

TOURISM RECEPTION STRUCTURES. TECHNICAL AND MATERIAL ELEMENTS OF ACCOMMODATION UNITS, PUBLIC CATERING, LEISURE, SPA TREATMENT, AND TRANSPORT FACILITIES

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***Abstract:** Tourism reception structures are units and facilities dedicated to accommodation, dining, and providing various services to tourists, with the primary goal of meeting their needs during their stay in a specific tourist destination. These structures are essential for tourism development and encompass a wide range of units. According to Government Ordinance No. 58/1998 on the organization and conduct of tourism activities in Romania, approved with amendments through Law No. 755/2001 and subsequent modifications, a tourism reception structure is defined as any building or facility designed and executed for accommodating tourists, providing meals, leisure, tourist-specific transport, and spa treatment services for tourists, along with the associated services.*

Key words: *tourism, accommodation, transport, catering*

INTRODUCTION

The technical-material base of tourism, commonly referred to as tourism reception structures, encompasses all material resources utilized by the tourism sector to fulfill its economic and social functions. In this context, both tourism-specific material resources and those shared with other industries are considered.

Government Ordinance No. 58/1998 on the organization and conduct of tourism activities in Romania defines a tourism reception structure as any building or facility specifically designed and constructed to accommodate tourists, provide meals, leisure activities, tourist-specific transport, and spa treatments, along with related services [6].

Tourism reception structures include a comprehensive range of units specializing in services for accommodation, public catering, leisure, spa treatments, and transport for tourists. These structures represent essential components of the hospitality industry, providing comfort, safety, and satisfaction to those who choose to use them. To maintain quality standards in the hospitality industry, regulatory guidelines set clear requirements for the classification and certification of tourism units. These regulations ensure that each structure meets strict criteria, with certification providing credibility and recognition, guaranteeing tourists a high-quality and safe experience [9].

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The materials used to write this work consist of normative acts and web pages. The methods used are legal, namely the formal method, the comparative method, the logical method and the analytical method. The use of these methods had the role of carrying out a systematic analysis of the information from the studied sources in order to elaborate the points of view, the results of the research carried out and the conclusions.

RESEARCH RESULTS

To meet visitor requirements and expectations, each unit must be equipped and organized according to strict standards, incorporating specific technical and material elements. Thus, accommodation units, restaurants, other public dining facilities, recreational spaces, spa treatment centers, and tourism-specific transportation services must meet clear quality, safety, and hygiene criteria, all regulated by legal standards. These

elements contribute directly to ensuring a high-quality tourism experience and strengthening the reputation and competitiveness of destinations.

In this context, compliance with technical and material standards not only addresses legal requirements but becomes essential for the classification and certification of tourism units, offering them credibility and recognition in the tourism market.

Order No. 1179/2018 governs the classification and operation of tourism reception structures in Romania, establishing the requirements and criteria these units must meet to operate legally. Tourism reception structures include various types of accommodation units and related services, such as hotels, guesthouses, tourist villas, cabins, campsites, and other facilities intended for tourists [2].

Classification of Tourism Reception Structures

The order establishes a clear classification for accommodation units, divided into multiple categories based on the type and level of comfort offered. Classification is determined by a system of stars, daisies, or other symbols, depending on the unit type:[9]

- ▶ **Hotels:** Classified from one to five stars, depending on amenities, facilities, and services offered. Five-star hotels, for example, must provide superior facilities, such as relaxation and leisure areas, conference rooms, high-quality restaurants, and spacious rooms.
- ▶ **Tourist Guesthouses:** Classified from one to five daisies, with high-rated guesthouses providing conditions similar to three- or four-star hotels but in a more intimate setting with a focus on traditional hospitality.
- ▶ **Campsites:** Classified by a star rating system with requirements related to amenities, hygiene, and safety. Three- and four-star campsites must include modern facilities, such as shower areas, cooking spaces, and recreational zones [8].

Basic Operational Requirements

Order 1179/2018 specifies that all tourism reception structures must adhere to minimum safety and comfort requirements, including:

Sanitary-Hygiene Conditions: Each unit must be adequately equipped with sanitary facilities, cleaning equipment, and must comply with hygiene standards.

Essential Amenities: Rooms must be properly furnished with beds, storage spaces, and adequate lighting, depending on the classification category [2].

- ▶ **Tourist Safety:** Facilities must be equipped with fire safety measures and ensure easy access to first aid equipment.

Classification procedure

To obtain official classification, owners of tourism reception structures must submit an application to the Ministry of Tourism, along with the necessary documentation, including the unit's layout and proof of meeting the minimum criteria established by the order. Following submission, a specialized commission evaluates the unit and, based on the results, grants an official classification [11].

Compliance and Sanctions

The order also includes provisions for monitoring and sanctioning in cases of non-compliance with classification standards. Units that do not meet the required conditions risk being downgraded, temporarily suspended, or even permanently closed in severe cases.

Periodically, these structures are inspected to ensure compliance with legal standards and requirements.

This legislative framework is essential for ensuring a high level of quality within Romania's hospitality industry and for safeguarding tourists, ensuring they benefit from safe, comfortable, and high-quality services [15].

Order No. 221 of July 7, 2015 introduces amendments to the Methodological Norms concerning the classification and issuance of certificates for tourism reception structures (with accommodation and public dining functions), as well as tourism licenses and certifications.

1. Tourism Reception Structures

Tourism reception structures refer to complexes of units that offer tourism services, including accommodation, public catering, recreation, spa treatment, and transportation, and which are subject to classification in order to obtain a classification certificate. These structures are evaluated based on the standards and criteria outlined in the Methodological Norms approved by Order No. 65/2013, as amended by Order No. 221/2015.[3]

2. Technical and Material Elements of Tourism Unit

To obtain a classification certificate, tourism units (hotels, guesthouses, restaurants, etc.) must meet specific technical and material conditions.

3. Classification and Certification of Tourist Units

According to the recent changes, the classification of units is based on compliance with technical and material criteria for each specific category.

Government Emergency Ordinance no. 224/2020 provides support measures for the tourism sector in Romania, including tourist accommodation units, in the context of financial difficulties caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. The main objective of the ordinance is to offer financial assistance to economic operators in the tourism sector and to prevent the closure of units due to significant losses during this period.

Main Support Measures for Tourist Accommodation Units

1. Financial Grants for Loss Compensation

OUG 224/2020 introduces the possibility of granting financial aid to tourist accommodation units to partially compensate for the revenue losses recorded in 2020. These grants are calculated as a percentage of the decrease in turnover compared to the previous year, to provide tailored support based on the situation of each unit.

2. Payment Deferrals and Tax Relief

Tourist accommodation units benefit from deferred payment of taxes and duties, as well as exemptions or reductions of certain fiscal obligations, to reduce financial pressure and enable operators to focus resources on maintaining operations and economic recovery.

3. Support for Employee Retention

An additional ordinance was provided for partial coverage of employee salaries within tourist accommodation structures by granting subsidies to employers. This measure aims to prevent layoffs and ensure that accommodation units have the necessary staff to resume full-capacity operations.

4. Financing for Modernization and Compliance

While the primary goal is to cover losses, Emergency Ordinance no. 224/2020 also includes incentives for units that wish to modernize their facilities or comply with new health and safety standards. This funding also supports the adaptation of spaces to virus prevention measures, such as creating special circuits for tourists, equipping facilities with protective equipment, and improving ventilation and sanitation systems [10].

5. Promoting and Revitalizing Local Tourism

A portion of the funds outlined in OUG 224/2020 is allocated for projects aimed at promoting local tourism. Tourist accommodation units are encouraged to engage in marketing campaigns, tailor their offers for Romanian tourists, and develop new services that cater to the current needs of travelers [14].

Conditions for Accessing Support

To benefit from the support measures provided by the ordinance, tourist accommodation units must meet certain criteria, including:

- Official Certification according to national classifications (e.g., hotels, guesthouses, campgrounds).
- Financial Statements and Documentation proving the losses incurred in 2020 compared to previous years.
- Compliance with Legal Operating Requirements, such as adhering to hygiene and health safety standards [13].

Impact of OUG 224/2020 on Tourist Accommodation Units

Government Emergency Ordinance no. 224/2020 is a vital intervention to support the tourism industry, which was severely impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. This government measure not only provides financial aid to struggling units but also helps preserve jobs and encourages the revival of tourism. Additionally, the funds allocated for modernization contribute to improved infrastructure and service quality, which can attract more tourists and foster long-term development in the sector [5].

Through this supportive framework, OUG 224/2020 offers tourist accommodation units the opportunity to overcome current challenges and adapt to new tourism realities, focusing on quality services and safety for tourists.

Ordinance No. 510/2022 establishes the legal framework for organizing and operating public food establishments in Romania, aimed at enhancing service quality, protecting consumers, and ensuring compliance with hygiene and food safety regulations.

This normative act sets the classification requirements, minimum equipment standards, and compliance measures for restaurants, cafes, fast-food outlets, canteens, and other public food service structures.

OUG 224/2020 introduced several measures to support the tourism sector during the COVID-19 pandemic, which significantly impacted tourist accommodation units. These measures included :[5]

1. Financial Aid: Providing direct financial support to help stabilize businesses.
2. Access to Credit: Facilitating easier access to credit for tourism-related businesses to ensure liquidity during challenging times.
3. Health and Safety Protocols: Implementing necessary health and safety measures to ensure compliance with public health guidelines.

Overall, these actions aimed to encourage domestic tourism, support the recovery of the sector, and help accommodation units navigate the financial challenges posed by the pandemic.

Classification and Typology of Public Catering Units

Ordinance 510/2022 regulates the classification of public catering units based on comfort and services, specifying the equipment and quality offered by each category. The main types of units include:

- Restaurants: Classified using a star system, assessing the gastronomic specialty, equipment, serving capacity, and service quality.
- Cafes and Bars: Classified based on available space, equipment, and product variety.

- Fast-food Establishments: Subject to strict hygiene and food safety requirements due to the rapid preparation and serving processes.
- Canteens and Catering Services: Serve institutions such as schools and hospitals and must comply with strict storage and transport regulations [4].

Minimum Equipment and Organizational Requirements

The ordinance sets minimum standards for equipment and organization to ensure safe operations:

- Preparation and Storage Equipment: units must be equipped with refrigerators, freezers, ovens, grills, and other appliances that ensure food is kept in optimal conditions.
- Hygienic Spaces and Functional Layouts: clear circuits between supply, storage, preparation, and serving areas must be established to prevent cross-contamination. Spaces must be easy to clean, and equipment must comply with food safety standards.
- Ventilation and Air Conditioning Systems: required for eliminating odors and reducing the buildup of steam and grease in the air [12].

Hygiene and Food Safety Standards

A key aspect of the ordinance is maintaining hygiene and consumer protection:

- Food Handling: staff must wear protective equipment (gloves, masks, hairnets) and adhere to frequent hand sanitation in line with safety standards.
- Temperature Control During Food Preparation and Storage: to prevent the growth of harmful microorganisms, temperatures must be carefully monitored during the preparation and storage of food.
- Consumer Information About Ingredients: consumers must be informed about the ingredients used in food preparation, including allergens, to prevent allergic reactions and protect individuals with dietary restrictions [13].

Authorization and Control Procedure

To operate legally, public catering units must obtain a sanitary-veterinary authorization and comply with all the requirements set forth by the ordinance. The authorization procedure includes an inspection of the premises, evaluation of equipment, and verification of necessary documents. These units are subject to periodic inspections by the competent authorities to ensure compliance with safety and hygiene standards [7].

Sanctions and Compliance

Failure to comply with the provisions of Ordinance 510/2022 can result in sanctions such as fines, temporary suspension of operations, or even permanent closure in cases of severe non-compliance. These sanctions are enforced to protect public health and maintain quality standards in public catering.

Importance of Ordinance 510/2022 in the Public Catering Industry

By establishing a clear and detailed legislative framework, Ordinance 510/2022 helps improve the quality of public catering services, providing enhanced safety and comfort for consumers. Implementing these standards not only protects public health but also contributes to the professionalization of the sector, promoting ethical and high-quality practices among food service operators [4].

Law no. 343/2002 was adopted to approve Government Ordinance no. 109/2000, which regulates the legal framework for spa, climatic, and balneoclimatic resorts in Romania, as well as balneary and rehabilitation medical care. The purpose of this law was to establish a set of norms and standards for the development and management of these

resorts, with an emphasis on protecting and utilizing Romania's therapeutic natural resources [1].

Key Aspects Regulated by Law 343/2002 and OG 109/2000

1. **Definition and Classification of Resorts:** The law defines spa, climatic, and balneoclimatic resorts based on the specific natural resources of each area (mineral waters, therapeutic muds, favorable climatic factors, etc.). The classification ensures better organization of these resorts and facilitates patient access to specific medical treatments.

2. **Protection and Use of Natural Resources - OG 109/2000** imposes strict measures for the protection of therapeutic natural resources. Spa resorts must follow conservation norms for resources such as mineral waters and therapeutic muds to prevent excessive exploitation and degradation. The law aims to ensure a balance between exploitation and conservation, so that natural resources remain available for future generations.

3. **Balneary and Rehabilitation Medical Care -** The law establishes the framework for providing high-quality medical services in spa and balneoclimatic resorts, including treatment and rehabilitation procedures. The law provides for the organization of specialized centers and medical units that offer balneary therapies, where patients can benefit from treatments for post-traumatic rehabilitation, rheumatological recovery, cardiovascular care, etc.

4. **Accreditation and Supervision of Balneary Units - OG 109/2000** sets criteria for accrediting and licensing units that provide medical and balneary rehabilitation services to ensure that they meet safety and quality standards. The supervision of these units is ensured through periodic inspections conducted by competent authorities, including the Ministry of Health and other relevant sanitary institutions.

5. **Funding and Support for Development - Law 343/2002** includes measures to support investments in spa, climatic, and balneoclimatic resorts with the aim of modernizing infrastructure and attracting tourists, both domestic and international. It provides incentives for economic operators who invest in the development of these resorts and for those who offer quality medical services [1].

Law 343/2002: This law primarily focuses on the organization and development of tourism, establishing frameworks for tourism services, infrastructure development, and the promotion of tourism as a vital sector for economic growth. Key aspects include:

- Licensing requirements for tourism units.
- Standards for quality and safety in tourism services.
- Promotion of sustainable tourism practices.

OG 109/2000: This ordinance covers the legal framework for public-private partnerships and investments in tourism infrastructure. Key aspects include:

- Encouragement of private investment in tourism development.
- Guidelines for cooperation between public authorities and private entities.
- Provisions to ensure the efficient use of resources and sustainable development in tourism projects.

Together, these regulations provide a structure to promote the tourism industry while ensuring quality, safety, and sustainability in tourism services.

Importance and Impact of Law 343/2002

Law 343/2002 has played a key role in promoting health tourism and harnessing the therapeutic potential of Romania's spa resorts. The adoption of this law has contributed to raising the quality standards in balneary medical care and encouraged investments in health and spa tourism infrastructure.

Furthermore, this law has supported the development of an important segment of the local and national economy, through job creation in tourism and healthcare and by attracting tourists interested in balneary treatments. Law 343/2002 thus represented a significant step in strengthening Romania's position as a recognized destination for balneary and medical rehabilitation tourism, while also supporting the health and well-being of patients benefiting from the treatments specific to these resorts [1].

Tourism reception structures, from accommodation to transport, are central to the experience of modern travelers. The technical and material aspects of these facilities should not only aim to meet basic needs but also to elevate the overall visitor experience. This involves incorporating comfort, sustainability, and technology into the design and service delivery. As tourism trends evolve, particularly towards eco-consciousness and seamless digital experiences, these structures must adapt accordingly. Properly integrating these elements ensures that destinations can offer not only a memorable experience but also a responsible, sustainable one.

CONCLUSIONS

Tourism reception structures play a crucial role in the development of tourism, contributing to economic growth, job creation, and the improvement of infrastructure in tourist areas. These structures include hotels, guesthouses, cabins, campsites, hostels, and other accommodation units, all of which must adhere to strict standards and comply with current legislation to provide an appropriate level of services and safety for tourists.

According to both Romanian and European legislation, tourism reception structures must hold official authorizations and classifications, which are granted based on the level of comfort and services offered. These classifications aim to standardize service quality and protect consumer rights, providing tourists with clear information about the conditions and services they can expect.

In conclusion, compliance with legislation and classification norms is essential for ensuring a safe and high-quality experience for tourists, as well as for maintaining a positive image of tourist destinations. Non-compliance can lead to legal penalties and reputational damage, undermining tourists' trust. Therefore, adapting and aligning tourism reception structures with legal requirements not only supports the sustainable development of tourism but also contributes to the long-term competitiveness of the sector.

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