

## TOURIST SAFETY AND SECURITY: A FACTOR OF THE COMPETITIVENESS OF SECONDARY TOURIST DESTINATIONS

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### Abstract

*The majority of speciality studies which aim at the quantification of competitiveness in economic terms were guided, especially, to the aspects that support a strong productive sector and, less, to the related fields, but that confer big added value. However, it is required to look over other recent approaches that were repositioned, giving attention to the international competitiveness from the services area, with a special emphasize on tourism destinations and the hospitality industry. As tourism continues to flourish in the world economy, competition, be it international or intern, becomes harsher and harsher. Under these circumstances, success must be associated with possession and making the most of the elements generating competitive advantages. It is already known that in order to be competitive, a destination or an economic entity in the area must be able to attract and satisfy tourists at a superior level in comparison with competition.*

*The geopolitical cleavage and the deep globalization of services- associated with spending leisure time as restoratively as possible- motivated us to tackle quite concisely a particular aspect of tourism competitiveness, of critical importance, in our opinion: safety and security of tourists. In order to underlie the analysis, we used the data supplied by the World Economic Forum through the Travel and Tourism Competitiveness Index (TTCI), which represents one of the most used evaluation instruments of tourism competitiveness at the international level. From the methodological point of view, the same index was used to emphasize the possible differences registered between Romania and the other central and Eastern European countries, EU members (EEC-EU).*

**Keywords:** Tourism safety and security; Travel and tourism competitiveness indices (TTCI); Romania and EEC-EU; cybercrime, Terrorism.

**JEL Classification:** F52, L83, M31, Z32.

### I. INTRODUCTION

The destination choice remains one of the first and most important decisions made by tourists, and to this decision, contributes, largely, a series of factors, like the image of the destination country, the price of the tourism services, the affordability and/or the safety in terms of air and road infrastructure, the attractiveness (through the richness of tourism heritage), but also the security of tourists and the local population from the destination.

The problems of the competitiveness of destinations became more and more important, especially for the countries and regions which are based a lot on tourism. A lack of tourism competitiveness may be caused by the lack of efficiency and the imbalances between the inputs and outputs, caused in their turn by the possible erroneous reasons of the deciders regarding the necessities of a destination, the development phase in which it is, the

life cycle of the tourism product, etc. (Țigu, Maria, Nica, 2010, pp. 735-736) or can be caused by a series of uncontrollable factors or inopinate events.<sup>1</sup> On the other hand, in the case of the countries where the weighting of the hospitality industry counterbalances successfully the consumption from the retail market, the possible decrease of incomes from tourism has as a consequence an escalation of the deficit of the current account and determines, mandatory and short-term, an increase of the external debt. Consequently, tourism has the capacity of controlling/ adjusting national exports.

Subsequent to the multiplier effect of tourism, the competitiveness of a destination does not affect only directly the number of arrivals and, implicitly, the proceeds, but conditions indirectly other businesses related to the tourism field. Consequently, the deficiencies at the level of tourism competitiveness also affect the related economic fields.

As we have already said, infrastructure, public and private institutions and their transparency, the infrastructure of telecommunications, health and education, primary and the secondary and tertiary ones, the efficiency of the labour market, the degree of adaptability to the new technologies and innovation are only some of the pillars of economic competitiveness, without which the tourism activity within a country cannot develop. Beside these factors, by far one of the most important, especially in this context at the world level, became the safety and security of the destination and, implicitly, of tourists and local population.

Safety and security are critical factors in determining the competitiveness of tourism industry within a country. Tourists are likely to be discouraged to travel to dangerous countries or regions, which means that a region with a low level of security will be less and less attractive for foreign tourists, but also for investors.

## II. THE ANALYSIS OF SPECIALITY

### LITERATURE

The topic of safety and security in tourism industry got a vital importance at the world level, especially after the terrorist attack from the United States of America, from September 11, 2001. With the increase of the terrorist attacks in the Europe tourism Macroregion (March 2004- on trains from Madrid, Spain; July 2005- transport system from London, Great Britain; January 2015- headquarter of Charlie Hebdo editorial office, Paris; November 2015- proximity of Stade de France, Bataclan theatre and other places from Paris, France; October 2015- a plane with Russian tourists down over Sinai peninsula, Egypt; January and March 2016, Istanbul, February and March 2016 Ankara- Turkey; March 2016- Zaventem Airport, Brussels, Belgium; July 2016, truck driven into crowd, esplanade, Nise, France; July 2016, mall from Munich, Germany; December 2016- Christmas Fair from Berlin, Germany; March 2017- Westminster Bridge, London and May 2017- Manchester Arena concert, Great Britain), the speciality literature began to focus more and more on safety/ security as determining factor of competitiveness and attractiveness of tourism destinations.

The interconditionality of the tourism phenomenon with activities from various fields and macroeconomic processes, augmented by the multidisciplinary approach of the hospitality and travel industry, made that, including the clarification of the aspects regarding notions like security in tourism and tourism safety be submitted to wide debates and analyses within the speciality forums and academic circles. Tarlow (2014) emphasizes that, the lack of precise regulation doesn't mean that practitioners from tourism don't have the knowledge

and responsibility/ competence necessary to ensure security and guarantee the safety of tourists, but rather suggests that these aspects must be judged in consensus with the general evolution of the factors of instability.

In the opinion of Kovari and Zimanyi (2011, p.5), security and safety became extremely complex notions, of multidimensional nature, with a large range of components: from political security and public safety, to the personal data security, the legal protection of tourists and consumer protection.

A reference work on security and safety in tourism is that of Mansfeld and Pizam (2006) which approaches different topics like the theories of terrorism, the war, the terror and the tourism market, the development of tourism in an unsafe world, etc. A work with a quite similar approach is published by Hall, Timothy and Duval (2012) and contains a set of scientific articles that approach the problems of security in tourism, from the point of view of management and marketing.

In a different approach, Kozak, Crofts and Law (2007, pp.233-242) focused on the direction of the analysis of the versatility and quantification of the impact of the risk perceived on the tendency to travel at international level. The results of the research show that the majority of tourists have, many times, the tendency to change their travel plans when it's about risky destinations. Thus one can see that tourists seem sensitive to the appearance of any type of risk, consequently they will avoid as possibly unsafe destinations.

A great part of the speciality literature approaches the safety and security as determining factors of the competitiveness of tourism destinations. Among the authors with such concerns, we remember Cracolici and Nijkamp (2009) who used a set of six factors to determine the competitiveness of tourism destinations from the South of Italy, among these one being the safety of tourists. Also, Donaldson and Ferreira (2009) show that the safety and security are viewed as primary ingredients of the growth of tourism industry and the competitiveness of destinations. The same authors emphasize that tourists who don't feel safe, can contribute decisively to the alteration of the tourism image of the countries and/or regions and, implicitly, to dramatic decreases of tourist flows.

In counterbalance, Hapenciuc, Stanciu, Condratov and Nistoreanu (2009, pp. 47-56) proposed, in 2009, the phrase „safe tourism”, on the example of Romania that, although it is not by far a tourism destination of international notoriety, can march on this direction, advertising on the lack of terrorist risks that represents a solid premise on the way of advertising a specific form of tourism, capable of conveying the idea of safety to tourists.<sup>ii</sup>

Other authors who choose to tackle the problems of security and safety as determining factors of tourism attractiveness or competitiveness are:

Assaf and Josiassen (2012), George and Booyens (2014), Scott, Laws and Prideaux (2013), Seabra, Dolnicar, Abrantes and Kastenholtz (2013) and others.

An interest towards the hospitality and travel industry regarding tourism security and safety manifested also Kapiki (2012). He emphasizes that the exacerbation and „globalization” of the terrorist attacks- especially after September 11, 2001- make that the security of destinations and tourists become a sine qua non condition of action plans that imply the sectorial development of tourism irrespective of the types of threat, risk or hazard.

Other concerns on the topic of security and safety in tourism have: Baker (2015)- who tackles the problems of terrorist threats towards the airline companies, Magliulo (2016)- who studies the link between the cybernetic security and tourism competitiveness and the team made of Simpson, Simpson and Cruz- Milan (2016, pp. 373-386) who approach an extremely current topic, namely, that of the immigrants and their impact on tourism destinations.<sup>iii</sup>

### III.METHODOLOGICAL ASPECTS

The major objective of this study is to achieve a preliminary, comparative study regarding the degree of safety and security of tourists from Romania, in comparison with a series of emergent countries from the region. From a conceptual point of view, the emergent countries included in the study are represented by countries that have as a purpose to reduce the difference of increase and development in comparison with the already developed countries ( usually those from the Western Europe), countries which, otherwise, represent the older nucleus of the European Union. In order to render as accurate as possible the possible intercountry differences, we chose as a basis of comparison:

- The Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, Slovakia, Slovenia, Estonia, Lithuania and Latvia- that joined the EU in 2004;
- Bulgaria- that joined the EU in 2007;
- Croatia- that joined the EU in 2013.

In order to reunite under a common title all these countries, we appealed to the terminology proposed by the OECD, which uses the abbreviation EEC ([stats.oecd.org/glossary](http://stats.oecd.org/glossary)), coming from the countries from the Centre and Eastern Europe. In order to better delimit the selected countries, we chose to add to the EEC abbreviation the ending- EU, to clarify from the beginning that we refer to the member countries of the European Union, from the Centre and Eastern Europe.

There are many studies and models of analysis of the differences (Parasuraman, Zeithaml, Berry, 1985, p.44; Gartner, 1993; Fesenmaier, MacKay, 1996; Baloglu, McCleary, 1999; Govers, Go, Kumar, 2009, p.16; Minciu, Stanciu, 2010) between the

tourism activity from different countries or regions, but by far, one of the most known is that of the Travel and Tourism Competitiveness Index (TTCI), a methodology achieved by the World Economic Forum (WEF) together with partners from the countries submitted to analysis, including international organizations like IATA, OMT, WTTC or private organizations (airline companies, hotel chains, etc).

From the data provided by the latest World Economic Forum Report from 2015 ([www3.weforum.org](http://www3.weforum.org)), regarding the Travel and Tourism Competitiveness Index (TTCI), Romania is on the 66<sup>th</sup> position from 141 countries, unlike Bulgaria, as direct tourism competitor, which is on 49<sup>th</sup> position.

The TTCI is published every two years, starting with the year 2007, and as a starting point is based on an older methodology proposed by the World Council of Tourism and Travels, which was named Competitiveness Monitor. This was elaborated within the period 2001-2004 and had as purpose to measure the degree in which a certain country offers the necessary conditions to carry out tourism activities.

From a methodological point of view, TTCI has the role of assessing a series of elements that are on the basis of the development of tourism industry from 141 different countries. More exactly, the purpose of the TTCI is to offer a broad strategic instrument to measure „the set of factors and policies that allows the sustainable development of tourism sector, that, in its turn, contributes to the development and competitiveness of a country” (WEF Global Travel & Tourism Report, 2015, Executive Summary, p. VII). Also, the TTCI enables the countries to follow their progress in time, regarding certain measured fields. In order to spotlight the possible differences regarding the safety and security of tourists as determining factor of the competitiveness of the 11 selected destinations, we appealed to the methodology of the World Economic Forum, from which we selected two pillars to be analyzed: pillar 2- Safety and security (P2) and pillar 7- International openness (P7) (Table no. 1).

**Table no. 1- Pillars of tourism competitiveness P2 and P7 for EEC-EU countries, 2015**

Country	P2 – Safety and security		P7 – International openness	
	Position	Score	Position	Score
Bulgaria	78	5,2	45	3,9
Czech Republic	46	5,7	17	4,1
Croatia	28	6,0	19	4,1
Estonia	23	6,0	52	3,7
Lithuania	54	5,6	34	4,0
Latvia	40	5,8	36	4,0
Poland	35	5,9	26	4,1
<b>Romania</b>	<b>65</b>	<b>5,4</b>	<b>42</b>	<b>3,9</b>
Slovakia	55	5,5	43	3,9
Slovenia	14	6,2	50	3,7
Hungary	39	5,8	18	4,1

Source: Personal elaboration on the basis of data of *The Travel and Competitiveness Index, 2015*

From a methodological point of view, each pillar among those listed is made of a series of individual variables that are assessed on a scale from 1 to 7, 1 representing the minimum score, relative to the minimum performances, and 7 the maximum score, relative to the maximum performances for the assessed variable. Pillar no. 7 was included in the analysis because a part of the analyzed variables presented interest for our research approach. It's worth mentioning that the necessary data to elaborate situations for each pillar provided in the analysis of tourism competitiveness are taken both from direct statistic researches, achieved by the World Economic Forum, and from secondary sources like international organizations, institutions and experts in the tourism field.

In order to achieve a more complete image on the approached topic, we considered opportune to analyze also a series of data made available by Eurostat, Europol, but also by other reports on security problems (including cyber security).

#### IV.RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

**P2- Safety and security** within the Travel and Tourism Competitiveness Index (TTCI) refers to the level of costs with violence and crime, with terrorism, but also to the degree in which the police force from one country are ready to ensure protection to the residents and non- residents.

According to the statistical data provided by the World Economic Forum, the safest countries in the region, from the point of view of the general classification, are Slovenia (14<sup>th</sup> place from 141 countries), Estonia ( 23<sup>rd</sup> place) and Croatia (28<sup>th</sup> place).

From the point of view of this pillar Romania and Bulgaria are the lowest placed countries in the region, which shows that in these countries the level of the security of tourists may be affected by a higher rate of violence, of organized crime. The comparative analysis demonstrates a slight superiority of Romania

over Bulgaria, especially regarding the degree perceived of preparation of law enforcement to cope with the possible actions that could put to a test the safety of the citizens and tourists of any kind. From the point of view of this indicator, Romania occupies the 65<sup>th</sup> position in the TTCI classification (from 141 assessed countries), compared to the 111 place, occupied by the neighbouring country. Regarding the terrorist incidence, quantified as an average of the number of victims of terrorism ( wounds and deaths) and the number of terrorist attacks, each normalized on a scale from 1 to 7 (1 high incidence, 7 low incidence), it is found that Romania is on the 1st position in TTCI classification, alongside other 50 countries of the world, which demonstrates that the territory of Romania was unexposed until now from terrorist actions with victims.

The situation is quite balanced between the two countries (with an evident superiority of Romania), if we relate to the homicide rate at 100.000 inhabitants (1.7 killed persons in Romania, in comparison with 1.9 in Bulgaria). From the point of view of this indicator, the best results at the regional level are registered by Slovenia (0.7 homicides, 9/141 place) and the Czech Republic (1 homicide, 23/141 place).

**Table 2- Comparisons Romania- Bulgaria from the point of view of P2 variables- Safety and security**

	Romania		Bulgaria	
	Place	Score	Place	Score
Police services (score)	65	4.2	111	3.3
Index of terrorist incidence (score)	1-50	7.0	97	6.9
Homicide rate at 100.000 inhabitants ( absolute values)	42	1.7	48	1.9

Source: Personal elaboration on the basis of data from *Travel & Tourism Competitiveness Report, 2015*

Though both Romania, and the other countries from the region were safe from terrorist attacks, the level of alert remains a quite high one. In Table no. 3 we present the situation at the regional level, regarding the number of arrests in 2015 of persons suspect of terrorist actions.

It's worth mentioning that, besides the very exposed actions of jihadists terrorists, were calculated also the extremist actions (left or right), respectively the separatist actions. For a complete comparison, at the basement of the table were added some states from the Western Europe (Austria, France, Belgium, Germany, Italy, Spain), which are registered, most of the times, on the lists of the countries threatened directly by terrorist organizations.

We can find that, among the countries from the EEC- EU region, that present publicly such data, the countries with most arrests of persons suspect to be involved in terrorist attacks of jihadist type, are Bulgaria and Romania. If we relate strictly to the case of Romania, we will find that the figures registered are far below the ones declared by the Western

countries, that constitute in important poles of tourism attraction, and, at the same time, as final destinations for the waves of immigrants from Syria and Iraq or other countries affected by intern military conflicts.

As we could see from the previous analyses, Romania presents better results than Bulgaria, especially regarding the capacity of police services to ensure public peace and order. In absolute values one can see that the most police employees are in Poland and Romania, first, because the size of the country (surface and population) (Table no. 4). In the case of all countries in the region, one can find that the police employees had, in the recent years, an oscillatory evolution. It is paradoxical that, despite the increasing number of threats of terrorist nature in the majority of the EEC-EU region countries, the number of law enforcements stagnates or even decreases annually, in the case of countries like Slovenia or Lithuania.

<sup>i</sup> As is the case with natural cataclysms, terrorist attacks / threats, etc.

<sup>ii</sup> At present, however, it is worth considering Romania's position in the alliance against terrorist movements, an increasingly accentuated position, which could attract at some point the wrath of Islamic sympathizers.

<sup>iii</sup> A theme as current and heavily debated is the one about a possible new World War, carried out this time, in different forms. Of these, we can only mention, by way of example, perhaps the most current and publicized forms: terrorism and counter-terrorist actions, namely cyber-attacks, capable of "paralyzing" the whole economic sectors of different states.

**Table no. 3 - The number of arrests of persons suspect of terrorist attacks at the level of EEC-EU Region**

Country	Jihadist	Left extremist	Right extremist	Separatist	Total
Bulgaria	21	0	0	0	21
Czech Republic	1	4	0	0	5
Estonia	2	0	0	0	2
Croatia	N/A <sup>iv</sup>	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Latvia	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Lithuania	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Hungary	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Poland	4	0	0	0	4
Romania	11	0	0	0	11
Slovenia	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Slovakia	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Austria	48	0	0	1	49
France	377	1	2	44	424
Germany	21	9	4	5	39
Italy	40	0	0	0	40
Spain	75	37	0	75	187
Greece	0	16	5	0	21

<sup>iv</sup> N/A – Non Available Data

Source: processing of data provided by Europol, <https://www.europol.europa.eu/content/european-union-terrorism-situation-and-trend-report-te-sat-2016>

In the case of Romania, the police employees increased within the period 2008-2014 by about 5.1% (in 2014 compared to 2008), although inflections were registered at the level of the year 2011, or 2014. These oscillations are due, greatly, to some causes like the low number of persons who enter the system, in

comparison with the number of those who leave the system for various reasons (for example, reaching the retirement age). In order to counterbalance this type of difference, in Romania, the competent ministry has begun in recent years big campaigns of recruiting police agents from external source.

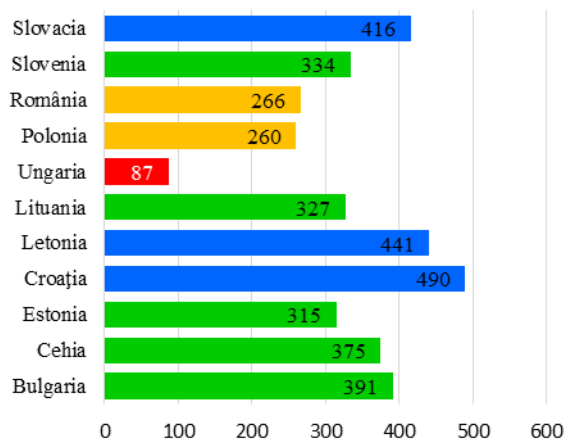
**Table no. 4 - The police employees in the EEC- EU Countries**

	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014
Bulgaria	33,800	30,707	29,439	29,358	28,167	26,772	28,171
Czech Republic	42,747	43,645	41,224	39,037	38,363	38,754	39,384
Estonia	3,218	3,183	4,552	4,484	4,424	4,220	4,089
Croatia	19,823	20,204	20,846	21,134	21,339	20,747	20,562
Latvia	8,959	9,694	9,725	N/A	8,595	8,199	8,813
Lithuania	11,018	10,957	10,738	9,926	9,530	9,416	9,484
Hungary	8,969	9,161	8,724	8,661	8,598	8,387	8,644
Poland	100,640	98,955	97,535	97,474	96,322	97,762	98,829
Romania	50,339	51,076	52,146	49,642	53,132	53,626	52,907
Slovenia	7,779	7,842	7,776	7,631	7,371	7,212	7,014
Slovakia	20,116	21,826	21,559	21,180	21,733	22,404	22,454

Source: Processing the data provided by Eurostat, [http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Crime\\_and\\_criminal\\_justice\\_statistics](http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Crime_and_criminal_justice_statistics)

Reporting the number of policemen to the population of each country from the EEC-EU space, we find that among the analyzed countries, the most police employees at 100,000 inhabitants are in Croatia, which places it on one of the lowest places in the regional classification (Figure no.1).

Because of the communist inheritance and from the point of view of the peripheral position within the EU, Romania and Bulgaria have circumscribed relatively late to an upward trend favourable to the development of a competitive tourism sector in an established common market. Beside the vast advantages of a multiple valence tourism- based on a natural setting, here and there wild, a life style similar to the Western European one from the interwar period and feasible with a reduced budget- the zone is marked also by a set of geostrategic, social-economic risks, and stereotypes which label/ define the EEC space, naming it „The Wild East” of the community tourism.



**Figure no. 1- Police employees at 100.000 inhabitants**

Source: Achieved by the authors based on Eurostat data, [http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Crime\\_and\\_criminal\\_justice\\_statistics](http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Crime_and_criminal_justice_statistics)

The biggest risks associated with the physical-geographical, geopolitical and social-economic position which characterize Romania are related to the danger of contagion determined by the vicinity with Ukraine ( a country deeply affected by the conflicts between the army and the pro-Russian separatists activists from Donetsk and Lugansk, the Crimea problem) and with Moldova ( one of the poorest states from Europe where frictions between pro-Russians – logistically supported by Russia- and the pro-Europeans- made especially of young people that consider that the future of the country must be correlated with the EU policy- diminish the national economy and fuel corruption). Internally, the populist, unsustainable economic measures, corruption, the insubstantiality of the political class, the deficit of current account of Romania and the lack of a country

490 policemen), followed by Latvia (441 policemen) and Slovakia (416 policemen). In the case of Romania, the public order and safety is ensured by 266 policemen at 100,000 inhabitant brand strongly affected the image, already dim, of the young Carpathian – Danube-Pontic democracy.

On the other hand, Bulgaria is situated at the border with Turkey, a strong from the economic and military point of view country, but that has lately had a series of difficult problems: terrorist attacks committed by the ISIS group, or by PKK group ( The Party of Workers from Kurdistan), the existence of a big wave of Syrian immigrants stationed in Turkey that intend to reach the EU in the future, but also a series of internal conflicts (see the case of the attempt of conspiracy in July 2016).

Despite the huge wave of immigrants that reach Europe from Syria and Iraq, Romania and Slovakia reported a low level of terrorist threat, although they are aware of the risk represented by the emigration’s phenomenon which transits the South-East zone of Europe ( the Balkans) , raising new physical barriers and creating dissensions within the community policy. The fact that until now, in Romania there weren’t major security problems, may constitute a competitive advantage, especially in the conditions in which, in this global geopolitical and social-economic context, in which military conflicts and terrorism generate chaos and produce panic in many countries around the world, the security of secondary destinations becomes an important factor of emulation and creates the premises of a tourism export concentrated to emergent countries credited as being safer.

We consider that the problems at least as important as those we have already spoken about, are the cybercrime. A subject not included in the analysis of the World Economic Forum, but which, we consider, has a major significance, must be tackled more carefully. While in the majority of the European countries cybercrime becomes more perfidious and subtle, Germany and the Scandinavian Countries opened new combative fronts meant to identify and annihilate the underground digital activities, from spamming and phishing to trolling and pornography. Russia, or at least the Russian speaking countries, are still considered to keep one of the most steady market area for the cybercrime, including in the tourism field.

A special problem is phishing, which represents creating new false web pages and transmitting messages to different persons, in order to obtain some data of the credit cards (efraduda.ro). Phishing developed as a vector of attack extremely widespread and which can be used, as such, or as a preliminary stage for a supplementary attack. Some reports indicate that, generally, the phishing rates continued to decrease gradually along 2015-2016. Nevertheless, the global decrease from the two years is not in total agreement with the tendencies

observed by the EU member states, because most of them reported a bigger and bigger number of investigations regarding this phenomenon (The 2016 Internet Organised Crime Threat Assessment Report – IOCTA, www.europol.europa.eu). The phishing messages and the web sites used for this type of crimes are, also, increasing, from a qualitative point of view. Today, it is not always enough that a victim rely on different grammatical, orthography and punctuation or syntax errors, as explicit indices of the fact that a certain message or site can be a clone or dangerous potential.

Regarding the top of the countries that host the phishing sites, on the first place at the world level are the U.S.A. It's worth mentioning that in January 2015, on the 10th place in the classification was Bulgaria, with a percentage of 1.27% from the total number of the existing phishing sites (APWG, Phishing Activity Trends Report, 1<sup>st</sup>-3<sup>rd</sup> Quarters, 2015). We mention that the other states from the EEC -EU region are not in the top of the first 10 host countries for such fraudulent sites.

Pillar 7 (P7- International openness) shows that the development of a competitive sector of tourism needs a certain degree of openness of the country internationally, in order to facilitate travels. Regionally, Croatia, Czech Republic, Hungary and Poland are the most internationally open countries (4.1 points each from 7 possible). Romania is on the 42nd position globally, with 3.9 points, equal to Slovakia and Bulgaria.

It is obvious that the restrictive policies regarding the visa giving, diminish the will of tourists to visit a country. Unfortunately, both Romania and Bulgaria are two countries with a quite restrictive regime regarding visa giving to tourists, irrespective of the market they come from. Both countries are equal from the point of view of the score registered, according to the data from Table no. 6. One must emphasize that, generally, the developed countries from Western Europe practice the same restrictive system of visa giving, in order to prevent the possible waves of immigrants that could intend to settle in the EU countries.

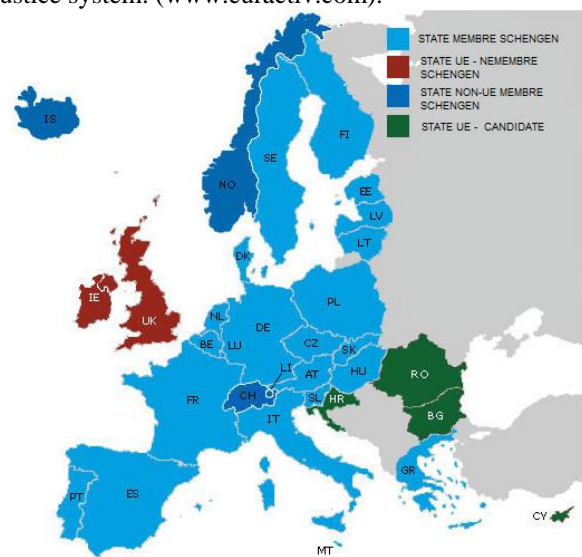
**Table no. 6- Comparisons Romania-Bulgaria, from the point of view of variable of P7 pillar - International openness**

	Romania		Bulgaria	
	Place	Score	Place	Score
The rigidity of the visa giving system for tourists ( score from 0 to 100).	72-101	23	72-101	23
International openness for the bilateral treaties in the airtransport field. ( score from 0 to 38).	103	8	111	7,3

Source: Elaboration based on the data from Travel & Tourism Competitiveness Report, 2015

Special problems that are worth being discussed are related to the position of Romania and Bulgaria towards the Schengen Space accession- a zone of free circulation within the European Economic Space (EES). Because the member states of the Schengen Agreement eliminated ( and a part will do it soon) the controls for persons at borders, the passing from one member country to another will be free, without presenting the I.D. and without control stops. So, according to the agreements between the European states involved in this project, the Schengen zone guarantees the free circulation of more than 400 million citizens of the EU, and many citizens from outside the EU, businessmen, tourists or other persons legally present on the EU territory (ec.europa.eu).

At present, there are 4 states that are not members of the agreement but that applied for in this respect: Bulgaria, Romania, Cyprus and Croatia (Figure no.2). Romania and Bulgaria should have entered the Schengen Space beginning with 2011, but they were stopped by the sharp opposition of some member states like Germany, Finland or Austria. The main reasons invoked were related to the existence of a high level of corruption and organized crime, respectively the necessity of major reforms in the justice system. (www.euractiv.com).



**Figure no. 2 – EU and the Schengen Space**

Source: The European Commission, Migration and Home Affairs, [http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/home-affairs/what-we-do/policies/borders-and-visas/schengen/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/home-affairs/what-we-do/policies/borders-and-visas/schengen/index_en.htm)

In recent years, the countries that were against, reassessed their position towards Romania and Bulgaria accession to the Schengen Space, but, meanwhile, new diplomatic obstructions appeared, this time imposed by the Netherlands and Finland. The main arguments invoked by the two reticent countries claim the existence of a high level of corruption and the problems in the justice of the two countries that joined the EU in 2007. Despite that from the moment of the initially agreed accession (year 2011) and until now passed more than 5 years, sprinkled with many diplomatic pressures pro and

against the admission of the two countries, it is not yet established a term until Romania and Bulgaria are, finally, admitted in the Schengen Space.

Pillar 7 which measures also the participation of a country in the bilateral agreements regarding the airline services, has a direct impact on the level of connexion of the countries with other countries in the region or from the rest of the world, affecting the bilateral agreements of trade nature and implicitly tourism circulation. Both Romania and Bulgaria are quite low positioned in the TTCI Classification, because of the restrictive policies practiced in this field. Practically, among the EEC-EU countries in the region, Bulgaria, Slovakia, Slovenia and Estonia practice a more restrictive policy than that of our country regarding the openness to conclude bilateral agreements in the field of transport tourism services.

## V.CONCLUSIONS

In this economic- social and geopolitical context, safety and security represent determining factors of competitiveness and attractiveness of tourism destinations. Looking for safe holiday destinations, tourists will eliminate many times the idea of travelling to destinations likely to be dangerous.<sup>v</sup>

The statistical data, especially those made available by the World Economic Forum, Eurostat and Europol demonstrated us that in Romania, tourism has suffered, especially, because of the slightly lower rate of international openness and tourism competitiveness corroborated with some values slightly above the EEC-EU average of violence and organized crime. Nevertheless our country presents better results than Bulgaria, especially regarding the capacity of the police services to ensure us the public peace and order. Though in absolute values, Romania has the most police employees regionally, the rate of the number of employees at 100.000 inhabitants is among the lowest within the EEC-EU countries.

Romania should take advantage of the fact that until now there were no major security problems, especially in the conditions in which, the social and geopolitical context is more and more affected by immigration, a phenomenon that generates political instability, social convulsions, cultural-religious conflicts and terrorism. Even if the unfavourable geographical position, near the instability focuses Ukraine and Republic of Moldova, constitutes an apparent discomfort for tourists, Romania still remains a steady country, away from conflicts until now. The level of alert remains quite high, especially if we consider the emigrationist phenomenon that transits the South-East Balkans.

At the same time, the postponement of the discussion regarding the accession of Romania and Bulgaria to the Schengen Space, postponement caused, mainly, by the refracting attitude of some states like Germany, Austria, the Netherlands or Finland may be transformed by Romania in a very grafted point on the increase of the tourism attractiveness, because the detailed control at the state borders and the inexistence of a free circulation can guarantee, to a greater degree: the strictness of security controls at the borders and on airports, the safety both of the resident population and the non-resident population, the almost total control of the immigrant flows. These „guarantees” can be only some elements of differentiation, namely competitive advantages for Romania as tourism destination, in comparison with other known destinations (France, Spain, Italy). The exploitation of these elements can counterbalance, to a certain extent, other deficiencies with which Romanian tourism confronts, both from the point of view of the general transport infrastructure, and other problems of attractiveness caused especially by the restrictive policies regarding the visa giving for certain categories of tourists.

<sup>v</sup> It is worth mentioning, however, that there are exceptions, such as the case of Israel, a country that pilgrims do not stop to visit despite the security issues that the "Holy Land" faces.

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