

## THE AVATARS OF HOTELS CLASSIFICATION SYSTEMS

*Prof. Ph.D. Nicolae LUPU*

*Junior Assist, Ph.D. candidate Ana-Maria NICA*  
Academy of Economic Studies, Bucharest, Romania

### **Abstract**

*As the needs and expectations of the clients evolved, stimulating the development of the hotel supply, the need for regulation of the activity domain became imperative, by adopting measures for protecting the rights and interests of final consumers or clients. To this end, the classification systems of accommodation structures are conceived and implemented, either compulsory or volunteer, officially statuated at national or regional level, consensually adopted at the level of hotel owners' organizations or proposed by other entities, consecrated by unofficial recognition from the public. The realized research is an exploratory one, based on the collection of secondary sources.*

*In Romania, from 1991, seven different sets of norms for star classification systems were adopted. Other example is Spain, where each of the 17 governments of the autonomous communities is entitled to adopt its own regulation. Confronted with the heterogeneity of classification systems in Europe, which affects consumers' rights and interests for information, HOTREC, which is the confederation of hotel owners' organizations in the European hospitality industry adopted, in 2009, a series of 21 principles regarding the establishment or revision of the national and regional hotel classification systems. In December 2009, in Prague, under the HOTREC patronage, organizations from seven countries (Germany, Austria, Hungary, Switzerland, Czech Republic, Sweden, and the Netherlands) have announced the founding of the Hotelstars Union – a common system of hotel classification, which is already applied. It is expected that the number of the Hotelstars Union will increase. Nevertheless, there are voices against this attempt. What is the way Romania should choose?*

**Key words:** *Hotel classification systems, Minimum criteria, Harmonization attempts, Consumers protection.*

**JEL Classification:** *D18, K23, L83.*

### **1. INTRODUCTION**

The hotels industry has passed, from the moment the first accommodation units were opened until the present time, through a dynamic process of continuous change. The demand on hotels market is determined in great measure by the degree of economic development, which consequently has influence on the supply. Every year, hotel companies enter and leave the market and international brands could, in terms of decades, disappear completely, because of mergers or even bankruptcies, depending on external and internal factors.

The hotels' industry is a global industry and includes, in a dynamic network of interdependencies: clients, investors, brands and services. The growing competition on hotels market was doubled by a clientele segmentation regarding the needs and revenues, as well as a diversification of the offered services, the main trend at world level being as it is the orientation towards entertainment services, adjacent to the lodging and F&B ones.

With an end to homogenize the hotel services and to facilitate comparisons, along with the desire to protect the rights and interests of final consumers, various measures of standardization and

regulation were adopted. These measures vary from normative acts, applicable at national or regional level, to classification systems established by hotel owners' organizations, considered by both consumers and the operators in this field. Many attempts to harmonize the classification systems are also made, with an end to elaborate a sole system, recognized at international level, but the existence of many differences regarding the quality of lodging and F&B services, along with the material and spiritual culture, make this attempt difficult to accomplish.

According to the Order of the Minister of Regional Development and Tourism no 1296/2010, the classification constitutes a "codified form of synthetic presentation of the level of comfort and of the service supply". The objectives of adopting a classification system, at least of adopting an official one (at state level) are: informing the client; possibility to differentiate hotels by applying distinct policies; possibility to exercise increased fiscal pressures on luxury hotel services, as a particular case of the previous objective; possibility of regulating the tariff system; "educating" the hotel owners, by orienting the direction of modernization of the hotel; facilitating the communication, deal-closing and making sure that the stipulations are respected by the tour-operating agencies; consumer protection. As an expression of the variety of hotel classification systems in different countries, times

passing three solutions have gained recognition (Lupu, 2010).

On the market, there is a group of countries which never adopted a national classification system and included in this category are the Nordic countries (Norway and Finland), the United States of America, other countries of English juridical culture (Australia, New Zealand, Hong Kong, Singapore, etc.), Israel, Columbia, etc. In the majority of these countries, the opposition towards adopting a classification system is justified by the free market principle, incongruous with any form of intervention and control. Altogether, in the USA and not only, there are rankings and commercial guides, like *Mobil Travel Guide* and the classification of the American Automobile Association (AAA) – both of them establishing a system of 5 levels, with the sole difference that in the first case stars are used in order to perform the division, while in the latter, diamonds are used to perform to same action (www.aaa.com).

A second group of countries have unofficial classification systems, with a fair recognition from the public. Through the hotel owners' associations, the classification gains relevance, as it is the case of Switzerland, Germany, Québec, etc.

Finally, other countries have adopted an official classification system of their own, more or less detailed. Many of the European countries are in this category.

The research which results are the object of this article is an exploratory one, having as the main goal to identify the coordinates of the researched phenomenon, as well as the precise wording and the good understanding of such, throughout the conceptual and operational definition of the characteristic variables and the hypothesis which could be object to a subsequent research (Balaur, Adăscăliței et al, 2000). Practically, our research is a documentary one. Being as they are detail-oriented and minutely narrations of the aspects relevant for the theme, the exploratory researches are essentially qualitative ones, which do not aim at measuring the phenomena. The utilized method is represented by mere collection of secondary data, i.e. existing data, already obtained for other purposes than that of the present research, stocked in various forms. These data are to be found in different magazines and books, in collection of normative acts, publications, reports, scientific communications, etc.

## 2. THE RELATIVE INSTABILITY OF CLASSIFICATION NORMS IN ROMANIA

The Romanian system of classification of the touristic lodging structures is assessed by a normative act, compulsory for every structure to

enter the market; still there are a few units which remained yet unclassified.

The first attempts towards classifying the Romanian accommodation units are located previous to the year 1970. In 1973 the first Order of the Minister of Tourism, regarding the classification of hotel units was passed. It was followed by another two normative acts: Order of the Minister of Tourism no. 308/1976 and Order of the Minister of Tourism no. 433/1976 respectively (Pop, Cosma et al, 2007).

During that period, the classification systems did not use stars as a category symbol, because the division was made in term of: luxury, I<sup>st</sup> category, II<sup>nd</sup> category, etc. The types of units, as they were inventoried in the late 80's, were the following:

- Hotels;
- Touristic inns;
- Guesthouses;
- Lodges/chalets;
- Camping;
- School camps;
- Rooms for rent for tourists in private homes.

The system was used until 1991. Through the Order of the Minister of Tourism no. 61/1991 new types of lodging units were established and the star classification system was adopted. Most of the inns were reclassified as motels and the guesthouses as touristic villas.

From this moment until 2010, six different sets of new acts were successively adopted and abolished; Governments' Decisions were followed, for detailing and implementation by Orders of the head of the national tourism administration – Minister or National Tourism Authority, giving the impression that every political movement influenced the passing of new classification norms (Table 1). At declarative level at least, in the creation of the new act, norms used in competitive countries, with high degrees of tourism development on the market were taken into account, along with the recommendations from the World Tourism Organization.

Despite the repeated changes, the relatively high quantum of details, as well as their technical character, with a great majority of criteria of equipment and surface – which are as a matter of fact characteristic to most systems, irrespective of the country – remained a constant. The list of the types of units was brought several modifications as well, which however are not of essence or irreversible either. For example, the units characteristic to rural tourism have known a whole "odyssey": in 1992 there was pension; in 1995 touristic pension and agro-touristic farms were introduced; in 1999 the agro-touristic pension appeared and a difference was made between rural and respectively urban touristic pension; in 2002, only the two types of pensions according to the rural-urban environment were kept; in 2008 they reverted to touristic pension and agro touristic pension, while in 2009, the Parliament is ready to discuss the introduction of a new type i.e. traditional house.

Table 1 - Successive classification norms after 1990

Governments' Decisions		Orders of the National Tourism Administration		
No. / month and year	Prime-minister	No. / month and year	Issuer	Head of the national administration (minister, president)
233/V 1992	Theodor Stolojan	61/1991	Minister of Commerce and Tourism	Constantin Fota
		87/VI 1992	Minister of Commerce and Tourism	Constantin Fota
114/II 1995	Nicolae Văcăroiu	20/IV 1995*	Minister of Tourism	Matei-Agathon Dan
		56/VI 1995	Minister of Tourism	Matei-Agathon Dan
601/X 1997	Victor Ciorbea	61/IV 1999	National Authority for Tourism	Sorin Frunzăverde, Marius Dorin Anton**
1328/XII 2001	Adrian Năstase	510/VI 2002	Minister of Tourism	Matei-Agathon Dan
709/VI 2009	Emil Boc	636/ V 2008	Minister for Small and Medium Enterprises, Commerce, Tourism ...	Ovidiu Ioan Silaghi
		1296/IV 2010	Minister of Regional Development and Tourism	Elena Gabriela Udrea

\* For the approval of norms and minimum criteria regarding star classification for pensions and agro-touristic farms

\*\* Vice-president of the National Authority for Tourism, signer of the respective order

Source: Corresponding normative acts, published in *The Romanian Official Monitor*, 1<sup>st</sup> part

Nevertheless, the degree of details of the classification norms was diminished little by little while, in parallel, some pretensions – probably exaggerated at the beginning – were given up. This kind of relaxation is also an expression of the compromise that is normal to characterize the classification norms, i.e. between the existing and the should-be norms, in accordance - first of all – with the customers' expectations at present and in future. For example, the compulsory existence of a restaurant and day bar in the hotels of 2 or more stars, which was valid in 1992, was "relaxed" in 2002, such obligation being restricted to the level of four and five stars hotels. In 1999, the sommelier was compulsory in 5 stars restaurants; in 2002 this obligation was also extended to four stars category, while the 2008 brought an apparent regression, the inclusion of sommelier remaining a simple recommendation. From 2010, the sommelier began again compulsory for the four and five star categories.

At present, based on the Order of Minister no. 1296/2010, the certificate of classification is released by the Ministry in-charge. In order to check the conditions on-site, the General Direction of Control and Authorization in Tourism resorts to the assistance of its territorial representatives, having their offices in nine of all county capitals, which are also taking care of the remaining counties. The certificates of classification must be renewed every three years. Apart from the compulsory criteria – most of them representing an inventory of the installations, pieces of furniture and linen, as well as of the services rendered – there is a number of supplementary evaluation criteria: a

number of points is established for each separate supplementary criterion, which, by addition should reach a minimum score for the hotel to be included in the respective category. The F&B units for tourism are classified by allotting stars on the basis of the same normative act.

The Ministers Order no. 636/2008 has also brought some other modifications to the list of the types of units: the youth hotel (introduced in 1999, at the same time with the hostel, the two types being quite similar) was given up, it was given up the difference among lodges/chalets (touristic, touristic shelters, hunting and fishing chalets), as well as the camping areas in the inhabitants' yards. In conclusion, the list of types of "touristic structures with accommodation functions" includes:

- Hotel;
- Apartament hotel;
- Motel;
- Hostel;
- Villa;
- Bungalow;
- Touristic chalet;
- Camping, holiday village, dwellings in rest area, houselet-type units;
- Touristic pension and agro-touristic pension;
- Apartments or rooms for rent;
- Accommodation on cruise ships or on docked ships.

As an exception, the agro touristic pensions are conferred a different symbol (not stars) to express their category, i.e. flowers (daisies).

### **3. ANOTHER EXAMPLE – THE SYSTEM OF CLASSIFICATION OF HOTEL UNITS IN SPAIN**

The rules and regulations of hospitality industry in Spain, a country enjoying a remarkable touristic experience, have known a long and anfractuous development. The first normative act referring to hospitality was issued in 1892, yet the first official classification of touristic reception structures was established by the Order of April 8<sup>th</sup>, 1939.

It was abolished once the Decree of April 4<sup>th</sup> 1952 entered in force. Closer to present day coordinates of hotel industry regulations is the order of June 14<sup>th</sup> 1957, which however was brought modifications according to the Statute of the Touristic Enterprises and Activities (Decree no. 231/1965). By the Order of March 28<sup>th</sup> 1966, there were definitely excluded the provisions that proved inapplicable because of the regulations in other fields, having connection with that of hospitality.

In 1964, in Madrid, the National Assembly of Tourism was hold, which gave course to the desire of this sector to implement new criteria. Subsequently, the Order of July 19<sup>th</sup> 1968 was issued, regarding the classification of the structures of hotel accommodation, which was modified afterwards by orders of February 16<sup>th</sup> 1970, February 14<sup>th</sup> 1971 and June 19<sup>th</sup> 1974.

The Statute of the Enterprises and Touristic Activities of 1965 divided the touristic accommodation settlements into hotel units and non-hotel/extra hotel units. For a long time, the common perception and the law-maker made no distinction between touristic accommodation and hoteling. The effect was a “shadow” cast on the modalities of extra hotel accommodation. A possible explanation to this situation is the Spanish tradition of tourism, based on the existence of hotel accommodation units, while extra hotel settlements such as camping and bungalows are generally characteristic to other European destinations. The difference made in 1965 remained unchanged for a long time and, according to a new normative act, it was kept valid until today.

In 1965 hotel was defined to be an enterprise which, in a professional and systematic manner, provides against payment accommodation in its own rooms, with or without other associated services. Later on, the Royal Decree no. 1634/1983 will refer again to explaining the concept in view of the contribution brought to the regulations adopted at the level of domestic communities: a hotel is a specialized enterprise or unit, dedicated in a professional and systematic way to the accommodation of people against payment, it having the statute of a unit open to the public.

In 1982 the Royal Decree no. 3093 was adopted but without any efficiency because of the

political bases and criteria. Therefore it was quickly replaced by the Royal Decree no. 1634/1983, with regard to the norms of classification of hotel accommodation units, which is still in force. Nevertheless, the urgent nature of its release made it insufficiently fundamented. Later on, appliance of the Royal Decree no. 1634 was restricted to autonomous communities which do not have their own regulations, while in the other communities it is considered a complementary regulation.

The ever stronger importance of tourism in the Spanish economy and the constantly growing trend of demand along several decades, led to a substantial increase of the offer, but also to the necessity of adopting new specific regulations. Today, nearly each and every autonomous community has issued its own regulations governing their touristic activities.

The autonomous communities have elaborated the texts of the normative acts, in keeping with their regional interests and their own opportunities, without taking into consideration their integration into a common national policy. Thus the differences between the operation norms and classification criteria of some communities are quite big, causing the dissatisfaction of and claims by the clients, particularly of foreign tourists, often confused by the existing differences.

Law no. 6/1994, with regard to the settlement of touristic activities establishes in Chapter II – “Enterprises for touristic accommodation”, a few common directions for the classification of touristic accommodation units in Spain, in an attempt at harmonizing the norms of different autonomous communities. The enterprises of touristic accommodation are divided into hotel and extra-hotel units, the first category including: hotels, hotels-apartment and pensions, and the second category including campings, touristic apartments, rural houses, secondary residence and rooms for rent in family dwellings (Lupu, 2003).

In conclusion, in Spain there is no national classification system at present, each of the 17 autonomous Governments being entitled to adopt its own regulations. The differences among the criteria of several communities are smaller or bigger, from one case to another. What they have in common is the obligation of applying for an official evaluation, which is always made taking into account the number of stars. Likewise they have in common the minimum criteria for classification of hotels.

### **4. EUROPEAN ATTEMPTS AT HARMONIZING THE NORMS OF HOTEL CLASSIFICATION**

Taking into account the worldwide concept of global customer, the expectations should be for an offer and classification of hotel establishments also globalized. For a long time however the harmonization of the classification criteria and even of the categories considered was a desire left to wait. It was only in

December 2009 that France took the decision of giving up the older expression for the highest category, which ceased to be “four star lure”, resorting instead to the much more in use “five stars”. Relatively off-date, Greece as well renounced to express categories by letters (A, B...). Notwithstanding this, there is a long way to go to achieve harmonization since, as mentioned above, not even the idea of applying classification norms valid at national level is unanimously shared.

In the conditions of free circulation of people and of the endeavors to a joint policy, tourism will, step by step, tend to become a domain of reference for the future development of the European Union, yet, according to some studies made in 2006 by Hotelleriesuisse - Swiss Hotel Association, HOTREC - Hotels, Restaurants & Cafés in Europe and CEHAT – Spanish Confederation of Hoteling and Touristic Accommodation, the classification systems in the EU is very heterogeneous, since there are practically own norms in each of the countries included in the study.

The interests of the consumer of hotel services are the first to be hurt. The various systems of classification cause discontent among customers, because of the lack of harmony between their expectations, based on their experiences in other countries in hotels of same category, and classification criteria applied in certain state.

The absence of a unitary system of classification of establishments brings about a lack of transparency on the hotel market, arising considerable difficulties in making comparisons among different countries. At the same time, the risk of infringement of consumers’ rights is enhanced because of the lack of their protection against misinformation with regard to the level of hotel services rendered in the countries visited.

#### **4.1. Recent endeavors aimed at harmonizing the classification systems**

One of the first concrete attempts at harmonization in the European hotel industry was made by Northern and Baltic Countries – Denmark, Sweden, Iceland, Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania, with a view to establishing some joint classification norms. The main motivation was connected to consumers, for the improvement of their position of negotiation, with due respect to the cultural differences. It was taken into account the potential of amplifying the extra communitarian touristic flows, in the conditions of a unitary European market, as well as the interest of the consumers to be able to travel and take advantage of hotel services against total transparency of information.

The Committee of NBC, held in December 2006, set forth a number of minimum criteria, which hotel units must meet in order to accede to a certain category of the star classification system.

In the same direction, in 2007, the European MP Paolo Costa generated debates with regard to the necessity to harmonize the classification systems according to categories/stars, this being subsequently included in the Common Policy Plan of Tourism of the EU.

In November 2009, at the General Assembly in Barcelona, HOTREC members adopted 21 principles regarding the setting-up/revising of the national/regional classification systems of classification of hotels in the European countries, many of them referring to consumers’ protection. HOTREC is the confederation of owners’ organizations of the hospitality industry in European countries and its first recommendations as to the classification systems dates back since 2005. Romania, through the Federation Hotel Industry, has the status of observer at HOTREC. The 21 principle of 2009 are the following ([www.hotrec.eu](http://www.hotrec.eu)):

- a) Classification systems must ensure that accurate information is provided to the guests;
- b) Classification systems should display their criteria (summary and full list) online to the guests via [www.hotelstars.org](http://www.hotelstars.org) at least in English and their national language;
- c) Information about the star category of each individual hotel as well as the classification system on which this rating is based should be made transparent for the consumer;
- d) Compliance with legal requirements is a prerequisite to classification;
- e) Classification systems must ensure cleanliness and proper maintenance of the establishments in all star categories;
- f) Classification systems should encourage the use of quality management tools;
- g) Tour operators and travel agents, as well as hotel booking and review sites are invited to use the official classification. If they use their own rating scheme alongside, they should specify so;
- h) Classification systems should ensure that accurate and up-to-date data on the rating of establishments are provided to tour operators, travel agents, hotel booking and review sites;
  - i) The number of stars obtainable shall be one to five;
  - j) Stars must be granted/confirmed only after a control;
  - k) This control must take place regularly;
  - l) This control must take place on site;
  - m) Complaints by customers relating to classification should be dealt with in a systematic manner;
  - n) Explanation for classification decisions have to be made available to the hotel concerned;
  - o) Every classification system must allow for an appeal by the hotel concerned against the result of the classification;
  - p) Classification systems should have some range of flexibility in the application of their criteria;

r) Classification criteria should be regularly adjusted to market requirements. A systematic inventory process of the criteria should take place regularly;

s) Whenever research on consumer expectations in relation to classification is carried out in one country, it is desirable that the results are made available to all HOTREC member associations;

t) When classification systems are set up/reviewed, equipment and service criteria should be emphasized in order to facilitate European and international harmonization efforts;

u) When classification systems and criteria are set up/reviewed, cooperation with other countries is encouraged in order to facilitate European and international harmonization efforts;

v) Classification systems should always involve the hospitality industry. In the countries, where the classification system is regulated and/or operated by public authorities, it is essential that the public authorities work in close partnership with the private sector.

#### 4.2. The European classification system Hotelstars Union

In time, the strengthening of the hospitality industry at national and regional levels was based on the association of different entities of the industry, with a purpose of protecting their own and the customers' interests, as well as to consolidate cooperation. Meetings between confederations and associations are more easily achieved than between governmental structures. This explains the fact that on December 14<sup>th</sup> 2009 in Prague, under the

auspices of HOTREC, the owners organizations from seven countries announced the setting up of Hotelstars Union – a system of hotel joint classification, applicable in Germany, Austria, Hungary, Switzerland, Czech Republic, Sweden and the Netherlands. Practically the announcement was made a few days prior to the expiry of the limit term for application of Directive 2006/123/CE regarding services on domestic market. The system meets all the 21 principles of HOTREC ([www.tourism-review.com](http://www.tourism-review.com)).

The classification in the five categories expressed by stars is similar to that applied in several European states, including Romania. The total 270 criteria is split in compulsory criteria (Table 2) and optional criteria, the latter being the majority. Each criterion is allotted a number of points, each category has a minimum total score. The maximum score is 860, yet for classification to 5 stars a score of 570 is sufficient ([www.hotelstars.eu](http://www.hotelstars.eu)). In this way, the system proves to be flexible, as long as one category can include hotels that do not offer the same services; the idea is that there is a variety of styles and of customers.

The new system of classification, which is common to the seven European countries has been adopted for more than 17.000 hotel units. In January 2010 the system entered in force in Austria, Czech Republic, Sweden and Germany, while Hungary is to apply it during 2010, after the required law modifications have been made. Switzerland and the Netherlands are to adopt the new system of star classification system in 2011, on account of the agenda of compulsory revisions of their previous classification systems. At the same time, it is expected that the number of Hotelstars Union member will increase to 15 in the next 2 years.

**Table 2 - Hotelstars Union compulsory classification criteria**

Categories	No. of compulsory criteria	Examples of compulsory criteria
One star	44	Own sanitation unit, TV set, table and chair, fax facility at Reception, public phones at clients disposal, safe facility at Reception, breakfast
Two stars	53	Buffet style breakfast, veilleuse by the bed, only use cosmetics, POS
Three stars	83	Reception open 14 h/day, by phone 24h/day, minibar, Internet connection in the lobby or in the room, sewing kit, shoe-care kit, supplementary blanket and pillow on request, complaints management system
Four stars	104	Reception open 18h/day, by phone 24h/day, doorman or vallet parking, buffet type breakfast, room-service, minibar, robe and slippers on request, Internet connection, a la carte restaurant
Five stars	121	Reception 24h/day, doorman or vallet parking, concierge, personalized pillowments, minibar, PC with Internet connection, ironing and shoe care facilities

Source: <http://www.hotelstars.eu/index.php?open=Criteria>

HOTREC Chairman, Mr. Kent Nystrom also believes that this initiative is open to other countries in Europe as well, countries that wish to enhance the quality of their hotel sectors. Nevertheless there are voices against this endeavor. International Hotel and Restaurant Association considers that the national classification systems are sufficient, and the conditions that the expectations of national customers will undoubtedly differ from one country to another.

## 5. CONCLUSIONS

Hospitality, in relation to protection of the rights and interests of consumers, in the use of hotel classification systems is being faced with several dilemmas. Should they adopt and maintain hotel classification system or should they leave absolute freedom of the market to rule the relationships between hotel owners and their customers? In the case of a classification system, should it be set forth in a normative act or should it be left to be adopted at the level of such entities as hotel owners' organizations? Should it be compulsory or should it be left a voluntary character? Should its area of application be national, limited to a province or its area of application be international?

An all-comprehensive answer cannot be provided. At this moment, historical conditions and the level of material and spiritual culture lead to various solutions. Nevertheless on a medium and long term, the future seems to lead to integration.

Romania has already a two-decade tradition of the classification norms adopted by the order of the minister, which are compulsory in the whole country. Such norms were abolished and adopted again, with few modifications by each governments alternating to power. However the European integration as well as the relatively modern hotels, and the cosmopolitan clientele of many hotels could lead to taking the decision of harmonization with Hotelstars Union requirements. The problem is that the adoption of the new system was made at the level of some national owners' organizations, which would be responsible also for its application. Until now, in Romania, the two owners organizations, including the members of hotel owners, the Federation of Hotel Industry in Romania and, respectively, the Federation of Ownership of the Romanian Tourism, do not prove sufficiently attractive to many of the potential members, and the relative coherence of their actions do not qualify themselves as vectors to the introduction of the new, quasieuropean system. As a matter of fact, Romania, through the Federation of Hotel Industry, in the frame of HOTREC has the position of observer member only. It might be that the position of full rights member be dependent on a higher quantum of contribution. Here is a direction of action for the Ministry in-charge to ensure a small amount from its own funds to this end and to influence the activities of owners' organizations.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

1. Balaure, V., Adăscăliței, V., Balan, C., Boboc, Ș. (2000) *Marketing*, Editura Uranus, București.
2. Cristea, A.A. (2009) *The Reassessment of the Service Quality System within the Romanian Hotel Industry – a Premise for Increasing the Competition of the Tourist Offer*, Amfiteatru Economic, 26 (2), pp.451-461.
3. Gouin, J. (1998) *La classification des établissements hôteliers - un pas de plus vers l'excellence*, Le Chef, septembre – octobre 1998.
4. Guede, A. (2009) *Nace HotelStars Union, un unico sistema de clasificacion hotelera para siete paises europeos*, Hosteltur, 15 décembre 2009.
5. Lupu, N. (2003) *Normele de clasificare a hotelurilor, izvor al dreptului turismului*, în Sandu G. și Hurjui O.F., eds., *Economia românească – prezent și perspective*, Editura Universității din Suceava.
6. Lupu, N. (2010) *Hotelul - Economie și management*, Editura C.H. Beck, București.
7. Pop, C., Cosma, S., Negrușă, A.L., Ionescu C., Marinescu, N. (2007) *Romania as a Tourist Destination and the Romanian Hotel Industry*, Cambridge Scholars Publishing, Newcastle.
8. La Ley 6/1994 de ordenación del Turismo, [http://noticias.juridicas.com/base\\_datos/CCAA/pv-l6-1994.t2.html](http://noticias.juridicas.com/base_datos/CCAA/pv-l6-1994.t2.html), accessed in 2010.
9. \*\*\* (2009) *21 HOTREC principles for the setting-up and/or review of national/regional hotel classification systems in Europe*, HOTREC, General Assembly in Barcelona, 6 November 2009, accessed in 2010.
10. \*\*\* (2010) *Ordinul Ministrului Dezvoltării Regionale și Turismului nr. 1296/2010 pentru aprobarea Normelor metodologice privind clasificarea structurilor de primire turistice*, Monitorul Oficial al României, Nr. 312 bis/2010.
11. \*\*\* *El sistema de clasificacion hotelera en Espana*, CEHAT, <http://www.cehat.com/frontend/cehat/El-Sistema-De-Clasificacion-Hotelera-En-Espana-vn2681-vst300>, accessed in 2010.

12. \*\*\* *La experiencia de los países bálticos y nórdicos*, CEHAT, <http://www.cehat.com/frontend/cehat/EL-SISTEMA-DE-CLASIFICACION-POR-ESTRELLAS-EN-EUROPA---LA-EXPERIENCIA-DE-LOS-PAISES-NORDICOS-Y-BALTI-vn3086-vst379>, accessed in 2010.
13. \*\*\* *Excerpt of the catalogue of criteria*, <http://www.hotelstars.eu/index.php?open=Criteria>, accessed in 2010.
14. \*\*\* (2010) *French hotel classification reformed*, Tourism Review, January 4<sup>th</sup> 2010, <http://www.tourism-review.com/article/1987-french-hotel-classification-reformed>, accessed in 2010.
15. \*\*\* (2009) *Hotel classification systems united in seven European countries*, Tourism Review, December 21<sup>st</sup> 2009, <http://www.tourism-review.com/article/1972-new-union-of-7-countries-ensure-the-same-hotel-standards>, accessed in 2010.
16. \*\*\* (2009) *Hotel classification – The founding of Hotelstars Union to lead to harmonised hotelstars in Europe*, Press Release, Praga, December 14<sup>th</sup> 2009, [http://www.hotrec.eu/files/view/1195-press\\_release\\_hotelstars\\_union\\_2009-12-14\\_english\\_final.pdf](http://www.hotrec.eu/files/view/1195-press_release_hotelstars_union_2009-12-14_english_final.pdf), accessed in 2010.
17. \*\*\* *Hotel star rating criteria*, Forbes Travel Guide, <http://www.forbestravelguide.com/hotels-channel.htm>, accessed in 2010.
18. \*\*\* *Los alojamientos hoteleros y las normativas autonómica*, Mesa de Turismo, [http://www.mesadelturismo.com/common/mt/unidad/material/hoteles/introduccion\\_hoteles.php3](http://www.mesadelturismo.com/common/mt/unidad/material/hoteles/introduccion_hoteles.php3), accessed in 2010.
19. \*\*\* (2005) *Ranking – Top ten worldwide hotel chain growth 1995-2005*, Hotel Online, [http://www.hotel-online.com/News/PR2005\\_4th/Oct05\\_HotelBrandRanking.html](http://www.hotel-online.com/News/PR2005_4th/Oct05_HotelBrandRanking.html), accessed in 2010.
20. <http://www.aaa.com>, accessed in 2010.