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# VI. ЕКОНОМІКА СФЕРИ СЕРВІСУ

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## TOURISM AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT – AN ENCOURAGING PERSPECTIVE FOR THE REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA

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**Summary. Purpose.** The article is devoted to the research of the tourism and sustainable development in the context of encouraging perspective for the republic of Moldova. **Methodology of research.** The objectives of the article implemented by using the following general and specific research methods: analysis and synthesis, systematization and generalization, dialectical approach. **Findings.** It is being established that the development of nature-based tourism activities within the local communities and protected areas can generate numerous socio-economical benefits and positive impacts on the environment. Directions of increasing efficiency the tourism activities are developed. **Practical value.** The article substantiates that an integrative approach towards sustainability is the only right way to its achievement and Republic of Moldova would be considered as an equal member of the European society only when all necessary prerequisites will be accomplished.

**Keywords:** tourism, tourism activities, tourist services, form of tourism, ecotourism, sustainable development, sustainable progress.

**Introduction.** The United Nations General Assembly, in the adopted resolution «Promotion of ecotourism for poverty eradication and environment protection» emphasizes the positive impact that ecotourism can create for economy and society, by generating income, employment and education opportunities, as well as for environment by contributing to the conservation and protection of biodiversity and natural areas (UNWTO, 2013b).

In the context of Moldova's vast potential of natural resources, their valorization represents one of the most easy-reachable opportunities to achieve sustainable development, and tourism appears to be the most appropriate form of fulfilling the established objectives.

**Purpose.** The main objectives of the article are to research of the tourism and sustainable deve-

lopment in the context of encouraging perspective for the republic of Moldova.

**Result.** The development of nature-based tourism activities within the local communities and protected areas can generate numerous socio-economical benefits and positive impacts on the environment:

- Job creation (directly in the tourism sector or in those related to it) and as result a decrease of immigration rate;

- Stimulation of local economy by developing the infrastructure and tourist services (accommodation, catering, transport, recreational facilities, crafts and souvenirs products);

- Increase of the standard of living (medical centers, drinkable water sources and other facilities for the host communities);

- Stimulation of ecological agriculture development;
- Stimulation of rural economy by creating or increasing the demand for agricultural products needed to ensure the tourist services;
- Stimulation of development of the peripheral areas through capital injections;
- Stimulation of the improvement of intercultural relations within regions (often tourists are looking to discover the traditions and habits of visited ethnographic regions, and the host community is stimulated to revive and preserve the popular traditions);
- Promotion of cultural exchange between tourists and local communities;
- Empowering of local communities;
- Increasing awareness towards local culture and environment;
- Increasing access to education;
- Conservation and protection of geographical landscapes;
- Biodiversity conservation, protection and multiplication;
- Conservation and protection of historical and cultural heritage;
- Development and application of scientific conservation methods (Manea, 2000).

Although, it is important to always keep in mind the thin line that lies between the positive impact of any form of tourism (including ecotourism) and its destructive capacity that can lead to catastrophic consequences, especially in environmental terms.

Unfortunately, the Moldavian ecosystems have been already affected by the unorganized and uncontrolled tourist activities, since tourist industry is in its incipient stage and the lack of regulations within the domain played a negative role.

On the other hand, the aligning to international standards, in the context of Moldova's European integration is already generating positive results.

According to Alexandru Rotaru, the manager of UNDP Programme for Development in Moldova, the creation of the first National Park «Orhei», will serve as a model of sustainable development and will contribute to the launch of other similar projects, since Republic of Moldova possesses all necessary requisites.

Among the already achieved results can be mentioned the creation and inauguration of the first eco-route, the extension of the «Wine Route» and a premiere for Republic of Moldova –

the implementation of the project regarding the restoring of 472 ha of pastures within the region of National Park «Orhei», that will contribute essentially to the development of local communities (UNDP, 2014a).

Another important project launched within the National Park «Orhei» is the implementation of ecological agriculture that will contribute to the conservation of biodiversity and environmental protection, by creating adequate living conditions for flora and fauna in the area of organic farming. The preservation of the soil fertility through the method of crop rotation, quitting the use of pesticides and synthetic fertilizers will create various habitats for the wild animals living in the area. Among other benefits of the ecological agriculture can be distinguished: less contaminated agricultural products, water and air, due to neutralization of pesticides (herbicides, insecticides, fungicides); safe working conditions for farmers; real opportunities for small farmers to enter the attractive economic market, in the same time improving the food security; fertile and healthy soil, due to such biological practices like crop rotation, manual work, weeding, composting and mulching; reduced loss of nutrient elements, due to the use of organic fertilizers and the neutralization of chemical fertilizers, reducing the risk of nutrients loss; reduction of soil erosion, due to the maintenance of the soil covered as much as possible, by mulching or cultivation of cover crops; a better soil management, due to the increase of organic matter and improvement of its structure that will lead to a better water retention and storage in the soil, reducing the need for irrigation; superior nutritional quality of organic products, due to a high content of amino acids, vitamins, mineral salts and trace elements; minimization of agriculture's negative impact on global environmental issues – acid rain, global warming, biodiversity loss, desertification, reducing the emissions of gases responsible for the greenhouse effect (CO<sub>2</sub>, methane and nitrous oxides); decrease of non-renewable resources use; contribution to the productivity increase of conventional farming systems (UNDP, 2011).

The elaboration and publication of the Catalogue of handicrafts produced in the National Park «Orhei» region, comprising information about more than 90 traditional craftsmen working in the field of: artistic wood carving, artistic stone carving, ironmongery, artistic crocheting and embroidery, artistic weaving, plant fiber weaving,

manufacture of musical instruments and decoration of eggs will contribute to the preservation of local culture and traditions, in the same time increasing the attractiveness of the region and providing financial benefits for the host communities (UNDP, 2013).

In this context, the direct interdependence of tourism and sustainable development becomes obvious and an integrative approach towards the system will provide more and more opportunities for the extension of benefits. The number of tourists will increase, due to the preservation and diversification of natural tourism product, and the positive impact will strengthen even more the orientation towards sustainable development, as it contributes to the overall welfare of the community. The National Park will become more attractive for the foreign investors in the field of environmental protection and in this way will gain more opportunities to participate in projects related to the research of natural resources, environmental protection, greening of the slopes subjected to erosion, protection of ecosystems, etc.

Moreover, Moldova is awaiting the response of the UNESCO World Heritage Center, regarding the request to include the «Old Orhei Archaeological Landscape» in the UNESCO World Heritage List. The final decision will be taken in June, 2016 at the 40<sup>th</sup> Session of the World Heritage Committee and an eventual positive result will mark the historical moment, when Moldova will register its first own heritage object on UNESCO List, considerably increasing its tourist attractiveness.

And finally, after Moldova was declared by the Lonely Planet «the second off-the-beaten-path destination in the world» in 2013, this year brings great news regarding the fascinating evolution of the country that climbed 28 positions in the ranking of Adventure Travel and Trade Association (ATTA), being declared as the second most improved tourist destination in the world, especially in the category Hospitality and Security, increasing in this way the overall tourist attractiveness of the country (ATRM, 2015b).

The context of Moldova's orientation towards European Union and the first achieved results – the signing and ratification of EU – Moldova Association Agreement is opening unlimited opportunities for the sustainable development of the country, creates prerequisites for the cooperation in various fields and enables the aligning of political, economical

and ecological systems to the European quality standards.

The country is facing serious challenges targeting various dimensions – economical, social, cultural, and environmental. As result the complexity of the problem is strongly hindering the recovery process. Although, numerous sets of actions oriented towards the sustainable progress have been already implemented and generated tangible results.

Republic of Moldova possesses a wide network of environmental quality monitoring stations, aiming to supervise the state of natural resources, in order to develop measures for their protection. Along with the Ministry of Environment and its subordinated bodies – State Hydrometeorological Service (SHS), Agency «Waters of Moldova», State Ecological Inspection (SEI) and the Agency for Geology and Mineral Resources (AGMR), a number of thematic offices – Biodiversity Office, Ozone Office, Biosecurity Office, Carbon Finance Office, and Pollution Prevention Office are functioning in order to improve the effectiveness of the projects aiming to protect the environment (UEA, 2012).

One of the most important realizations related to the environmental protection is the approval of the Climate Change Adaptation Strategy (CCAS) of the Republic of Moldova and the Low Emission Development Strategy (LEDS) of the Republic of Moldova until 2020.

Since the agricultural sector, water resources, forest sector, health sector, energy and infrastructure sectors are crucial for the environmental protection and sustainable development of the country, the aim of the CCAS is «to ensure a framework in which the social and economical development of Republic of Moldova is resilient to the future impacts of the climate change» (ME, 2013b: 51). The general objective is supported by several specific objectives: to improve the management and proliferation of information regarding the disasters and climate risks in Republic of Moldova; to strengthen the institutional framework, to ensure the efficient implementation of adaptation measures to climate change at national, sectoral and local levels; to develop climate resilience by reducing the risks and facilitating the adaptation to climate change in priority sectors; to monitor and report the implementation of CCAS (ME, 2013b).

The CCAS has generated additional activities and projects - UNDP Project «Supporting

Moldova's Climate Change Adaptation Planning Process», supported financially by Government of Austria (2013–2016) and EU Project «Clima East Program» (2013–2016), subdivided in two main components: (1) Clima East Policy Component and (2) Clima East Pilot Projects in seven partner countries (Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova, Russia and Ukraine) (Tăranu, 2013).

The general objective of the LEDES consists in «providing a general policy framework for the national sustainable development that would lead with a high probability to the reduction of national emissions of greenhouse gases and would contribute to the increase of the actual level of mitigation commitments assumed by Republic of Moldova under the Copenhagen Agreement» (ME, 2012: 13–14). The specific objectives of the Strategy comprise: proposal of mitigation solutions that would provide economic opportunities; highlighting the barriers to transitions to the low-emissions economic development; consolidation and continuing of the existent projects/investments focused on the low-emissions economic development; prioritization of the identified NAMA (National Appropriate Mitigation Actions); proposal of additional mitigation actions requiring international financial support (supported NAMA) (ME, 2012).

The Biodiversity Strategy of Republic of Moldova is pursuing the general objective «to reduce the current rate of loss of biodiversity as a contribution to poverty alleviation and to benefit all forms of life on Earth» (ME, 2014c: 35). The specific objectives of the Strategy embody: ensuring of sustainable management and efficient institutional framework in the field of biodiversity conservation; reduction of the pressure over the biodiversity for ensuring sustainable development; ensuring of measures for benefits increase as result of use of natural resources and ecosystem services; ensuring of scientific support for the biodiversity conservation, access to information and education promotion for the sustainable development (ME, 2014 c).

As regarding tourism development, the Agency of Tourism of Republic of Moldova has developed the Strategy of Tourism Development «Tourism 2020», aiming «to boost the tourism activity in Republic of Moldova by developing the domestic and inbound tourism» (ATRM, 2014: 38). In order to achieve the major goal, the Strategy pro-

vides additional specific objectives: improvement of the legal framework in accordance with the requirements of tourism market, adjusted to European standards; valorization of national tourism potential and the promotion of Moldova's image as a tourism destination; regional development of tourism; increase of level of specialized staff training and the level of tourist services; technological modernization of the tourist industry by using information and communication technologies (ATRM, 2014).

In the same context, the ATRM is emphasizing the need to incentivize the development of ecotourism, as it substantially contributes to the overall sustainable development.

It is obvious that the great objectives stated by the Ministry of Environment and the Agency for Tourism Development of Republic of Moldova are very complex, and the way towards their achievement will be perturbed by numerous internal problems, such as increased level of corruption and unstable political situation. In this context, the collective implication of all stakeholders appears to be the right tool for reaching the inclusive and sustainable development of Republic of Moldova.

The multilateral cooperation between the Government, the private sector and the society can generate substantial benefits, expressed in financial, social and environmental terms.

The former prime-minister of Moldova, Iurie Leanca, while pointing the attention on the role of Government to ensure favorable conditions for the achievement of aspirations of every person, underlines the incomparable role of private sector in the process of sustainable development attainment: «Community development, solving certain social and environmental issues, conservation of ecosystems – these objectives are hard or even impossible to manage without the participation of firms» (UNDP, 2014b: V).

In this context, the construction and enhancing of effective platforms needed for the dialogues between the public and private sector plays an essential role and the ensuring of transparency and mutual confidence can contribute to the correlation of common interests and objectives.

The adoption of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) represents an imperative of the actual reality, due to its inclusive character, comprising five dimensions: stakeholder, social, economic, voluntariness and environmental (Dahlsrud,

2006) and ensures the «achieving of sustainable profits, while reducing environmental footprint (planet), and balancing these objectives with people involved, from employees to overall community» (Mattera, Melgarejo, 2012: 37). Thus, the CSR can become an innovative key feature for the sustainable development of Republic of Moldova, as it is still a relatively new practice on the national market.

Unfortunately the heavy burden of Soviet Union legacy hampers the reorientation of Moldavian business practices towards sustainable ones, the high level of corruption and bureaucracy installed at all levels, being the main cause of poverty (Oprunenco et al., 2005).

Basing on the fact that the private sector is the major contributor to the GDP, the strengthening of its role as a factor of change is crucial in the context of a strident need to advance towards sustainable development and the Government is forced to undertake all type of measures in power to establish efficient partnerships with the private sector, and it refers not only to the central Government, but also to the regional and local.

Another major stakeholder is the civil society, represented by NGO's, that is also hardly underestimated, despite the fact that it contributes to numerous relevant events related to the sustainable development of the country, including the process of National Park «Orhei» establishment.

The local communities are on the emerging stage of awareness regarding their role in the processes that are taking place in the society and their direct implication in these processes is also an imperative for the overall sustainable development of the country. The improvement of the sense of identity and pride achieved as result of the preserved traditions will result into a more strong and unified society, aware of its rights and duties.

An integrative approach towards sustainability is the only right way to its achievement and Republic of Moldova would be considered as an equal member of the European society only when all necessary prerequisites will be accomplished.

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**Анотація.** Мета статті полягає в дослідженні туризму та сталого розвитку в контексті перспектив для Республіки Молдова. **Методика дослідження.** Цілі статті реалізовано за допомогою таких загальних і спеціальних методів дослідження: аналізу та синтезу, систематизації та узагальнення, діалектичного підходу. **Результати.** Нині встановлено, що розвиток туристичної діяльності на основі природи в рамках місцевих громад та районів, що охороняються, може генерувати численні соціально-економічні вигоди й позитивний вплив на навколишнє середовище. У статті розроблено напрями підвищення ефективності туристичної діяльності. **Практична значущість результатів дослідження.** У статті обґрунтовується, що комплексний підхід до сталого розвитку є єдино правильним способом її досяг-

нення, і Республіка Молдова буде розглядатися в якості рівноправного члена європейського суспільства тільки тоді, коли всі необхідні передумови будуть реалізовані.

**Ключові слова:** туризм, туристична діяльність, туристичні послуги, форма туризму, екотуризм, сталий розвиток, стійкий прогрес.

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**Аннотация.** Цель статьи заключается в исследовании туризма и устойчивого развития в контексте перспектив для Республики Молдова. **Методика исследования.** Цели статьи реализованы с использованием таких общих и специальных методов исследования: анализа и синтеза, систематизации и обобщения, диалектического подхода. **Результаты.** Нине установлено, что развитие туристической деятельности на основе природы в рамках местных общин и охраняемых районов может генерировать многочисленные социально-экономические выгоды и позитивное воздействие на окружающую среду. В статье разработаны направления повышения эффективности туристической деятельности. **Практическая значимость результатов исследования.** В статье обосновывается, что комплексный подход к устойчивому развитию является единственно правильным способом ее достижения, и Республика Молдова будет рассматриваться в качестве равноправного члена европейского общества только тогда, когда все необходимые предпосылки будут реализованы.

**Ключевые слова:** туризм, туристическая деятельность, туристические услуги, форма туризма, экотуризм, устойчивое развитие, устойчивый прогресс.

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