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## Tourist organization of space in the Eastern Carpathians - the northern group

Vasile Surd<sup>a\*</sup>, Ion Iuga<sup>b</sup>, Veronica Constantin<sup>c</sup>

<sup>a</sup>*Babeş-Bolyai University, Faculty of Geography, 400006, Cluj-Napoca, Romania*

<sup>b</sup>*George Coşbuc" School, Sighetu-Marmaţiei, România*

<sup>c</sup>*Babeş-Bolyai University, Faculty of Geography, 400006, Cluj-Napoca, Romania*

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### Abstract

The Northern Group of the Eastern Carpathians distinguishes itself through an attractive tourist potential, both anthropic and natural. To the anthropic heritage belong the wooden churches and monasteries of Bucovina, and to the natural one, the varied relief, developed on a diversified lithological basis (eruptive rocks in the West, crystalline in the median area and sedimentary in the East). To all these adds up the unaltered human potential and the remarkable hospitality of the inhabitants.

Three types of areas regarding the tourist organization of space have been highlighted based on the variety and level of the tourist potential, of the role in its development and its exploitation forms: areas with a complex organization, areas with a deficient organization, areas in the process of organizing themselves.

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### 1. General traits

The Eastern Carpathians represent the most extended mountain group from the Romanian Carpathians chain. They range from the Northern border of the country to the Prahova Valley. Among them, the Northern group distinguishes itself through the variety of relief forms by virtue of its diverse lithological substrate, which generated attractive relief forms, from the endogenous ones to the alpine relief, modeled by the quaternary glaciers. According to specific forms of space organization, are noticeable within this group the “countries” “The Oaş Country” in the West, “The Maramureş Country” in the central area, “The Dornelor Country” in the East, “The Lăpuş Country” in the South. Each of these stands out through the specific customs, clothing and folk songs, to which are added the remarkable industriousness and integrity of the inhabitants [1].

The humanized landscape comes to the fore through the agricultural use of the territory, in which natural hay cliffs prevail, with households dotted about till the bottom of the mountains. This adds to a rich experience in the use and manufacturing of wood, mainly in the Maramureş Depression and the Dornelor Depression (wooden tools, houses, churches etc. that are made of wood, a true civilization of wood).

The tourist potential is completed by the presence of monasteries in the Eastern sector, which show a

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\* Corresponding author. Tel/fax.0040 264 597 988

E-mail address: [vsurd@geografie.ubbcluj.ro](mailto:vsurd@geografie.ubbcluj.ro).

great architectural originality and shelter mural paintings and iconographic works that have an inestimable artistic value [2].



Figure 1 The geographical localization of the Oriental Carpathians – The Northern Group

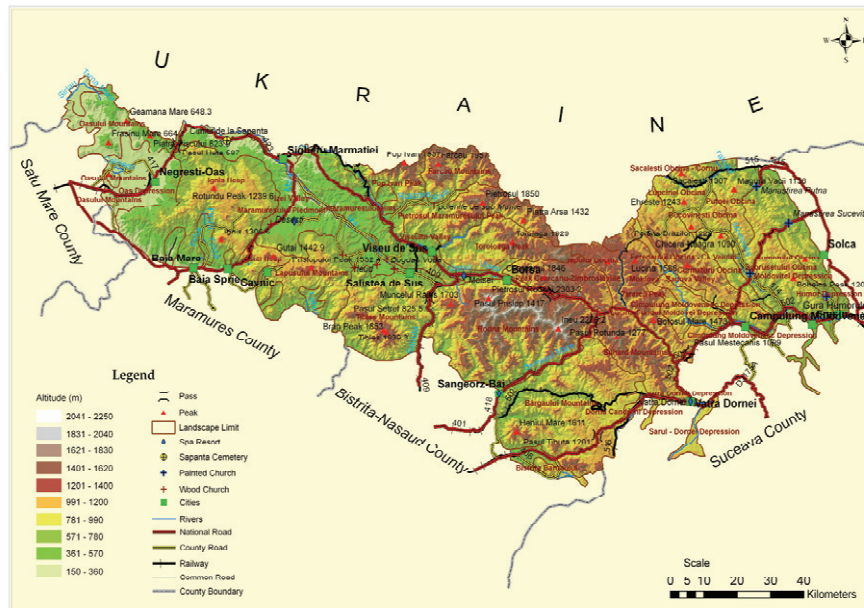


Fig. 2 Oriental Carpathians – The Northern Group. The relief and the main lines of communication

Following the assessment of the value of the tourist potential and relative comparability, five levels of territorial units were highlighted, namely:

- level I –Rodnei Mountains
- level II –Maramureșului Depression, Dornelor Depression and Gutâi Mountains
- level III – Obcina Mare [The Big Obcina]
- level IV – Tibleș Mountains, Oaș Depression, Maramureșului Mountains, Bârgăului Mountains and

Obcina Feredeu

- level V – Oaş Mountains and Obcina Mestecănişului( see fig.4)



Figure 3 Pictograms of the touristic potential (taken from Monografia turistica a Carpatilor [The Tourist Monograph of the Carpathians, 2008] [9])

## 2. The tourist areas and regions

Three types of areas regarding the tourist organization of space have been highlighted based on the variety and level of the tourist potential, of the development level and its exploitation forms, namely:

- areas with a complex organization and tourist development
- areas in the process of tourist organization
- areas with a deficient tourist organization[9].

Tourist organization regions were delimited within the areas, considering the frequency of the differentiation of the tourist specificity throughout the territory. Therefore, seven complex tourist organization and development areas were highlighted in the whole Northern sector of the Eastern Carpathians, which include 16 regions.

Eight areas are included in the tourist management plan and present a considerable variety from the perspective of their potential and of their tourist offer, ranging from the alpine tourism to the balneary one.

Five are the areas with deficient tourist organization and they occupy favourable positions within the mountainous group.

2.1. Areas with a complex organization and tourist development – are areas which distinguish themselves through a development of tourism oriented services, of the accommodation capacity and of the infrastructure, contributing to a diversification of tourist activities and permitting the development of several types and forms of tourism. The following areas belong to this category:

a. Baia Mare – Cavnic area stands out through a varied tourist potential and a tourist infrastructure which determines the development of climatic tourism for relaxation and recreation, especially winter sports tourism, due to the ski region of Cavnic, Mogosa, Suior and mountain hiking tourism, which is practiced on the South-Western flanks of the Gutâi Mountains, nautical and fishing tourism, activities which can be performed on the Firiza lake. The area possesses the requisites for developing transit tourism, weekend

tourism, etc.

According to a detailed analysis of the tourist potential and of the tourist infrastructure in general, the following tourist region with a complex tourist organization and development are to be found within the Baia Mare – Cavnic area:

- Baia Mare tourist region– covers Baia Mare municipality and is characterized through a complex tourist infrastructure, with an intense tourist circulation, very diverse tourist potential, which will determine a development and diversification of the tourist activities; recreation, relaxation and leisure tourism is to be noticed, which could be developed through extension and improvement especially in the periurban area. Tourism for congresses and reunions could be intensified, using the improved tourist infrastructure of Baia Mare city. Tourism for pupils could be developed through the use of the existing accommodation capacity in the camps.

- The tourist region Cavnic – is in full development stage of winter sports tourism, mountain hiking tourism, external tourism and through a series of conservation actions of the mines from that area, which constitute the premises for the development of recreation tourism.

- The tourist region Baia Sprie – Mogosa – is noticeable through a development of alpine tourism in general, mostly of winter sports tourism, weekend tourism, etc.

- b. The Desești - Ocna Șugatag area is an area meant for curative tourism, due to the presence of lakes in the salt massifs of Ocna Șugatag and for religious tourism, having the background of a rich patrimony. Izvoare resort is intended for winter sports tourism, mountain hiking, mountain-climbing in the Cocoșului top area. The great numbers of tourist pensions, the traditional activities of the people create the proper conditions for rural tourism. In the case of Desești – Ocna Șugatag area, the following tourist regions with complex tourist organization and development are to be differentiated:

- The Desești tourist region, which is individualized through the development of rural tourism (the Desești commune has its specific accommodation facilities), alpine tourism in the surrounding alpine area, the Izvoare resort having a special role in this case. The presence of wooden church, which is enlisted on the UNESCO World Heritage, could attract the practice of cultural tourism, especially of religious tourism.

- The Ocna Șugatag – Budești tourist region stands out through its potential in balneary and climatic tourism and represents a determining factor in the development of curative tourism. The modernization of the treatment facility is required, which is in a state of moderate degradation. The well developed rural tourist infrastructure determines the development of the “greenways” type of rural tourism.

- c. Valea Izei area – is the most important area from Maramureș, having important anthropic tourist objectives and accommodation facilities composed mostly of tourist pensions, but also motels. One of the regions that are very well developed from a tourist perspective is the Botiza village, which besides the great number of pensions, has mineral water resources developed on a local level. The modernization of the facilities of the former baths will allow the development of curative tourism at a bigger scale. Other important objectives of the area are the wooden churches, in Ieud is to be found the oldest wooden church from the country. Thus, the Iza Valley, with the background of an accommodation facilities’ density of 10 places per square kilometres, of a high ranked accommodation capacity, of the tourist potential, is an area meant for cultural tourism, recreation, transit and agro tourism.

The main tourist regions with complex organization and development within this region are:

- The touristic region Vadu Izei, including Vadu Izei and Oncești communes, localities with a developed tourist infrastructure; it is characteristic to the development of rural tourism, weekend tourism and transit tourism. The geographical localization in relation to the main traffic roads constitutes one of the important factors in the development of tourism. The development of a cross border tourist connection Baia Mare – Cavnic – Ocna Șugatag – Vadu Izei – Sighetu Marmăției – Solotvino (Ukraine), within the Romania – Ukraine cross border cooperation programmes will determine even more an increase in the number of tourists. Therefore, this tourist region is characteristic to transit tourism, cultural tourism, cyclo-tourism development, etc.

- The tourist region Bârsana – Rozavlea – is a region which stands out through the rural tourism development. The main types of rural tourism developed within this tourist region are cultural tourism, especially in the Bârsana commune, cyclo-tourism, transit tourism.

- The tourist region Botiza-Ieud – is a region which encompasses several administrative units which could implement common tourist development programmes, being given the fact that the four communes (Ieud, Botiza, Poienile Izei and Sieu) aim to develop common tourist promotion networks through accessing structural funds. As a result of a good cooperation, these localities could develop to a great extent cultural tourism (in Ieud is located the oldest wooden church from the country), curative tourism based on the Botiza mineral waters, recreation and leisure tourism, weekend tourism, etc. In this region the accommodation

capacity is well developed.

- The tourist region Săcel – Bogdan Vodă. The development opportunities of this region are due to its closeness to the Borsa resort and the Vaserului Valley. Săcel pottery, Săliște de Sus and Bogdan Voda wooden churches, Dragomirești Monastery, the clothing, the traditional activities are just several factors which determine cultural tourism, transit tourism, recreation tourism and agro tourism.

d. Sighet – Sapânța area is noticeable through the presence of two important tourist centers, the Sighetu Marmatiei Municipality and the Sapânța commune. Sighetu Marmatiei Municipality, situated at the convergence of the communication roads that cross the Maramuresului Country, is the most important cultural center from Historical Maramures. With the opening of the border crossing point Sighetu Marmatiei – Solotvino, Sighetu Marmatiei municipality has great tourist development perspectives.

- Sighetu Marmatiei tourist region. The Sighetu Marmatiei municipality is an administrative unit that disposes of important tourist objectives of anthropic origin (museums), but there are perspectives for the development of the periurban area. Cultural and recreation tourism are important forms of tourism which are developing in this tourist region.

- Sapânța tourist region has a well developed natural and anthropic tourist potential, with notable objectives such as Cimitirul Vesel [The Joyful Graveyard] and Sapânța – Peri Monastery, these objectives standing at the basis of the cultural tourism development, especially of religious tourism. Fishing tourism is also developing, due to the existence of a locally trout farm and also hunting tourism, etc

e. Câmpulung Moldovenesc – Gura Humorului area is situated on one of the most important trans Carpathians connection roads. Due to its varied tourist potential and to a well developed tourist infrastructure, two important tourist centres developed, represented by the Câmpulung Moldovenesc Municipality and the Gura Humorului town, which are important resorts of national interest. Winter sports tourism is practiced in Câmpulung Moldovenesc Municipality area. Cultural tourism is representative for the Humorului Monastery, Voronet localities; transit tourism is also practiced, and in the last years agro tourism gains in importance[4].

- Vama – Câmpulung Moldovenesc tourist region has the most complex tourist organization that resulted out of the diversity of the tourist potential from the region, starting with the mountain hiking tourism to cultural transit tourism, equestrian tourism, cyclo-tourism and arriving to winter sports tourism, etc. Recently Câmpulung Moldovenesc Municipality was declared a climatic resort of national interest.

- Gura Humorului tourist region is developing on the basis of the cultural and artistic heritage of Voroneț and Humorului Monastery. Religious cultural tourism is practiced, recreation tourism, tourism for pupils, mountain hiking, cyclo-tourism, fishing tourism, etc.

f. Dornelor area is an area with an old tradition in balneary tourism. The latter is relatively developed, but still needs a lot of improvements for the modernization of the material facilities. Vatra Dornei Municipality, declared tourist resort, has developed especially through tourism, due to the balneary-climateric resort and to mineral water sources (charbo-gaseous, hypotone, athermal, sodium bicarbonated, calcic and magnestic, ferruginous) with multiple therapeutic qualities, as well as the peat mud from Tinovul Mare. Vatra Dornei ski region creates the premises for the development of winter sports tourism. Extreme tourism can be practiced in an environment in which the geographical conditions are favourable (attractive natural landscapes, original natural objectives, etc.) As part of tourism in general, extreme tourism is equivalent with adventure tourism, encompassing specific activities such as: climbing, paraglide, rafting, motorized hiking, extreme snowboarding, caving, etc. In some of the rural localities there are conditions for the development of rural tourism [3].

The main tourist regions with complex organization and development are [6]:

- Vatra Dornei tourist region is a region which has the necessary tourist infrastructure for developing several forms of tourism. There are two main elements of tourist interest: mineral waters, used from ancient times and a developed tourist infrastructure.

- Iacobeni – Mestecanis tourist region is a region within which mountain and rural tourism are practiced.

g. Obcina Mare area covers three important tourist centres: Sucevita, Vatra Moldovitei and Putna, which from a tourist perspective developed on the basis of cultural tourism. They present extended possibilities of attraction for foreign tourists through the integration of national heritage values into the European and global ones (Bucovina monasteries are UNESCO acknowledged and have international meanings – the award of the “Pomme d’Or” prize by the Tourist Journalists and Writers International Federation for the cultural tourism in general and for the ecumenical tourism in particular, as a consequence to the existence of monasteries. The natural environment with an exceptional landscape value offers excellent conditions for the development of tourism. Rural tourism, a particular form of tourism which is



more complex and covers as well the tourist activity as such (accommodation, pension, tourist traffic, supplementary services) as the economic one (usually agricultural), finds in the villages of this mountain area favourable premises for development. The rural space has a rich tourist potential which is available both in the mountain and in the sub mountain areas. Beside the historical and natural monuments the tourist interest is raised by the existence of valuable resources in the field of biodiversity.

It covers the following tourist regions:

- Sadova – Vatra Moldoviței region includes two objectives: Sadova commune, in which rural tourism was developed, and the Moldovița monastery in Vatra Moldoviței, which determines the development of cultural tourism in general and of ecumenical tourism in particular.

- Sucevița – Marginea tourist region, which is the most developed region from this area. Sucevița has tourist complexes, a great number of pensions, all which contribute to the increase of the tourist traffic in this area

- Putna tourist region. Putna is one of the most important cultural, religious and artistic centers founded in Moldavia, religious tourism having in Putna almost all the necessary conditions for its development and rural tourism developed at the same time with the increase of the number of pensions

2.2. Areas which are in the process of tourist organization are those in which a sufficient tourist infrastructure is not present, thus a dynamic development of tourism which could contribute to the social and economic development of an area being impossible. One finds under this category:

- a. Rodna mountains area is in a state of still stand regarding tourist development, due to a degradation of the existing infrastructure. The tourist area of the Rodnei Mountains could be launched again through the development of mountain hiking tourism, and especially of eco tourism. The improvement for tourism of several mountain tracks, the building of alpine shelters, the building of tourist chalets at higher altitudes and a more active tourist promotion could lead to the development of tourism in this area, especially because the natural tourist potential is very diverse.

- b. Vama – Bixad area is known for its mineral waters, a very rich ethno-cultural potential and for the clay crafts and pottery in Vama. Through tourist promotion actions, the development of tourist infrastructures, the increase of accommodation units' number, the modernization of road network, etc., tourism could be launched again in this part of the country.

- c. Sângeorz – Băi area is an area traditionally known for general tourism and especially balneary tourism. The degradation of the accommodation facilities, the lack of newer accommodation facilities smaller than the existing ones, in order to reduce as much as possible the maintenance costs of these units, lead the resort to the current situation.

- d. Cărlibaba – Ciocănești area is an area with a mixed tourist development, the Ciocanesti commune attained a certain level of tourist development, the locality disposing of marked tourist tracks, churches, the organization of nationally acknowledged festivals (Pastravului Festival) and even internationally acknowledged ones (Festivalul Oului Încondeiat – Painted Easter Egg Festival).

- e. Poiana Stampei area, which tourist potential and also its closeness to Vatra Dornei are the main factors which could determine the development of tourism.

- f. Lapusului area has a relatively reduced tourist potential and also a reduced accommodation capacity.

- g. Borșa – Vișeu area has known a degradation of the existing infrastructure, especially in the Borsa tourist complex, due to the blockage of big projects which would have given an impulse to the tourist activities in the area. The main tourist regions that are in the process of tourist organization are the Vaserului Valley, the Moisei commune and the Borsa Tourist Complex.

Concerning the Vaserului Valley, following the 2008 flooding, the railroad infrastructure was destroyed to a great extent, which will cause a reduced tourist activity in the next period. The accommodation and public alimentation facilities from the Borsa - Vișeu area is limited both as number and variety.

- h. Ronisoarei Area is represented by Rona de Jos and Rona de Sus localities, where is also located the Costiui village, known for its salt massifs lakes.

2.3. Area with a deficient tourist organization, category to which belong [5]:

- a. Camîrzana - Tarna Mare area is an area with deficient tourist organization, determined by a reduced tourist potential and the lack of the proper infrastructure needed for the development of tourist services. There is no major road connection in the area which would allow the tourists' access to this area.

- b. Repedeza – Poienile de sub Munte area possesses a natural tourist potential which is from a tourist perspective. One of the causes is the lack of interest for the tourist development and landscaping. There are many European funds which could be accessed by the local communities from this area, but the lack of experience and of interest in this direction of economic and social development resulted in a still stand till the present moment.

c. Valea Sălăuței area (Coșbuc – Romuli) has a rich natural tourist potential and rail and road connections, but tourism is still poorly developed. The very low accommodation and public alimentation capacity, the lack of local initiatives, to which is added an old population, are the causes of this situation.

d. Ulma - Izvoarele Sucevei area - besides the natural tourist potential poorly represented, the small number of inhabitants as well as the conditions of a weak tourist infrastructure, tourism has not enough objectives in order to develop.

e. Breaza – Moldovita – Sulita area is also situated in a relative isolation in relation to the main connection roads, to which adds the lack of local initiative, both at the level of local authorities and on the population level, situations which a development of tourism cannot take place.

### 3. Conclusions

The research made on the question of tourism in the Northern group of the Eastern Carpathians highlight a series of traits specific to the mountain area in general and to the Northern group in particular.

From a wide tourist perspective, the Northern group of the Eastern Carpathians is characterized through a diversified tourist potential, with a differentiated spatial distribution, according to the specific of each potential.

Therefore, within the Northern group of the Eastern Carpathians, tourist potential is to be found more in the central and Western part of the Northern group, and the anthropic tourist potential is specific in the Eastern part of the group and in the Maramuresului Depression, which determines the forms of tourist organization of the space within this relief form.

The material facilities, especially the accommodation facilities from the Northern group of the Eastern Carpathians are mainly situated in the lowland corridor Câmpulung Moldovenesc – Gura Humorului, in the Dornelor Depression, the Maramuresului Depression and the Baia Mare area.

Within the Northern group of the Eastern Carpathians there are areas with a complex tourist potential, respectively in the Eastern part of the group, in the Obcina Mare, the Câmpulung Moldovenesc - Gura Humorului Depression and the Maramuresului Depression; the mountain areas are for the most part characterized through mainly natural tourist potential, that is the Maramures Mountains, the Rodnei Mountains, the Gutâi Mountains, etc; there are areas with a low tourist potential, for example Obcina Mestecanisului and Feredeului and the Bârgaului Mountains.

The territorial distribution of the tourist potential, of the accommodation facilities and tourist infrastructure generate different forms of tourist organization of space in the Northern group of the Oriental Carpathians[8].

Three types of tourist organization of the space were identified within the Northern group of the Eastern Carpathians:

- areas with complex organization and development, which cover: the Baia Mare - Cavnic area, the Câmpulung Moldovenesc - Gura Humorului area, etc
- areas in the process of tourist organization, distinctive for Rodnei Mountains area, Sângeorz – Bai area, Borsa – Viseu area and others
- areas with a deficient tourist organization, specific to the: Camârzana – Tarna Mare area, Repedea – Poienile de sub Munte area, Ulma – Izvoarele Sucevei area

In the Northern group of Oriental Carpathians' area a series of priority actions for which the local, county and regional authorities are responsible are proposed within the Regional North – West and North – East Development Region Operational Programme, for the period 2007-2013:

- the extension of water supplying in the tourist area of the Ocna Sugatag resort, the extension of sewage in the tourist area, the increase of tail water treatment capacity, the extension and modernization of the street network in the tourist area
- building access roads and parking for autos near the ski slopes – Mogosa, Firiza, Izvoarele, Cavnic, bringing the ski slopes to standards – grass planting, drainages, steerage in all locations.
- valorising the wooden churches from the patrimony of Maramures and Satu Mare counties: building and/or improving the access infrastructure – roads in the local area, building auto parking, building one traditional construction near the objective with the role of selling point for local products and social group, implementing a monumental lighting system for valorising

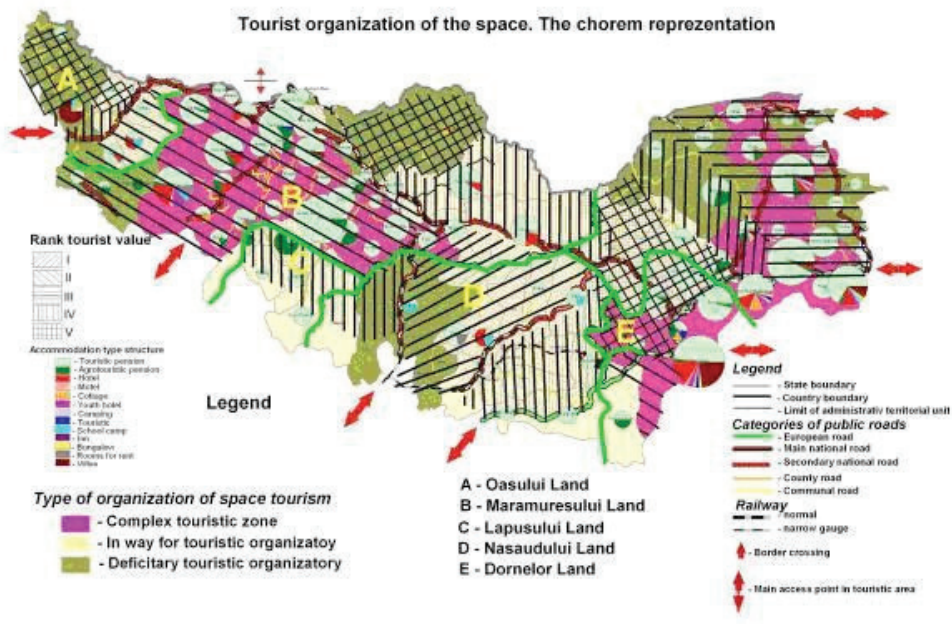


Figure 4 The chorem of touristic space organizing [7]

- “The Gold Road”: The rehabilitation and inclusion in the tourist circuit of two mines from Maramures (Baia Mare, Cavnic), the modernization of the Mineralogy Museum from Baia Mare and the creation of a thematic circuit
- Integrated project of creating a rural alternative to the “Blue Flag” which should certify that in the area the traditions, customs, architecture etc were preserved at the best: thematic circuit of the crafts from the counties of Maramures, Suceava and Satu Mare areas focused on the popular culture, ecological education and the environment in the rural space
- The support and promotion of private initiative for the preservation of the popular genius' values, including the creation of a data bank
- The creation of a complete map and calendar with the objectives, events and complex tourist tracks, including through their connection to the tourist networks and recognized “info” means
- The creation of multifunctional models generically called the “House with Customs”, which should simultaneously have a craftsmanship, educational, tourist, informational and musicological vocation, sustained through complex means and helped by promotions: fairs, symposia, exhibits, events, advertising, media relations, etc
- Maramureş “Rainbow”: implementing the project of a trout sport fishing circuit in Maramures (on the Valea Neagra –Blidari, Bodi – Mogosa, Vaser, Viseu, Repedea, etc rivers) including visits to the region’s 5 trout farms (Firiza, Blidari, Lostrita, Sapânta si Faina – Vaser)
- The Northern main road of the Oriental Carpathians “Pietrosul Călimanilor – Pietrosul Rodnei” (project realised in collaboration with Bistrita Nasaud, Maramures and Suceava County Councils): improving tourist mountain tracks and the building of mountain shelters, creation of connection infrastructure among the tourist areas Bistrita, Suceava and Maramures, ecological tourism in Rodnei Mountains National Park[10].
- The building of authorized mountain tracks in the Rodnei Mountains National Park: Borsa – Pietrosul – Tarnita la Cruce, Borsa – Saua Stiol – Saua Gârgalau, Borsa – Cascada Cailor, Pasul Prislop
- The building of authorized mountain tracks in Gutâi Mountains: Ighis – Gutâi – Creasta Cocosului – Ignis, Cabana Mogosa – Complexul turistic Suior – Poiana Boului, din traseul Huta – Netedul portiunea Izvoare – Netedul.



The present organization form of the tourist space from the Northern group of the Oriental Carpathians puts forth the premises of a resultful development of tourism in this part of the country[11].

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