear calendars of their financing activities. This situation makes our attempt a rather difficult task when it comes to determining the exact time-spans of the implemented programs. Thus, because of this unfortunate situation, our lists are consistent but not exhaustive; still they allow us to realize a representative case study.

4 A consistent list of the projects can be found in Appendices 1 and in two of the dissertations of Marius Emil Coroş (Coroş, 2010, pp. 46-57).

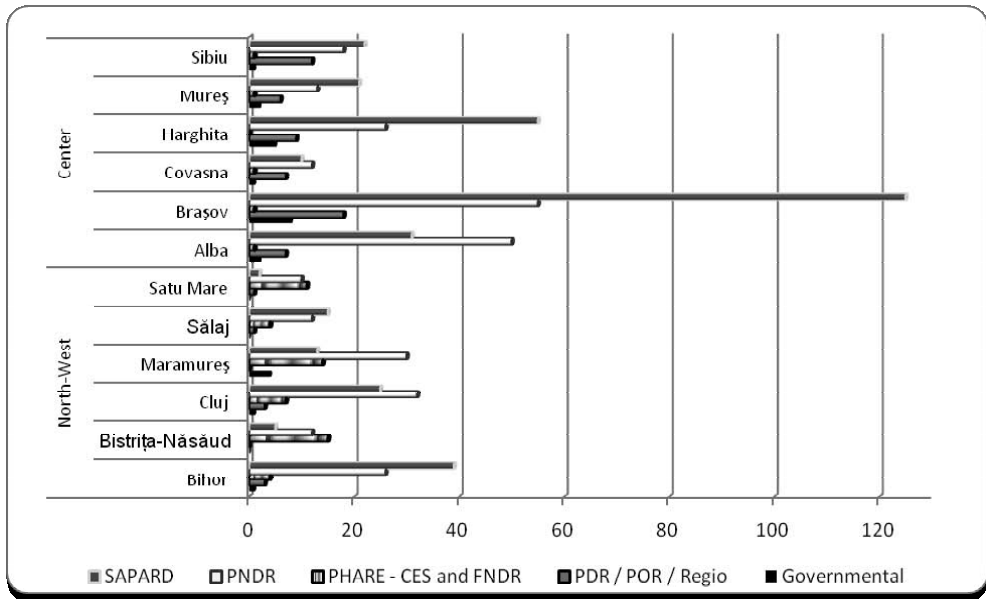


Figure 2b: Types of projects financed by regions and counties
Source: Authors' calculations

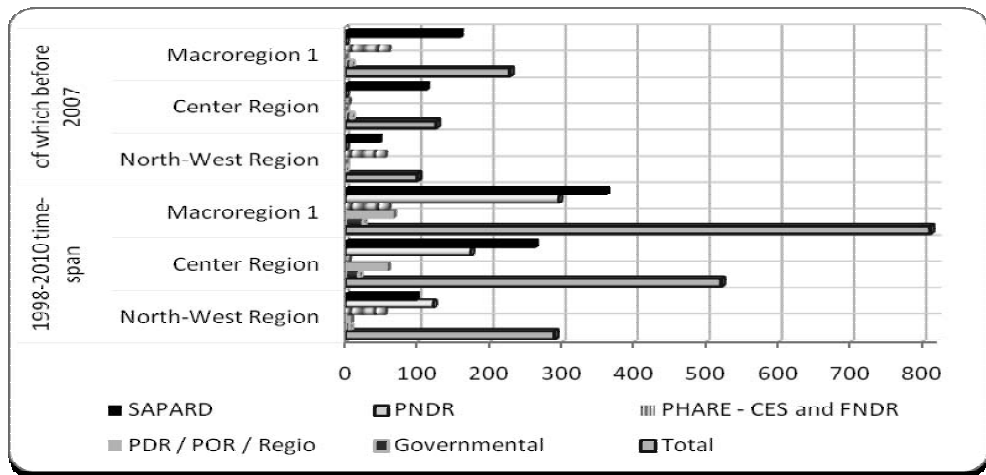


Figure 2c: Projects financed since 1998 by regions until now and prior to 2007
Source: Authors' calculations

Several remarks ought to be made regarding the programs thus financed. Only three of these projects have simultaneously implied two different counties, therefore generating an impact upon more destinations. Generally speaking, the Center Region has registered by far more projects, which fact confirms its greater interest towards the development of tourism. Around 84% of the supported projects have aimed and

aim at the development of enterprises and small individual or family business, while only a very low number of the projects regard regions and localities, roughly 16%:

Table 1: Projects financed per regions and by the types of beneficiaries

Regions	Projects	Number of Projects			Percentages		
		Total	Destination	Enterprise	Private Individuals and Family Business	Destination	Enterprise
North-West Region	290	50	205	35	17.24%	70.69%	12.07%
Center Region	521	84	373	64	16.12%	71.59%	12.28%
Macroregion 1	811	134	578	99	16.52%	71.27%	12.21%

Source: Authors' calculations

The distribution of projects, by their main types of beneficiaries (private enterprises or individual and family businesses, and respectively destinations), per regions of development and counties is presented in the graphic representation given below (Figure 3):

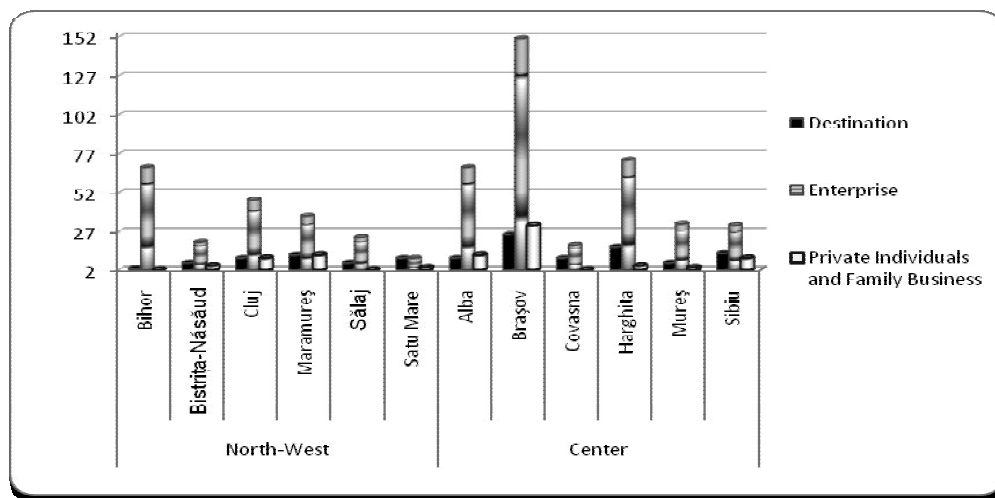


Figure 3: Distribution of financed projects' beneficiaries in Macroregion One
Source: Authors' calculations based on www.adrnord-vest.ro, www.adrcentru.ro and www.apdrp.ro

It is hardly possible not to notice the fact that, within the Center Region of development, there has been put a somewhat higher stress on the projects involving the development of tourist destinations, while in the North-West Region there can be noticed a clear preference towards projects contributing to the development of private enterprises. This remark needs to be made, because of the fact that we are interested in determining the involvement and interest of public institutions as applicants for European funds. We believe that their true involvement has the capacity to increase the attractiveness of destinations in a higher degree than that

one of private enterprises⁵. Projects financed are highly dominated by SAPARD (mostly before Romania's integration into the European Union) and by structural programs (especially during the past two years). We dare to point out the fact that it is beneficial that private entrepreneurs have accessed European financial resources in order to develop their businesses but their impact can be expected only to be a limited one as long as their initiatives are not really supported by local, regional and national administrative projects. To make it clear, a small rural boarding house, that offers high quality services cannot have a major impact upon the tourist destination where it is situated, unless there is also an appropriate support infrastructure. This is exactly the point where local authorities must get involved.

The dynamics and the development of the Romanian tourist accommodation facilities and capacity must be also presented because we strongly believe that there is a tight relationship between the lodging capacity and the overall development of the Romanian tourist industry throughout the past 20 years. For a very long time it has become clear that, in Romania, the hotels continue to dominate over villas and boarding houses of lower classifications (respectively one, two or three stars or daisies).

Romania's accommodation capacity was massively developed during the 1970s, in the genuine communist era; most of the hotels that were built then were one and two stars establishments. Unfortunately, due to the late start of the privatization process and to the scandals related to it, most of the hotels have not yet been renovated and refurbished; therefore, Romania's lodging facilities are still dominated by a huge number of accommodation places of low categories. Of course, the past 20 years have brought a quantitative growth of the lodging facilities, but the number of bed-places has not suffered significant changes. Despite of the fact that new lodgings were built, with a higher qualitative offer, most of them are small hotels, villas or boarding houses; there are rather few cases of investments in large-scale accommodation facilities of higher classifications.

5 Most of the projects financed by European funds were elaborated by microenterprises and very few by small and medium enterprises, thus they can be expected only to generate a reduced influence upon the development of the destination they belong to.

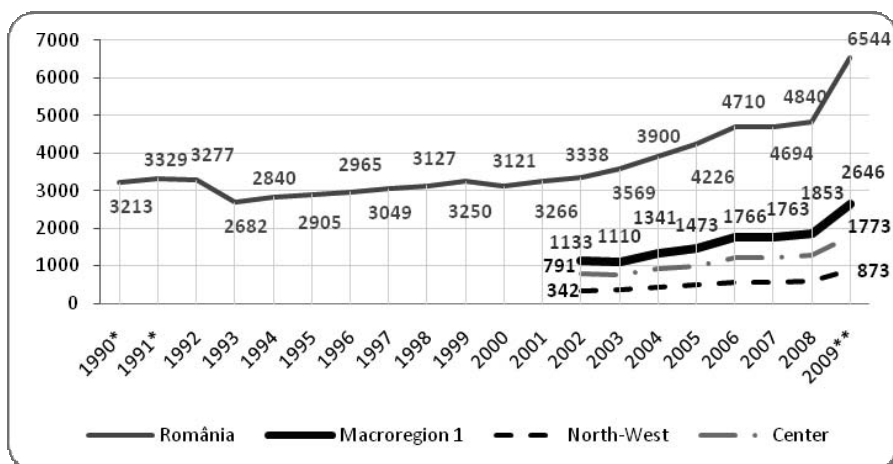


Figure 4: The development of the accommodation facilities in Romania and in Macroregion One between 1990 and 2009

Source: Authors' calculations based on *ASR 2002-2009* and on *MDRT 2010*⁶

Analyzing the data provided by the Ministry of Tourism, we may reveal the fact that in 2009, from the total of 6,544 authorized tourist accommodation units, 1,538 possessed less than ten bed-places (473 of these establishments having, in fact, less than five bed-places), while the remaining 5,006 had at least ten bed-places:

Table 2: The structure of the tourist accommodation facilities in Macroregion One, according to the number of bed-places, by 2009⁷

	Total	Less than 5 Bed-Places	% Less than 5 Bed-Places	Less than 10 Bed-Places	% Less than 10 Bed-Places
Romania	6,544	473	7.23 %	1,538	23.50 %
Macroregion 1	2,646	245	9.26 %	834	31.52 %
North-West	873	100	11.45 %	283	32.42 %
Bihor	195	8	4.10 %	39	20.00 %
Bistrița-Năsăud	37	1	2.70 %	4	10.81 %
Cluj	223	25	11.21 %	52	23.32 %
Maramureș	331	61	18.43 %	175	52.87 %
Sălaj	40	1	2.50 %	5	12.50 %

⁶ For the years of 1990 and 1991, the total number of accommodation facilities also included schooling dormitories and facilities that could be rented to tourists; in 2009, the “surprising” increase in the number of accommodation units must be regarded in the context of the fact that the National Authority for Tourism (Ministry of Tourism) authorizes all accommodation units, while the NIS only takes into consideration units with at least ten bed-places beginning with 2009, and with a minimum of five bed-places until 2008.

⁷ Own calculations based on the authorization certificates issued by the Ministry of Tourism (*MDRT 2010*).

	Total	Less than 5 Bed-Places	% Less than 5 Bed-Places	Less than 10 Bed-Places	% Less than 10 Bed-Places
Satu-Mare	47	4	8.51 %	8	17.02 %
Center	1,773	145	8.18 %	551	31.08 %
Alba	122	9	7.38 %	36	29.51 %
Braşov	794	63	7.93 %	244	30.73 %
Covasna	95	10	10.53 %	28	29.47 %
Harghita	293	24	8.19 %	112	38.23 %
Mureş	137	5	3.65 %	13	9.49 %
Sibiu	332	34	10.24 %	118	35.54 %

Source: Authors' calculations based on MDRT 2010

We consider necessary to point out the fact that the figures presented in the above table fully support our previous statement, respectively that Romania's tourism relies, in a very high degree, on small and very small accommodation facilities; therefore, the decision of NIS to eliminate from the statistical reports the lodgings having less than five bed-places (until last year), and to ignore, nowadays, the facilities having less than ten places (since last year) has led to a diminishing of the quality of the information provided by Romania's National Institute for Statistics. As anyone may easily notice, at the level of the Macroregion One (which after the seaside, rejoins some of the most important Romanian tourist destinations, both from the perspective of the available accommodation capacity and of the flows of tourists), over a third of the accommodation capacity is represented by rural and agritourist boarding houses, having a rather low number of bed-places; in fact, these are the accommodation facilities preferred by tourists when they visit Maramureş, Alba, Braşov, Covasna, Harghita or Sibiu, and other counties.

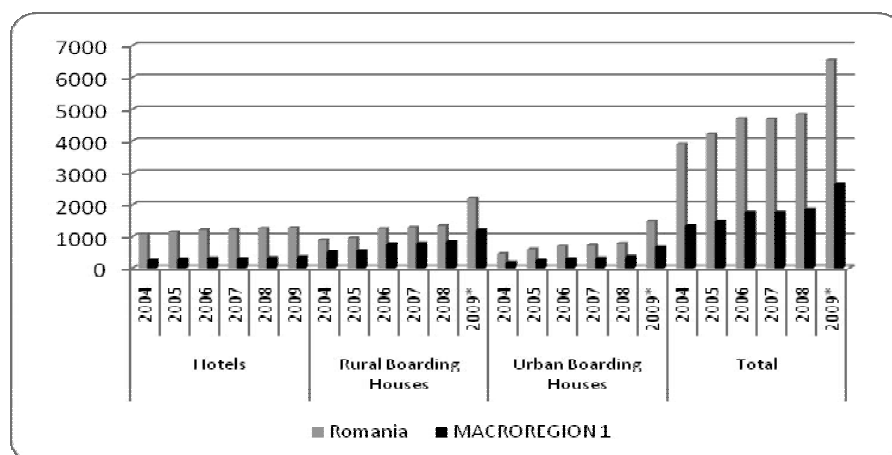


Figure 5: Development of accommodation facilities at national level and in the Macroregion One, during the Time-Span 2004-2009

Source: Authors' calculations based on ASR 2002-2009 and on MDRT 2010

Analyzing Figure 5⁸, one may easily notice that, while hotels have had a relatively constant development, tourist boarding houses (urban, rural and agritourist) and also some of the other accommodation facilities have known a continuous and sustained growth; therefore, we may conclude that authorities ought to grant them a higher attention and importance in order to support the development of these lodging facilities.

The graphic representations included in Appendix 2 present the development of the arrivals and overnight stays, respectively the average duration of stay and the net usage index of the available accommodation capacity. Romania's tourist activity may be briefly characterized as it follows:

- Both Romanian tourism in its ensemble, and the tourist activity of the North-West and Center regions of development are strongly affected by seasonality; the season mainly occurs during the summer time; the development region North-West seems to slightly benefit from a somewhat extended season during the spring and autumn months;
- Throughout the analyzed time-span, at the level of the entire country, the average durations of stay have registered continuous decreases; moreover, the average durations of stay are very low during the peak-season, too, both at a national level (being a little over four nights), and also at a regional level (being less than four nights); they correspond to the so-called short-breaks and not to the type of tourism that may be practiced in the analyzed areas (here we explicitly refer to spa tourism, normally characterized by long-term sojourns); this situation proves the poor exploitation of the existing tourist potential at the level of Macroregion One;
- The very reduced levels of the net usage indices of the accommodation capacity enable us to conclude that, for the entrepreneurs, the lodging activity is a rather unprofitable one (or, on the opposite side, when the existing accommodation capacity is exploited underground or in the grey or black economy⁹, it becomes truly profitable);
- Obviously, a dramatic decline of all measured indices may be remarked throughout the entire past year and a half (mainly due to the economic crisis faced by Romania).

In order to accomplish our case study, we have opted for a comparative analysis in the tourists' flow at the level of the counties and towns¹ from the two regions that constitute Macroregion One; a special focus is set on a total number of six counties, three from the North-West region of development (Bihor, Cluj and Maramureş) and three from the Center region of development (Alba, Braşov and Sibiu). There are several aspects that have been taken into consideration when making this selection:

8 See footnote one from above.

9 Another point that clearly needs the intervention of the state is the fight against illicit economic activities and tax evasion.

- The counties of Maramureș (from North-West) and Alba, Brașov and Sibiu (from Center) enjoy the most developed rural tourism in Romania;
- The counties Bihor, Brașov and Sibiu concentrate the largest part of the accommodation facilities (both in number and also in bed-places) from Macroregion One; at the same time they are, too, the most attractive tourist destinations of the regions they belong to;
- The county of Cluj represents the most important business tourism destination from Macroregion One;
- Maramureș is a key destination for religious tourism;
- The counties of Brașov, Cluj and Sibiu (with the municipality of Sibiu being together with Luxembourg the European Capital of Culture in 2007) represent the most important cultural tourism destinations from Macroregion One;
- From the perspective of the representativeness of our case study, we may prove that the selection of the six counties enables us to determine a representative sample, because, according to the Table 3, the selected counties add up around 65% of the projects financed in Macroregion One, meaning about 62% of the projects from the North-West region and over 67% of the granted financial aid in the case of the development region Center (Table 3);

Table 3: Projects financed in the six selected counties before 2007

	North-West				Center				Macroregion One
	Bihor	Cluj	Maramureș	Total	Alba	Brașov	Sibiu	Total	
Destination	0	2	10	29	1	1	1	5	34
Enterprise	23	14	10	69	13	43	9	101	170
Individual/ Family Businesses	0	2	2	4	3	14	0	20	24
Total	23	18	22	63 of 102	17	58	10	85 of 126	148 of 228

Source: Authors' calculations based on Appendix 1

- From the point of view of the accommodation capacity, the six counties concentrate 75.50% of the existing capacity in Macroregion One in 2009 (authors' calculations based on the Database of Authorized Lodging Facilities in Romania);
- Finally, due to some reasons that are strictly related to the possibility of measuring the impact of the financed projects upon the identified destinations, we are going to analyze the development of tourism only in those localities that have benefited from European financial support through programs prior to the start of POR¹⁰ 2007-2013 (it is obvious that the evaluation of the impact of these projects that are still under implementation is a rather difficult task).

After having processed the information contained in Appendix 1, we selected a total number of 34 projects that have been accessed by local and regional public administrations and which had focused on the development of localities and regions, and,

¹⁰ POR: Programul Operațional Regional – in English: Regional Operational Program.

respectively, 194 projects implemented by private enterprises and individual or family businesses, that mainly aimed at the modernization and building of accommodation facilities. The 228 identified projects influence at the level of Macroregion One a number of 161 individual destinations, three regional tourist destinations, ten areas that are not exactly mentioned, and, of course, their neighboring areas, too (once a destination is selected, tourists also visit its surrounding areas; moreover, tourists – especially foreign ones – who visit a certain destination, tend to travel around the country and visit other destinations, too, and this means either close ones or others situated farther away). Regarding the six selected counties, the projects influence 93 individual destinations and five unspecified ones. Next, we are going to analyze the tourists' flows at the levels of the selected destinations and areas.

Because of the limited available space, the current analysis shall resume to present tourist flows, in general, and not by types of accommodation facilities.

Spa destinations of local interest, such as Brețcu, Malnaș or Vâlcele from Covasna county, or Remetea and Sântimbru from Harghita county were practically inexistent on the Romanian tourist map (according to NIS, which has not registered any figures concerning their tourist flows between 2001 and 2008); these resorts were recently rehabilitated, being thus granted the chance to develop. Similar situations occur in many other cases, such as the medieval fairs from Arduș and Beltiug (Satu-Mare County) or the baths from Miercurea-Sibiului and Ocna-Sibiului (Sibiu County) or the baths from Cojocna, Someșeni and Turda (Cluj County). The recent renovation of the salt mine from Turda (Cluj county) is another relevant example. Shortly after the official opening following its renovation, at the beginning of 2010, during one day it received over 3,500 guests, reaching during its first six months of exploitation 230,000 visitors (Monitorul de Cluj, 2010).

Appendix 3 presents a detailed situation concerning the development of the tourist activity at the level of the analyzed destinations and towns. Below, there follows a synthetic presentation of the most important conclusions drawn starting by the graphic representations:

- with the exception of a few particular situations, the number of tourists has increased in both regions of development – North-West and Center; this fact is absolutely normal under the conditions of the growth trend registered by tourist flows at national level; regrettably, this trend was suddenly stopped beginning with 2009, when the economic crisis deepened;
- slight tendencies of diminishment in the tourists' number were registered in the cases of certain mountainous destinations (Predeal and Poiana-Brașov, from Brașov County; Borșa, from Maramureș County), while others (such as: Băișoara, from Cluj County; and Cavnic, from Maramureș County) followed the general trend of growth;
- rural tourism and agritourism – as anyone has expected – have registered significant growth rates at the level of all the traditional and recognized rural destinations;

- spa tourism has not registered any major developments, generally having a constant evolution;
- with the exception of the Alba County, regarding the average durations of stay, all other destinations are facing a constant diminishment, especially in the cases of mountainous and spa destinations; unfortunately, at national level, all Romanian destinations face the same problem, having relatively low average durations of stay.

4. Conclusions

After having analyzed the different indices specific to tourism, we may point out the fact that Romanian tourism, and especially the one carried out in Macroregion One, have known a favorable development from the point of view of the increase in tourists received. This situation was mainly generated by the general increasing trend of the mobility of both Romanians and foreign tourists, which was doubled by a slight improvement in the quality of services provided and by a somewhat more differentiated tourist offer. Of course, the fact that the year 2007 found itself under the positive influence of Sibiu as a European Capital of Culture has also played a key role in the favorable development registered by the industry of services. On one hand, the years prior to the mentioned cultural event have represented the time-span when local and central administrative institutions focused on actively increasing the attractiveness of Romania's tourist offer, especially through their effort to rehabilitate, modernize and improve the support infrastructure in the area of Sibiu, and to more intensely promote the destination, etc. On the other hand, we cannot but insist upon the fact that the average durations of stay, registered both at national level and at that one of Macroregion One, have positive connotations under no circumstances. This situation can be relatively easily explained through the fact that the Romanian tourist product (be it a spa, mountain, rural, urban, religious, cultural or seaside one) is underdeveloped, and it does not possess the necessary features in order to provide sufficient reasons in favor of extending tourists' sojourns.

From the point of view of the impact generated by the projects financed by European resources, this research revealed the fact that the vast majority of the implemented projects focused on the development of enterprises and generated (as anyone could have expected) small impact upon the hosting destinations. It is obvious that a low number of small-scale projects concentrated on enterprises cannot generate major effects upon the regions the applicants belong to. Clearly, as anyone could have anticipated, projects initiated by local or regional administrations and, especially, joint projects implemented for the development of destinations have generated positive impacts upon their hosting regions and, moreover, they continued to stimulate the development of the various destinations that have benefited from a European financial support.

A crossed analysis between the data included in Appendices 1 and 3¹¹ enables us to conclude that, in a relatively high number of cases, when projects were financed at the initiative of private enterprises, financial support reached less known areas, having thus poorer chances to generate in the near future any positive effects upon the beneficiaries' destinations.

It is regrettable to notice that despite the fact that the European Union grants a financial aid for the development of tourist destination brands, at the level of Macroregion One there have not been financed any projects for this purpose¹².

The initiative proven by the local and regional public administrations can be noticed and measured through the high quota of the financed and implemented projects for a long-lasting development and for the development of access and transport infrastructure, as well as through the development of the tourist infrastructure in the development regions North-West and Center. The impact of the projects financed for the rehabilitation, conservation and exploitation as tourist attractions of the fortresses and citadels of Alba Iulia, Sighișoara, Brașov or Târgu-Mureș, respectively those of renovating medieeval churches and old towns' centers shall be beyond all a positive one but not a very quick. The rate of return of such projects is a high and steady one, but it also needs a rather long time to be accomplished. Projects such as the Route of Mineral and Spring Waters in the counties of Covasna and Harghita, the Circuit of Medieval Fairs from Northern Transylvania, in the county of Satu-Mare, or the revitalization and re-inclusion of certain spa destinations of local interest (such as: Cojocna and Turda, from Cluj County, etc.) in the national and international tourist circuits are expected to contribute to the development of Romanian tourism in a significant measure. Nevertheless, we cannot but notice the fact that the projects financed for the development and perfecting of the specialized personnel in tourism activities are merely present among the financed projects; this, together with the development of the tourist infrastructure and the rehabilitation of certain resorts or the creation of new ones (such as Terra, on the Black Sea Coast or Cavnice in Maramureș) must constitute a priority of the Romanian public administration.

The very low number of financed projects and, implicitly, the low rate of absorption of the European financial resources, have been explained through the applicants' reduced capacity to contribute with the compulsory co-financing for many years. In addition, this is a key problem that requires the intervention of the national authorities, which, in fact, does not represent any novelty nowadays.

11 For further details, see Appendices 4 and 5 (Coroș, 2010, pp. 60-64).

12 We presume that it is also the case of the other regions of development; the final part of July 2010 has brought into light a new branding project of Romania as a tourist destination – the first one relying on European funds; the municipality of Cluj-Napoca has also submitted a small-scale project for tourism development and for the creation of a tourist brand of the city; the projects still expects to be approved.

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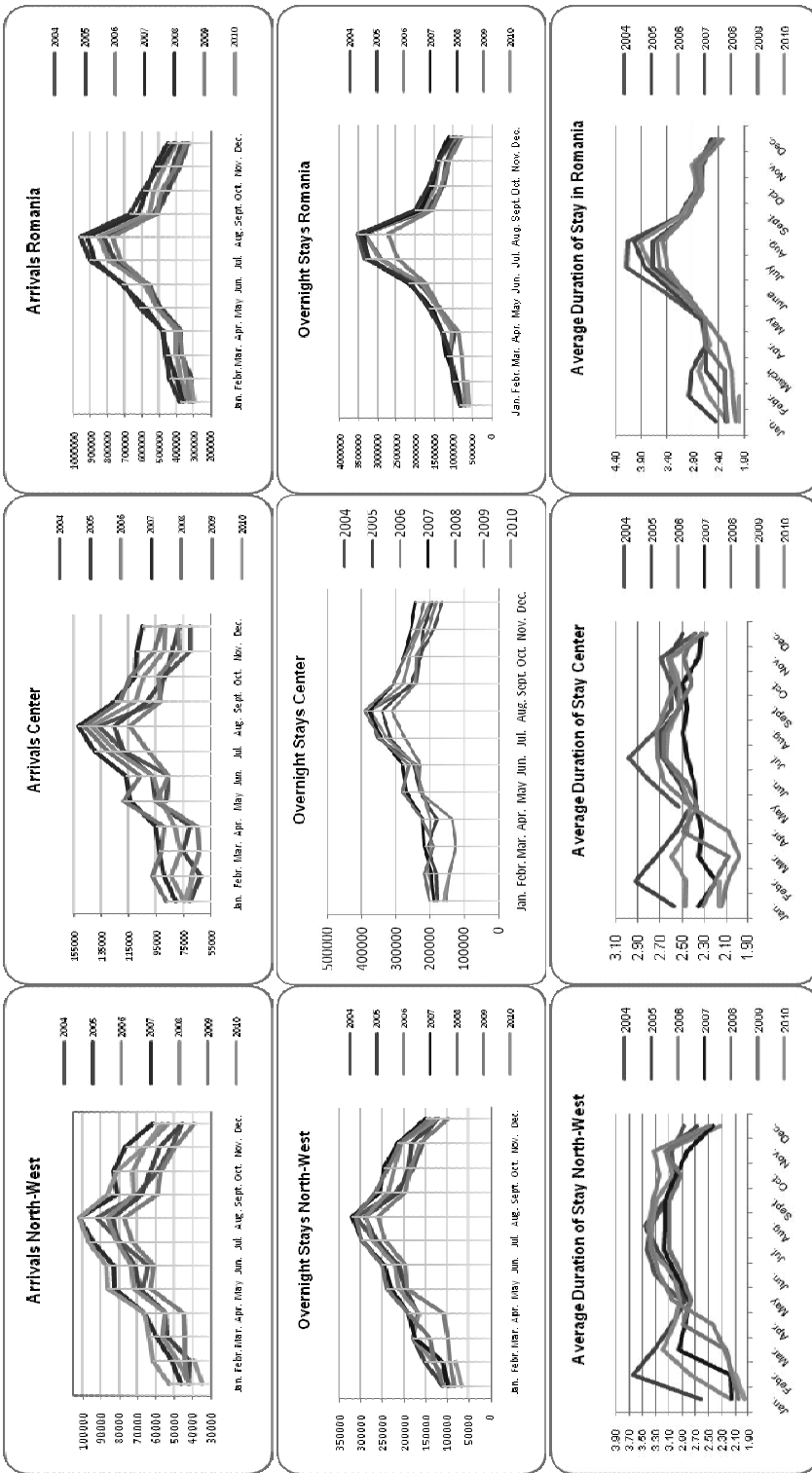
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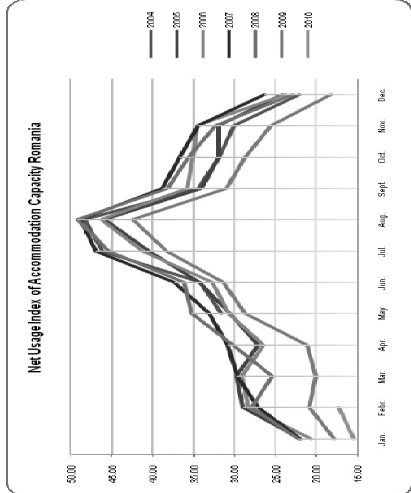
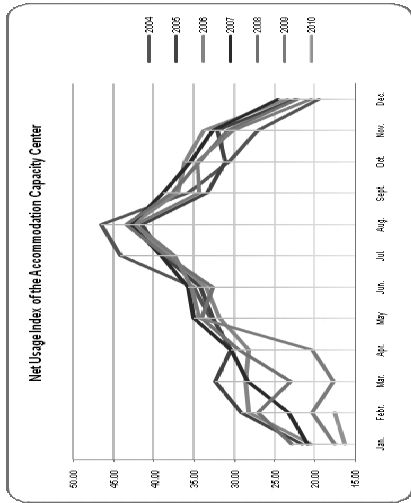
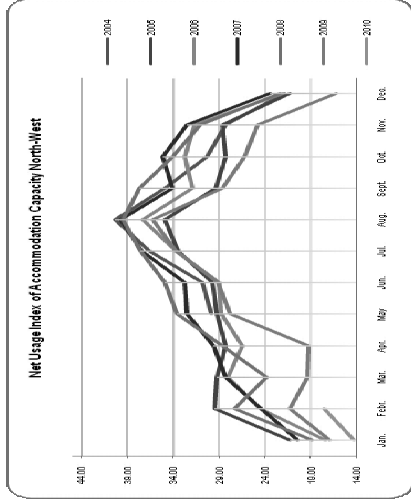
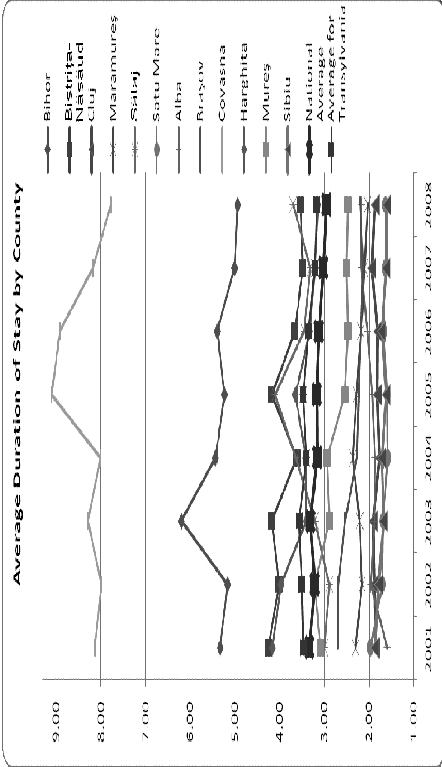
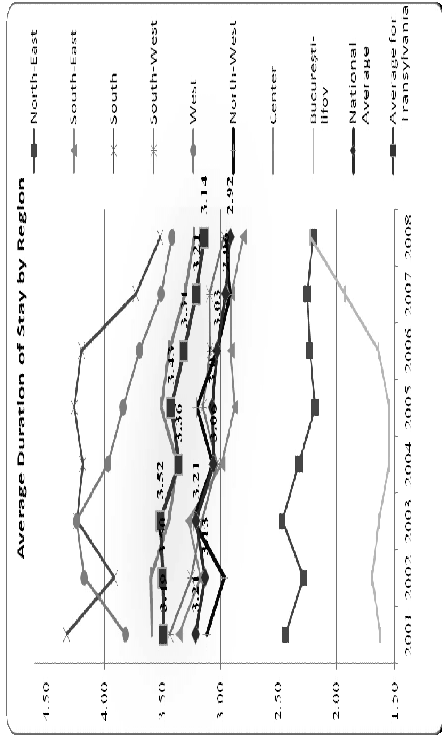
Appendix 1: Projects Financed in Macroregion 1 by Regions, Counties and Types of Projects, before vs. after Romania's Integration into the European Union

Region	County	1998-2010 Time-Span				of which: Before 2007			
		Govern- mental	PDR / POR / Regio	PHARE - CES and FNDR	PNDR	SAPARD	Govern- mental	PHARE - CES and FNDR	SAPARD
North-West	Bihor	1	3	4	26	39	0	4	19
	Bistrița-Năsăud	0	0	15	12	5	0	15	1
	Cluj	1	3	7	32	25	0	7	11
	Maramureș	4	0	14	30	13	0	14	8
	Sălaj	0	1	4	12	15	0	4	6
	Satu-Mare	0	1	11	10	2	0	11	2
Center	Alba	2	7	1	50	31	2	1	14
	Brașov	8	18	1	55	125	4	1	53
	Covasna	1	7	1	12	10	0	1	3
	Harghita	5	9	0	26	55	1	1	24
	Mureș	2	6	1	13	21	1	1	10
	Sibiu	1	12	1	18	22	0	1	9

Source: Authors' own calculations based on ADR, 2010; MADR and APDRP, 2008 and 2009

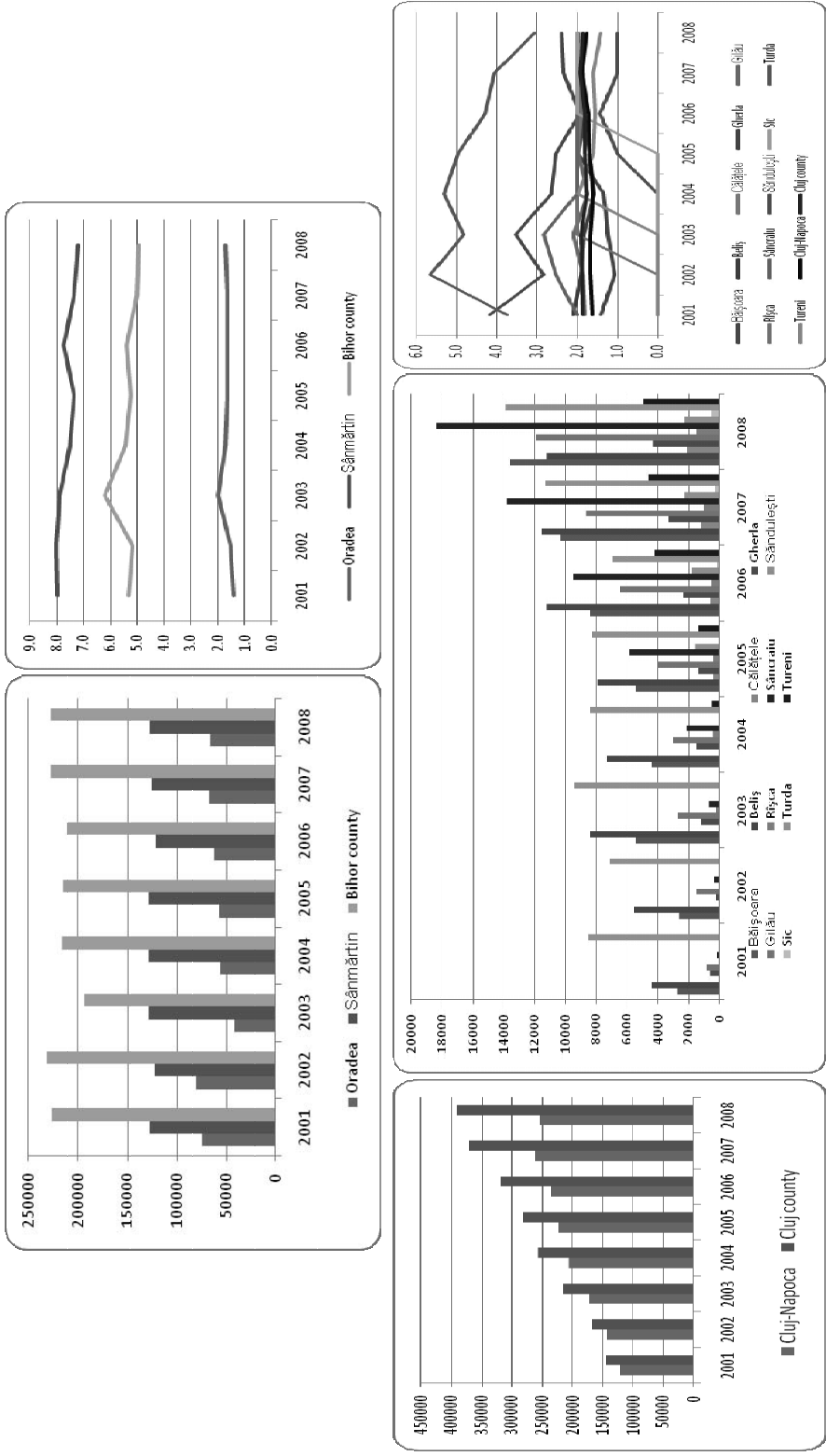
Appendix 2: Characterization of Romania's tourism and of its development in the Regions of Development North-West and Center, between 2004 and 2010

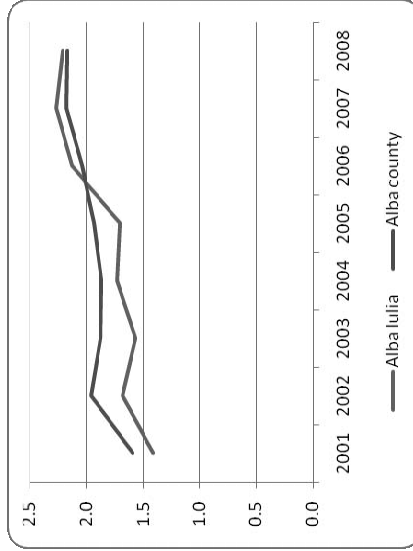
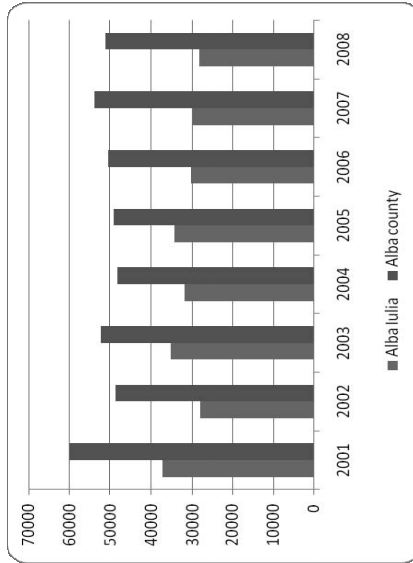
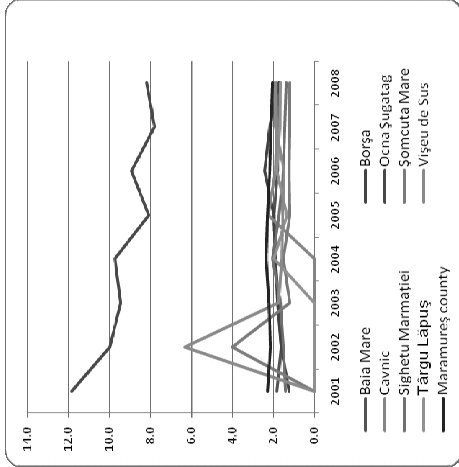
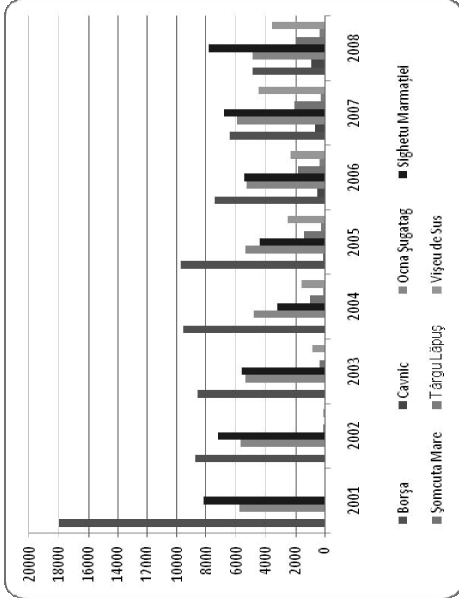
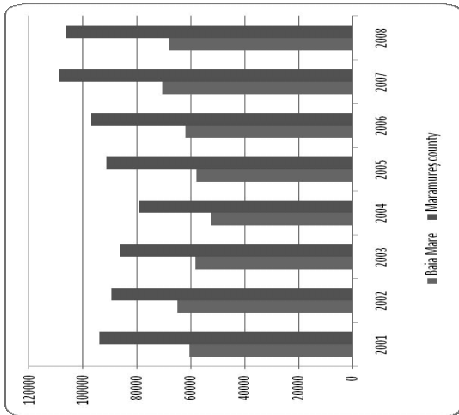


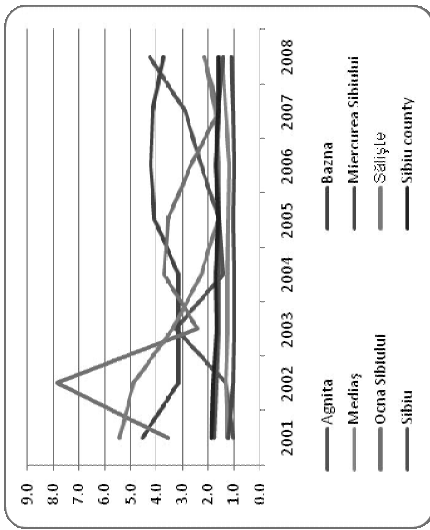
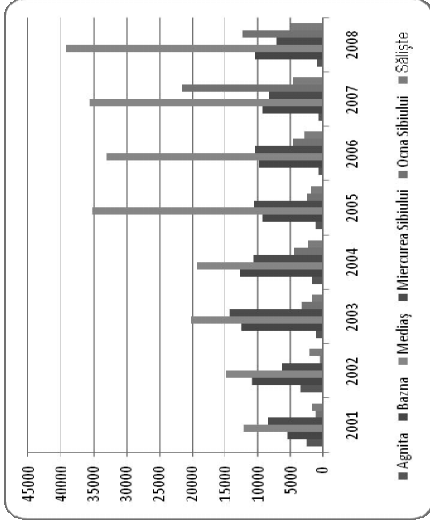
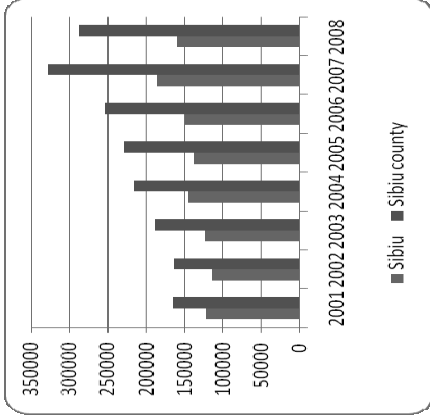
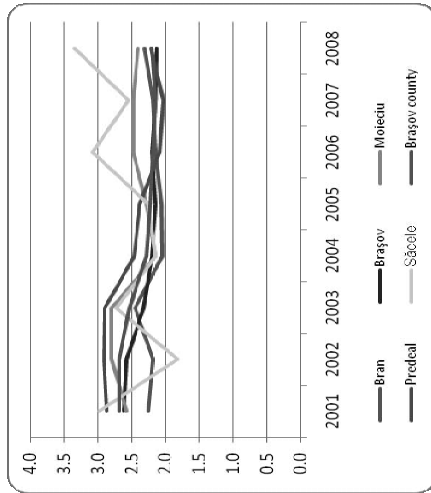
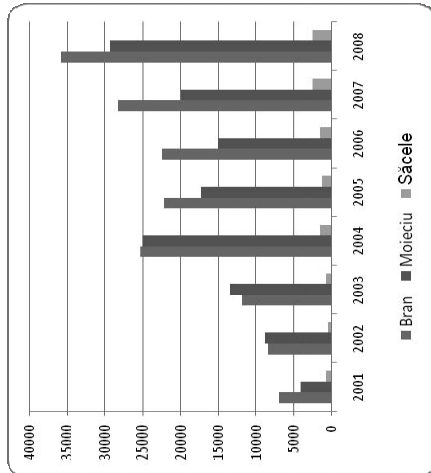
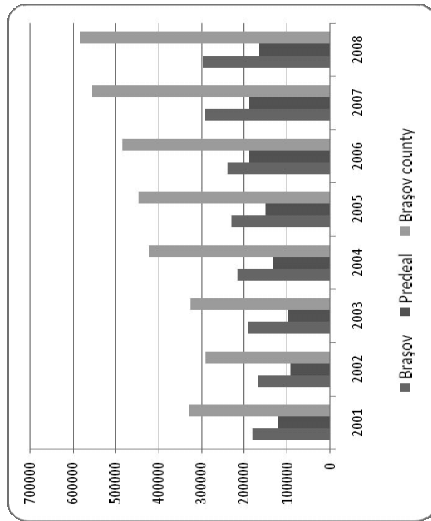


Source: Authors' calculations based on NIS, 'Monthly County Statistical Bulletins', 2004-2010

Appendix 3: Local level tourist activity in the regions of development North-West and Center, between 2001 and 2008







Source: Authors' calculations based on NIS 'TempoOnline' and on NIS, 'Romania's Statistical Yearbooks' 2002-2009 collection