

**“TRANSYLVANIA REGIONAL BALNEOTOURISM CLUSTER”: TO MEASURE  
THE IMPACT OF TOURISM DEVELOPMENT IN THE CENTRE REGION**

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**Abstract:** *This paper aims to analysis of the economy of the Centre Region of Romania, cooperation with the different institutions and the business environment, to elaborate map of the cluster, pointing the main business subjects and their links with suppliers, clients, non-governmental organizations, educational institutions and other companies from different spheres. Transylvania Regional Balneotourism Cluster was established at the initiative of national organizations with a common purpose: to develop the Centru region Romania, by exploiting the existing natural resources with therapeutic effects. The initiators identified several objectives, like creating integrated and complex tourism services, to participate in or to initiate research projects and to introduce innovation in this sector of therapeutic tourism, modernization of buildings from the partner areas, creating a unitary and coherent cluster politics. The cluster also has like basic aim to represent the company's interests, and to increase the competitiveness by building international relationships and promoting the Romanian balneotourism around the world.*

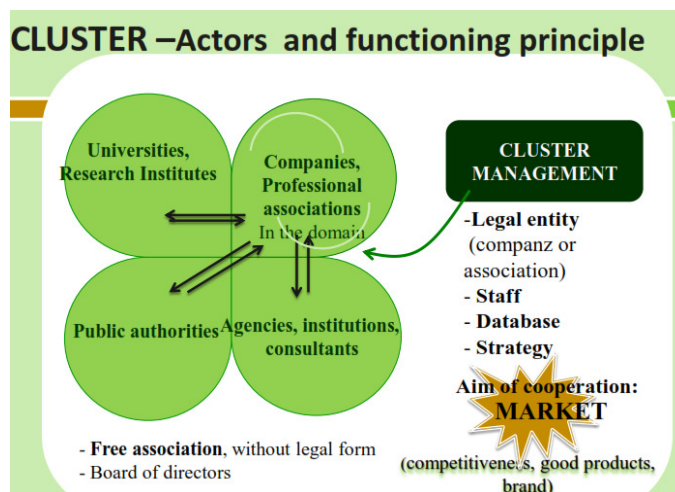
**Key words:** *tourism cluster, health tourism, regional development*

**INTRODUCTION**

Health tourism plays an important role all over the world, and the tendency shows growing. Health tourism is the key driver of health industry. Health industry is connected to almost every field of economy and has innovative characteristics, which have to be considered. Romania has a very good potential being an important country for touring destination in future. The importance of the tourism based on medicinal services is growing, the medicinal tourism in Romania is a dynamic field. Romania has well-qualified specialists, and good references in this area, and the appropriate knowledge in medicine to reach better position in health tourism in Europe.

**MATERIALS AND METHODS**

A definition of the cluster concept - clusters are geographic concentrations of interconnected companies, specialized suppliers, service providers, and associated institutions in a particular field that are present in a nation or region. Clusters are arising continuously. Forming clusters has many advantages, they increase the productivity with which companies can compete, decrease the costs of doing business. If there is a common aim, it makes easier to achieve it together, in corporation instead of rivalry. As a group, the members can maintain easier good relationship with the related and supporting industries. They can handle easier the unexpected events, which are out of their control such as economic crisis. Clusters provide support for innovations and entry to international market. The main purpose is to create a competitive advantage. It is also important for governments and other institutions to develop and upgrade the clusters.



**Source:** *Importance of innovative clusters in Romania, by Vajda Lajos, vice-president of the Association of Romanian Clusters*

The concept of cluster is adopted to the specific characteristics of tourism activity, whose product is linked to its local base and to the joint action of an agglomerate of enterprises involved in the region's tourism product.

The tourism cluster concept - a complex group of different elements, including services carried out by tourism companies or business (lodging, restoration, travel agencies, aquatic and theme parks); richness provided by tourist holiday experiences; multidimensional gathering of interrelated companies and industries; communication and transportation infrastructures; complementary activities (commercial allotment, holiday traditions); supporting services (formation and information) and natural resources and institutional policies.

The relations between enterprises and institutions and a tourism cluster can be understood in two ways:

- **Horizontal** – by the creation of **strategic alliances**, where agreements can be of two kinds: on one side, the agreements between enterprises that have the same principal activity, i.e. among enterprises that deal with lodging, entertainment, transport and catering. On the other side, the agreements between enterprises working with the same group of customer satisfaction, but offering different product components to the customers (tourism service);
- **Vertical** – by the creation of **strategic nets**, where there is the establishment of a unilateral supplier customer relation among the partners in such a way that the object activities of the agreement are fulfilled by one of the parts, which gives its *output* to the other in exchange for a payment.

## RESEARCH RESULTS

In Romania, it is not common yet, to form clusters. It is unique that the companies belong to the same industry, cooperate instead of competing. It is one of the reasons, why the *Transylvania Regional Balneotourism Cluster*, is emphasized. It is operating in the *Centre Region of Romania*. The members are medical and thermal baths, medical and wellness hotels, sanatoriums, councils that are interested in the development of medical and health tourism, tourism advisory firms and non-profit organizations.

## Balneoturism in CENTER-RO Region



**Source:** *Importance of innovative clusters in Romania, by Vajda Lajos, vice-president of the Association of Romanian Clusters*

The clusters can be formed because of several factors. Transylvania Regional Balneotourism Cluster is based on plentiful natural resources. The main target is the better utilization of these values, taking more advantage. It is continuing a non-profit activity, providing benefits its members and for the society, including advocacy of the members. The efficient cooperation helps to evolve and maintain new connections in thermal and medical tourism, and through them build plans for development. Further activities are supporting of researches in this area, organizing education and trainings with the appropriate experts. As it is mentioned above clusters are new phenomena in Romania, therefore to get the people familiar with Transylvania Regional Balneotourism Cluster also aimed. It concludes easier prevailing and achieving the overall goal of the organization.

The Transylvania Regional Balneotourism Cluster has 30 members (14 from the Economic Sector - which has 2 main parts: the basic sector – 13 members, 2 national organizations, 1 hospital, 2 doctors, 5 enterprises; and the connective sector with 2 national organizations, 1 county organization and 1 hotel; the complementary sector complied from 1 university, 1 academy, and the National Institute for Research; the Support Sector with 7 authorities, 1 agency, 1 association; and the Catalyst Organizations composed from a national foundation, the Romanian Cluster Association and an enterprise).

Transylvania Regional Balneotourism Cluster was established at the initiative of 7 national organizations with a common purpose: to develop the Centre Region, by exploiting the existing natural resources with therapeutic effects. The initiators identified several objectives, like creating integrated and complex tourism services, to participate in or to initiate research projects and to introduce innovation in this sector of therapeutic tourism, modernization of buildings from the partner areas, creating a unitary and coherent cluster politics. The cluster has priorities such as: to develop the IT system, to elaborate legislative proposals, the formation and professional development of the human resources, to elaborate a touristic marketing strategy of this region based on the potential, and then, creating a competitive Brand, etc. The cluster also has like basic aim to represent the company's interests, and to increase the competitiveness by building international relationships and promoting the Romanian balneotourism around the world. The Cluster is a solution for the problems that sets back for years this trade, it is important to mention that the natural resources from this area are unique in Europe. We are speaking about the mineral waters (wide sort scale), lakes with salty water, salt mines, gases with therapeutically effect, etc.

The most important services provided by Transylvania Regional Balneotourism Cluster are the following:

- make the benchmarking and logistic database,
- maintain and expansion partnerships,
- develop common acquisition,
- creating special touring areas including spa-climacteric resorts,
- improving the image of the Romanian touring product over the foreign market,
- form common image, edit and submit image issues,
- provide information continuously about the activities and plans of the members,
- stimulating the partnership between private and public sector,
- measure and satisfy the educational and training needs,
- exposition of lobby activities,
- diversification of the treatment procedures,
- participate in the national and international tourism exhibitions, conferences and workshops,
- edit offer catalogues in foreign languages,
- project management.

### CONCLUSIONS

In the Centre Region territories, development of health tourism has passed in different stages and has been influenced by social and economic developments. The tourism potential offered, enable his current development. At a time when tourism is considered as one of the most perspective branches in our region, becomes important the role that health tourism plays in areas with health tourism potential. According to the importance that it has, it is necessary to intensify efforts to strengthen: policies and strategies for the development of health tourism; promotion of curative values; community involvement in tourism development; professional qualification of the new generation with new concepts of health tourism and of welfare; local and foreign investments in health tourism.

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