

DYSFUNCTIONS AND OPPORTUNITIES IN THE TOURISTIC COOPERATION IN THE PRUT TRANSFRONTIER AREA

1. Introduction

When potential transfrontier cooperation is considered it has to be viewed both from a theoretical perspective and in the context of the practical action with its ensuing effects.

Thus, on the theoretical level, one realises that in order to achieve such cooperation good intentions alone are not enough; what is needed is a concrete harmonisation of the positive aspects in such an enterprise. The harmonisation of interests and of the involved actors can be problematic and requires many compromises for the sake of the durable development of the concerned areas, which, even if located in historical conflict-prone regions, can be come areas of peace, cooperation and understanding.

From a practical point of view, one has to bear in mind that a viable project should be established, based on concrete objectives and appropriate, scientifically documented strategies of all the elements that can have a positive influence in this cooperation.

A careful analysis of all the opportunities, dysfunctions and complementarities specific to an area is needed to ensure the success of the practical approach of the issues involved by transfrontier cooperation.

Since the problem of the complementarities favourable to the development of durable tourism in the Prut transfrontier area has been dealt with separately in the present study we shall concentrate on the dysfunctions and opportunities for the durable development of tourism in the Prut transfrontier area.

2. Dysfunctions and their negative role in the cooperation in the field of tourism

A record of the problems linked to cooperation in the Prut transfrontier area highlights the existence both of dysfunctions and of opportunities.

This cooperation can be dynamic and efficient, in so far as these are known and examined and solutions are identified in order to diminish the negative effects of existing dysfunctions and to take advantage of particular opportunities.

Derived from the German word "Dysfunktion" meaning abnormal function, the term describes the dysfunctions which generate obstacles and barriers in tourism with a essentially negative effects. It is for this reason that they have to be known and included in a favourable equation outlining tourism development and cooperation in the Prut transfrontier area.

The analysis of the elements that contribute to the generation of dysfunctions can contribute to the creation of possible classifications.

Thus, if we take into account their nature there can be dysfunctions related to:

- a. the legal system;
- b. administrative systems;
- c. development strategies;
- d. financial and taxing systems;
- e. economic policies pertaining to the field of tourism.

If the effects of dysfunctions are considered, they originate in:

- a. the distinct system of classification and definition of the specific aspects of the technical and material assets;
- b. the special distribution of economic agents involved in the field of tourism;
- c. the strategy and forms of training of the tourism industry staff;
- d. the norms and required documents for the accreditation and functioning of companies operating in the field of tourism;
- e. the systems designed for the physical safety of the persons travelling as tourists in the Prut transfrontier area;
- f. ensuring food safety for the consumers of the products provided in the area, including their safety within the accommodation facilities.

3. An attempt at detailing the tourism dysfunctions in the considered area

In practice a marked detailing of the generators of dysfunctions in tourism is hard to achieve because of their highly variable dynamics. However, considering the previous classification, we can draw certain conclusions which, by generalisation, can single out many of the obstacles obstructing tourism activity.

Thus, the dysfunctions determined by legal aspects can be produced by:

- Customs legislation related to cross-border travel, the volume and nature of goods they can carry.
- The legislation regulating the movement of goods and persons in the three countries.
- The legislation concerning the physical security of persons and goods during travel.
- The economic legislation that can favour or restrict the movement of persons, goods and investment capital, etc.

We would like to mention that the regulations pertaining to the listed aspects differ greatly in the three countries, which sets back tourism activity in general and the development of tourism in particular.

Without assuming a biased stance, it is worth mentioning that out of the three countries called on to carry out transfrontier tourism cooperation in the Prut area by far the best placed and better and more accurately harmonised with the EU legislation is Romania, which is also more receptive to such cooperation.

When analysing the problem from the point of view of the organisational and administrative systems in which tourism is included we detect noticeable specific features which have a negative effect on cooperation.

In this respect too Romania is better placed owing to the flexibility of the tourism system.

As regards the tourism development strategies in the three countries bordering the river Prut there are differences and variations whose effects obstruct cooperation. There are differing policies referring to the role of private capital in tourism, in relation to state-owned and cooperative capital.

Moreover, the authorities in Chisinau have decreed that the Green paper issued by Romanian insurers is not valid on the Moldovan territory.

For instance, if a Romanian coach travels from Iasi to Chisinau (160 km) at the customs in the Republic of Moldova, the owner must pay the following taxes:

- road tax;
- disinfection;
- ecological;
- sanitary;
- customs taxes.

The total is 55 \$, which is too much indeed.

Greater attention must be paid to the dysfunctions related to the state role and obligations in establishing strategies, providing investment promoting certain forms of tourism.

As regards the financial and taxing systems in the three countries there are noticeable differences which restrict the development of tourism the Prut transfrontier area.

The noticeable differences in the payment systems, in fiscal and administrative registration, and taxing and financial facilities mean that Romania, Ukraine and Moldova still have to work to develop closer structures.

Nor are tourism-related economic policies similar enough. To a certain extent, this is understandable because tourism in Romania is an integrated industry, with well-established tasks and objectives, owing to the experience gained in more than 200 years of use of natural curative factors and the current infrastructure. In contrast, in Ukraine and in Moldova in particular tourism has a much different position among economic activities. This is why the nature, content and scope of economic policies are so contrasting. We have already mentioned that one of the criteria used in classifying dysfunctions has in view the effects they bring about.

Thus, if we consider the different systems of definition and classification of the specific components of the technical and material assets these represent more or less artificial obstacles for transfrontier cooperation. We would like to add that when talking about such cooperation we have in mind the involvement of several actors at various levels, which need to relate to as many similar measurement units as possible.

Thus, there are differences in the classification of the accomodation facilities, food retailers and tour transport services. These obstruct the activity of touring agents when tourists find it hard to accept the conditions different from those in their own country.

Equally relevant are the differences in the formation and training of tourism staff. There are differences not only in the subjects included in the syllabus and their content but also in the concepts that inform them.

The spatial distribution of tourism agents is more or less related to the previously mentioned aspects. It is well-known that there is a correlation between the quantity and quality of tourism resources, tourism figures and the operators in the industry.

The current situation in the Prut transfrontier area reveals an uneven distribution of economic agents operating in the field of tourism. Thus, while they are many on the right bank of the river Prut, namely in Romania, in North Bucovina and Republic of Moldova there are much fewer.

This is due to the differences among the three countries regarding the norms and documents required for the authorisation and functioning of companies (economic agents) operating in the field of tourism.

Although it would be preferable to have just a few, simple and clearly formulated and rigorously applied laws, there are many peculiarities in the concerned area which generate dysfunctions. The current difficult situation is also due to the transition the three countries have been going through. In this respect too, though, the situation in Romania is more encouraging and more favourable to economic agents.

A burning issue is the ensurance of physical safety of persons travelling for tourism purposes in the Prut transfrontier area. No tourist would like to risk their time and money to travel in high risk areas. The existence of tourist attractions and affordable prices are not enough to guarantee an influx of tourists.

In contrast with this compulsory demand, in the Prut transfrontier area there are many dysfunctions which cast doubt on the issue of tourist security. The Ukrainian authorities, for North Bucovina, and the Moldavian ones may retort by presenting relevant legislation that has already been passed but the problems is that it is not enforced.

Starting from policemen who elude the law to beggars that pounce on tourists there are many aspects that create unacceptable discomfort for tourists. In this respect too the situation in Romania is better for the groups of begging gypsies.

Food safety in the concerned area is just as important and needs to be improved. Thus, on the way from producers to consumers the hygiene and sanitary norms imposed by the European Union are breached. In dealing with this issue one has to consider that generally tourists come from developed countries whose expectations are influenced by the conditions in

their own countries. In the Prut transfrontier area there are many things left to do in order to ensure food safety for tourists.

The brief listing of the main problems contributing to the generation of dysfunctions in the field of tourism in the Prut transfrontier area can contribute to finding the actions that must be taken to cancel them.

4. Opportunities favourable for the durable development of tourism in the Prut transfrontier area

It is relevant to point out that, in parallel with the listed dysfunctions that obstruct tourism, there exist real opportunities for the durable development of tourism in the Prut transfrontier area. Thus, while dysfunctions contribute to creating barriers, the opportunities highlight the potential bases for establishing cooperation in the field of tourism.

In the sense of adequate, favourable, appropriate circumstances, tourism opportunities also occur in the resources structure and volume, tourists' needs and expectations, experience in the field, local customs, etc. Tourism research reveals a wide range of opportunities relating to:

- a. the formulation of development strategies;
- b. proposing combined touring programmes so as to share groups of foreign tourists;
- c. improving and sharing the experience gained in legislation, organisation, etc;
- d. cooperation in the field of advertising, including the setting up of common presentation stands at international tourism fairs and exhibitions;
- e. common research of the markets which generate the greatest influx of tourists in the Prut transfrontier area;
- f. financing common investment programmes and sharing specific resources;
- g. common training, or following the same syllabi and standards, of tourism staff.

If we consider the first aspect, on the basis of common grounds adequate strategies could be formulated to reveal the opportunities, complementarities and to limit disadvantageous dysfunctions.

In order to draw the attention of potential tourists, tourism agents in the three countries crossed by the river Prut have to join their efforts to: launch combined tourism programmes, organising international fairs and exhibitions and commonly prospecting foreign markets.

The present research takes into account the opportunities offered by each party providing a wider perspective on this activity.

Equally relevant are the opportunities resulting from experience gained in the field, tourism infrastructure, training, price policy etc.

The opportunities arising through common financing also need to be considered. Equally important is the balance of state and private funds and foreign contributions.

References

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