

RESEARCH ON AUTHORIZATION OF AGROTOURISTIC PENSIONS IN ROMANIA

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Until 2008, pensions in our country were classified into two categories: rural tourist hostels and city tourist hostels. In terms of legislation, there was no such concept as agrotouristic pension or agrotourism. Only by Order no. 636/2008 the agrotouristic pension was born. The hereby work aims to study the impact of the new legislation with regard to increasing the number of agrotourist hostels. The study was conducted on a sample of 100 representative hostels located in the main agrotourist areas of the country: Bucovina, Neamt, Maramures, Bran, Marginimea Sibiu, Vrancea-Buzău, Danube Delta, Harghita- Covasna, the Apuseni Mountains and Oltenia under Mountain. As we can plainly see, the legal criteria are quite demanding and the needed documents suppose a very stiff bureaucracy if we consider that we are talking only about a minor family business. Out of the 100 studied hostels, only 30 have managed to meet the legal criteria and have been assigned the official status of agro tourist hostels.

Key words: authorization, agrotourism, pensions, the comparative analysis

The new legislation in the field defines the agro tourist hostels as tourist welcoming units with a capacity of maximum 8 rooms that act either independently or in people's houses and that ensure places especially designated for accommodating tourists and serving food, as well as the possibility of taking part in household or handicraft activities. In agro tourist hostels, tourists are served with natural products, mainly from their own household or from other local authorized producers. The hosts are in charge of welcoming directly the tourists and of their program all along their stay at the hostel.

MATERIAL AND METHOD

This study has been performed during the 1st of September – 1st of December 2009 on a number of 100 hostels that have initiated the procedure of being assigned the Classification Certificate in conformity with the stipulations of the Order no. 636/2008 as agro tourist hostels. In order to get results as exact as possible, we have selected 10 hostels from each 10 most representative agro tourist areas in the country. Part of these hostels are newly built, others have their classification certificate expired, while others wish to switch from the status of tourist hostel to agro tourist hostel.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The study has aimed at comparing the legal stipulations regarding the classification of agro tourist hostels and the required certification papers with the reality existing on the field, offered by the 100 hostels, aiming at setting up conclusions regarding the actuality of the new laws issued by the government and at proposing some amendments to adapt the legal provisions to the reality in the rural Romanian areas.

In order to be classified by the Ministry of Tourism, an agro tourist hostel has to fulfill a set of minimum compulsory criteria and a set of optional supplementary criteria.

1. *Compulsory criteria regarding the classification of tourist housing units of an agro tourist hostel*

Within agro tourist hostels it is developed at least one activity having to do with agriculture, breeding animals, cropping several types of plants, orchards of fruit trees or a handicraft activity is developed in a workshop that produces various cottage industry items. The mentioned activities have to be continuously develop or, depending on their characteristics and season, they need to have a recurring character. The location of hostels has to be in areas protected from pollution and any other elements that would jeopardize tourist's health and life. The equipments in rooms and the sanitary premises meant for the tourists will be exclusively for their use. Inside all these, there will be none of the owner's personal things such as clothing, footwear, baubles or other objects that could hinder the tourists. If the spaces designed for cooking and serving food are allocated also for outside consumers and the number of seats at the tables is bigger than that of the housing number, but not less than 40 seats at the tables, such places will be classified as public alimentation units.

Minimum compulsory criteria	Hostels									
	TOURIST					AGRO TOURIST				
	stars					Flowers (daisy)				
	5	4	3	2	1	5	4	3	2	1
1. General criteria:	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
- buildings as well as household annexes have to be clean and well maintained										
- to comply with the local specific architecture style	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
- own access ways and surrounding areas to be well maintained	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
- own yard with green spaces	x	x	x	-	-	x	x	x	x	x
- yard with flower improvements	x	x	x	-	-	x	x	x	-	-
- open air improvements for leisure and relaxing (kiosks, bowers, covered terraces, etc)	x	x	x	-	-	x	x	-	-	-
- garage or covered housing	x	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
- own parking	x	x	-	-	-	x	x	-	-	-

2. Spaces organization:	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	-	-
- The access into bedrooms and sanitary premises has to be direct without passing through other rooms used as bedrooms										
- clean and adequate spaces for cooking, equipped with installations for preparing and preserving the food	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
- living room with adequate furniture of high quality and with highly serving inventory	x	x	-	-	-	x	x	-	-	-
- day room with a minimum surface of mp	20	-	-	-	-	20	-	-	-	-
- room for serving food equipped with furniture (tables, chairs, benches) and with serving inventory	-	-	x	x	x	-	-	x	x	x
- rooms with own sanitary premise	x	x	x	-	-	x	x	x	-	-
- common sanitary premise (1 star/flower tourist hostels may have outdoor washers supplied by natural resources in basins)	-	-	-	x	x	-	-	-	x	x
3. Installations:	x	x	x	-	-	x	x	x	-	-
- gas central heating by common or terracotta fireplaces, except the summer season units										
- heating by terracotta fireplaces or other devices agreed by the provisions regarding the protection against fire	-	-	-	x	x	-	-	-	x	x
- heating device in bathrooms (central heating or other devices tolerated by the provisions regarding the protection against fire)	x	x	x	-	-	x	x	x	-	-
- running cold and hot water installation in the kitchen	x	x	x	x	-	x	x	x	x	-
- running cold water in the kitchen	-	-	-	-	x	-	-	-	-	x
- air conditioning	x	-	-	-	-	x	-	-	-	-
- connection with the public sewage system or with its own collecting and cleaning water devices	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
- the building has to be connected to the public electricity network	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
4. Minimum area of rooms	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
5. Maximum number of beds in one room	2	2	3	3	4	2	2	3	3	4

2. *Supplementary criteria:* The minimum scoring resulted from evaluating the supplementary criteria is the following:

- 5 stars/flowers 150 points;
- 4 stars/flowers 120 points;
- 3 stars/flowers 80 points;
- 2 stars/flowers 40 points.

3. *Documents needed for the classification:*

In order to be assigned the Classification certificate, economic agents, owners and/or hostel administrators, have to draw up a documentation comprising the following:

- a). request for assigning the Classification certificate;
- b). own liability declaration stating that hostel owners hold the authorization for fire prevention, the sanitary, sanitary veterinary and environment certifications;

- c). copy of the stating certificate issued by the Commerce Register which states the working location for the hostel as well as the CAEN code corresponding to the developed activity;
- d). copy of the registration certificate at the Commerce Register;
- e). copy of the authorization regarding the development of economic activities, applicable to natural entities and family associations;
- f). file regarding the nominal classification of the housing areas by category;
- g). file regarding the classification of tourist housing units that carry out also alimentary activities (if applicable);
- h). Specific notification regarding the location and functionality of the premises issued by the Ministry of Tourism in case of new constructions;
- i). copy of the tourism licence of the person that runs the tourist housing unit and copy of the individual labour contract registered in conformity with the legal provisions, if applicable.

CONCLUSIONS

As we can plainly see, the legal criteria are quite demanding and the needed documents suppose a very stiff bureaucracy if we consider that we are talking only about a minor family business. Out of the 100 studied hostels, only 30 have managed to meet the legal criteria and have been assigned the official status of agro tourist hostels.

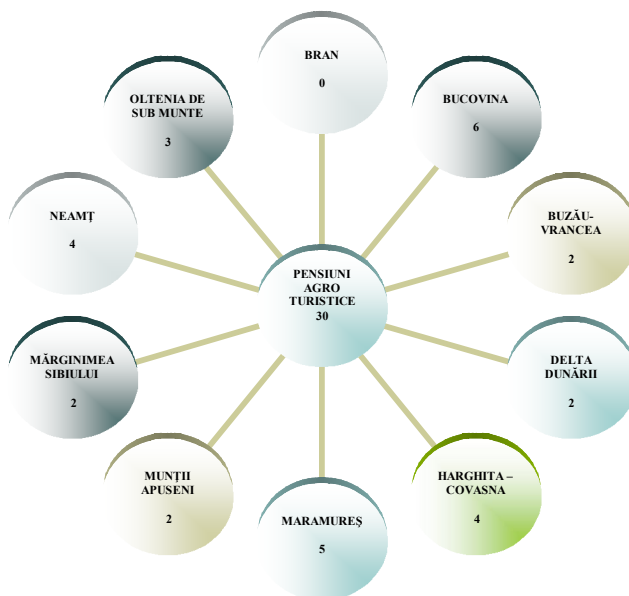


Figure 1 Agro tourist hostels

40 more hostels have got tourist hostels certificates due to not fulfilling the agro tourism criteria. The worst part is that 30 hostels did not manage to get the

necessary authorizations or the owners were not able to go through the bureaucracy stress and these hostels will not be classified and will work on the black market.

The main reasons for which some of the hostels could not get the agro tourist hostel status but got the tourist hostel certification were the following: having more than 8 rooms, impossibility to fulfill the criteria of agricultural activity; breeding animals or handicraft activities; they could not ensure food prepared out of natural products, mainly from their own household or from local authorized producers. The reasons for which the owners of 30 hostels out of the 100 studied have chosen to work on the black market consisted of: impossibility to get the sanitary, sanitary veterinary and environment authorizations but especially the fire prevention authorizations which were extremely expensive and difficult to get; lack of finances for the minimum equipments and for paying the authorization taxes; lack of specially trained personnel in conformity with the legal provisions.



Figure 2 Tourist hostel and black market

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