

## THE EVOLUTION OF TOURISM IN THE CARPATHIAN REGION

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### **Abstract**

*Carpathian region hosts a unique natural and cultural heritage, offering a true "haven" for wildlife. Carpathians are a real living environment for millions of people and biodiversity and natural heritage are constantly threatened by land abandonment, habitat conversion, industrialization, pollution and over-exploitation of resources.*

*Dynamic rural tourism in the Carpathians is spectacular if we considering that 20 years ago this sector does not exist. This development has occurred mainly due to the fact that rural tourism is an additional source of income for people living in rural areas. But on the other hand, rural tourism has created disparities between rural localities because they do not all areas ruled by the same opportunities (cultural resources, historical, natural, etc.) and even went to image distortion architectural village through the changes of houses or by the loss of traditions of the area, etc. However, rural tourism remains the most promising type of tourism in the Carpathians.*

**Key words:** economic development, habitat conversion, pollution and over-exploitation of resources

### **INTRODUCTION**

Most of the area covered by the Carpathian Mountains area is considered weaker (less developed Areas) because the mountains are less suitable for agriculture and arable land is found only up to approx. 600-700 meters. Also being new mountains geologically, they have low mineral resources, or located in inaccessible areas. Despite these factors, the population density is high, even exceeding the capacity of these areas, which in recent decades has led to poverty and migration. In fact, Carpathian regions are some of the regions with the highest migration today.

In these circumstances, partially unfavorable were added particular political situations, Carpathians always being considered and negotiated the border areas. Also, over time, have been deforestation major fittings, etc.. Although the area offers opportunities for hiking, this activity was not a priority sector and international tourism was forbidden.

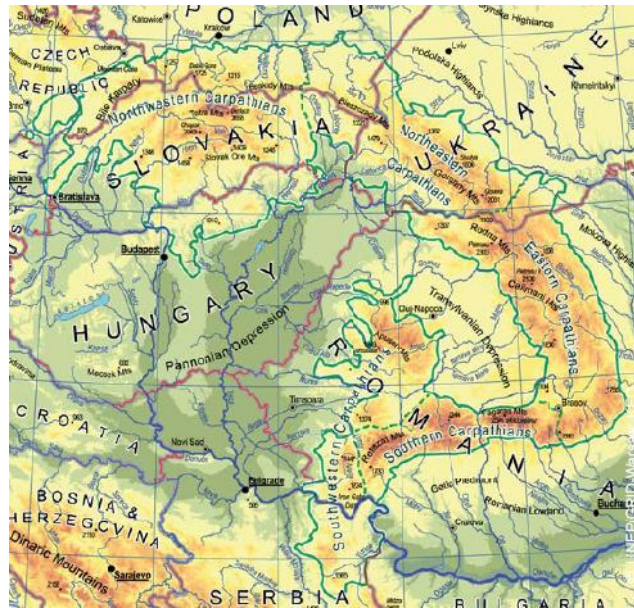
### **MATERIAL AND METHOD**

Carpathian region covers the area from eight European countries: Austria, Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, Romania, Serbia, Slovakia and Ukraine (Map 1). The total length of the Carpathians is over 1,500 km and depressions between 12 and 500 km. With a coverage area of over 190,000

km<sup>2</sup>, is the Carpathian region, after the Alps, the most extensive mountain system in Europe.

Map nr. 1

The Carpathian mountains and their sub-units



Sursa: The Carpathian Project - Visions and Strategies in *the Carpathian Area (VASICA)*

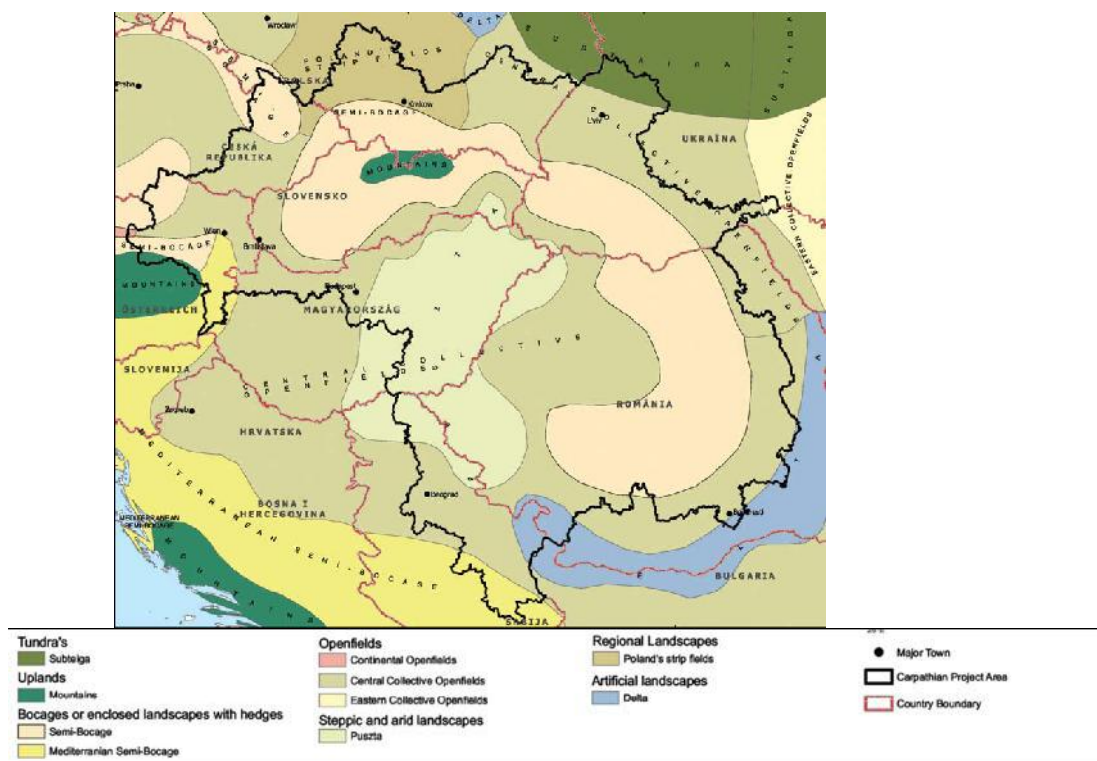
The Carpathian Mountains are a natural variety, subject to the general policy of conservation and protection (Map 2). All Carpathian countries are involved in international networks to protect biodiversity and have appropriate legislation. They also have national parks, protected areas, etc.

Austria, Czech Republic, Poland and Slovakia said more than 15% of their territory as being protected area (Map 3).

Ukraine has 30 national parks (9 in Carpathian Mountains) which are spread over an area of about. 19,091 Km<sup>2</sup> and which represent 85 % of the protected areas.

Follows Romania which holds 12 protected areas in the Carpathians (of a total of 13) that stretch over 3,047 km<sup>2</sup> and representing 72% of the total area of protected areas.

Landscape typology for Carpathian Region



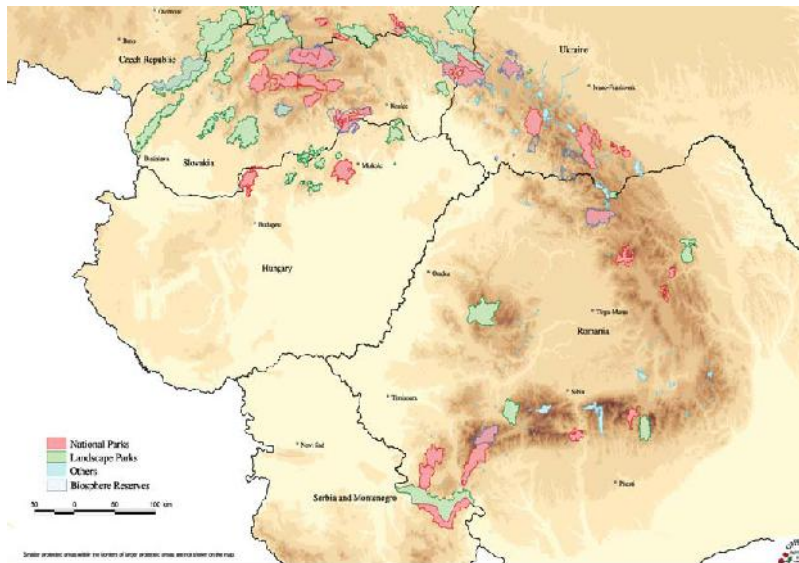
Sursa: EURAC

The last is Czech Republic which holds in the Carpathians only one area protected with an area of 79 km<sup>2</sup> and representing 11% of the area of the 45 protected areas of the country.

Carpathian protected areas issue is a sensitive topic in international conventions, many organizations denouncing intensive economic activities in these areas. In some national parks have been reported deforestation and poaching activities that occurred due to underfunding of these locations.

Cultural heritage is another important element of the Carpathian region. There is a big: monuments in Romanesque style (Hungary, Poland), Gothic (Brasov, Sibiu and Alba Iulia, Sighisoara) or ancient master (Lviv, Kraków and Tarnów); specific architecture churches (Catholic, Orthodox); decorations traditional; traditional trades, etc., when they add other intangible values inherited such as: folk music, slime, folk tales, public holidays, etc., all prezervate due to insulation locations.

Protected areas in the Carpathian Mountain



Sursa: Daphne Institute of Applied Ecology

All these elements referred to above have determined that tourism is the most dynamic sector of local economies in the Carpathian. This is due, on the one hand, facilities for winter sports in Slovakia, Poland and Romania, and on the other hand rural tourism.

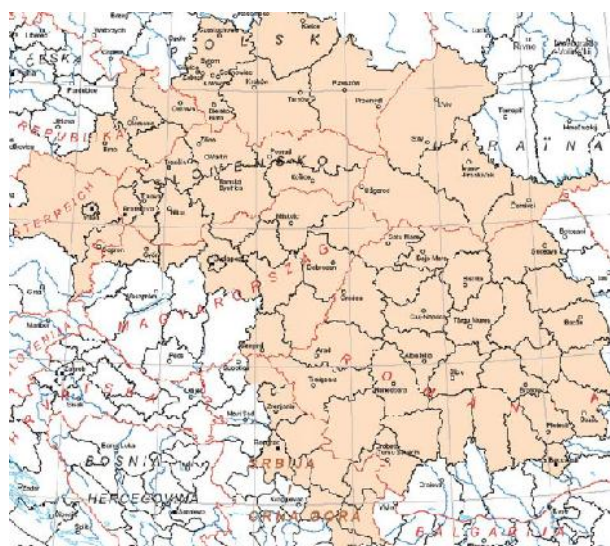
Winter sports in Slovakia is the main form of tourism in the country, more than 30% of domestic tourists coming here in season. There has been major investment in hotels, residential parks, ski slopes, etc., In recent years international tourism surpassing domestic tourism, 42% were Slovaks, Czechs 32%, 8% Hungarians. This has affected the Tatra National Park where activities especially tourism promotes walking, cycling or skiing circuits (ski run). In the Czech Republic winter resorts are not located in the Carpathian Mountains in Ukraine are not yet developed, and in Hungary offers reduced conditions.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Analysis of statistical data on tourism in the Carpathian region can be achieved only by taking into account administrative regions, respectively NUTS level 2 in Austria, Poland and Ukraine, and NUTS 3 in the Czech Republic, Hungary and Romania (Map 4).

Mapa 4

The Carpathian Development Regions



Sursa: The Carpathian Project (VASICA)

Analysis of the situation and the dynamics of tourism in the Carpathians, from the existing data in the administrative regions whose surface stretch, reveals the following:

Țara	Suprafață Km <sup>2</sup>	Hoteluri - număr -			Locuri (paturi) - număr -			Înnoptări - număr -			Grad de Înnoptare	
		2006	2012	%	2006	2012	%	2006	2012	%	2006	2012
Cehia	21723	2737	4314	157,62	167058	236104	141,33	20766	25889	124,67	12,4	11,0
Ungaria	54322	1687	1921	113,87	127650	154060	120,69	11584	15749	135,95		
Polonia	45514	1247	2301	184,52	102272	178056	174,10	8024	21821	271,95	7,8	12,3
România	165013	2362	4125	174,64	204374	226383	110,77	18464	18098	98,02	9,0	8,0
Slovenia	49034	476	922	193,70	41700	57985	139,05	7014	6792	96,83	16,8	11,7
<b>Total</b>	<b>335606</b>	<b>8509</b>	<b>13583</b>	<b>159,53</b>	<b>643054</b>	<b>852588</b>	<b>132,58</b>	<b>65852</b>	<b>88346</b>	<b>134,16</b>	<b>10,2</b>	<b>10,4</b>

Sursa: The Carpathian Project (VASICA)

As seen in the region have built new facilities, and the number of beds increased by over 32%. Poland and Hungary, which records and most dynamic in the provision of accommodation, increased occupancy of 57% and 12%. On the other hand, although the number of tourists increased, employment fell in Czech Republic, Romania and Slovakia.

SWOT analysis on tourism activities in the Carpathian region. The strengths of the Carpathian region in terms of tourism activity can be summarized as follows:

- Carpathian Mountains are found in many areas well equipped and easily accessible resorts for winter sports: Zakopane (PL), Tatranská Lomnica, Stry Smokovec, Štrbské Pleso (SK), Sinaia, Azuga and Predeal (RO);
- Carpathian Mountains are rich in sources of mineral water and spa resorts: Krynica (PL) Piešťany and Teplice (SK), Citrus, Sovata Tusnad, Covasna and Baile Herculane (RO);
- Carpathian Mountains are shared by 8 European countries (unique in the world), important countries in terms of geo-strategic, political, economic and environmental;
- Carpathian Mountains is one of the regions of Europe where architecture, art and rural crafts are best preserved;
- Carpathian Mountains are found in high-potential resources: food products of interest for food industry; forest industry interest in wood processing and furniture industry; rivers of interest to the energy industry, etc..

**Weaknesses** of the Carpathian region in terms of tourism activity are:

- Carpathian Mountains are considered in economically "disadvantaged area";
- Carpathian Mountains are less accessible than the Alps, here we approached on a stretch of 1,450 km just 12 railway line (of which 5 at the border between Czech Republic and Slovakia) and no highway, as they affect the potential of exploitation by tourism;
- Carpathian Mountains population density is high, leading to poverty and migration;
- much of the Carpathian regions are border areas, peripheral economic isolated from each other;
- due to political and economic changes, small mountain towns have lost their traditional function-processing of mountain villages, or have become "mono-producing"
- in many areas in the Carpathians are conducted an intensive process of deforestation.

**Opportunities** that creates Carpathian Mountains to develop tourism activity are :

- Carpathian Mountains is one of the regions of Europe where the population is increasing, thus providing educated and cheap labor;
- has a great potential for tourism: designated areas where you can practice winter sports, wild natural areas, national parks spread;
- Townships developed with economic functions;
- trade, processing and marketing of mountain products are an important source for economic development, etc..

Carpathians also presents a number of risks in the development of tourism such as:

- population pressure and lack of agricultural resources, determined indirectly deforestation, over-grazing and inappropriate land use, which can lead to flooding, landslides and soil degradation;
- Climate change may cause flooding or decrease the supply of winter sports;
- Lack of economic development can increase the migration, materializing in income transfers between regions;
- relative isolation, and the role of the border may increase illegal activities such as poaching and smuggling, moonlighting, etc..

## CONCLUSIONS

Dynamics of rural tourism in the Carpathian Mountains is spectacular, considering that 20 years ago did not exist.

Analysis of the situation and the dynamics of tourism in the Carpathians, based on the statistical data from the administrative regions, shows an increase of tourist reception especially in Poland (57%) and Hungary (12%). On the other hand, although the number of tourists has increased employment in the Czech Republic, Romania and Slovakia fell. SWOT Analysis of the Carpathian region shows the following main elements:

- The area has a high tourism potential (natural and anthropogenic);
- The area is difficult to access and is generally classified as disadvantaged areas;
- Has the necessary resources for the development of sustainable economic activities;
- The area has been subjected to the processes of deforestation, erosion, migration, loss of cultural identity, poaching, etc..

SWOT analysis of the Region identifying emphasizes the following main elements:

- the area has a high tourism potential (natural and anthropic);

- the area is accessible and is generally classified in category less-favored areas;
- area has resources necessary for the development of sustainable economic activities;
- the area has been subjected to the processes rocks, erosion, migration, cultural identity loss, poaching, etc.

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