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## SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT OF LOCAL RESOURCES BY ECO-TOURISM IN CĂLĂRAȘI COUNTY

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### **Abstract**

*The development of sustainable tourism in the natural areas led to the ecosystem as distinct form, aimed to respect the integrity of the natural landscapes, of ecological biodiversity. The natural areas represents important phases for the development of pleasure activities, that can bring important incomes, both to those who administer them and to the local communities. The present study proposed to show the current situation of the natural protected areas in Călărași county and the development phase of the eco-tourist activities within them and surrounding. Despite the fact the Călărași county possesses a remarkable eco-tourist patrimony with high potential for capitalization, the eco-tourism is a quite strait segment of the local tourist market, faced with problems such as: low cooperation at local level, existence of some limited offers, low diversification, low development of eco-tourism specific infrastructure at the level of the protected areas, and also the low level of training of those employed in this domain. Measures for the capitalization of these resources by eco-tourism are proposed based on the information obtained and analysed, in accordance with the requirements imposed by the national legislation.*

**Key words:** eco-tourism, sustainable development, protected areas, eco-tourist patrimony, biodiversity

## **INTRODUCTION**

According to the definition formulated by Ziffer, 1989, ecotourism „is a form of tourism which inspires from the natural history of a region, including also its indigene cultures” [1]. Ecotourism is that which practices a protective tourism, non-consumer of natural resources, floristic and fauna. The economic activity in the protected areas develop in accordance with the capacity of their absorption; it is opposed to the mass tourism a form of organized tourism, supposing the combination of pleasure and recreation activities, with the educative ones, of environment protection and natural and cultural historical resources protection; thus, the ecotourism wants to be both a form of viable commercial tourism and protective ecologically speaking; this type of tourism aims to contribute to the development of a region, by maintaining a state of balance between the three dominant components of the tourist activities: guest, tourists and tourist

industry, in order to obtain an equitable benefit on long term. [2].

The European Federation of National and Natural Parks (FNNPE) mentioned recently the tourism in and around the protected areas and concluded that the tourism and preservation can be many times compatible, mutually advantageous, but only if it is practiced in a sustainable way, in the protected areas [3].

## **MATERIAL AND METHOD**

Calarasi touring presence in the pages of Romania's Guide comes as a confirmation of its tourist potential. The existence of archaeological remains, the natural reserves, the wealth of architectural heritage in the context of current trends of socio-economic, strategic positioning along the Danube, making it an area of great importance in the national landscape, with strong roots, and dynamic presence extraordinary growth prospects.

In Calarasi county there are six natural areas protected by law for the fauna and flora living in the areas of rare plant and animal species and species placed under special protection. Tourism potential, Calarasi County, is underutilized at less than 130 km from Bucharest and around 100 km from Constanta and Black Sea.

The study aims to identify, in the Calarasi county, the potential for eco-tourism development, which is aimed at those who wish to visit the existing nature reserves, biotope and for those interested in the Danube.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

**Tourism**, as economic activity, can cause big damage to the protected areas if they are not administered adequately, but can lead also to high benefits. The pressures on the tourist places increase, so that the valuable natural areas become more and more places for long term tourism, one day visits and even sport. In several protected areas, there are pure and simple so many visitors in certain parts, or in certain moments, that the nature – and the quality of visitor experience – suffers; in others, visitors can enter the furthest areas. The tourist facilities enter many times in conflict with the preservation aims and harms them; the pressures for the development of such facilities are powerful enough in the former group of East-European countries, meanwhile, in some protected areas, the tourism does not simply take place. But, if it is planned and managed to be sustainable, the tourism can be a positive force, bringing benefits both to the protected areas and to the local communities. The main forms of agreed tourism within the protected areas are: tourism based on nature appreciation, cultural and educational tourism; tourist activities of small, peaceful groups, ecotourism, in general. [4].

In Europe, Romania has the most diverse and valuable natural heritage, the area of protected natural areas of national interest, reported the country's surface is 7%. The categories of protected natural areas (Table 1) are of

national interest (scientific reserves, national parks, natural monuments, nature reserves and natural parks) international interest (natural sites of universal natural heritage, geo-parks, wetlands of international importance, Biosphere Reserves).

Table 1- Natural areas protected in Region 3 South Muntenia

3 SOUTH MUNTEANIA REGION	Number	Area- ha
Argeș County	32	32613,73
Călărași County	5	<b>3224,3</b>
Dambovița County	13	18228,93
Giurgiu County	6	27561,5
Ialomița County	4	221
Prahova County	7	13325,04
Teleorman County	5	1782
Total	72	96956,5

Table 2- List of protected areas in Calarasi County

Name of protected areas	Location e	Type	Surface (ha)	Remarks
<u>Iezerul Călărași</u>	<u>Călărași, Cuza Vodă</u>	birds	2.877	Law no 5 of 6 <sup>th</sup> March 2000
Ciocanesti Island	Ciocănesti	floristic and fauna	206,70	HG 2151/2004
<u>Haralambie Island</u>	<u>Lunca Dunării</u>	floristic and fauna	44,90	HG 2151/2004
<u>Soimul Island</u>	<u>Dichiseni</u>	floristic and fauna	20,10	HG 2151/2004
Forest Ciornuleasa	Mitreni	Forestry	75,20	Law no. 5 of 6th March 2000

**Forest reservation Ciornuleasa** - 73.2 ha, contains secular trees, with ages over 130 years (grey oak, ash tree, etc.).

Location: Baragan Plain, altitude 42m



**Bird natural reservation Iezer Calarasi** - 2877 ha

Location: The Danube Meadow, administratively belongs to Cuza Voda commune and Calarasi municipality. Species of avifauna strictly protected at present: curled common – small cormorant – red



neck goose – red neck grebe– white stock – black stock– small brook – red duck – small egret.

**Natural Reservation Ostrovul Soimul - 20.1 ha**



Location: on the Danube river km 350 near Dichiseni locality, average altitude 16 m .fit into the bio geographic region – steppe, in eco-region flooding Danube Meadow.

**Natural reservation Haralambrie Island - 44.9 ha;**



Location: on the Danube river km 400, average altitude 16 0 m, Length: 500 m  
Fit in the bio geographic region–steppe, in eco-region – Flooding Danube Meadow.

**Natural reservation Ciocanesti Island - 206,7 ha;**



Location: on the Danube river km 395, average altitude 15 m .length: 300 m  
Fit in bio geographic region steppe, in eco-region flooding Danube Meadow.

**Natural reservation Ciocanesti- 230 ha.**



Location: Ciocanesti commune, Calarasi county.

Species of birds present: small cormorant, Dalmatian pelican, night heron, etc.

Eco – tourism can help to justify the creation of protected areas in margin regions, and can lead to a revival of the local communities

from the economic and traditional cultures point of view.

The techniques of administration of visitors in sensible areas are not well known in general. Although they cost many times money and time, the income they generate can help to cover the costs. Also, the ecotourism development can be linked to the manufacturing industry and to alternative jobs at farms, in order to produce elements needed to a sustainable rural economy.

***The European Federation of National and Natural Parks (FNNPE)*** mentioned recently in and around the protected areas and concluded that the tourism and preservation can be compatible sometimes, mutually advantageous, but only if practiced in a sustainable way, in suitable areas [5]. from the point of vie of tourist use, the measures the protected areas benefit by include [6]: a) transformation of existent non sustainable development in more sustainable forms; b) establishing sustainable standards for new development, especially in sensitive areas; c) appoint some areas for different levels of tourism, including sanctuary and restful areas, as areas suitable for different levels of tourist use and development; d) reduction of pollution and smoothing the traffic during holyday; e) avoiding tourism and excessive pleasure activities in the protected areas; f) ensure that from the tourism local communities benefit also; g) ensure support and resources to apply in due time the plans; h) preparation of protected areas manager in sustainable tourism. at the same time, it should review if, it is needed, the improvement of the legislation related to tourism and especially [7]: a) to give to the protected areas managers the power to control the tourism development; b) to ask for the complete evaluation from the ecologic point of view of the proposals concerning the protected areas; c) to work together with the tourism industry, to ask for the damage created by tourism in the past to be repaired and to adopt managerial techniques in order to make the future sustainable use. The pilot schemes in the sustainable tourism should be encouraged, for

example by: a) loans, subsidies or concession taxes for farmers and local communities, to create small enterprises that use the protected areas in an adequate way; b) administrative projects to show an innovative approach of the tourism, adequate to local economies; c) use of European and national funds for tourism, aiming to encourage the sustainable tourism in the group of former East-European countries.

The sustainable tourism inside and outside the protected areas imposes: the close cooperation with the authorities of the protected areas; tourist operators and guides who works in the protected areas to have high ecologic knowledge; practical and financial contributions of the tourist operators for the preservation of the protected areas; rules for the promotion and marketing of holidays based on the protected areas; directory lines for the local communities involvement; - standards for design and operation of sustainable and business tourism.

The definitions presented allow the individualization of the main aspects of ecotourism, respectively: preservation of biodiversity, by its non consuming characteristics of flora and fauna resources, by services it generates, and by economic incomes, that can be used, including in the benefit of the protected areas; support of local communities, by activities diversification, capital derivation, and economic benefits generating (economic increase); gaining a new experience of interpretation/learning by the ecotourism practitioners: persons open to new, directed to viable tourism and protective ecologic tourism, promotion of responsible actions compared to landscape elements, from the tourists and tourist industry; addressability to small groups of tourists and small businesses; minimum consume and production of non regenerable products; participation of local communities, especially in the rural area; respecting the regional tourism needs; encourage and use of results of environment, social studied, of long term monitoring programs, destined to the evaluation and minimisation of negative impact of tourist activities; adaptation of the

tourist infrastructure to need of preservation of natural elements; achievement of some harmonious links between the natural and cultural environment elements.

Mainly, *ecotourism must be planned and managed taking into account the social involvement and protection objectives it implies*. It needs: specialized market to attract tourists who are interested in visiting the natural areas; achievement of a management to attract visitors in the natural areas; presence of guiding and interpretation services, preferably made available by the inhabitants of the visited areas, to be focussed on the natural history of the region and on the development principles; elaboration of some governmental policies and fiscal exemptions for tourism, that generate profits from the biodiversity preservation and sustainable development of local communities; focusing the attention on area inhabitants who must be well informed and to agree to this type of development.

***Development of a business based on ecotourism*** supposes: identification of elements that must be preserved; respecting the ecotourism principles; elaboration of a guide for tour operators, to include aspects related to: tourist training, instructions for use of visited space, minimisation of impact for ecotourist purposes, contribution to preservation, use of labour force selected within the local communities, non destructive, but comfortable accommodation offers etc.; creation of new jobs, especially for the local communities; proposal of a guide for tourist certification, in accordance with the international experience in the sector.

## CONCLUSIONS

As organized form of public use of the territory of the protected areas, ecotourism does not exclude the existence of an infrastructure and some flows of persons with different cultures, values and needs. Regardless the classic tourism, ecotourism tends to minimize the negative impact on the natural ecosystems and to have a positive impact in social plan on the local economy.

**1. Impact on ecosystems.** Studies made on ecosystems in the natural parks led to the conclusion that no form of major impact on biotopes and biocoenosis can be due to the ecotourist activity developed within the protected areas. But, on the other hand, at present there is no scientific methodology – really efficient – for the evaluation of the changes generated by the tourist activity within the protected areas. [8].

**2. Impact on local economy** Ecotourism can determine significantly the *increase of incomes* at local and regional level. It is *generator of jobs* for the persons who live in or near the protected areas. An important problem of the ecotourist economy is generated by the clients who are quite instable and present rapid changes of attitude, are very sensitive to the political climate, to the tax fluctuation, but also to natural disasters. An aspect which can not be neglected at all is the fact that this tourist client is easily influenced by the reflections in the mass-media, of publicity. Besides ecotourism is a somehow elitist form of tourism, that address only to those who know and love nature.

*Instability of tourist demand* can have *bad economic consequences* in the guest regions where the economic activities are less diversified and jobs are limited or instable as number. In many small localities, the population can be double by tourists arrival, and this calls during their stay an increase of the demand for local products and can generate even inflation at local level. On the other hand, the temporary character of the tourist activity can jeopardise an ecotourist economy, if there are no also other related or complementary activities. Thus, *economic objectives of ecotourism* must be represented by the *production increase and activities diversification* to diminish the instability and the fluctuation of production in the guest region.

**3. Impact on local communities.** Rapid increase of the number of visitors in a region has *social and cultural repercussions on the local community*. When two cultures meet, they have certain divergences, not necessarily negative, to which – most times – the local

community can not adapt. This confrontation can have an effect of lack of culture of the local community, especially when the tourism becomes a mass one. Thus the creation of a park hinder the practice of the traditional activities, such as hunting, fishing, that are often prohibited by the protected areas.

The publicity of the protected areas in mass-media can determine the increase of the number of tourists and thus, can influence the *social behaviour* of the inhabitants.

The presence of the tourists interested in traditions can represent a *revitalising factor of the cultural practices*, often forgotten by the inhabitants and can contribute to the reconstruction of a collective identity.

It is very true that the social impacts are difficult to measure quantitatively. But over the time quantitative measures can be made. The main *social objectives* related to ecotourism are: *revival of the quality of life of the community members, satisfaction of information needs* on ecotourist resources and *participation* of the community to its own development. These objectives well be achieved if the local communities will have the power to make decisions and will participate in the elaboration of ecotourist projects in their regions, so that will contribute to their own development. It is what Marie Lequin (2001), quoted by Mioara Ghincea () considers that it is called *participative governing*.

**4. Socio-economic benefits of ecotourism .** Development of ecotourist activities in the protected areas implies a series of *socio-economic benefits* such as:

- Generates *the job creation* at local level (directly in the tourist sector or in related sectors).
- Stimulates the local economy by developing services (hotels, restaurants, souvenir industry, craft products and guiding services).
- Generates economic exchanges* with the exterior of the protected areas.
- Determines *diversification of local economy*, particularly in the rural area where people have activity (in agricultural sector) only a season a year .

-**Stimulates especially the rural economy** by the creation or increase of agricultural products demand needed to ensure tourist services and by capital insertion.

-Intensify **the development of infrastructure**, that brings benefits also to the local population.

-Once developed the tourism in a protected area, the local/regional/national authorities can be stimulated to contribute also to the **development of peripheral regions** by capital insertions.

-Encourage the **increase of agricultural productivity** on restricted surfaces (intensive agriculture) to maintain a bigger surface with natural vegetation.

-Can contribute to **the improvement of the intercultural relations** in a region. The tourists often want to know the traditions and customs specific to an ethnographic region, and the guest community is thus stimulated to revive the popular traditions.

-In a conditions of a normal development the tourism can lead to **self-financing of the development mechanisms** that the park authorities can benefit by as **instrument for natural areas preservation**.

-Create pleasure **facilities** that can be used also by the local communities over the year.

-Support to achieve **the aim of preservation**, by persuading the governments and public on the importance of the natural areas.

**Socio-economic benefits** imply often also certain **concessions**. Many times, the managerial activity of the protected areas suffers from **lack of economic, technical and organizational resources**, needed for the development of the tourist activities. These should be made available by the local and central authorities. In these cases, it is more suitable the concession (**custody**) of the **protected areas**, and providing for administration the infrastructure and tourist equipment. The tourist activities developed in a protected area must be based on a **management plan** elaborated by the park custodies consulting all stakeholders involved. So it is needed a good **collaboration and communication** between all decision making

factors involved (local, central community, scientific community).

By the concession activity the local population can have **benefits** from nature, thus, can become, by direct involvement, the best **defender of nature protection**.

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