

RURAL TOURISM-DEFINING ASPECTS AND THE PREMISES FOR THE DEVELOPMENT

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Abstract: Tourism has become, in our days, an activity as important as that carried out in other key sectors of the world economy (industry, agriculture, trade). The tourist phenomenon is extremely difficult to delimit because, like any human activity, it falls under the incidence of interdisciplinary study, involving economists, geographers, psychologists and sociologists alike. Preserving a rural world, with everything that it has significant in economic, social, cultural terms, involves the initiation and development of tourism in rural areas. The development of rural tourism will lead to the development of rural localities.

Key words: rural tourism, definition, development, functions

INTRODUCTION

Rural tourism is the first form of reception of tourists in the country, because the image of the villager or farmer suggests and evokes, at the same time, the hospitality enjoyed by the pilgrim or tourist, this representing the meeting between the villager and the tourist.

For tourist activities, Switzerland was one of the first countries that, since 1884, through the exploitation of the Swiss Alps, called rural tourism activities "tourist adventure". In this country there have been more and more areas assaulted by visitors, asking for accommodation in existing houses, boarding houses and hotels.

The first organized forms of rural tourism were marked with the appearance, in the 19th century, of tourist associations: English Alpine Club (1875), French Alpine Club (1874), Touring Club-French (1890). Their main objective was the preparation and organization of excursions in the mountains (especially in the Alps), using the accommodation, meals and companions of the villagers of these areas, thus appearing the first forms of rural tourism. [2,4,9]

At first sight, the definition of rural tourism would be a simple matter: it is tourism that takes place in rural areas. But this simple definition is not exactly appropriate, as it is difficult to conceive of a complex definition of rural tourism that would apply in all contexts: [3,12,13]

- rural areas are difficult to define. The criteria for delimiting the rural area differ from one nation to another, as we have seen before;

- not all forms of tourism that take place in rural areas are strictly "rural"; they can be "urban" in form, but can take place in rural area;

- tourism is an urban concept; most tourists live in urban areas and encourage economic and cultural changes, determining a certain urban influence;

- there are different forms of rural tourism in different regions: farm tourism in many regions of Germany and Austria and, less frequently, in the United States and Canada; In France, self-catering cottages or rural gites - are the main components of rural tourism

- the tendency to diminish the clear distinction between urban and rural due to suburbanization, development of holiday homes;

- rural tourism is a complex activity, with many facets: it includes agritourism, as the main component (meaning holidays based on activities on the farm, around the farm)

but also includes nature-oriented holidays (ecotourism), walks, climbing, horseback riding, adventure, sports, hunting and fishing, educational trips, tourism for art and traditions, ethnic tourism, etc.

Taking in consideration all these aspects rural tourism in its pure form as tourism have as features: [12]

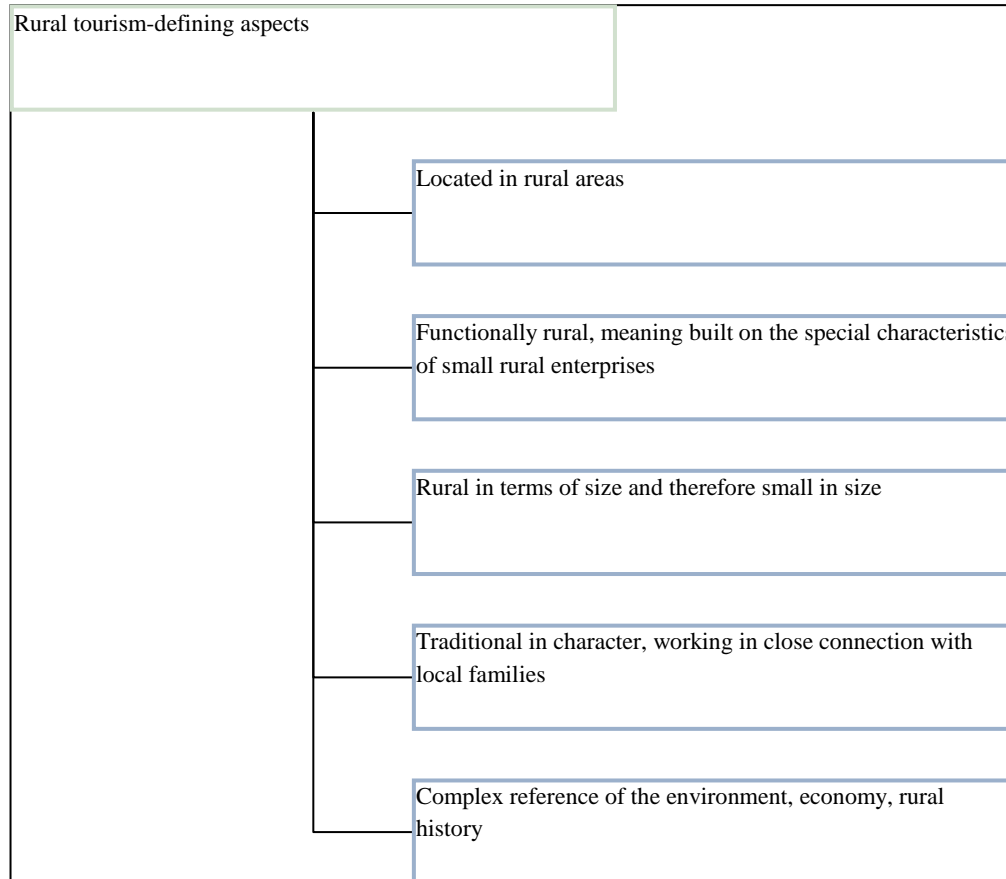


Figure 1. Rural tourism-defining aspects

1. Located in rural areas;
2. Functionally rural, meaning built on the special characteristics of small rural enterprises, spatial openness, and contact with nature, tradition, practices and traditional society;
3. Rural in terms of size and therefore small in size;
4. Traditional in character, working in close connection with local families;
5. Complex reference of the environment, economy, rural history.

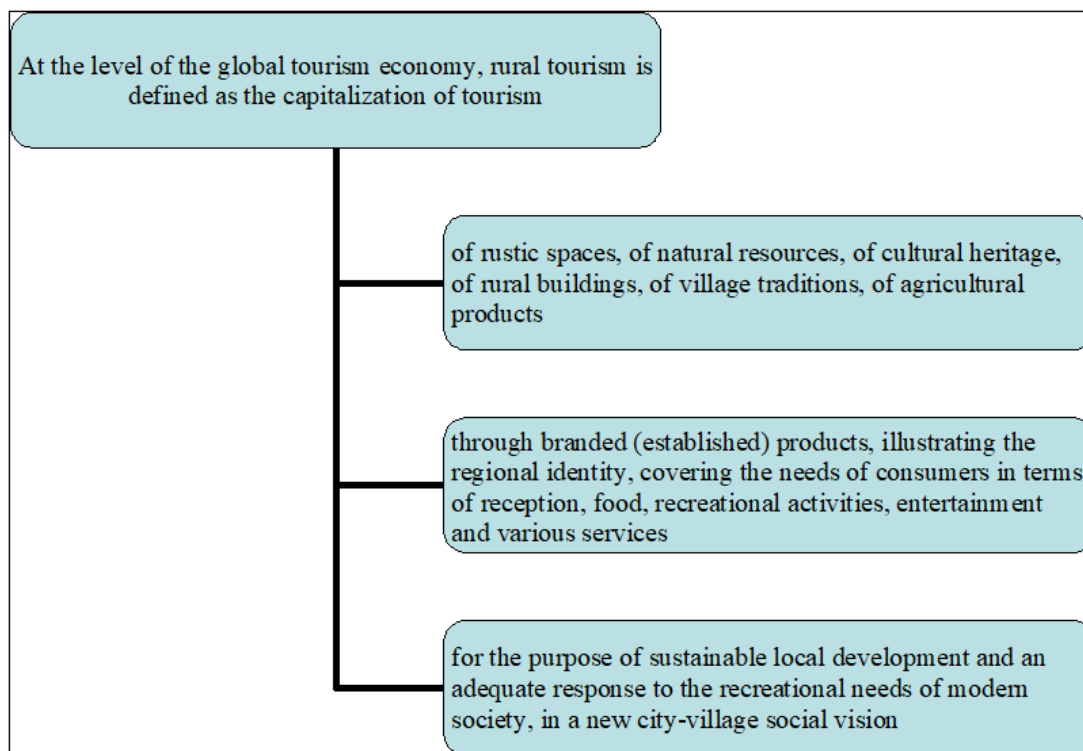


Figure 2. Defining rural tourism at the level of the global economy

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The target of this scientific paper is to highlight the main aspects regarding the definition of rural tourism and the necessity of type of tourism especially for rural area and for supports this objective we have use many references from the field to draw the main conclusions.

RESEARCH RESULTS

The development of rural areas has always been strongly marked by non-agricultural activities, because they have a complementary function in the rural economy. The village community could not make a living without certain services provided by some of its members, who do basic work in the agricultural sector and thus contribute to a more decent standard of living. [11,13,15] Preserving a rural world, with everything that it has significant in economic, social, cultural terms, involves the initiation and development of tourism in rural areas.

The forms of tourism specific to the rural environment are extremely diverse in the countries with a tradition in the field (France, Switzerland, Austria, Germany): [16]

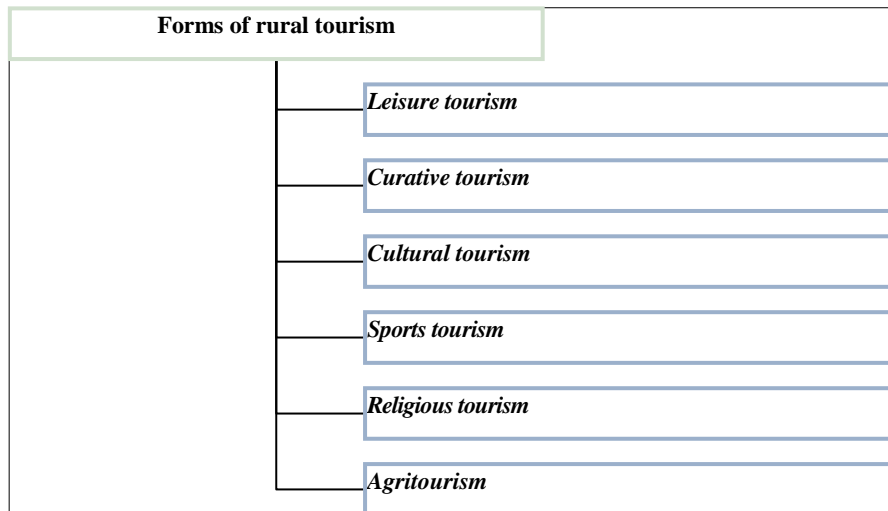


Figure 3. Types of rural tourism

The emergence of classical tourism and a little later of rural tourism, as a mass phenomenon, is related to the creation of economic and social conditions that we call premises. These premises are the following: [1,9,10]

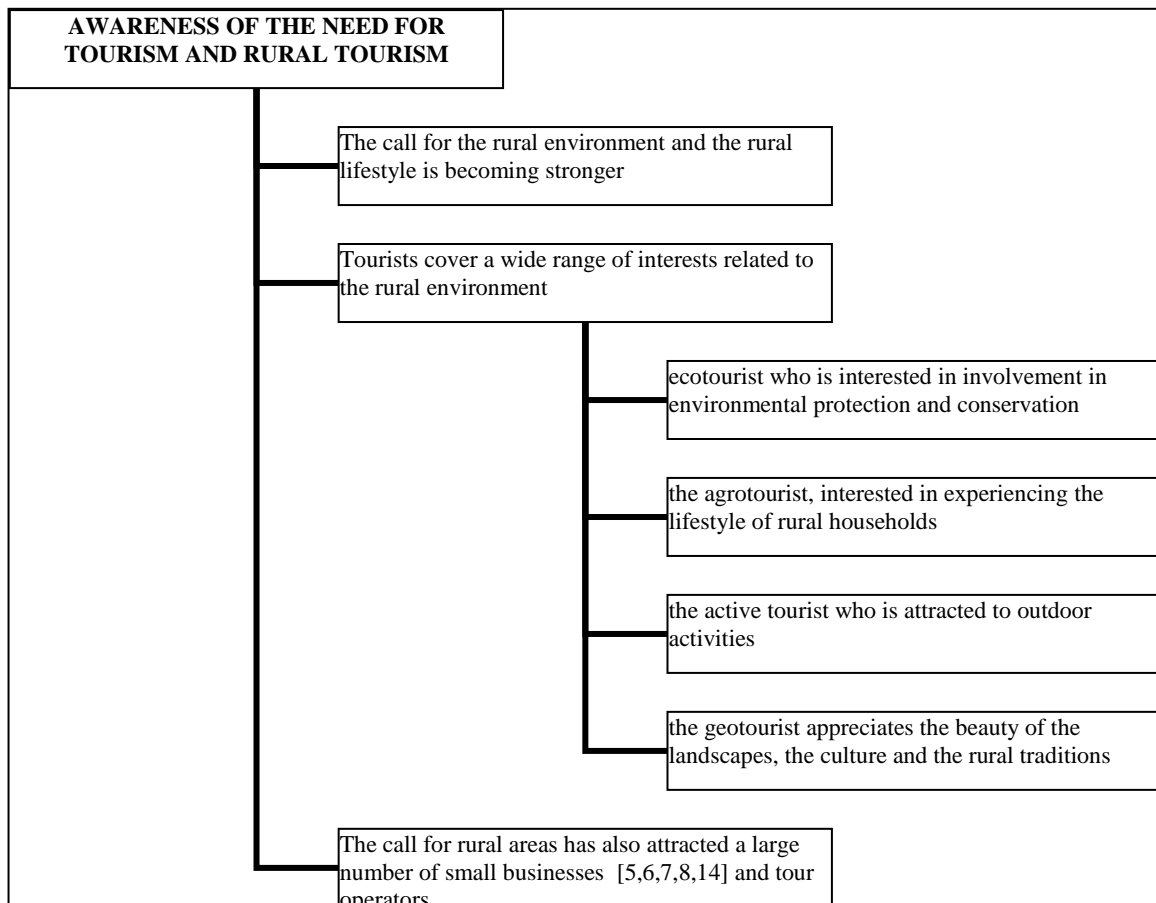


Figure 4. Awareness of the need for tourism and rural tourism

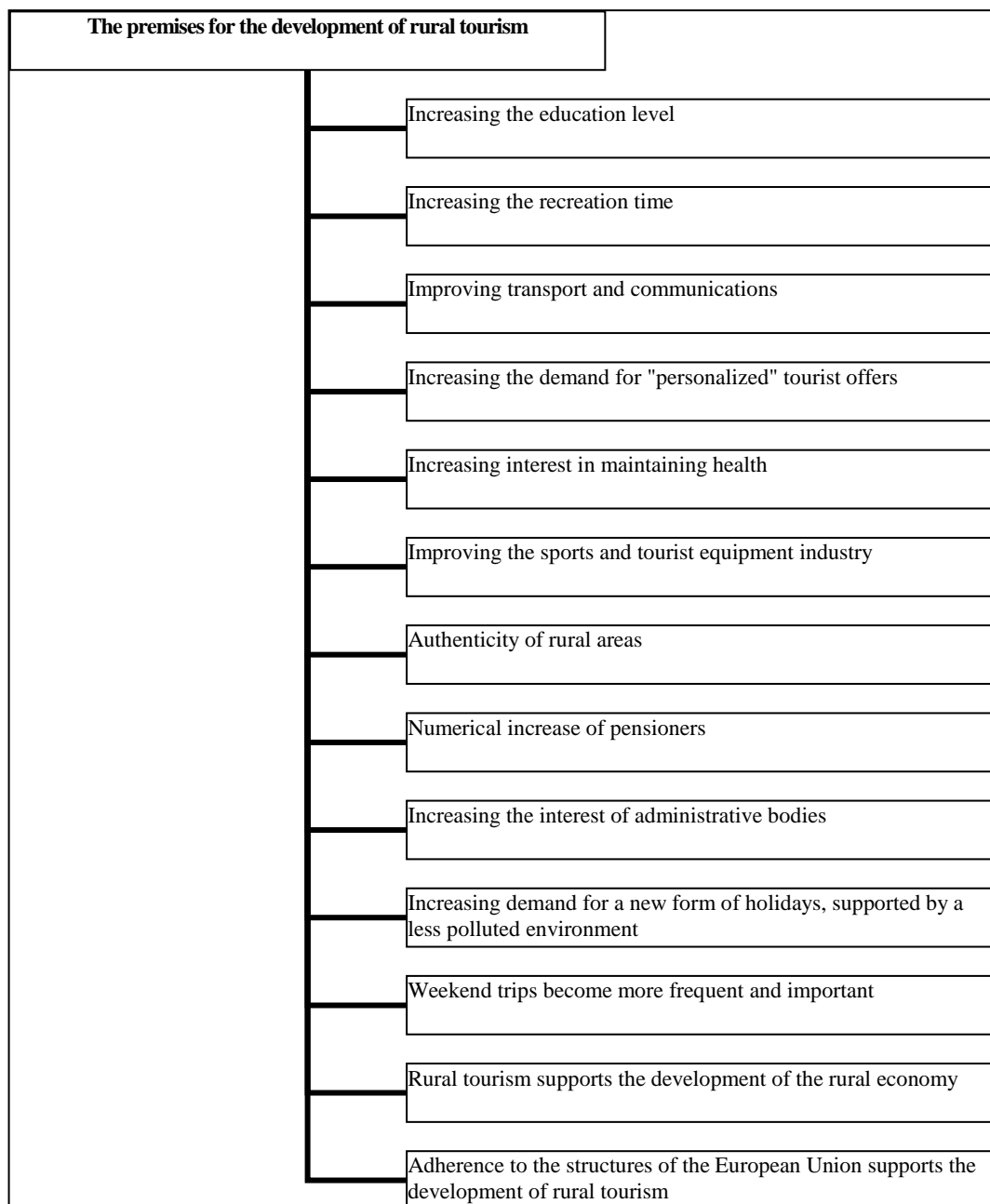


Figure 5. The premises for the development of rural tourism

- Increasing the level of education;
- Increasing the time allocated for recreation;
- Improving transport and communications;
- Increasing the demand for "personalized" tourist offers;
- Increasing interest in maintaining health;
- Improving the sports and tourist equipment industry;
- Authenticity of rural areas;
- Numerical increase of pensioners;
- Increasing the interest of administrative bodies at local and county level.
- Increasing demand for a new form of holidays, supported by a less polluted environment;
- Weekend trips become more frequent and important;
- Rural tourism supports the development of the rural economy;

- Adherence to the structures of the European Union supports the development of rural tourism.

There will be positive influences on the environment, agriculture, transport, construction, processing and food industries, services in various fields. The main functions of rural tourism could be:

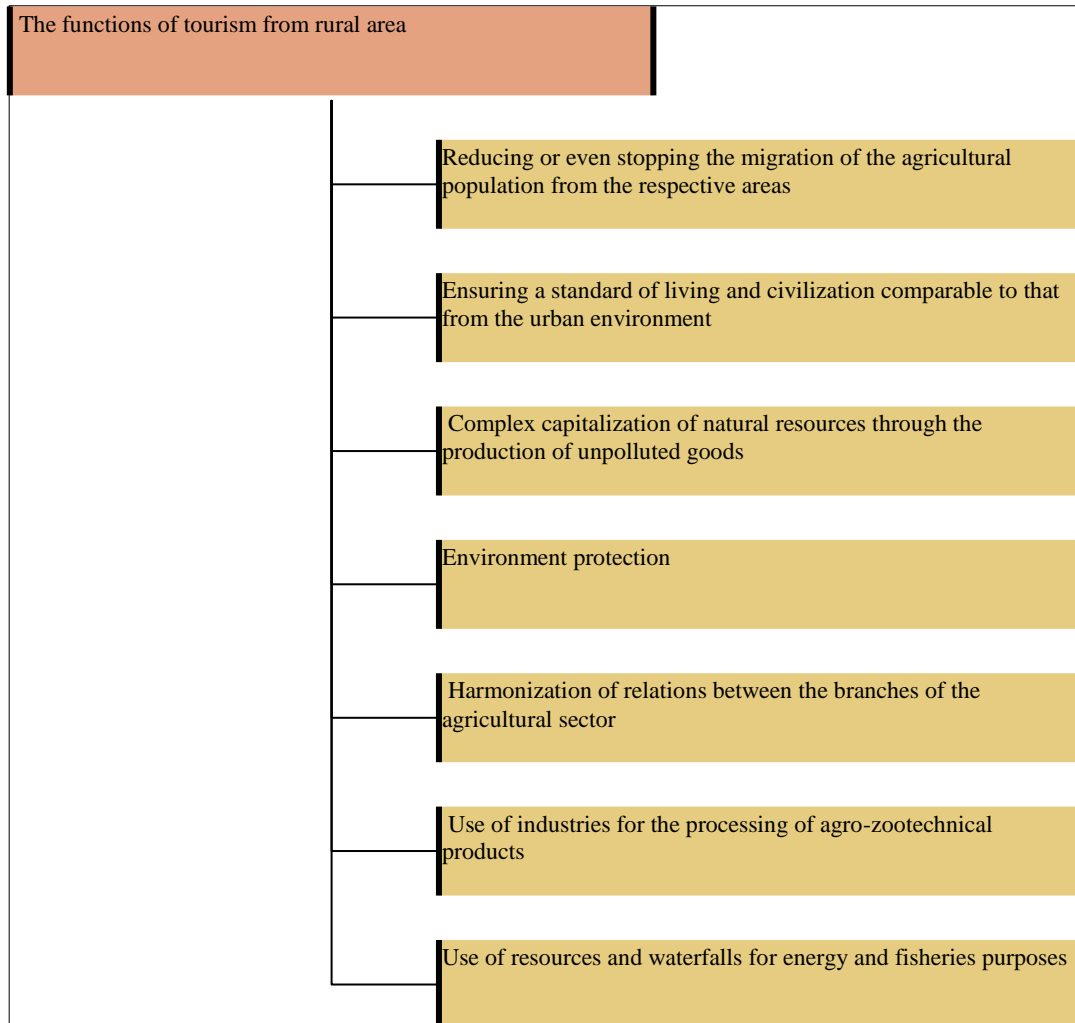


Figure 6. Functions of rural tourism

1. Reducing or even stopping the migration of the agricultural population from the respective areas. The development of traditional crafts, industries that capitalize agri-food and other natural resources, as well as a wide range of services that are currently lacking in rural areas naturally creates a significant number of jobs.

2. Ensuring a standard of living and civilization in the rural area that stimulates the stability of the population in the area and even determines the reversal of the migration of the active population to the rural area. Increasing the level of civilization of the population is a strategic goal throughout the country, and for the rural population this goal must be set not only in a competitive way to repopulate the rural area with active population, dynamic and able to revive the economic and social activity of this area.

3. The complex capitalization of natural resources through the production of unpolluted food goods and high quality non-food goods, competitive in market economy conditions. The neglect and omission of agriculture from the benefits of contemporary technical progress, however, gave it a chance by not being contaminated by pesticides. As a result, plant and animal agri-food products from this area are clean of chemical pollutants

in most basins, laboratory tests attesting to this. The ever-increasing demand for such products on the market of developed Western countries will be able to offer great opportunities for export and foreign exchange earnings as well as a special chance for the development of tourism that allows the commercial marketing of chemically unpolluted natural products on the spot.

By making high quality products, the inhabitants of the rural area will be able to obtain competitive incomes, with a convenient profit even in the conditions of the liberalization of the prices on the market. To these products must be added those that can be achieved by reviving traditional crafts, the domestic industry and by developing new activities that highlight resources still untapped. All this can bring complementary income to households or even create new profitable jobs.

4. Protecting the environment, combating all pollution factors of any kind and keeping the rural area clean, even in the conditions of its development to preserve the healthy living conditions of its inhabitants and those who consume its products.

5. Achieving the energy autonomy of households, settlements and localities by capitalizing the existing hydrological resources in this area. There is a rich experience in this regard in other countries, especially in Switzerland, which could be carefully studied to find the most economical solutions to ensure electricity in the mountain area by capitalizing on unconventional local resources. The studies and projects that will be carried out in this field could attest the possibilities of positive energy balances that, after covering the local needs, will also provide energy resources for the national energy system.

6. Depreciation of the relations between the agricultural sector and the forestry sector. The forest plays a particularly important role in the life of households, providing the wood needed for construction, for fire, for the production of many labor and household inventory items, as well as for all mountain crafts and wood processing industries as complementary activities. Therefore, the assessment of the wood and forest needs of the households is an important objective to remember in the activity of the county commissions and of the agricultural schools, together with the village community of the localities in the area.

7. Increasing fish production (lakes and rivers); elaboration of some projects regarding the organization of the ponds within the households located near the watercourses with continuous flow.

8. Development of industries for processing agro-zootechnical products, other industries and crafts. The survival of households, in market economy conditions, depends to a large extent on the production of high quality food (organic products) which, even if they are accessible only to certain consumer segments, can benefit from a higher market price to ensure the coverage of production costs and a profit for agricultural producers.

Specifically for European economies, rural tourism makes a key contribution to the integration process. The intensity of mutual tourist flows stimulates mutual knowledge, creates the feeling of belonging to a common space of values, and contributes to the development of European identity and, through all these, to the shaping of European citizenship. Through the high degree of internationalization of production, it contributes to the amplification of intra-community exchanges and to the integration of European markets. Last but not least, the Union's efforts to promote tourism in foreign markets support the image of a heritage unit as a key element of European unity.

This explains why, starting with the second half of the last decade, tourism and, implicitly, rural tourism, entered the European Commission's work agenda in a more systematic way, in a more favorable context from an institutional point of view, created by The Maastricht Treaty. Without assigning specific responsibilities in the field of tourism to the Community, however, the Treaty provides that measures may be taken in the field of

tourism in order to achieve the objectives of economic and social cohesion, growth and employment, sustainable development.

The premises that determine the local administration to intensify the efforts for the local promotion and the development of the rural tourism could be:

- the major changes in the structure of the local industry determine the reorientation of both investors, capitals and labor force;
- the natural, historical setting, the architectural and religious monuments create the necessary basis for the development of rural tourism at local level;
- the existing competition requires the improvement of services, the promotion and correlation of the efforts of all the factors at local level.

CONCLUSIONS

A supreme argument in practicing rural tourism, including its expansion, is the fact that the rural area is increasingly restricted due to the development of non-agricultural activities, and citizens increasingly express the desire (need) to spend free time in a clean environment.

Rural tourism can contribute to the capitalization of resources and sustainable development at local or regional level through the sustainable use of tourist resources, maintaining the natural, cultural and social diversity of rural areas, integrating profile activities in local development planning and strategy, supporting local economies in the socio-economic development of the community but also in protecting nature and cultural values.

Therefore, the problem of developing a sustainable rural tourism arises. In order for rural tourism to become a real factor of local development, in order to be able to offer an attractive and alternative tourist product, a series of priority conditions must be taken into account, such as:

- maintaining an optimal balance between the ecological, socio-economic system and the cultural system of the area, when conceiving the development process of the respective rural area;
- ensuring a strong local mastery of investment decisions so that it is possible to overcome the crisis of agricultural systems and rural societies;
- increasing the offer of local services and products which will lead to the increase of the tourist attractiveness;
- promoting the exchange between cultures and populations through knowledge and respect as a factor of solidarity and social cohesion;
- designing a spatial planning policy that would allow the improvement of the competitiveness of the economic activity in the less favored areas and endowed with infrastructures and equipment indispensable for the quality of life both for the local population and for the visitors.

Rural areas invest in tourism in order to diversify their economy, essential for development, jobs and sustainable development. They offer interesting possibilities, because it is about the very attractive living and working environment or the very appreciated natural resources and landscapes.

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