

Ecotourism in Romania: from branding to destination management



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Association of Ecotourism in Romania (AER)

www.asociatia-aer.ro

www.eco-romania.ro

About AER



Established in 2003, AER has achieved a partnership for nature conservation and tourism among private sector businesses (tour-operatours, guesthouses) and organisations acting in nature conservation (NGOs, protected areas, consulting companies, individuals).

Discover
ECO-ROMANIA

www.eco-romania.ro



www.asociatiaaer.ro



80 members:

- 50% privat sector (e.g. tur-operators, guesthouses, guides) & 50% entities and individuals interested in nature conservation and ecotourism development (e.g. NGOs like WWF Romania, CAPDD Bihor, Mioritics Association, ADEPT Foundation, etc.)





Marketing - International Travel Shows, Magazine...

1. Photo-Adventure Viena
2. Destinations London
3. Fair for Special Journey Amsterdam
4. CMT Stuttgart
5. ITB Berlin

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ECO-ROMANIA

...beyond a green image



- Eco-Romania certification system;
- Ecotourism destinations network development.

Eco-Romania certification system




- Established in 2007;
- Based on Swedish and Australian models;
- Third party certification system;
- For accommodation facilities and tours;
- More than 100 certificates awarded;
- 1.5 or 3 years validity;



Discover Eco-Romania Zenith Map Collection



- Part of a larger concept for ecotourism destinations;
- They integrate the eco-certified services;
- The aim is to open the rural areas around the mountains for tourism and to bring benefits for the local communities.



Ecotourism destination

=

**The protected area and the
(surrounding) local communities that
adopted a responsible and integrated
local policy based on ecotourism**

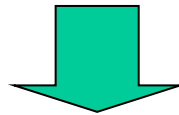
A brown horse with a blonde mane is the central focus of the image, positioned on the left side. The background shows a rural landscape with a wooden fence, green hills, and a blue sky with scattered white clouds. A semi-transparent white box is overlaid on the right side of the image, containing text.

Brasov Declaration, the 2nd European Ecotourism Conference 2013

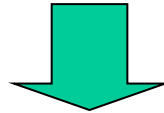
Ecotourism destinations in Europe should have:

- A **protected area** associated with the destination;
- A critical mass of **local ecotourism businesses**;
- A **sustainability plan** under implementation, in developing ecotourism;
- **Nature and local culture** as the main ingredients in product development and marketing;
- **Active participation** of local communities, empowered through education and awareness raising, based on shared values.

Global Sustainable Tourism Council (GSTC)



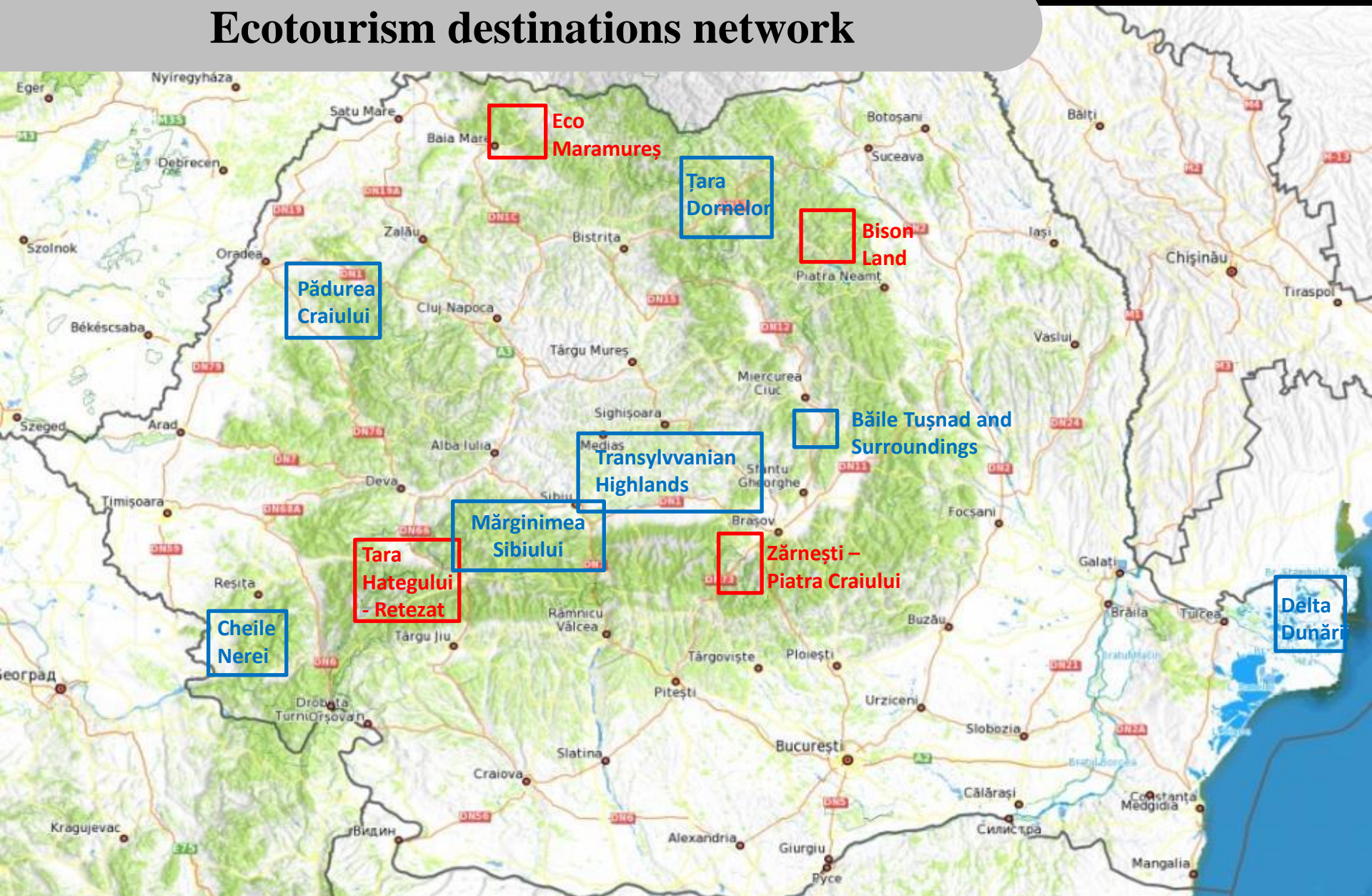
European EcoTourism Labeling Standard (EETLS)



National Tourism Authority
Initiative



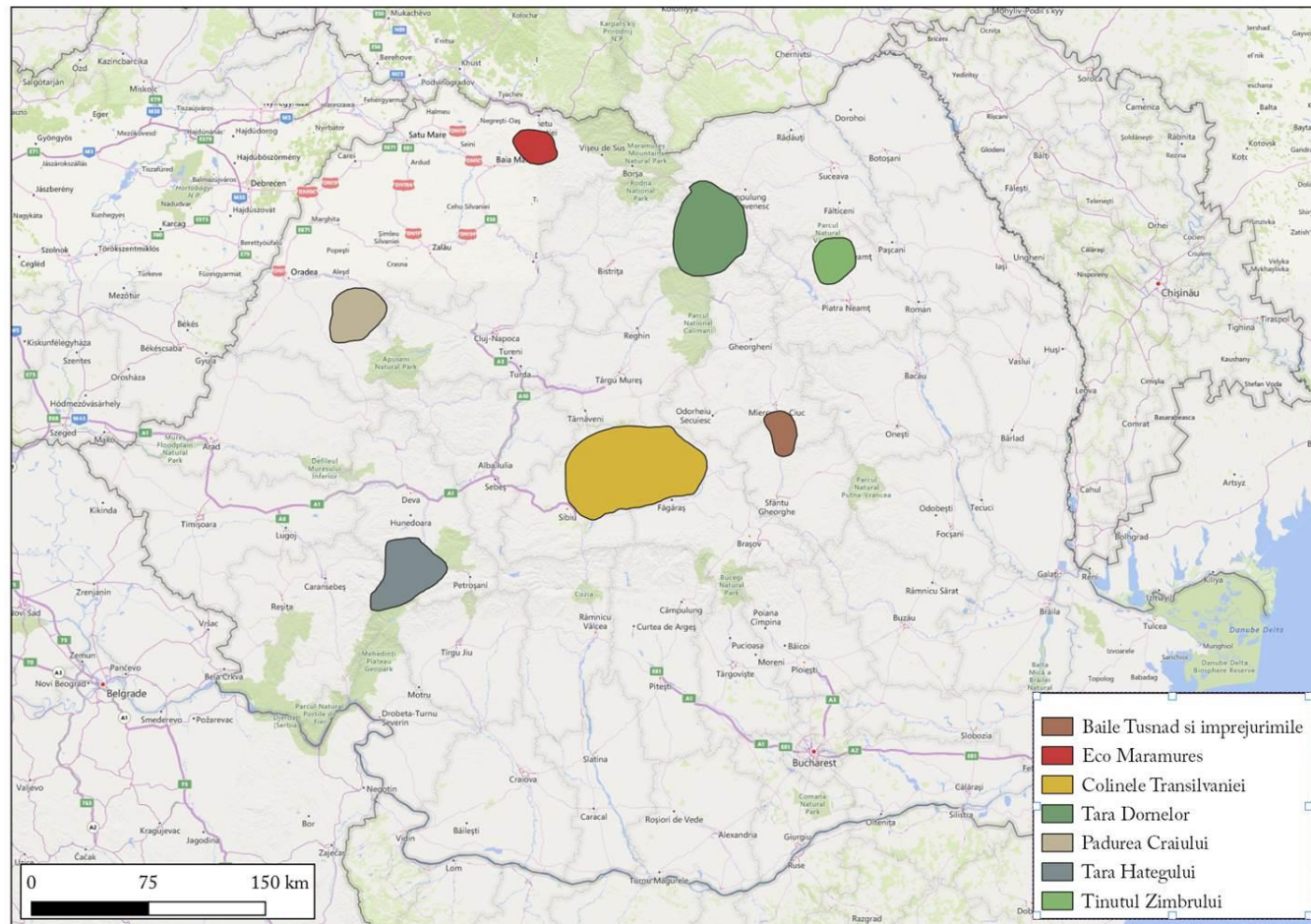
Ecotourism destinations network



National context

- National ecotourism strategy developed by National Research and Development Institute for Tourism defines the needs for **ecotourism destinations in 2009**;
- In 2011, the **Inter-Ministry Working Group** for ecotourism development is officially formed under coordination of National Tourism Authority. AER is member of it;
- In 2011 – 2013, National Tourism Authority coordinates the process of developing **the criteria and procedure for ecotourism destination** awards;
- **European Ecotourism Conference** (Poiana Braşov/Romania, 2013) agreement on European ecotourism destination concept;
- In 2014, the first **two micro-regions are recognized** as ecotourism destinations by the National Tourism Authority in partners.
- In 2016, 2018/2019 **national ecotourism** strategy is updated.
- In 2016, **two more ecotourism destination** are evaluated and officially awarded

The network of the seven-ecotourism destination coordinated by AER



General overview of the seven destinations

(evolution of the main tourism related indicators)

NETWORK	2016	2017	2018	2019
No of guesthouses	86	136	173	191
No of beds	1412	1.801	2.357	2.745
No of tourists	74.106	79.495	104.379	113.277
Overnights	127.859	158.292	249.115	265.312
Average stay	2,44	2,33	2,47	2,34
Occupancy rate	20,02	21,24	27,96	26,48
NAT. STATISTICS				
Average stay	2,04	1,99	1,98	2,02
Occupancy rate	19,6	20,08	21,6	23,3



Destination profile: Tara Dornelor

2018 data: Tara Dornelor Ecotourism Association & AER

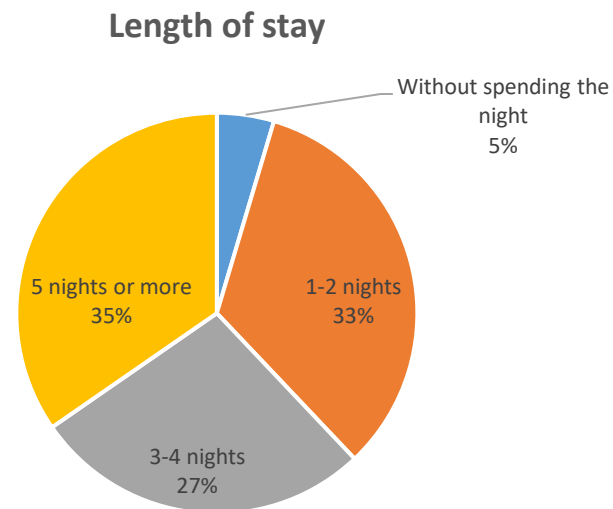
Ecotourism network: 22 guesthouse (386 beds);

Overnights: 30500

Average stay: 3,43

Occupation rate: 21,62

Tara Dornelor

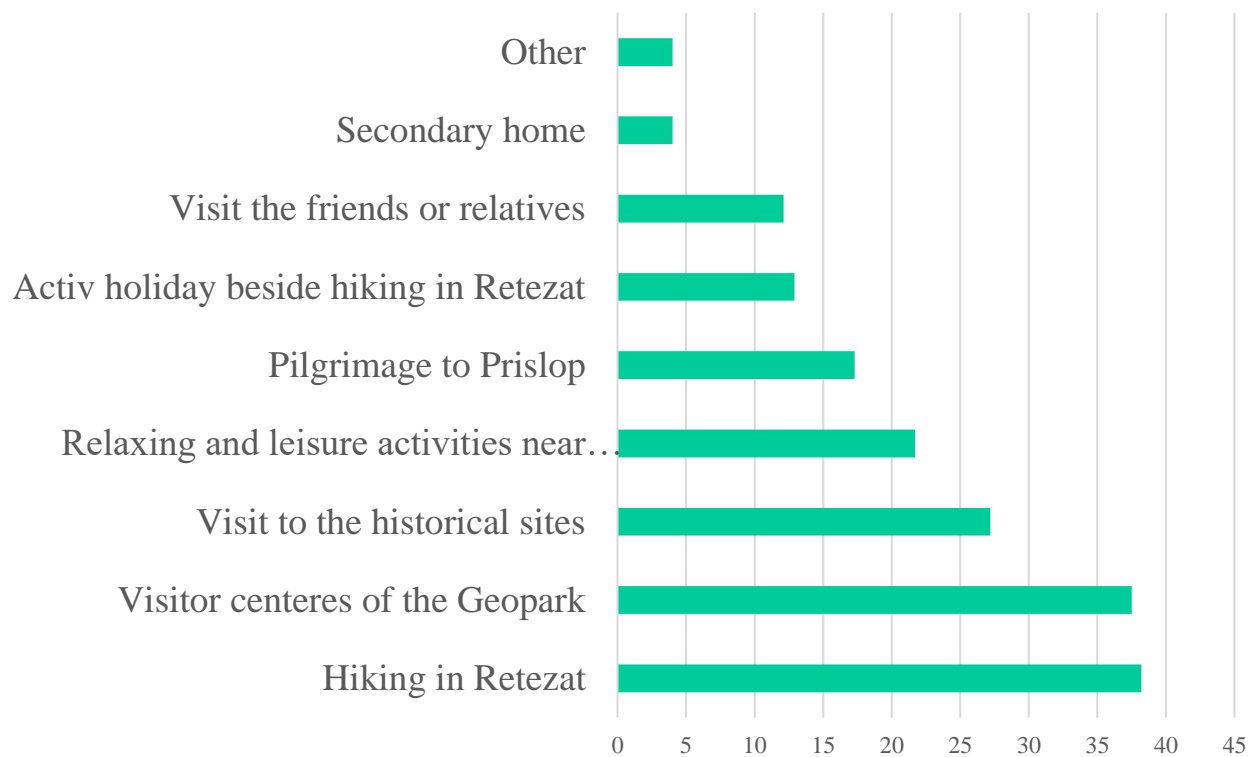


Average stay: 3,43

Occupation rate: 21,62

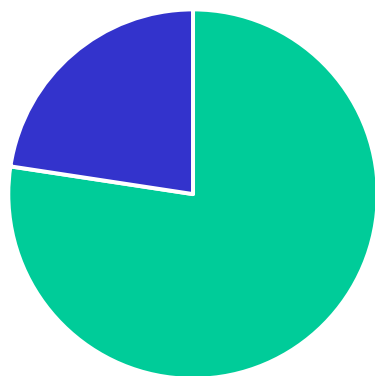
Tara Hategului - Retezat

The main purpose of the visit



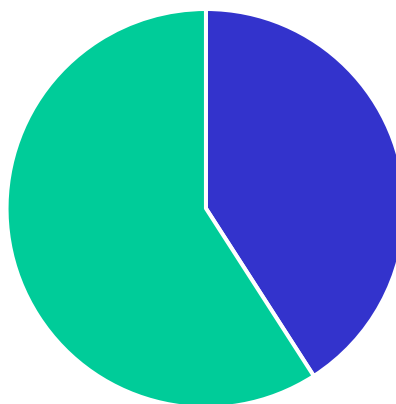
Eco-Maramures

Citizenship



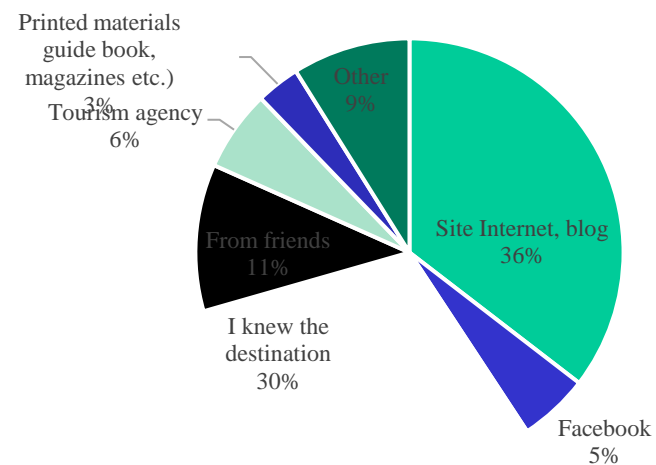
■ Romana ■ Foreigners

Resident



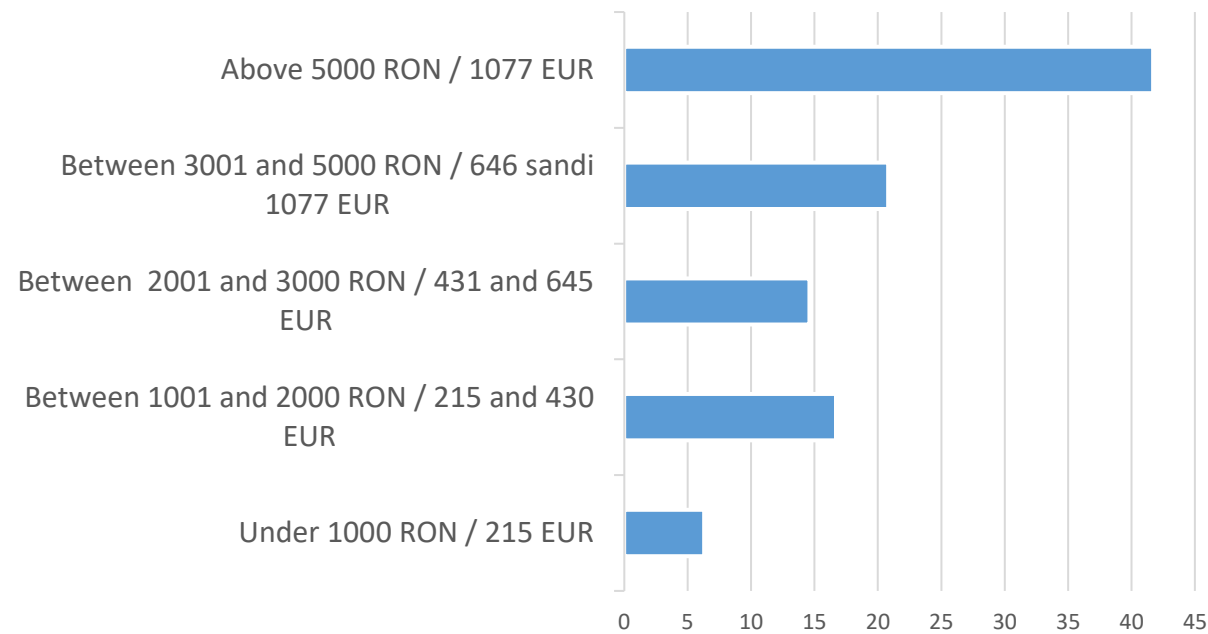
■ Abroad ■ Romania

Information channel

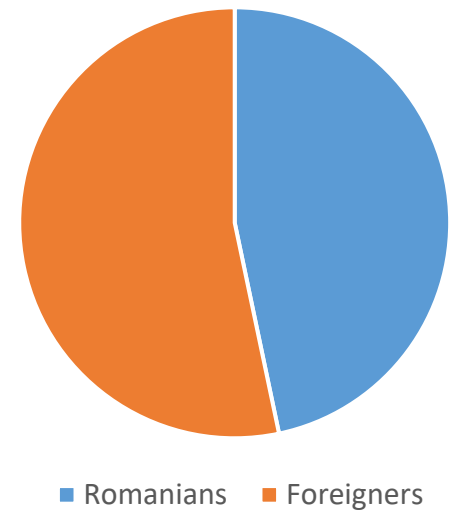


Transylvanian Highlands

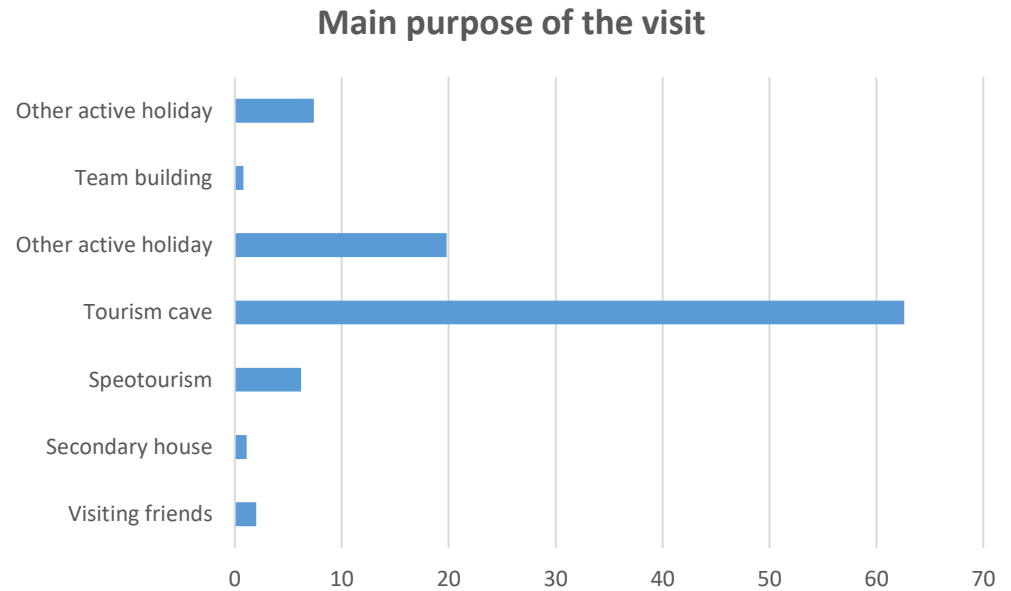
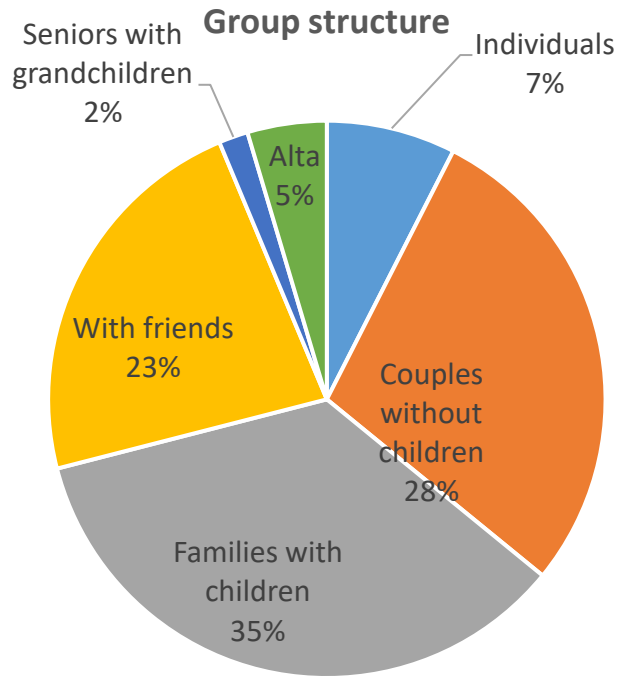
Income of tourists



Citizenship



Padurea Craiului



Objectives for 2023

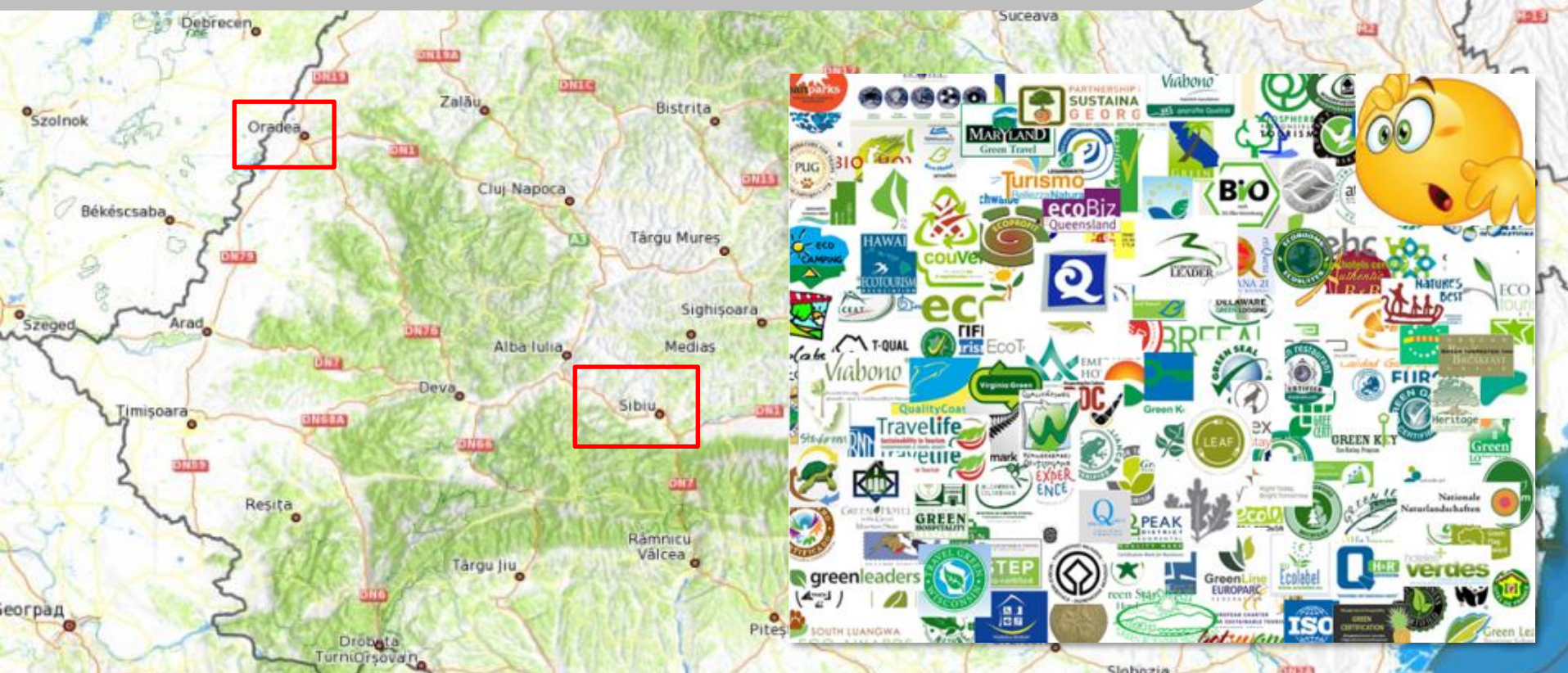
- **To increase the number of enrolled producers and service providing members with 50%** at the level of the network (7 destinations)
- **To increase the total number of nights spent by tourists with at least 32%** for the whole network,
- **To increase the average length of stay at least up to 2,75 days** for each destination
- **To increase the occupancy rate of the lodgings units to at least 32%** for each destination,
- **To improve the ecotourism offer** in the 7 destinations
- **To strengthen the ecotourism network** that includes the 7 destinations
- **To strengthen Romania's image as an ecotourism destination**

DMO development



- Tourism monitoring system for real data;
- Resource optimization;
- Sustainable development: lower seasonality, higher occupancy rate and longer length of staying.

Sustainable Tourism Actions in Romania



- 2 large tourism destinations: Sibiu and Oradea;
- Identification of certification systems for hotels and destinations on sustainable tourism at European level;
- Performing the self-check for 10 hotels and 2 destinations.

Funders



PROGRAMUL DE COOPERARE ELVEȚIANO-ROMÂN
SWISS-ROMANIAN COOPERATION PROGRAMME



Thank you for your attention!



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