

VITICULTURAL POTENTIAL AND VINE TOURISM IN ROMANIA

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Abstract

Romania, a member of the International Organization of Vine and Wine in 1927, has a wine heritage of European notoriety and worldwide, privileged positions it occupies in economic statistics every year, confirm this fact. Vine are grown, especially in areas traditionally enshrined, located mainly in the hilly area, on the sands, and in other fields with favourable conditions, and disposed as an architectural viticulture landscape grouped in 8 wine regions of the assigned three growing areas of the European Union.

Wine tourism is on an incipient phase in Romania, compared to other countries of Europe with significant wine heritage, but it has real chances of development, sustained especially, by the potential value of wine recently indicated, once again, by the studies undertaken in order to implement reform wine sector of the European Union.

Key words: Potential of wine, Promotion of wine tourism, Wine tradition, Wine landscape, festival.

JEL classification: L83, O13, Q36.

1. INTRODUCTION

The large number of varieties of grape-vine, continuous cultivation of valuable grape varieties, development of types of wine production on natural areas, techniques and methods of its storage, are evidence of age on these lands of viticulture, where can be added the love and appreciation for wine and grape-vine of the inhabitants of the Carpathian-Danube-Black Sea since ancient times.

Some varieties of grape-vine that are growing today are varieties of Dacian origin transmitted across the centuries, in more refined forms. Typical traits of the sort-group “Yellow”, according to spreading area (by the end of the nineteenth century) and after the large number of varieties of grape-vines, shows that “the yellow variety of Odobești” can be considered as a kind of Dacian origin.

Between the fourteenth and the nineteenth century, as the political and economic stabilization in the Romanian principalities, there is a long process of concentration of the culture of vines in vineyards and wine centers located in the hilly area: Cotnari, Huși, Odobești, Drăgășani, Miniș etc. (Oșlobeanu, Macici et al, 1991, pp.8-9).

Until the invasion of phylloxera (identified for the first time in our country in 1880 in Arad, and in 1884 in Chitorani - Prahova), varieties of grape-vines have adapted and settled in the actual Romanian territory, including those imported, on vineyards, most of them being found on the current list of vine varieties.

2. VINEYARD LANDSCAPE TODAY - GEOGRAPHICAL DISTRIBUTION AND ASPECTS OF VINE VARIETIES

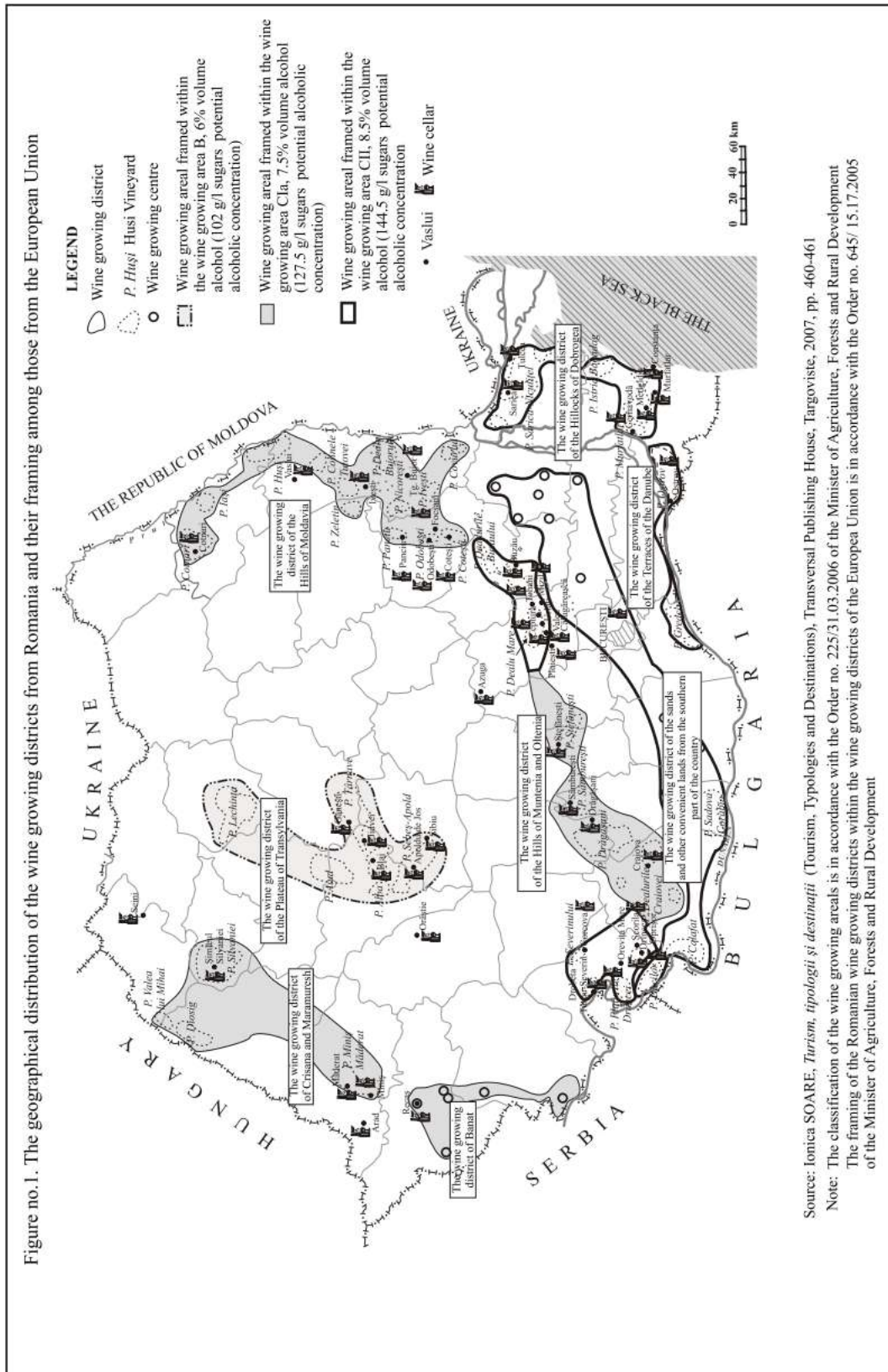
2.1. Geographical Distribution

Romania has an impressive wine landscape created by the eight wine growing regions (Figure 1), which are areas of high extension especially in the hilly area located, on the sands, as well as on other areas with favourable conditions. Together with the issuance of the Order no. 594/17.08 2004 for approving the “Zoning varieties of grapes recommended and approved for the wine crop growing areas in Romania” it has been created a new division and grouping of wine zones.

Framing the Romanian wine regions as the following zones B, 6% alcohol volume (102g/l sugar alcoholic strength potential), the CIa, 7.5% alcohol volume (127.5g/l sugar alcoholic strength potential) and CII, 8.5% alcohol volume (144.5g/l sugar alcoholic strength potential) of EU, was made based on the “Ecoclimatic and ecopedological study for the classification of wine growing areas in Romania in the vineyard zones of EU”, prepared by Research and Development Institute for Viticulture and Winemaking in Valea Calugarească (Figure 1). The essence of the regulations when it comes to vineyard and wine in accordance with the system of the common organization of the viticultural market on its way to join E.U. was the delimitation of the area destined to producing wines and other viticultural products with controlled origin, establishing the

characteristics which these must comply with and other corresponding aspects (Soare, 2005). The justification of the actions comes from the present-day wine industry because it is focused on optimizing the attractiveness of the product within the bottle, further overcoming this

aspect, paying more attention to the extrinsic factors motivating product choice, but ensuring that it remains cost-effective and economically sound (Bisson, Waterhouse et al, 2002).



Source: Ionica SOARE, *Turism, tipologii și destinații* (Tourism, Typologies and Destinations), Transversal Publishing House, Targoviste, 2007, pp. 460-461
 Note: The classification of the wine growing areas is in accordance with the Order no. 225/31.03.2006 of the Minister of Agriculture, Forests and Rural Development
 The framing of the Romanian wine growing districts within the wine growing districts of the European Union is in accordance with the Order no. 645/ 15.17.2005 of the Minister of Agriculture, Forests and Rural Development

Vineyard landscape as a whole, recorded a decrease in area from 1990 to 2008, reaching 186,900 hectares of grafted vines onto the surface of fruit with an average of about 6000kg/ha going beyond the hybrid vines. Even with this size of the vineyard landscape of 2008, Romania ranks 5 in the hierarchy of European wine countries and 6th place at wine production after France, Italy, Spain, Germany and Portugal.

But, as inferred from the map in Figure 1, the largest vineyard landscape is distributed to Muntenia, Oltenia, followed by the hills of Moldavia, and the smallest area to Banat.

Economic statistics announced a diversified territorial structure of vineyard areas imposed by the varieties of productive grape-vines, at national level. Thus, the main grape varieties provide the keynote of the landscape (the entire 240,000ha vineyard landscape); for white wines the following sorts are noticed: Royal Fetească - 19,458ha, white Fetească - 12,304ha, Italian Riesling - 9,784ha, Aligoté - 7,450ha, Muscat Ottonel - 4,778ha, Sauvignon Blanc - 3,336ha, Pinot Gris - 1,086ha, Chardonnay - 371ha and for red wines: Black Babească - 7122ha, Merlot - 6,606ha, Cabernet Sauvignon - 3,315ha, Black Fetească - 952ha, Pinot Gris - 664ha. (Wine route in Romania, 2004, pp.19-21). Even if the values are for year 2002, however, they are helpful in creating the overall image of the territorial structure of the entire landscape of wine assortment.

2.2. Grape-wine variety

Vineyard heritage has a wide range of noble fruitful grape varieties (Order 225/31 March 2006 on approval "Zoning noble varieties of productive grape-vine permitted for cultivation in areas in Romania"), with differences from one region to another, but also the presence of common species; the situation is more evident in the varieties of grape-vines for wine, and some sorts have a more limited location. Differentiations make each wine region to become a "wine country".

Spectrum of current assortment of common items from a wine region to another (because the varieties showed a good adaptation to environmental conditions in our country have been extended) has its roots in the past, in the stage of prephylloxera; immediate reconstruction of vineyards after phylloxera, through the importation of vine (commenced before phylloxera), reconsideration of valuable indigenous varieties, which coped to "time exam" and "foreign competition", and permanent creation of varieties of wine and table grapes led to completion of picture assortment of grape-vine. It was taken into account the creation of uniform plantations, especially in terms of production and quality, being made a series of clonal selections, primarily old sorts of grape vine, as (Muscat Hamburg, Chasselas, Afuz Ali, Furmint, Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot, Yellow

Odobești, Romanian Tămăioasă etc.) (Mănescu, Georgescu et al, 1989, p.149).

3. THE PLACE OF THE UVAL TOURISM IN THE TOURIST'S CIRCULATION IN ROMANIA

3.1. Vineyard landscape

Vine is established as an old and rich resource, creating landscapes in the Romanian space, giving personality to some places, tourist and agricultural function to human settlements, villages or cities.

The importance for tourism is illustrated by the growing number of major taxonomic units and their geographical distribution throughout the country, but mainly by landscape diversity created inside of taxonomic unit, which receives different values in the acceptance of each tourist. It is also the result of vine relationship with the natural environment and man, natural factors (topography, climate factors, soil, etc.), being directly involved in the genesis of the vineyard landscape, in the phenomenon of growth and fruition, and man, more in the artistic process, so that sceneries can provide expressive and tourist attraction.

3.2. Techno-economical objectives valuable for vine tourism

In this category, fall *wine centers, wineries with wine cellars, basements, cellars and tasting rooms* located in the wine production area, but also outside of it. Part of the travel circuit, they become subject to tourists' eyes, completed by information submitted by guides or specialists in viticulture or specialists training in this respect, by the tasting of wines in special places, etc.

Wine cellars are considered technical and economic objectives with the highest potential for tourism, as being located between the vineyards and because representing the place for pressing grapes and preparation of wines, they provide the necessary environment for wine tasting led by experts, with the possibility of consumption of meals in a rustic place.

By location within a hillside vineyard, cellars are points of sightseeing, places from which magnificent views are open over surroundings. During the ripening of the grapes they can become tourist attractions, where you can organize trips to the plantation, with the possibility of collecting and tasting wine grapes or organic wine. The specific of each of the vineyards makes the difference, make them attractive, "Matac" in Dealu Mare vineyard, administrated by ICDVV (Research and Development Institute for Viticulture and Winemaking), is a real museum piece, with its age (nineteenth century), through the organization of activities at levels (on the upper floor there is the processing and crushing grapes, vinification process at the ground floor and in

the cellar, maturation and aging in oak barrels) (Wine route in Romania, 2004, p59).

There is a landmark of the enterprise "Prahova Wine Cellars" in Urlați, a nice wine cellar placed on top of a hill, dominating in an aristocratic manner the surroundings, with cellars (where wine is matured in oak barriques, just like in the most famous wineries in France), equipped with a tasting and a dining room with fireplace.

The wine cellar Pietroasa - Buzău keeps aged wines, with great value, dating from 1942; Cotnari Wine route in Romania, 2004, p.127) wine cellar is unique, filled with rarities, spanning on a 120 m long corridor; In Panciu, the sparkling red wines, produced after the traditional method, are stored for a second fermentation, that in the bottle, in old cellars with a length of 6 km; there is the largest wine barrel in Ambrose Medias cellar, with a capacity of 20,000 liters.

Some wineries are named after the wine god, Bacchus, (eg. the one from Baia Mare), or after (Recaș Cellars) vineyard, or after a large wine producer (Halewood Wine Cellars).

4. INITIATIVES TO EXPLOIT THE POTENTIAL OF WINE TOURISM

4.1. Current status of proposals and / or implementation of projects and programs in the area of interest

National Tourism Development Master Plan 2007-2026 (<http://www.tourism.gov.ro/ro/proiecte-minister/2/master-plan/>, I, pp. 1, 26) is the only large-scale project initiated by the Romanian Government to build a sustainable implementation of tourism development in Romania and its immediate objective is to formulate an overall policy framework for solid management and development of tourism industry in terms of natural and cultural resources and presenting this as a Master Plan goal of long-term tourism development, covering the period 2007-2026.

Three main goals are contained in the Master Plan for wine tourism:

- Visits of wine connoisseurs and buyers in some plantations for scientific purposes and for purchasing, so called, tourism business;
- Visits especially to vineyards to get in touch with the process of producing wine and wine tasting; this is considered to be an advertising and self-financing activity in order to encourage the sale on the spot and long-term customer loyalty;
- Wine tours - tours through the picturesque vineyard areas, connecting different vineyards.

These measures intended to counteract the low efficiency of partial results obtained on various

programs and projects so far in the promotion of Romanian wine tourism.

Proposed projects at county level under various names assigned to exploit opportunities for tourism potential of the wine, locally, but in view of local government, it was just one of the elements supporting the local tourism development and not a primary objective of local tourism. It seems that all projects, developed some time ago are still in the waiting stage in order to be implemented because of the lack of funds and poor organization. Here is part of the "Road vineyards - Vrancea" project, which proposed capitalization of the largest tourist area in a vineyard county.

The national programme of promoting and including the Romanian viticulture tourism both in the packages of tourist's promotion on the Romanian market and on the foreign markets, launched at the VII th edition in April 2010 during the International Saloon of Vinvest Wines from Timișoara (<http://www.vinvest.ro/turism/1/>), seems to be a success because it is the result of the direct involvement of Vinvest Society along with The Association of the Authorized Tasters from Romania (ADAR) and 13 producers of wine from the country (among those 23 attending this event).

It has been announced that this opportunity will be mediated by two tourist's agencies which can bring tourists from the country or from abroad and that can offer them the following routes, even individualized, according to the chosen areas and their disposable time:

- The area of Zarandului Hills, with vineyards owned by Wine Princess, Pâncota Wine cellars and Elite Wine;
- Weingut Wine cellar in Maramureș and Jidvei;
- Dealu Mare Urlați Estates, Davino, SERVE Ceptura, Vinarte and Ostrov Estates from Constanta county;
- From the wine cellars in Dealu Mare Vineyard, going further in Moldova, at Olteanu House and to Cotnari (route of 7 days).

First of all, the producers attending the International Saloon of Vinevest Wines, 2010 Timișoara are promoted, the ones that want to be hosts (to receive their guests with all they have best, also providing entertainment, tasting traditional food, a lunch or a dinner), which explains the absence of certain notorious national names in this domain (Murfatlar, Panciu etc.).

Also, the tourist's programme proposed for organizing by The National Association of Rural, Ecological and Cultural Tourism, namely "The wine road on the lands of Iași" lasting 3 days on the route Iași - Ruginoasa - Cotnari - Cârjoaia - Prigoreni Mici - Iași, represents a form of involvement of this national organization in supporting the promotion of this type of tourism (www.antrec.ro).

4.2. Actions organized and performed separately for tourism purpose by the economic units for promoting the wine heritage

Members of the Association of Wine Producers and Exporters (Știrbey Farm, Carl Reh Winery - Opreșor Wine cellar, Panciu House, Ceptura Wine cellar, Receaș Wine cellars, Săhăteni Estates, Șegarcea Crown Estate, Halewood Romania, Murfatlar Romania, Senator, SERVE Ceptura, Vinarte, Wine Princess, Cotnari, (<http://www.wineromania.com>), members of the National Patronage of Vineyard and Wine (Alcovin S.R.L. - Măcin, Dealu Mare Estates S.R.L., Murfatlar Farms S.A., Piatra Ostrov SRL, Huși Vineyard S.A., Tohani Vineyards S.R.L., Viti-Vinicola and Pomicola Perla Cotnari SRL - <http://www.pnvv.ro>), along with other economic entities get involved in developing the viticulture tourism through the following actions:

Restarting, visitations of the places of interests regarding vine areas, such as:

- ***Vineyards, cellars, mansions and other wine tasting areas***; an example could be the company Halewood International Ltd., which included in the traveling circuit “cellars Rhein” (they were raised in 1892, the name came from the famous vineyards of the Rhine, were “Supplier of the Royal Court of Romania”) on Azuga and the former “Cellar County”, restoring the cellar Urlățeanu (built in 1922) and the famous mansion Bellu (architectural Romanian-style monument of the mid-nineteenth century, which houses a mixed heritage, of ethnography and art originating from Cricovu Salt Valley area) in an effort to increase the fame of the region Urlați (also called city of the living), an unique blazon of vineyard's long and rich history that is Big Hill; (<http://www.vacantesicalatorii.ro>) another example of modern room is that one from SCDVV Bujoru (Galați), decorated with a mural painting inspired by the history of viticulture; also, the Receaș Wine cellars from Timiș county (for which in the year 2009 an annual record of 10,000 visitors was announced - <http://www.comunicatedepresa.ro/comunicate/goodwine>), the wine cellars from Murfatlar (which recorded along with the Museum of Wine more than 9,000 visitors in the year 2010 - http://www.replicaonline.ro/peste_9000_de_vizitatori_au_degustat_vinurile_in_cramel_e_murfatlar_37792.html).
- ***Internationally recognized laboratories***, such as those from SCDVV Murfatlar, SCDVV Blaj, SCDVV Pietroasele, where the wines produced by a modern technology, are appreciated by tourists

through the savour and the scent of the grape fruits.

Restarting, visitations of the places with a historic past. For example, at Tohani place, among vineyards can be seen the mansion “Domeniile Tohani” (Wine route in Romania, 2004, p.59) which was the place of a beautiful love story between Prince Nicholas of Hohenzollern and the rose of the village, Dolette for whom the prince renounced to all royal privileges, living a happy and peaceful life near his lady of his heart. In their honour, most of the wine house of Tohani has their name: “Princiar” and “Dolette”;

Organization of the specific vine tourism events, such as:

- ***Wine tastings*** for tourists, under the coordination of oenologists; for example, wine tasting at SC Murfatlar SA (<http://www.murfatlar.com/site/>) is done inside of the “tourist point of attraction” or in one of two specially arranged tasting rooms, located near the museum;
- ***Presentations of wines and technology*** in order to achieve sparkling wine after a traditional method; eg in Balta castle fortress (built in XV century) owned by Company SRL Jidvei, are stored more than 200,000 bottles of champagne processed after a traditional method; everybody can assist to on spot presentations;
- ***Prepared dinners in wine tasting rooms or outdoors***, usually around the wineries, wine tasting are accompanied by a meal, etc.
- Outdoor parties or in specially equipped rooms, in the rhythm of music, with their own wines and grape vines;
- Thematic tours in vineyards during the ripening of grapes and the possibility of satisfying the desires of tourists for tasting the grapes and organic wine;
- ***Foundation of accommodation*** (rather limited for the beginning), for example, wine tasting accommodation (Seciu House, Urlățeanu Mansion, Mansion between vineyards), for example Tohani SA Company (*Wine Route in Romania*, 2004, p.79), Pension Rhein in Azuga etc.

Members of the National Vine and Wine Patronage (PNVV), to all intents and purposes, they are mostly involved in tourism activities, because this institution of the civil society holds through its members, over 70% of wine trade in Romania:

Mutual action and strategies chosen by economic entities, development of programs and projects are steps that signal the development of this type of tourism, revitalization of the Romanian tourism, in general, but show two features of vine tourism:

- *Lack of clear sightedness of wine tourism events;*
- *Weak advertising of wine tourism* as a result of disparate actions of organization and promotion in time and space which leads to poor participation of beneficiaries.

4.3. Facilitations of wine tourism by introducing museums and public collections in the travel circuit and festivals as forms of expression and manifestation of vine tradition

Museums and public collections such as: Murfatlar (Constanța County), Bujoreni (Vâlcea county), Harlem (Iași County), Odobești (Vrancea County) Huși (Vaslui County), Golești and Ștefanești (Argeș County), Miniș (Arad County).

Festivals, traditions and holidays; immediately after the communist period, in Romania started the organization of festivals associated with harvesting periods in order to attract tourists and promote brand community / communities.

Most cultural events to celebrate the results of the year, take place in autumn during one or more days (eg, “International festival of Grapes and Wine Bacchus” in Focsani.) Very few wine events take place in spring, as the manifestation of “Kurban of vines” (<http://www.cugetliber.ro>) or “Circling of vine” which aims to promote the first major holiday of the agricultural calendar and a series of magic and ritual practices that train field work.

So far, areas under vine festivals do not focus large tourist flows because of the absence or inadequacy of tourist reception regarding accommodation and catering.

4.4. Promotion of wine tourism during the ripening of grapes

Romania has several vineyards and famous tourist spots providing independent one of each other, routes, during the maturation of grapes (and wine tasting regularly for visitors, in general), according to the National Tourism Development Master Plan 2007-2026: Murfatlar, Urlățeanu Cellar, Seciu House, Ștefanești, Miniș, Jidvei, Panciu, Recaș and Bucium. (<http://www.turism.gov.ro>, p.26).

Concentration of tourist flows overlaps the evolutionary phase of maturation of grapes, namely, the period of the year when it begins and ends the ripening of them, which is the end of July to the end of October; grains maturation consist mainly of absolute accumulation of sugars to end of it when the maximum is achieved.

Tourism activity in this period takes place parallel with the agricultural one and it overlaps its peak, when the beauty of flooding of the fields, markets, cellars is fully experienced.

5. PROPOSAL FOR THE EFFECTIVE PROMOTION OF VINE TOURISM IN ROMANIA

As the authors of this paper, to effectively promote vine tourism in Romania, we consider that it takes a sustained effort at the national level on three main directions:

1. Incorporation of all tourist events from various locations (where the local administration or economic units had or not initiative), in a unique national event, a unique National Vine and Wine Festival, held during the grapes maturation that is between August 15 and October 15. In this way the whole period of 9 weeks is turned to advantage, starting with a national holiday - St. Mary, when tourists may take advantage of the ripe fruit of wild vineyards, most of all, the scientific research in recent years underlain on the impressive gain of grape cures. Integration of all events, now held at the local level, in an unique festival would not only promote in an efficient way at national level this period of maturation of the grapes, but also the efforts of local governments, economic units and why not, NGOs that promote eco-gastronomy (like slow-food), of school camps that have educational activities for a healthy food or research institutes and higher education institutes with interest in the field.

2. Starting with this event is considered to be beneficial the organization at a national level of a Caravana festival (here imagination can goes very far) to start from St Mary in the South (southern Oltenia for example) and, after a circuit containing all growing zones of the country in order of ripening period, to reach the feast of St. Parascheva, the last area of ripening grapes in Moldova. The most efficient tourist trap of the National Caravan requires information sending to all media not only to announce the event but also by organizing official visits of journalists (info trips), printing of tourist maps for caravan route and collaboration with travel agencies.

3. Association of this event, thought by the authors at the national level, by the two much loved religious holidays, St. Mary and Parascheva, aims both to ease integration with public awareness of the event and the acceptance of it by a larger audience. Focusing efforts to organize and promote this event between the two religious holidays is a great opportunity to attract tourist flows and thus to stimulate the creation of places for tourist reception with functions of accommodation and catering in the cities on the route but also in rural areas.

6. CONCLUSIONS

The main problem facing the wine tourism events organized in Romania so far is that the promotion of events is not sufficiently effective, and participation of various categories of beneficiaries, both domestic and foreign, may be relatively small in relation to expectations, so that vine tourism benefits are relatively limited, at least in the short and medium term.

If there is a sustained promotion at national level, of vine tourism, increasingly competitive wine domain from Romania, supported by legal and institutional framework will gradually lead to the development of this type of tourism, the same to countries from European Union like (France, Italy Spain or Portugal).

Concerted action at national level of tourism promotion can become a way designed to provide development of the local and national economy, a starting point for a higher economic level and new perspectives for economic development in this area.

Tourists are attracted not only by the variety and beauty of the wine landscape, of excellent value / price of services and products, but also by the less known places, more unusual, closer to wild nature.

Strengthening of the vineyard area, while providing economic complementarity, in line with EU policy, will boost tourism flows in all wine regions and will make that vine tourism to hold, by the number of tourists, important places between the types of tourism in Romania.

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