

## Establishing a Strategy for Developing Agricultural Pensions in Romania

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### Abstract

As rural tourism gains more and more popularity, it is important to establish a series of possible guidelines and suggestions on developing this tourism area especially when it comes to rural boarding houses. Moreover, the mountain area development can be used for encountering sustainable development through proper regulation, collaboration between authorities and population and financial support. The paper aims to present several solutions and suggests some guidelines on how the existing situation of the agricultural boarding houses in Romania, could be improved. The analysis is conducted on Romania, using existing data related to 2018 year's end, being a qualitative analysis based on several recommendations suggested by the authors that can be done to improve the development of mountain area. The strategy proposed, emphasizes the fact that in order to obtain reliable results collaboration between the authorities and the owners of the boarding houses have to be implemented, both on short, medium and long term.

**Keywords:** Rural tourism, agricultural boarding house, rural development, mountain area

### Introduction

The problem of sustainable mountain area is not new as it was first taken into consideration in 1992, in Chapter 13 of the **Agenda 21 (Price and Kim, 1999)**. In 2002, the year was considered to be "the international year of mountains" so several development strategies were implemented or proposed, both at national and at international level. Moreover, the accession of Romania in the European Union also implies that some regulation and measures were implemented. Among them, we emphasize both the role of "Romania's Sustainable Development Strategy 2007-2030" and the "National Tourism Master Plan, 2007-2026".

The paper focuses on the tourism component of the mountain area that is in close connection with the areas where there are agro-touristic boarding houses (ABH). Thus, the study proposes, on the basis of an analysis of the existing situation, to identify a series of measures, actions, directions and guidelines that should underpin a future strategy for the development

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of this form of accommodation at a higher level in the disadvantaged mountain area (DMA). The paper does not aim to create a strategy for the development of rural guest houses or to carry out detailed analyzes (SWOT type, for example) or to identify the objectives that should be taken on regional and national level, but only to form the basis of such a future analysis. The research is structure as follows: first part presents some aspects regarding the literature review and the regulation from Romania, the second part looks at the methodology of research, the third part presents the results or in other words, the recommendations proposed by the authors. The paper ends with a short section of conclusion.

### **Literature Review**

The “Sustainable Development Strategy of Romania, 2013-2020-2030 Horizons (Romanian Government, 2008)” established several objected related to the inclusion of vulnerable groups, increase of life quality, consolidation of environmental business, both at regional and local level, improvement of the regional and local infrastructure. Among them, we found tourism objectives such as sustainable development and promotion of tourism activities, such as:

- Creating, developing and upgrading the specific infrastructure that produces sustainable value added of natural resources and that increase the quality of services that belong to tourism area. Regarding the potential of mountain tourism area, the strategy aims to improve the access routes to mountain camping and alpine retreats, to install mountain rescue posts, to develop the mountain - spa tourism, to create, increase and expand the accommodation and leisure facilities as well as their utilities that belong to tourism area
- Promoting the tourism potential and creating the necessary infrastructure that increase the attractiveness of Romania as a tourist destination by defining and promoting the national tourist brand, by developing the domestic tourism through the diversification of the supply and the implementation of specific market activities.

These main objectives aim to increase the attractiveness of tourism area and the development of local communities, through constructions, transport, natural and cultural heritage.

The “National Tourism Master Plan, 2007-2026” was conducted together with the support of World Tourism Organization and has several objectives, among which are increasing and encouraging the investment in all related sector areas of tourism, strengthening the enhancement and the preservation of cultural heritage and the distribution of the benefits of tourism services in all Romania’ regions.

We also have to emphasize what the “National Strategy for suatinable development of Romania, 2030” aims to achieve. Among the 2030 targets there are the increasing of the quality of life of the population, achieving a competitive tourism activity in the long run and developing the agro-tourism, eco-tourism, rural tourism, spa and cultural tourism by improving the image that Romania has as a touristic destination. Other target that has to be completed is related with the creating value added of specific cultural resources that belong to rural or local area by protecting the cultural heritage, identifying the cultural activities and the traditional occupations such as: artisanal, artistic, culinary, and by encouraging further development of agro-tourism area.

## **Methodology of Research**

The paper focuses on the tourism component of the mountain area that is in close connection with the areas where there are agro-touristic boarding houses (ABH) and tries to identify a series of measures, actions, directions and guidelines that should underpin a future strategy for the development of this form of accommodation at a higher level in the disadvantaged mountain area (DMA).

The authors started considering that the ABH is not regarded as an isolated entity, but closely related to the destination where it was built. By default, some of the proposed measures refer not only to the ABH's themselves, but also to the tourist destination where it is built. It is natural, therefore, that these measures aim to integrate the tourist offer of the destination. The paper is based on an audit focusing exclusively on agro-touristic boarding houses (ABH), respectively the tourism potential of the destination where it was built. Any possible further development of the paper should make a complete analysis / audit of the destinations, from all points of view. The potential is assessed in accordance with the relevant Romanian legislation, namely the National Territorial Planning Plan.

Although the Romanian rural tourism potential is exceptional, the effects of its practice do not amount to the existing natural resources, which is why Romania is at a considerable distance from the international competitors. (Stancioiu, 2004)

The research started exclusively from the existing situation of the ABH's by the time of 01.02.2018 in the Ministry of Tourism database, with classified accommodation structures ([www.turism.gov.ro/01.02.2018](http://www.turism.gov.ro/01.02.2018)).

To conduct the analysis, we used a number of criteria that are based on the legislation:

- a) Areas that are included exclusively in the Disadvantaged Mountain Area (DMA) have been investigated;
- b) From the counties included in the Disadvantaged Mountain Area, we chose only the territorial administrative units that are part of the DMA;
- c) The third criteria used was related to the tourist heritage of the counties of DMA, of the territorial administrative units (t.a.u.). Those a.u. which have great touristic potential.

In order to accomplish this study, specialized papers in the field of tourism and regional development have been consulted (Studii OMT: "Organizația Mondială a Turismului – Rural Tourism, A solution for Employment, Local Development and Environment, 1997" ), courses from the data base of the specialized universities (ASE – Academy of Economic Studies Bucharest, University of Bucharest), profile studies conducted by the National Institute of Tourism Development (INCDT), data bases with tourist accommodation structures, classified according to the legislation in force, as well as the legislation regarding the classification of ABH, the specific legislation for the disadvantaged mountain area, the National Territory Arrangement Plan -section 8 – Tourism and rural pensions websites were taken into consideration.

## **Research Results**

### **Descriptive Statistics**

In order to propose several measures to be implemented for the development of the tourism area, especially of the mounting area, it is necessary to present a descriptive statistic of the data on which the analysis is conducted. Thus, in Romania, at the time of 01.02.2018, when the database was consulted, there were 799 boarding houses, distributed in 39 counties, including the 27 counties included in DMA (Table no.1).

Table no. 1

*Distribution of agro-touristic boarding houses (ABH) in 2018*

No.	County	No. of boarding houses	No.	County	No. of boarding houses
1.	ALBA	39	21.	SĂLAJ	24
2.	ARAD	10	22.	SATU MARE	12
3.	ARGEȘ	23	23.	SIBIU	22
4.	BACĂU	6	24.	SUCEAVA	101
5.	BIHOR	22	25.	TIMIȘ	15
6.	BISTRIȚA NĂSĂUD	50	26.	VÂLCEA	14
7.	BRAȘOV	58	27.	VRANCEA	7
8.	BUZĂU	11		<b>TOTAL DMA</b>	<b>742</b>
9.	CARAȘ SEVERIN	9	28.	BOTOȘANI	5
10.	CLUJ	73	29.	CĂLĂRAȘI	1
11.	COVASNA	13	30.	CONSTANȚA	2
12.	DÂMBОВИȚA	7	31.	DOLJ	3
13.	GORJ	24	32.	GALAȚI	3
14.	HARGHITA	42	33.	GIURGIU	1
15.	HUNEDOARA	30	34.	IAȘI	11
16.	MARAMUREȘ	75	35.	ILFOV	5
17.	MEHEDINȚI	7	36.	OLT	2
18.	MUREȘ	16	37.	TELEORMAN	2
19.	NEAMȚ	29	38.	TULCEA	17
20.	PRAHOVA	3	39.	VASLUI	5
				<b>GRAND TOTAL</b>	<b>799</b>

Source: [www.turism.gov.ro](http://www.turism.gov.ro)

From the total number of 799 boarding houses, 57 are located in counties that are not included in any disadvantaged mountain area and therefore, will not be included in the analysis of the study. The remaining 742 are located in the counties that are included in the disadvantaged mountain area. This does not necessarily mean that the boarding houses are located in the territorial units included in the disadvantaged mountain area. Most boarding houses are in Suceava County, respectively 101 units. The fewest, three units, are in Prahova county.

In terms of development regions, the most numerous are in Region 6, North West, respectively 256 units. The smallest number of boarding houses, excluding Region 8, Bucharest - Ilfov, is located in Region 2 South East, namely 18 units (Table no.2).

Table no. 2

*Distribution of agro-touristic boarding houses by regions, in 2018*

Region	1*	2*	3*	4*	5*	Total
1 North-East	2	33	96	5	0	136
2 South-East	0	5	13	0	0	18
3 South-Muntenia	0	12	17	3	1	33
4 South-West Oltenia	2	10	30	3	0	45

5 West	0	23	40	1	0	64
6 North-West	6	125	115	9	1	256
7 Center	7	75	102	6	0	190
<b>Total</b>	17	283	413	27	2	<b>742</b>

Source: [www.turism.gov.ro](http://www.turism.gov.ro)

Out of the 742 rural pensions located in counties included in the disadvantaged mountain area, 470 are in the territorial administrative units from disadvantaged mountain areas. 292 out of these are of high touristic potential, 134 with very high touristic potential and 44 are without touristic potential, but included in the disadvantaged mountain area. Unfortunately, in four of the 27 counties included in the disadvantaged mountain area there aren't any boarding houses in any territorial administrative unit. Dambovită, Salaj, Satu Mare, Timis.

### Measures Proposed Related To Several Areas of Tourist Development

Based on the descriptive statistics presented in Table no. 1 and Table no. 2, a first possible conclusion is that an action plan for boarding houses development should only pursue the 470 boarding houses located in the territorial administrative units which are part of a disadvantaged mountain area. We believe that the study should be extended at least to the Carpathian Convention (CC), for those units who are not included in a disadvantaged mountain area.

Under these circumstances, we propose that the action plan should be designed on several areas. The first one should be related with tourism destination. This is linked with the action regarding the promotion of tourism potential as it is presented in "Sustainable Development Strategy of Romania, Orizonturi 2013-2020-2030 Horizons (Romanian Government, 2008)".

Table no. 3

#### *Tourism destination's recommendations*

Subchapter	Action	Explanations	Deadline	Financial source
Documentation / Research	Touristic villages	Development of the villages in the regions with a high number of boarding houses	TM	Financing the study regarding specific criteria on how to set up the "tourist village", public funds
Establishing village monographs	Editing of the monographs for the touristic villages	Promoting the villages in order to attract more market segments	LT	Public / European funds for advertising
Ethnographic destinations	Overlapping tourist destinations and ethnographic destinations	Research of the issue collaborating with the open air museum network	MT	Collaborating with outdoor museums. Does not involve funds

Studies regarding the development potential related to the growth of the boarding houses sector	Studies on the area where new boarding houses could develop	As a result of the research, we found an uneven development of the boarding houses in Romania. The current stage of development is below the potential that could be associated with the local gastronomy.	LT	Public funds, European funds
Eco museums development	Pointing on areas which could be adapted or converted to eco museums	It allows a better advertising of the region and also of the boarding houses located in that region (Sibiu)	MT	Public funds, European funds
Developing the European cultural routes	Establishing destinations that present monuments that can be included in the European cultural routes	Developing destination networks based on European cultural routes (including tourism products)	MT	Public funds
Cultural parks development	Establishing the areas with high cultural potential	It allows a better advertising of the destination and, at the same time, the development of a new concept in Romania.	LT	Public funds
Eco tourism destination development	Establishing the areas with Eco touristic potential	Allows getting tourists that are attracted to this form of tourism, together, with direct effect on developing the specific destination	MT	Collaborating with APL (Local Public Authority)
Extending the assistance on the agrotouristic boarding houses of the Carpathian Convention	Study on the agrotouristic boarding houses located in the administrative units not included in the Disadvantaged Mountain Area but included in the CC	The double delimitation of the Carpathians, on different criteria, led to the non-inclusion of territorial administrative units in CC or Disadvantaged Mountain Area. For this reason, it would be ideal to extend the Agrotouristic boarding houses to the administrative units not included in the u.a. not included in the Disadvantaged Mountain Area but included in the CC	ST	No funds necessary

Development of the statistical system	Establishing exclusive tourism reports on the destinations included in the Disadvantaged Mountain Area and subsequently in CC	In order to have a complete picture of the tourism development in the administrative units included in the Disadvantaged Mountain Area, a statistical analysis should be carried out at their level. It involves a very active partnership with NSI (National Statistics Institute)	LT	Depending on the relationship with NSI,
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Source: own computation of the authors (own recommendations), where ST = short term, MT = middle term, LT = long term

Another area on which more attention should be focused on is the cultural heritage area. Thus, for further development of tourism, cultural heritage does not have to be neglected (Ciurea, 2011). The authors' recommendations on cultural heritage are found in Table no. 4.

Table no. 4

*Cultural heritage recommendations*

Subchapter	Action	Explanations	Deadline	Financial source
Tangible Cultural Heritage	Tangible Cultural Heritage Audit	It is necessary to carry out an audit with regard to P.C.M for every tourist destination where there are ABH, at local and regional level: monument, type, coordinates, web pages, contact persons	Depending on the level: ST, MT	The legislation in force through C.I.T. (Romanian abbreviation for Touristic Information Centre) must be consulted. The information must be verified by collaborating with the, representatives of the central public authorities from decentralized institutions
	Protecting, preserving and promoting of Tangible Cultural Heritage	In each tourist destination PCM must be protected, preserved and promoted to become a source of attraction for the consumer	LT	European / national funds to protect and preserve PCMs European / national / private funds to promote P.C.M.



	Traditional architecture	<p>Preservation, protection and promotion of traditional architecture:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Development of standard projects with O.A.R (Romanian language abbreviation for Ordinul Arhitecților din România - Convention of Romanian Architects) for recognized ethnographic regions</li> <li>• Transforming traditional old houses into points of interest</li> <li>• NOTE: For ABDs located in buildings that conserve cultural heritage, It would be recommended to access 100% financing through European funds.</li> </ul>	LT	Depending on the type of action: no funds / european / national or private funds
Investments PCM (Romanian abbreviation for Tangible Cultural Heritage)	Conservation of the buildings with traditional architecture	The possible opening of a ABH in buildings with traditional architecture should be 100% financed and exempt from taxes	LT	Public or private funds
Imaterial PCI (Romanian abbreviation for Non-tangible Cultural Heritage)	Audit PCI	Establishing the main ways of PCI for every destination	ST	Databases in collaboration with the network of outdoor museums
	Establishing a connection between tourism / gastronomy and local drinks	Establishment and evaluation of gastronomic heritage in connection with tourism and tourist destinations: traditional products, recipes	MT	Databases
	Establishing of guides / traditional recipes for gourmet products / traditional beverages	The development of the guides has a double objective: keeping the traditional recipes indoor and also promoting them	MT	European / national or private funds



	Developing of a local events calendar	Establishing the most important traditional events that preserve the cultural heritage and containing them in the calendar	MT	Databases of local public authorities
	Protect, preserve and promote PCI	PCI must be preserved and promoted in every tourist destination, including craftsmen. Organizing of courses/organizing of training facilities, funds allocation for the selling point development	MT	Database. Public funds on tourist destinations.
	Event organisation	Organizing gastronomic events with an impact on attracting tourists to certain dates	MT	Public and private funds
	D.O.C (Romanian language abbreviation for Denumire de Origine Controlata - Controlled designation of origin)	Development of D.O.C products with direct influence on the realization of a local gastronomic identity	MT	European funds
Investments	Establishing selling points for PCI-related products	Selling points are needed in order to attract tourists. Generally established close to the CIT, monuments (creating the dual consciousness, the heritage consciousness and the event consciousness)	MT	Public funds, European funds
	Digitalising of the heritage in the mountain area	A database regarding the national heritage in the DMA is essential and can be used not only to promote the area but also to promote and help the ABH to develop more attractive websites	LT	Partnership with I.N.P. to create the database

Source: own computation of the authors (own recommendations), where ST = short term, MT = middle term, LT = long term

The natural heritage is also important. In the “Sustainable Development Strategy of Romania, 2013-2020-2030 Horizons (Romanian Government, 2008)”, the main objective is the improvement of natural resource management and the avoidance of exploiting them excessively, by recognizing the value of services provided by ecosystems, while the 2030 objective is significant approach of environmental performance to other EU Member States. Same objective can be observed in the “National Strategy for sustainable development of Romania, 2030” as it aims for strengthening the protection efforts, regarding cultural and natural heritage and the landscape in rural and urban areas.

Table no. 5

*Natural heritage recommendations*

Subchapter	Action	Explanations	Deadline	Financial source
Conservation, protection and promotion of natural heritage	Audit of the natural protected areas from the places where there are ABH	Natural protected areas are a point of attraction. The existence of a manager of such an area can lead to collaborating with ABH for new tourism products development	MT	Databases containing the natural protected areas, their administrators, existing natural and / or cultural heritage
Alternative energy sources	Carrying out projects to provide alternative energy sources as well as for the destination as for the ABH	The use of alternative energy sources is a great advantage for the tourist destination as well as for the ABH in which they are being used	LT	European funds. Ideally, there should be public funds to allow the ongoing projects
Waste management systems	Awareness raising actions on how waste is handled. Waste recycling	Using waste recycling methods and waste management awareness: creates a positive impact on the visitor and can also be turned into an advertising system	LT	European funds from environmental programs

Source: own computation of the authors (own recommendations), where ST = short term, MT = middle term, LT = long term

We also have to consider other areas that are linked with the tourism activity such as the system on which the tourism activity is organized and coordinated. Information related to tourism activities has to be presented, easy to use and to access. In Romania, in 2017, May, 10<sup>th</sup>, the Ministry of Tourism (2017) launched the National Center for Sustainable Tourism, an instrument that belongs to the Carpathian Platform, which is an objective of the Carpathian Convention. Thus, in tourism sector the platform aims to create a map of tourist destination, national and international tourism institution and to facilitate their communication for

implementing the Carpathian Convention Strategy. Our recommendations are presented in Table no. 6.

Table no. 6

*Developing the tourist destinations system of organizing and coordination*

Subchapter	Action	Explanations	Deadline	Financial source
C.I.T. (Romanian abbreviation for Touristic Information Centre)	C.I.T. Audit	Establishing the tourist destinations with the existence of C.I.T. on a local or regional level (county, ethnographic area, mountainous) and national.level	ST	No funds needed
		Database development with C.I.T., location, address, phone, e-mail, web page	ST	No funds needed
		Development of the contact database with the City Hall, C.I.T., address, telephone, e-mail	ST	No funds needed
	Collaborating with C.I.T.	Developing C.I.T network on a local, regional and national level in order to gather and transmit information about ABH	ST	Funds needed for spreading the promotional materials.
Associations	Databases	Database with all the existing associations from the tourist destination	ST	Databases
	Developing of associations	The requirement of organizing professional associations to support and to represent the sector on a local, regional and national level is necessary. These associations might be exclusively advertising associations, advertising and development associations and in some cases, they might become DMO ( Destination Management Organizations)	MT	Financial funds for legal registration of the associations and other expenses. The funds can be obtained through projects with national and / or international funding

	Development of a booking systems (locally, regional, national) on line and off line	They can develop locally, regionally (county, ethnographic area, mountainous area) and at a national level in order to allow an easy consumer access.	LT	Funding of the web site (portal) and of the specialized staff can be done on European funds or on own funds of the operators who develop the program
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Source: own computation of the authors (own recommendations), where ST = short term, MT = middle term, LT = long term

The marketing strategy is also important and should be conducted on available and reliable data. The recommendations on marketing instruments are presented in Table no. 7.

Table no. 7

*Marketing recommendations*

Subchapter	Action	Explanations	Deadline	Financial source
Market research	Carring out of a survey related to consumers / tourists arriving in the ABH	The research will allow the establishment of the market segments on a national, regional or local level, that prefer the ABH. By default, it will indirectly allow the establishment of the most appropriate target market segments	MT	European funds, private funds. It is also possible without funds by submitting a questionnaire to be followed by the ABH
Tourist products	Developing regional tourism products	Collaboration between the ABH can lead to the development of regional tourism products with a direct influence on the increase of the average duration of the stay	MT	It only involves collaboration between the ABH
	Establishment of the tourism products	The generic "Holiday in (...name of the location)", "Gastronomy and tourism in (... name of the location)" can attract tourists but, at the same time, synthesize the ABH's efforts towards thinking about specific tourist products / identity at ABH's level. The generic could also be: "Holiday in Agrotouristic pensions"	MT	It involves ABH's effort, possibly marketing consulting. Private funds, European funds
Distribution	Distributing of the tourism product from the ABH to the consumer	Obviously the generic "Travel to ABH" product can also be distributed in the current form: web pages, tour operators, etc. Clearly a centralized service with subsidiaries is needed on regions with the richest activity.	LT	Private funds / European funds for the promotion component

		Normally this step will take place after a very thorough research! A first step could be to send the ABH offers to interested tour operators and CITs! The ABH catalog or ABH's portal are essential from this point of view		
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Source: own computation of the authors (own recommendations), where ST = short term, MT = middle term, LT = long term

The marketing activity is also important as it could emphasize a better development of tourism activity, tourism services and tourism development in Romania. The author recommendations are presented in Table no. 8.

Table no. 8

*Marketing / promotional mix*

Advertisement	Catalog publishing	Publishing of an annual catalog containing information about the ABH from each destination in Romania	MT	European funds, private funds
	Brochures and leaflets	Publishing of promotional materials on counties (where appropriate), ethnographic regions, and specific areas including the ABH's in the region and the presentation of the natural and cultural heritage. Depending on the edition, can be published annually	MT	Private funds, European funds
	Radio campaigns	The national radio station has the power to cover the entire territory of Romania, especially the age segments that should be targeted for the ABH's	MT	Private funds, European funds
Sales promotion	Organizing / participation of fairs in urban / rural areas	The ABH offer must be promoted. In this respect one of the most recognized ways is the participation at tourism / agricultural products fairs in the country and abroad and also organizing such fairs (Ex. Suceava). Concretely, participation at such a fair in Bucharest and organizing of a small event is mandatory	MT	Private funds to ensure participation
	Mass media visits, tour operators visits	Organized in areas with high ABH density, the two instruments allow a good advertisement of the ABH at national level	MT	Private funds, European funds

	Web page	A web page containing information regarding all ABH's and the heritage. The research shows the need to improve the use of this marketing tool	MT	Private funds, European funds
	Promotional items	Common gifts that should promote the idea of spending a holiday in such a ABH	MT	Private funds, European funds
Public relations	Events on tourism and gastronomy	One of the most effective tools to promote a destination, in conjunction with local gastronomy / customs	MT	Public funds, private funds
	Press conferences	Organizing regional press conferences in order to promote ABH's, the local gastronomy and heritage	MT	Public funds, private funds

Source: own computation of the authors (own recommendations), where ST = short term, MT = middle term, LT = long term

The "National Strategy for sustainable development of Romania, 2030 looks at the fact that all students have to acquire their knowledge and skills to promote sustainable development as the Romanian education is at a lower level than the average found in the European Union. Based on this, the recommendation made by authors are presented in Table no. 9.

Table no. 9

*Permanent education / training*

Subchapter	Action	Explanations	Deadline	Financial source
Local public authorities. Representatives of local communities	Short-term trainings	It is necessary to promote the idea of tourism development at the level of the local public authorities as a general factor of economic development. Likewise, promoting the idea that natural and cultural heritage helps to develop the community Este necesară promovarea ideii de conservare a mediului/gestionare a deșeurilor	ST	European funds
Tourism classes	Introducing classes / lessons in schools and high schools to prepare the necessary staff	A research needs to be made to identify the needs in tourism. Based on the results, the best / effective measures can be taken.	MT	Public funds
CIT	CIT Training Courses	6-months duration courses allow obtaining a diploma in accordance with the law	MT	Private / public funds, depending on the situation
ABH representatives	Short-term trainings, depending on the situation	Trainings covering several areas: tourism (depending on need), natural and cultural heritage, quality standards, foreign languages, activity in ABH	MT	European funds
Experience exchange	Exchanges of experience at regional and national level	Promoting the experience exchange on a regional / national level allows solving some problems based on good practice models and establishing a multi-level collaboration between the ABH's	MT	Private funds, European funds
Working groups	Organizing working groups on areas of interest	In order to support the owners of the ABH's, working groups can be organized by: legislation, marketing, mass media relationships. Through these groups, all ABH's owners can easily find out information in their areas of interest	MT	No funds needed
Constantly learning	Free E-learning platform	Developing of a permanent training system for the owners of the ABH's in the mountain area	MT	European funds

Source: own computation of the authors (own recommendations), where ST = short term, MT = middle term, LT = long term



According to "National Strategy for sustainable development of Romania, 2030" product registration in the national and international European standard quality system is a source through which value added is added to tourism sector, especially to rural development, based on their geographical origin. Thus, the quality systems emphasize the need of production both the quality goods and to ensure the safety for consumers. The authors recommendations are revealed in Table no. 10.

Table no. 10

*Quality recommendations*

Introducing quality standards	It is recommended to introduce internationally recognized quality standards (ISO) to establish a positive image on the ABH level	MT	Public funds, European funds
Establishing of quality criteria at ABH level	In several European countries there is a voluntary quality standard such as "tourism in ABH".	LT	Public funds, European funds
Establishing specific icons / labels for the tourist offer in the ABH	Depending on the gourmet product (food, drinks, etc.), pictograms can be established in such a manner to be easier identified	LT	Public funds, European funds

Source: own computation of the authors (own recommendations), where ST = short term, MT = middle term, LT = long term

**Conclusions**

The analysis on the number and geographical distribution of the rural pensions gives a surprising picture in 2018, from the following points of view:

- a) Reduced number of boarding houses at a national level
- b) Reduced boarding houses number in territorial administrative units included in the disadvantaged mountain area
- c) Lack of "traditional" counties by the number of rural pensions, among the counties with rural pensions in disadvantaged mountain area (Dâmbovița, Satu Mare etc)

Taking into consideration these findings, the research carried out, but also the strategic objective established, the increase / development of the number of rural pensions at a national level (thus understanding the increase of the rural pensions number with 5% annually, for five years) we consider a unitary action plan for the less developed mentioned areas, by promoting successful examples such as Cluj, Brașov, Maramureș, would be useful if applied at a regional level.

The research looked at the development of tourism activity in Romania and tries to provide several recommendation considering the regulation that is implemented. The recommendation look at some areas, such as Tourism destination, Cultural heritage, Natural heritage, Developing the tourist destinations system of organizing and coordination, Marketing and promotion mix, permanent education and quality criteria.

The problem of the research is linked with the fact that the proposals are recommendations conducted by the authors as the data is not totally available to the users.

One of the conclusions is also related to a strategic decision: action plans need to be developed for counties with a significant number of rural pensions, for example, over 20 rural pensions, in order to justify the planning efforts. Of course, at a later stage, all counties that have territorial administrative units included in the disadvantaged mountain area could be included.

Another conclusion is related to the need of a strategic decision: action plans should be developed exclusively for counties including administrative units included in the disadvantaged mountain area or, in order not to exclude certain counties, regional thinking systems may be developed, focusing on counties that have rural pensions in the administrative units located in disadvantaged mountain area. From the total of 470 rural pensions, most of them are located in Suceava (74) Cluj (58), Braşov (57) and Maramureş (45). Besides these, with a higher number of rural pensions, are the counties Harghita (38), Bistria-Nasaud (34) and Neamt (21). The fewest are in Arad, Bacau, Prahova, Vrancea (two) and Valcea (one).

Further research could take into consideration the degree in which the recommendations were implemented, the changes that should be done and the reasons why this (both changes and recommendations) were/ were not fulfilled.

We believe that an integrated development plan that highlights the destination and, at the same time, the boarding houses, is important. Otherwise, it is obvious that the boarding houses in Romania will only be able to develop by chance and isolated. For this reason, the action plan will present actions that appear to be not directly related to the development of the rural pensions themselves, but which will conduct to the development of the entire area and thus to the development of the agro touristic boarding houses.

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