

ARGUMENTS AND PROPOSALS TO SUSTAIN RURAL TOURIST VIABILITY OF THE WEST REGION

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Abstract: Tourism represents now a huge global market, where the demand of consumers for a huge variety of products and services is manifested. Numerous studies focus on the main trends, that are registered in the field of tourism, in terms of tourism demand and supply, sustain that the focus on the forms of rural tourism is an increasing one. The Western Region is characterized by a remarkable tourist potential, this is why some arguments and proposals to sustain rural tourist viability of the West Region are appropriate.

Key words: rural tourism, West Region, argument and proposals, viability

INTRODUCTION

The rural area, from Europe, holds 85% from the total continental geographical area. A large part of population lives in this area. It represents the place of manifestation of rural tourism, but also the "supplier" of resources that can be used through this type of activities. [14,7]

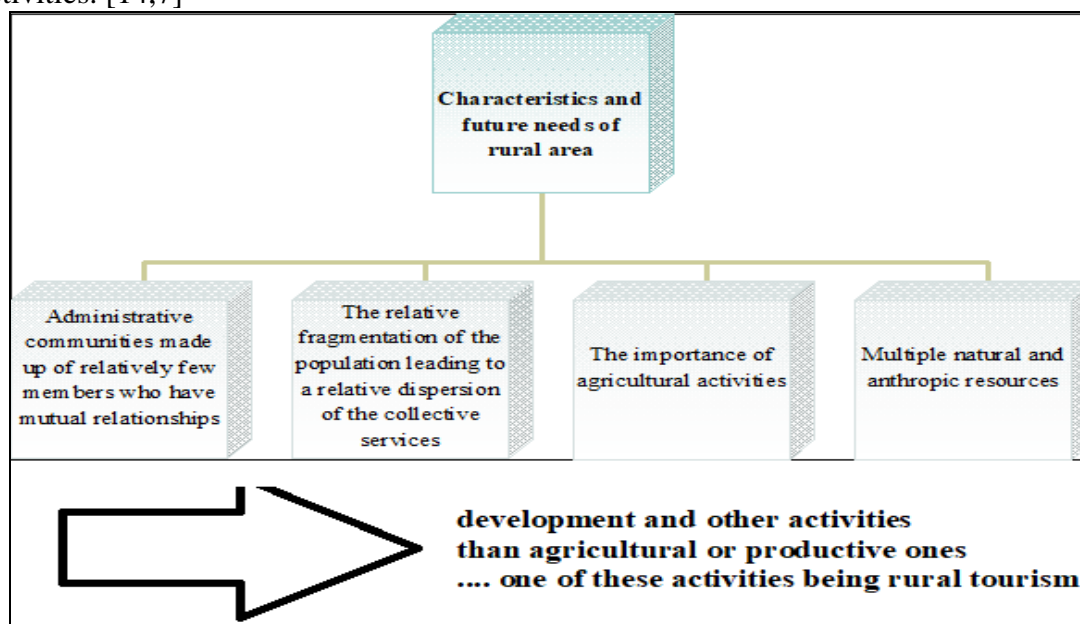


Figure 1. Characteristics and future needs of rural area

Source: own processing

The antithesis between the two environments: urban and rural is interesting: [16]

- The city as a nest of civilization, the rural as "an orderly and abundant landscape, beautified by peasants" that separates the city from the wild and nature.
- The city as a place of commercial and industrial concerns, the village as a place for aesthetic searches, the poetic, the erotic, a place of pleasures.
- The estate as a place that represents the expression of the tanned nature and the domination of man over the environment. The city, as a station, generating technological power, the "other" domain of human domination.
- The city is sophisticated, the village is rustic.

- The villagers are cultivated, refined and polite, the peasants are simple, uncomplicated (provincial).
- The city as a place of vice, the village as a place of virtue.
- The city as a fetid, congested, dark and murky place, the village as a fresh, clean, picturesque and revitalizing place.
- The village as the place where we come from, where our roots are, the city as the place where we are now and in the future.
- The village as the place of the pioneering spirit, the city as the inheritor and debtor of that spirit.
- The village as a place of mythical dimensions, the city as a reality.

The rural areas offer great opportunities for rural tourism development. The impact of rural tourism on local communities is highlighted by the extensive dimension, which refers to the characteristics of the locality, such as: its role as a tourist destination, the nature of the tourist activity, the report of resident tourists, the types of tourists, seasonality, etc. [1,2,4,5] The report between tourist/resident provides information on the intensity of the tourist flow. Lately there has been an increase in this ratio as a certain tourist destination goes through successive stages of development. Seasonality puts its mark on the reactions of the community through the fluxes accentuated by tourists during peak periods, which is also why the holidays of the locals, are often established taking into account the seasonality. The intrinsic dimension refers to characteristics of the members of the host community that affect the variations of the impact of tourism on the respective community: degree of involvement, economic-social characteristics, proximity to the house, period of stay, etc. Relations between guests and locals are viewed as a balance between costs and benefits for both parties. The degree of involvement of individuals and the tourism industry is important for, as it influences the extent to which the benefits are perceived to be greater than the costs. [17]

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The authors of this paper try to underline some arguments and proposals to sustain rural tourist viability of the West Region, in this regard are followed some aspects:

- Short description of the Western Region
- Identifying some arguments in support the tourist viability of the Western Region
- Creating a tourism development plan - necessity, objectives, effects and finally drawing some conclusions.

RESEARCH RESULTS

Short description of the Western Region

The Western Region is characterized by a remarkable tourist potential, represented by the multitude of natural resources, as well as those of special anthropogenic nature.

The natural tourist resources of the Western Area are represented by all the physical-geographical elements which, by virtue of them, are capable of exerting an attraction on the potential tourists, thus ensuring the tourist exploitation of this territory. The natural tourist resources, belonging to the initial endowment factors, are of particular importance for the beginnings of tourism, and even more for the rural tourism from a certain territory, and constitute the starting point in capitalizing of its, which must be ensured by building an appropriate technical-material basis, able to guarantee the needs of tourists. The good representation of the natural tourist resources can predestine the respective territory in order to perform the recreational function.

The anthropic resources represent a basic element in the appreciation of the recreational value, as well as an indicator of the level of cultural-historical and economic-

social development of the tourist area. The tourist objectives of anthropic origin are the result of the relation between man and his living environment. These objectives are gaining more and more importance, with the development of new types of tourism and especially rural tourism, which capitalizes the cultural heritage of the rural area.

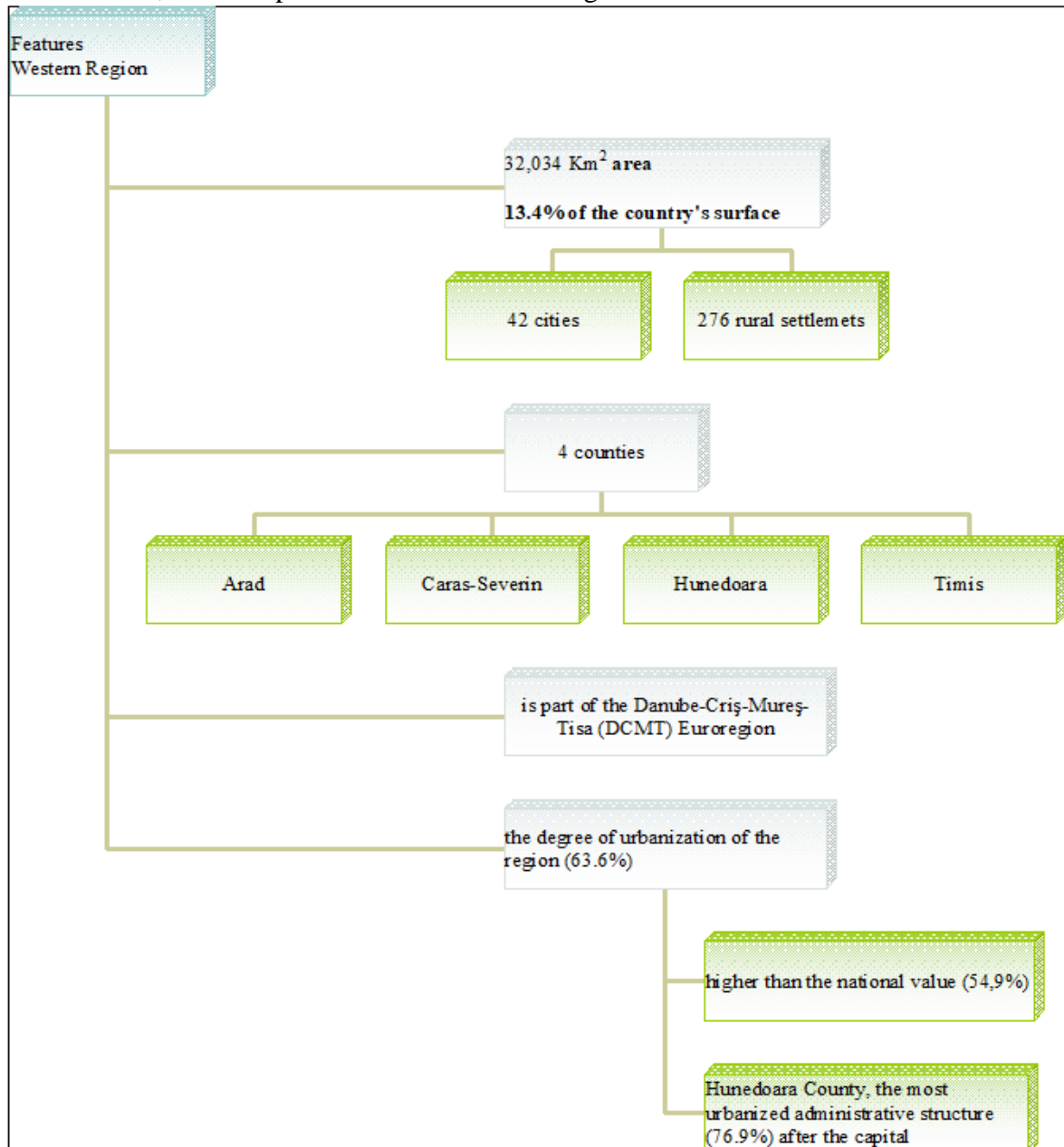


Figure 2. Particularities of the Western Region

Source: own processing by the data provided from County Council

Arguments in support the tourist viability of the Western Region

Viewed both nationally and internationally, the Western Region would have arguments for supporting rural tourism activity, which could be summarized as follows:

- the location of the region in the border area with three countries with which, due to history, it presents a lot of similarities in terms of economic and social development (Serbia and Montenegro and Hungary);
- the multi-ethnic coexistence has generated, over time, in the behavior of the population a special spirit, expressed synthetically and recognized as such on a national

level, as "Banat spirit" or "Transylvanian spirit" (with much more similarities between the two than differences), characterized by tolerance, constant preoccupations for the perfection of well-being, by the ability to innovate and to put on solid foundations everything thought and done, through pragmatism, through the vocation of always choosing the variants that will put their initiator in the forefront;

- the existence of a well-qualified and trained workforce, capable of assimilating in a record time the most complex technologies in all fields of production of goods and material values, from agriculture and the processing industry to biotechnologies and the information transmission industry. It is not by accident that the first faculties of higher education, organized at the beginning of this century, had a technical profile;

- the existence of a network of roads, railways and telecommunications which, although it is by no means comparable to that existing in the highly developed countries, is significantly higher than the one inside the country;

- the existence already at county level of some partnership relations with neighboring counties, which, in addition to the mutually beneficial effects on an economic level, is a good exercise for developing communication and standardization skills of one's own language for international collaboration;

- a much greater awareness of the need for decentralization in making decisions of local interest, based precisely on the knowledge of the potential factors available, whose value is able to maintain a sustained pace of development;

- belonging to an organic economic structure defined at national level will impose on the other counties of the country the model of the Western Region and implicitly the need to train them in the development competition, focusing precisely on promoting innovation, new development formulas, which will find the most correspondent listed in its production structures.

Creating a tourism development plan - necessity, objectives, effects

Despite the fact that the Western Area has a great rural tourism heritage with great potential for exploitation, rural tourism is still a fairly narrow segment of the tourism market, faced with many problems, such as: weak cooperation at local level, modest promotion at national and international level, the existence of a poorly diversified offer, the poor development of the rural tourism specific infrastructure, at the level of the protected areas, the low level of training of those employed in the field, etc.

Therefore, we consider that it is necessary to create a plan for the sustainable development of these resources through rural tourism, the implementation of such a plan being beneficial for the four counties of the western area from several points of view:

- will increase the credibility of the Romanian rural tourism product on the international tourism market, thus increasing the flow of tourists visiting the area;

- they will identify themselves the destinations that can offer quality to rural tourism products that can be promoted by tour operators.

- the quality of the services offered in the field of rural tourism will increase;

- will be implemented practical mechanisms of nature conservation and sustainable development (including financial mechanisms) at the level of each destination;

- the business sector will be directed towards a more environmentally friendly policy with local communities.

The elaboration of the plan for the sustainable development of rural tourism in the Western Area is one of the essential activities in order to manage the rural resources from the studied area.

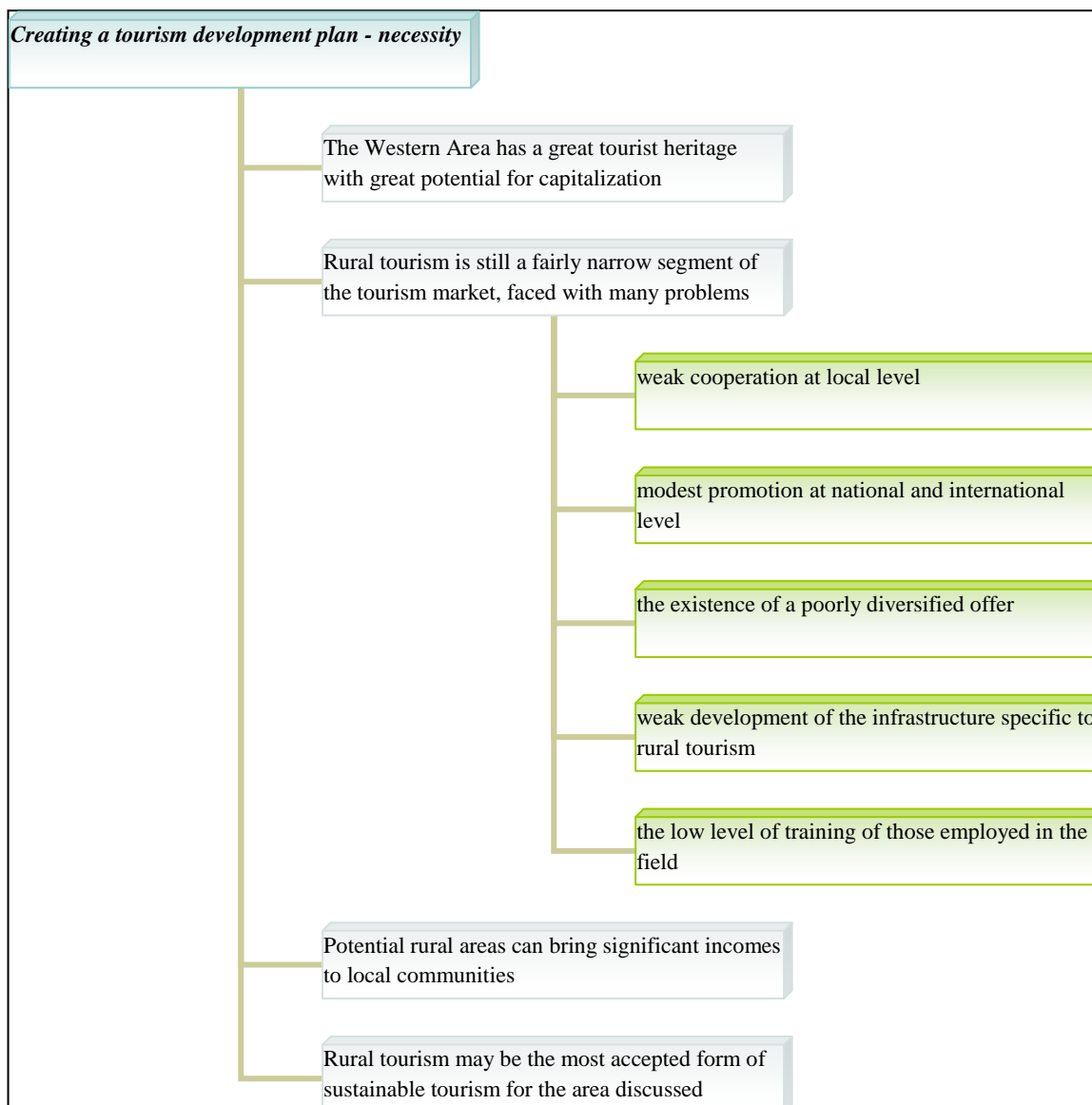


Figure 3. The necessity of designing a plan for sustainable development of rural tourism in Western Area

Source: own processing

The purpose of a plan is to create a functional correspondence between the real premises of rural tourism in these special natural areas, [6,8,9,10,11] the requirements of environmental protection and the current trends of the international rural tourism market. In order to achieve this goal and its orientation towards a sustainable direction, it must enable locals and tourism service providers to maintain high standards of living. Thus, from the structure of the sustainable development plan for rural tourism in the Western Area, there are no major aspects, such as: presentation of the existing tourist resources, definition of objectives, and development of the action plan. [12,13,15]

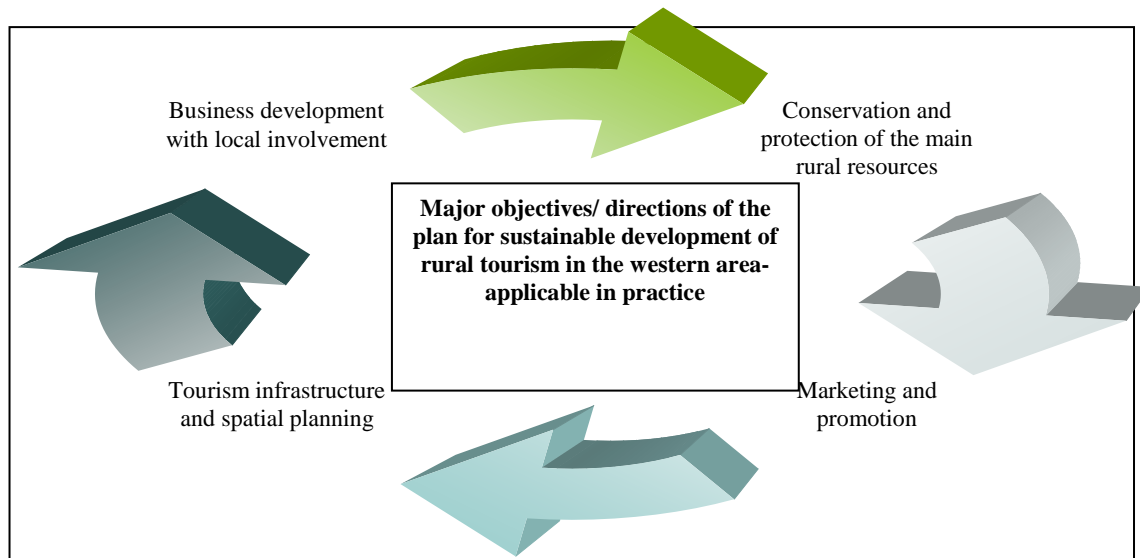


Figure 4. Creating a tourism development plan-objectives

Source: own processing

Table 1

Strategic plan for sustainable development of rural tourism in the Western Region

The general objective	Specific objectives / directions	Measures necessary to achieve the proposed objectives
The importance of rural tourism for sustaining rural areas from Western Region	Tourism infrastructure and spatial planning	- Development of easy-to-visit infrastructure
		- Development of a visitor center at the level of the most frequented areas, or of tourist information point (s)
	Business development with local involvement	- Stimulating local communities and encouraging them to develop a complete offer
		- Development of quality rural tourism products
	Conservation and protection of the main rural resources	- Active participation of economic operators and tourists from destinations with rural tourism potential in preserving the local specificity
	Marketing and promotion	- Development of research activities of the national and international market
		- Creation of offers of integrated rural tourism products/programs
- Development of the distribution system for the rural tourism product from the Western Area		

Source: authors proposals

The effects of this plan regarding the capitalization of rural tourist resources from Western Area cannot be known immediately, but only after a period of several years and must be viewed globally.

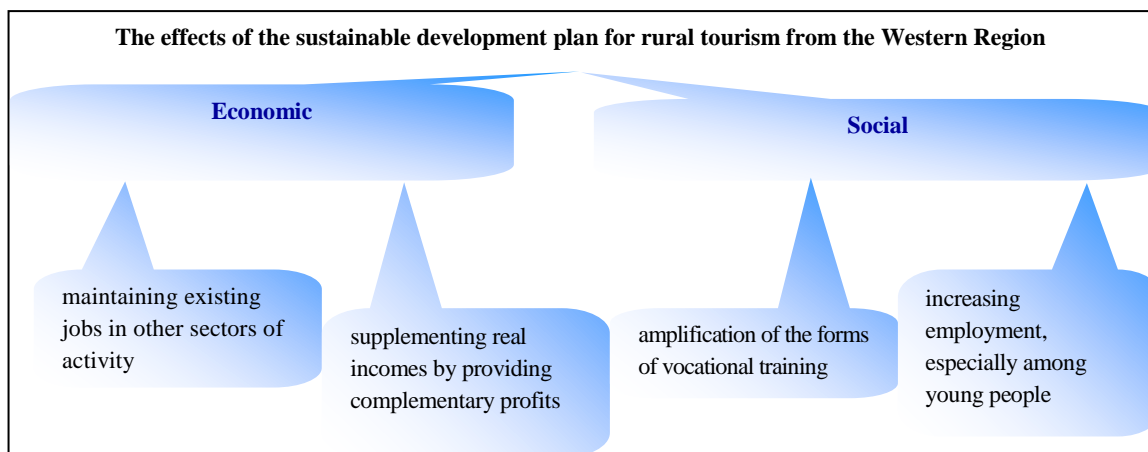


Figure 5. Effects of sustainable rural tourism development plan from the Western area

Source: own processing

CONCLUSIONS

Rural tourism has as its final purpose a certain economic efficiency, but not at the level predicted by the super-optimistic ones, which do not take into account the seasonal and complementary character of this activity for the peasant household. Rural tourism should not be regarded as a closed system, in which all the tourist needs is offered, occurs either in the owner's house or only in the locality. The entrances from outside the household and from the locality to support the tourism are very large and these entrances involve money exits to purchase the goods that the tourist needs (food, materials, etc.), precisely for this purpose it is necessary to draw up balances that accurately highlight the value of the entrances and exits for the tourist activities that, could put in a new conception the economic efficiency of the rural tourism. Finally, we could reach to a conclusion, with the following formulation: "Rural tourism and in general, the whole tourism activity, means a lot of work, a lot of energy consumed, a lot of passion and less money results".

Regarding the rural areas from Western Region they have important advantages for the development of recreational activities, activities that can bring important incomes, both to those who manage them and to the local communities. Although it is quite difficult to measure, and most often the results are difficult to observe in the short term, rural tourism is one of the few economic sectors through which the sustainable development of these areas can be achieved, and is the most accepted form of sustainable tourism for the area discussed. The purpose of the proposed plan is to highlight rural tourism, as the main form of sustainable tourism within these destinations, at the expense of the classic forms of tourism and to increase the role that rural tourism plays in the economic development of these areas and in the prosperity of the population.

As possible purposes of capitalizing the unique potential of the Western Area, of its geographical personality we could mention:

- the reactivation of the crafts and the development of the services in a diversified range, which will ensure an occupational balance and a fixation of the jobs;
- stimulating rural tourism as an alternative activity that brings additional income;
- promotion and stimulation of local economies, processing of food and non-food products;
- creation of a local and public-private partnership institutional structure.
- protection of rural tourism resources.

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