

The Tourism Development Joint Strategy for the Silistra - Călărași Cross-border Region

May 2021

Table of contents

Introduction

Part I – The Silistra-Călărași cross-border region

Chapter 1. International tourism and the current strategic context

Chapter 2. Overview of the region

2.1. Călărași County, Romania

2.1.1. Background

2.1.2. Natural setting

2.1.3. Demography

2.1.4. Transport

2.1.5. The economic activity

2.1.6. Tourism

2.2. Silistra District, Bulgaria

2.2.1. Background

2.2.2. Natural setting

2.2.3. Demography

2.2.4. Transport

2.2.5. The economic activity

2.2.6. Tourism

Chapter 3. The touristic potential of the region

3.1. Natural Resources

3.2. Heritages

3.3. Events

3.4. The general legal framework regarding the cultural heritage

Chapter 4. The SWOT analysis

Part II – The Tourism Development Strategy

Chapter 5. Vision and strategic objectives

5.1. The long-term vision

5.2. The context analysis

5.3. Development objectives and axes

5.4. Horizontal axes

- 5.5. Correlation with other strategic objectives
- Chapter 6. Target groups and communication channels
- Chapter 7. Key policy and ongoing programs
 - 7.1. The Silistra-Călărași touristic brand
 - 7.1.1. Target audiences
 - 7.1.2. Niches
 - 7.1.3. Brand strategy
 - 7.2. Touristic Destination Management Organization
 - 7.3. Program activities
 - 7.3.1. Information and promotion
 - 7.3.2. Touristic production
 - 7.3.3. Proposed events
 - 7.3.4. The infrastructure development
- Chapter 8. Implementation measures
- Chapter 9. Control methods and good practices
 - 9.1. Ways to control and update
 - 9.2. Good practice recommendations
- Chapter 10. Principles of responsible tourism and productive hospitality

Introduction

Over the last six decades, tourism has experienced an amazing expansion and diversification, becoming, globally, one of the fastest economic growing sectors. Despite the occasional shocks, over time, the tourism industry had seen an actual uninterrupted growth.

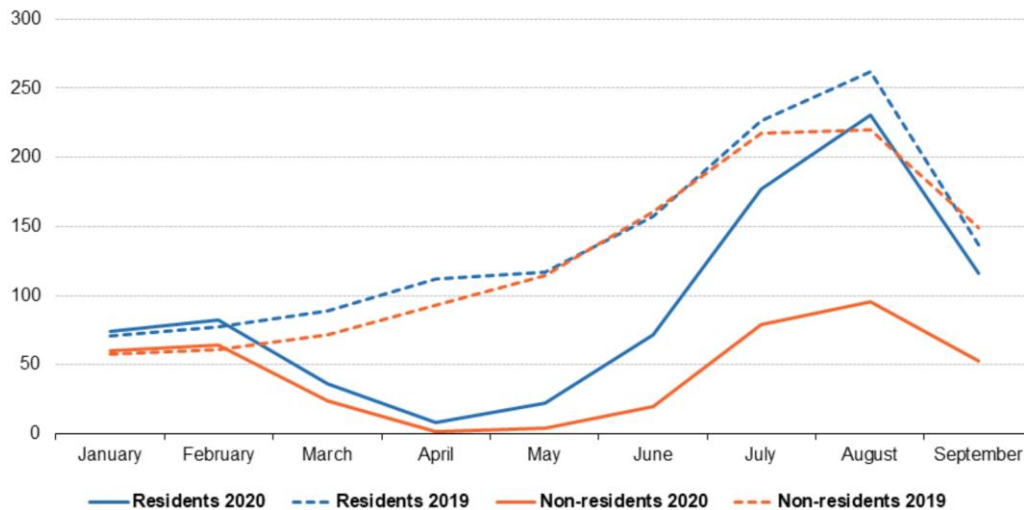
Thus, in 1950, worldwide, there were only 25 million arrivals of international tourists. This number increased to 166 million in 1970 and to over 436 million tourists in 1990 (UNWTO, 2009). And the number of international tourist arrivals has continued to grow steadily over the past three decades, surpassing one billion in 2012 and reaching 1.138 billion international arrivals in 2014, with a growth of 4.7% from the previous year (UNWTO, 2015). According to the UNWTO, long-term forecasts by 2030 for the number of international tourist arrivals were up 3.3% on average annually. This meant that by 2030, the number of international tourist arrivals was to approach 2 billion.

The extraordinary resources and forces that fueled the tourist explosion still exist. The problem is how they will be accessed from now on. Despite the uncertainty created by the pandemic, we must continue to approach tourism as a center of interest in the search for sustainability and as a priority area in policy development at local and regional level, which also applies to the cross-border region Silistra-Călărași.

The European Parliament debated and voted in March 2021 a resolution of the Committee on Transport (TRAN) urging EU countries to include the tourism and travel sector in their recovery plans following the COVID-19 pandemic and to consider the temporary reduction of VAT for these services.

The year 2020 turned upside down any calculations regarding the evolution of tourism activities, but more importantly, the paradigm in which tourism has evolved from the advent of the Internet to the present is changing. It is becoming clearer than ever that any community needs to self-evaluate more rigorously and carefully in order to continue to increase its overall well-being and quality of life. Tourism must be thought of in other terms than before.

The year of the pandemic registered a significant decrease in the figures in the tourism / hospitality area. Even with this decrease, the most plausible scenario in the immediate and medium future shows that Romanian and Bulgarian citizens will choose domestic destinations in an important proportion, forced somehow by the circumstances that have transformed the way people move and consume the touristic product. This situation, although really difficult, also has a number of advantages, which are worth exploring and exploiting. On the one hand, a constant demand can lead to long-term loyalty. On the other hand, the period is a good time to think and activate new development leverages through and for tourism.



Graph 1: Evolution of the number of nights spent in classified accommodation structures (residents and non-residents), in January-September 2019 vs similar period of 2020. We notice the difference between the two years and how the segment of residents seems to recover a lot faster than that of non-residents. Source: Eurostat.

The year 2021 comes with new challenges for Europe, which are highly topical for the world economy and with a very ambitious long-term goal: the transition to a net zero carbon economy. We want a resilient, more social and inclusive Europe. These are the desideratum from which the Cross-Border Cooperation Program for 2021-2027- INTERREG VI-A Romania - Bulgaria starts. Under these auspices and in this perspective, it was necessary to think and build with the strongest operational components for the border area north and south of the Danube, between Romania and Bulgaria, which address missing aspects and whom the development of tourism in the area needed for many years.

The present strategy for the space of the Silistra-Călărași region in the extended cross-border region of the Danube aims to address these aspects. The INTERREG V-A Romania - Bulgaria program generously offered a scope to actors and stakeholders in the analysis of the needs and development potential of the area and proposed a series of solutions.

The strategy presented below is based on the principles of responsible tourism, which focus on the community and the benefits for the inhabitants. This is the new paradigm: any community is attractive. The problem is how the community gets to be known by those outside it, by potential customers / tourists / visitors, and this is where the idea of tourism starts. A tourism that has in the center and that does not alter the community and the identity, but contributes to their development.

We further offer you a modern touristic vision, in full accordance with the current and forward-looking European policy objectives, encompassing a Europe that is more connected and closer to its citizens.

Part I – The Silistra-Călărași cross-border region

Chapter 1. Tourism and the current strategic context

1.1 The role of tourism in development

Sustainable development involves, at the local level, the simultaneous achievement of three objectives: increasing local socio-economic well-being, an equitable distribution of local wealth and increased integrity of local ecosystems. Tourism is one of the many external forces influencing the direction and options for local development and remains one of the largest and most dynamic industries in the world, with the fastest growth recorded at the beginning of the third millennium, accounting for one in ten jobs in worldwide (313 million people) and generating 10.4% of world GDP¹.

A survey conducted in 2020 by Booking.com finds that tourists are likely to find, in this changed world, ways to travel sustainably within destinations². It showed:

- Modification of transport options for walking, cycling or hiking (52%).
- Expressing the desire to return money for travel to the local community (68%).
- Search for authentic cultural experiences (72%).
- Asking for sustainable travel tips from the travel companies (41%).
- Visiting ecological accommodation (73%).

All over the world, urbanization is an ongoing process, with more and more people moving to cities. According to the United Nations forecasts, by 2050 about 70% of the world's population will live in cities. This change will bring a new set of challenges for the city authorities, with sufficient water supply, sufficient energy, transport services, waste management and infrastructure management in a sustainable way.

The urban tourism has become one of the fastest growing touristic sectors. Tourists are attracted in increasing numbers by the vitality, cultural richness and diversity of cities. Regardless of the reason for visiting - for leisure, business, visits to relatives and friends - tourists indirectly contribute to the economic development of the destination, increasing the number of jobs and reducing poverty. The understanding the consequences of the increasing demand for urban tourism, the pressures on the natural, social and economic environment and associated issues is essential for managing local tourism and ensuring its sustainable development.

Rural areas, on the other hand, are still largely dependent on traditional economic activities (exploitation of natural resources, agriculture, forestry, etc.), which remain the main source of income and employment opportunities. Being vulnerable to climate

¹ D. Tătaru, E.M. Iștoc, L.Sarchizian – "Fundamentele turismului responsabil. Evoluții pentru România", CEIS, Romanian Academy, 2018.

² CREST Report – Center for responsible Tourism, Responsible Travel Cases, September 2020.

instability, rural areas are often dependent on government financial aid. These areas, however, have a diverse and rich cultural heritage and highly attractive natural resources. In particular, cultural and natural values are an important resource for rural tourism. And the generation of responsible touristic activities can lead to the sustainable socio-economic development of rural communities and can contribute, at the same time, to the conservation and perpetuation of cultural heritage.

Both Călărași County and Silistra District include urban centers, but also rural areas. The urban and rural tourism depend on the availability and quality of the natural and cultural heritage of such destinations and the quality of the services offered. **However, the uncontrolled development of tourism, without a destination management, can lead to the degradation of these resources, ultimately eroding even the potential to support tourism.**

Also, the lack of a well-defined public image and the definition of the area brand through elements of real interest for tourists do not help at all to boost tourism, increase the number of visitors and economic development of the region, given that in recent years tourism has proven to be an extremely strong and resilient economic activity, which has made a fundamental contribution to the economic recovery by generating billions of dollars in exports and creating millions of jobs. This has been true for destinations around the world, but especially for Europe, which is struggling even before the health crisis to consolidate a way out of one of the most difficult economic periods in its history - the period of the global financial crisis from 2008-2009. Tourism has also made an important contribution to the economic recovery of most European regions in the past. According to data published by UNTWO, Europe has accounted for more than half of total tourist arrivals worldwide over many years (attracting, for example, in 2013, 534 million visitors, or 52% of the total).

From a macroeconomic point of view, expenditures made by international visitors are considered as exports to the country of destination and imports into the country of residence of the visitors. For many countries, domestic tourism is thus a vital source of income in foreign currency, employment opportunities and development opportunities. This is how things should be viewed at the level of a county or district.

Of course, tourism also generates export earnings through international passenger transport services provided to non-residents. International tourism (including touristic services and passenger transport) accounts for 30% of world exports of services and 6% of total exports of goods and services. As a global export category, tourism ranks fourth, after fuels, chemicals and food.

In some parts of the world, tourism has been a real boom. But, as we know, each boom is a two-sided coin that comes with its rewards, but also with tailor-made challenges. In order to prevent difficulties and create benefits in the touristic development of the region we are analyzing, we propose the following approaches.

1.2 Strategic context

One of the main objectives of the Romanian Government is the transition from the current economic model based on increasing consumption, without ensuring the investments necessary for the sustainability of public spending, to an economic model that stimulates economic development based on investment and increasing competitiveness and productivity, its priority objective being the reduction of economic imbalances. This aspect also helps the perspectives of the tourist development in all the Romanian areas, so also in the south of the country, on the Danube, with influence in the cross-border region of Călărași, related to the Bulgarian Silistra.

The government program for 2020 has set as its general objective the preparation of the necessary reforms for Romania's entry into a new stage, of the modernization in the European spirit of the public institutions and services.

"Among the essential objectives is to rebuild citizens' trust in public institutions, modernize public administration and put civil servants at the service of citizens based on values such as: transparency, integrity, fairness, professionalism and efficiency."

Excerpt from the document "Priorities for economic and social development of Călărași County in 2020"

Under the impact of these objectives, the activity of the town halls from Călărași County was developed, following that the above values will be shared by other institutional structures, in all administrative-territorial units (ATU).

In Bulgaria, the specialization of touristic regions was based on a pre-established methodology. For each region, a basic specialization was defined - a combination of two types of tourism, which determines the unique features of the regions; and an extensive specialization, which repeats the first two types and complements them with up to four types of tourism. There is an example ranking of tourism types according to their importance for the region. The "Danube" touristic region (one of the nine regions in the country, according to the Concept for Tourist District Partitioning of Bulgaria, 2015, Ministry of Tourism) includes the basic specialization: cultural tourism and cruise tourism, and the extended one, ordered according to the importance of the elements, contains: cultural and historical tourism, river cruise tourism, adventure tourism, ecotourism, urban tourism for leisure and shopping, wine-growing and culinary tourism, religious tourism and pilgrimage.

According to the "Sustainable Development Strategy of Călărași County for the period 2021 - 2027"³, the priority "Development of the cross-border cooperation environment" registered a degree of implementation of 100% for the period 2014-2020, which shows the increased interest of the dedicated structures in the two countries, Romania and Bulgaria, for advancing the development of the Danube cross-border region. The priority "Protection and improvement of biodiversity and the environment by promoting an efficient use of resources" registered a degree of implementation of 50%, and

³ The Sustainable Development Strategy of Călărași County for the period 2021 - 2027, Călărași County Council, Sept. 2020.

the one referring to “Development of cultural, touristic and sports infrastructure, as an impetus to redefine the identity of the citizen of Călărași” - the only one with direct reference to the evolution of tourism - registered a degree of implementation of only 23.73% at the level of local authorities.

However, in recent years, the Danube region has come to the attention of stakeholders in the tourism development of the area, initiating many projects supported by the European Union.

The promotion of the cross-border region Silistra - Călărași as a touristic destination with valuable natural and cultural heritage was targeted by projects, both on the cultural-social side and on the environmental-sports side, such as: *HERCULT (ROBG - 491) Development of common touristic products and rehabilitation of cultural heritage; Cultural Bridge (ROBG-271) Tutrakan - Călărași, an innovative cultural bridge for sustainable regional development; E-bike Net (ROBG-1) Development of the electric bicycle network; EasyGuide (ROBG-29) Interactive mobile application for promoting the historical and cultural heritage of the Călărași and Silistra region; Young volunteer (ROBG 296) etc.*

“Joint Strategy on the Development, Enhancement and Innovation of a Touristic Product” within the project “Development and promotion of a common natural heritage tourism product: the route «Protected natural heritage within the Romania-Bulgaria cross-border area»”, 15.2.1.068. is one of the steps taken, since 2017, in the touristic development of the entire Romania-Bulgaria cross-border region. The UNESCO Convention on the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage⁴ and the Convention on Biological Diversity⁵ are framework documents that guide and support global efforts for the development of different regions.

Through the UNESCO Convention on the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage, the signatory members recognize the responsibility of the State to identify, protect, preserve, present and transmit to future generations the cultural and natural heritage of the territory of their State. Each member assumes a number of obligations:

- To adopt a general policy that gives functionality to the cultural and natural heritage in the lives of the communities and to integrate the protection of that heritage in comprehensive planning programs;
- To establish in its territory services for the protection, preservation and presentation of the cultural and natural heritage, where it does not already exist, and which should have trained staff who have at their disposal all the means by which to exercise their functions;
- To develop scientific, technical and research studies, so that the implementation methods offer the possibility for the state to counteract the dangers and threats to which the natural and cultural heritage is subjected;
- To take the necessary legal, scientific, technical, administrative and financial measures for the identification, protection, preservation, presentation and rehabilitation of the heritage;

⁴ <http://whc.unesco.org>

⁵ www.cbd.int

- To support the establishment or development of national or regional training centers on the protection, preservation and presentation of the natural and cultural heritage, in order to encourage scientific research in this field.

Under the new European tourism policy, "Europe, the world's favorite touristic destination - a new policy framework for European tourism", four priorities for action were identified:

1. Stimulating competitiveness in the European tourism sector;
2. Promoting the development of sustainable, responsible and high quality tourism;
3. Strengthening Europe's image as a collection of sustainable, high-quality destinations;
4. Maximizing the potential of the European Union's financial policies for tourism development.

The first priority (1) aims at: promoting a diversification of the touristic offer; development of innovation in the tourism industry; improving professional skills; encouraging the extension of the touristic season; strengthening the socio-economic knowledge base on tourism.

The second priority (2) aims at: developing a system of indicators for sustainable destination management, organizing awareness campaigns for tourists regarding the choice of touristic destinations, means of transport, etc., developing a European brand to increase confidence of the consumers in the touristic product, facilitating the identification of climate change risks to avoid unprofitable investments and developing alternative touristic offers, creating a sustainable tourism charter, proposing a strategy for sustainable coastal and maritime tourism, strengthening cooperation between the European Union and the major countries emerging countries and countries in the Mediterranean area.

Priority three (3) includes: creating a "Europe brand" to complete promotion at national and international level, promoting the "visisteurope.com" portal, supporting joint promotion for international events, strengthening the European Union's participation in international fora. Priorities 2 and 3 are also the basis of the strategy we refer to in this paper.

From the multitude of regional strategies related to the Danube and the adjacent areas, a series of ideas can be formulated that will be integrated in this strategy.

- **Responsible tourism** is constantly mentioned as a hub for development and attracting visitors. It also strengthens the validity of the concept for this strategy, the specificity of the cross-border region around the Danube generating such an opportunity. On top of that, the branding policy will prove to be a key to success in this area of Europe as well.

- **The solidity of cultural values** in the region is a basis for tourism development, along with the spiritual richness of rural areas around the Danube.

- The valences of a **sustainable rural tourism** in the whole area of Silistra - Călărași were identified.

- **The Danube Region** is an important European touristic destination and the development and further consolidation of the Danube brand along the river is envisaged;

- **Promoting innovative forms of tourism and culture** by small and medium enterprises and public-private partnerships;
- **Development of sustainable forms of tourism**, including ecological touristic products ("green") and solutions for sustainable mobility in the Danube region;
- **Promoting skilled labor**, education and skills development in tourism and culture in order to ensure sustainable jobs in the region;
- **Creating a "Blue Book"** on the cultural identity of the Danube;
- **Ensuring sustainable preservation** and modern interpretation of cultural heritage and natural values.

The idea of sustainability in approach and the "Blue Book of the Danube" for a cultural identity of the cross-border region is harmonized and meets the strategy of this paper. Also, Romania's 20-year development strategy, between 2016 and 2035, includes among its interdisciplinary projects the "European Danube Project / National Danube Strategy".

Other strategic documents whose content supports the objectives of this strategy are listed below:

- European Union Strategy on the Danube Region (SUERD);
- Sustainable touristic development strategy for tourism in Bulgaria for 2014-2030;
- Action Plan 2017-2020 related to the Updated Strategy for Sustainable Touristic Development of Tourism in Bulgaria for 2014-2030;
- The concept for the division of tourism into regions of Bulgaria;
- Assessment Criteria for National Tourism Development Strategies - Romania;
- Romania National Tourism Master Plan for 2007 - 2026;
- Common strategy for sustainable territorial development of the cross-border area Romania-Bulgaria (through international project with the participation of the Business Center for supporting small and medium enterprises - Ruse);
- Strategy for development, improvement and innovation of a common cultural-historical touristic product - Route "Romanian border on the territory of the cross-border region Romania-Bulgaria" (a document of the Association of Danube Municipalities "Danube" and the Chamber of Commerce, Industry, Navigation and Agriculture Constanta);
- Integrated marketing strategy and promotion of a common cultural-historical touristic product: Route "Romanian border on the territory of the cross-border region Romania-Bulgaria" (a project of the Association of Danube Municipalities "Danube" and the Chamber of Commerce, Industry, Navigation and Agriculture Constanta)
- Transdanube.Pearls - Network for Sustainable Mobility along the Danube. Sustainable regional tourism and mobility plan of Ruse Region (through the project "Transdanube.perle" with the Bulgarian partner the "Sustainable development of civil society" Club);
- Common policy for the preservation, development and use of the heritage of fishing communities (through the "Memofish" project of the CCIBR with partners NGO "Paralel" Silistra, Ruse Regional Museum of History - author of the document, Călărași Access Association, Călărași FLAG);
- Culture is important - cross - border cooperation for cultural heritage management (through the "Memofish" project of CCIBR with partners NGO "Paralel" Silistra, Ruse Regional Museum of History - author of the document, Călărași Access Association, FLAG).

The promotion of the cross-border region Silistra - Călărași as a touristic and cultural destination by rehabilitating heritage buildings and developing touristic products are part of the objectives of the project *Development of common touristic products and rehabilitation of cultural heritage - HERCULT (ROBG - 491)*, whose beneficiaries are ATU Călărași County and the Municipality of Silistra and which is ongoing from 2018 until the end of 2021. In addition to defining the touristic route "Cultural heritage of old buildings in Silistra-Călărași", the project aims to rehabilitate the Art Gallery building owned by the municipality of Silistra and rehabilitate the old building, known as the "Demetriade House" in Călărași. The project thus aims to create integrated touristic products / services and a strategy to enhance the cultural and natural heritage of the region.

This strategy - for the development of tourism in this region - comes to create the environment and the bases to highlight the qualities of the area, of the communities living here and their specificity, to structure the way stakeholders work to attract tourists and retain the harmony of places at the same time.

Chapter 2. Overview of the region

The Silistra - Călărași cross-border area presents itself as a homogeneous territory from the point of view of the natural environment, and the similarities between the two counties go further. Călărași and Silistra have been on the same side of the border many times throughout history. With the free movement today, the ATU Călărași County and the Municipality of Silistra have several common elements, the only major differentiator being the language. Elements of architecture, way of life, traditions and culture are found in a range of identities.

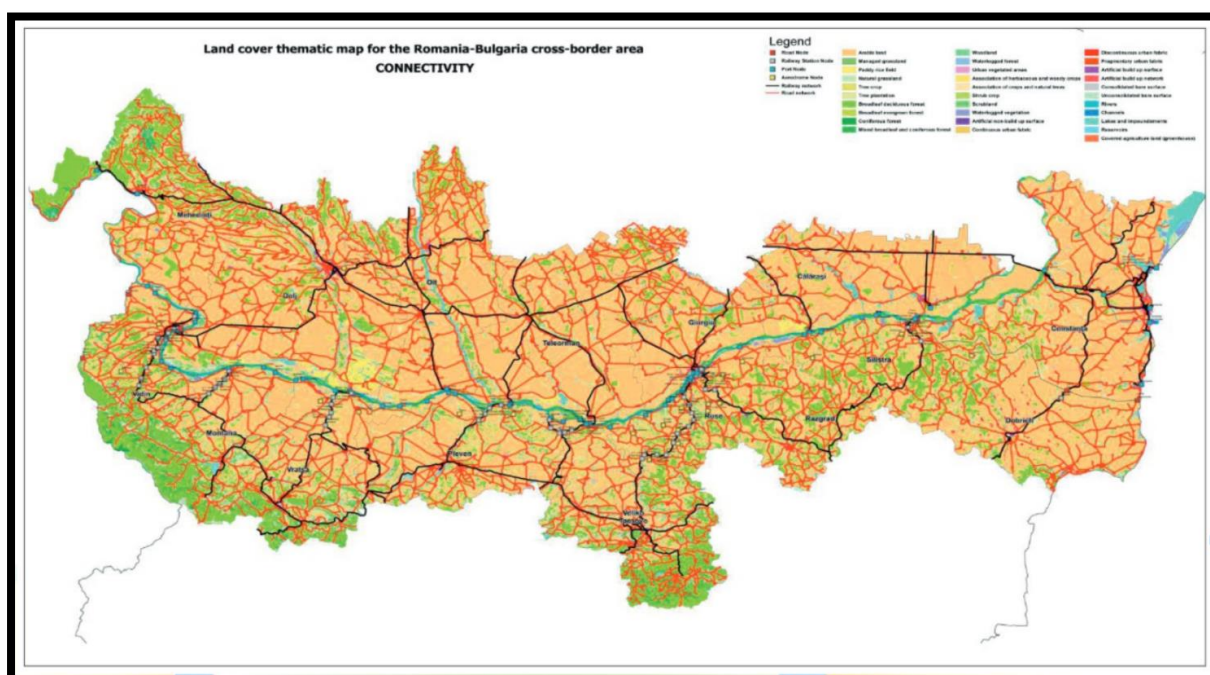


Figure 1. The Danube area that includes the Călărași-Silistra region

Source: "Joint Strategy for Sustainable Territorial Development of the Romania-Bulgaria cross-border area"

We will present the characteristics of each of the two areas, in order to discover the personality of each territory and the elements from which we can start in structuring a common, beneficial tourism development strategy.

2.1. Călărași County

Geographical location. Călărași County is located in the southeastern part of Romania, it is intersected by the parallel 44° 20' north latitude and the meridian of 27° east longitude, occupying part of the Muntenia Plain, on the middle course of the Danube River and the Borcea Branch, at the border with Bulgaria. It borders Ialomița County to the north, Constanța County to the east and southeast, Bulgaria to the south, respectively the Silistra region, and Giurgiu and Ilfov counties to the west. The geographical position offers the county a special competitive advantage, by belonging to the cross-border region with Bulgaria, but also to the convergence area of two development corridors: Bucharest - Constanta Corridor - part of the pan-European corridor 4, allowing Romania to connect with

Central European communications and the Danube Corridor 7 - which interconnects the 14 countries along the river, thus creating the premises for the development of a new region, symbolically called the "Danube Region"⁶. The surface of the county, of 5088 km², represents 2.1% of the Romanian territory, Călărași County occupying the 28th place in size among the counties of the country.



Figure 2. Călărași County

From the point of view of **the administrative organization of the territory**⁷, Călărași County includes:

- 2 municipalities: Călărași - the county seat and Oltenița;
- 3 cities: Budești, Fundulea; Lețliu Gară;
- 50 communes and 160 villages⁸.

The county seat of Călărași county is the municipality of Călărași which, on July 1, 2017, had a population, by domicile, of 76918 inhabitants. Călărași municipality has the strongest polarization effect, concentrating 23.34% of the county's population.

2.1.1 Background⁹

The current territory of Călărași County has known all the stages of the historical development of the Romanian people. Archaeological discoveries prove the existence of human society in the Călărași area since the early Neolithic. Along the Danube, Borcea, Argeș and Mostiștei Valley, the Boian and Gumelnița cultures flourished - native cultures - some of the most expressive Neolithic cultures in south-eastern Europe. Archaeological research has brought to light evidence of the main occupations of the inhabitants of these lands, such as the "clay civilization".

⁶ The Development Plan for Călărași County for 2014-2020, Călărași County Council.

⁷ Info: 31.12.2016.

⁸ https://calarasi.nsise.ro/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/org_adm_a_terit_jud_cl_31_dec.pdf

⁹ <https://calarasi.nsise.ro/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/Repere-istorice-in-Judetul-Calarasi.pdf>

At the beginning of the metal age, the local population goes through a process of assimilation of the eastern steppe populations. The first Bronze Age marks the establishment of the Getic population on the current territory of the county. Thus were born the cultures Glina - in the early bronze, Tei - in the middle bronze and Coslogeni - in the late bronze. Regarding the Iron Age, the discoveries in the Mostiștei valley attest to the presence of early Hallstatt populations. Archaeological evidence from the second Iron Age (Lattene) demonstrates the development of the Geto-Dacian civilization, and the population of these lands also entered into commercial relations with the Greek colonies at Pontus Euxinus. The appearance, at the end of the 1st century BC and the beginning of the 1st century AD, of the Romans, on the Lower Danube, represented a very important moment for the history of these lands. The connections between the Dacians and the Romans are, in this area, older than for the rest of Dacia¹⁰. The establishment of the Roman authorities in the Balkan Peninsula put the Dacians, inhabitants of Bărăgan, in direct contact with the Roman civilization. Along the Danube, Roman rule, re-established during the reign of Constantine the Great, lasted until the 6th century. Between 324 and 328, in front of the Transmarisca fortress (Turtucaia), Constantine the Great built a fortress with a military role, called "Constantiana Daphne", whose location oscillates around the city of Oltenita.

During the period of early feudalism, a demographic concentration is observed in the region of the Lower Danube and the space of Călărași County. Discoveries dating from the 9th to 11th centuries prove the existence of a peaceful population engaged in agriculture and animal husbandry. The numismatic discoveries have confirmed that, during the 10th and 12th centuries, there was a significant Romanian settlement in Călărași County, in permanent contact with the Byzantine Empire, through the fortress-city on the island of Păcuiul lui Soare. This community, through its trade relations, contributed to the development of the eastern market of the country.

Located in the south-eastern extremity of Wallachia, the territory of the county was involved from an early age in the political and military events of the country. During the reign of Michael the Brave, the inhabitants of these lands were involved in the anti-Ottoman struggle of the winter of 1594-1595, attacking the Turkish fortresses in Dobrogea and the Balkans. During the reign of Mihnea III, in 1669, another moment of revolt against the Turks took place in the cities and scaffolds on the Danube. In retaliation, the Turks attacked and looted the Romanian towns north of the Danube. The flourishing city was burned to the ground as far as Cornățel. In the 18th century, the Russo-Turkish wars of 1768-1774 and the Russo-Austro-Turkish wars of 1788-1891 took place, for the most part, on the current territory of the county. Strong battles took place within the village of Ulmu, in 1791, as a result of which the Turks were defeated and driven across the Danube. Also, the Russo-Turkish war of 1806-1812 caused great damage to this area, but the Turks were defeated successively, at Ulmu (in 1806) and Obilești (in 1807)¹¹.

From the analysis of the documents of the time, it can be concluded that the main occupations of the inhabitants were agriculture and animal husbandry. It was cultivated mainly wheat, millet and barley and corn, starting with the end of the 18th century. The cattle farming was an occupation closely linked to agricultural production, in which sheep

¹⁰ <https://calarasi.nsise.ro/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/Repere-istorice-in-Judetul-Calarasi.pdf>

¹¹ Ibidem 5.

farming was at the forefront. Fishing was another basic occupation. An important factor that has contributed to the development of economic life in this area of the country is crafts and trade. Medieval documents mention the presence in the villages of Călărași of craftsmen such as: tanners, millers, carpenters, drapers or blacksmiths.

The Middle Ages in Călărași was characterized by the presence of important settlements, for which the rulers of the time took measures of development and strengthening. Among the 60 such settlements, quoted by I. Donat in his work "Human settlements in Wallachia in the 14th-16th centuries", we mention several fortified villages: Coconi, Căscioarele, Cornățel, Lichirești, Gurguiști, Spanțov, Chiselet, Ciocănești and Pietroiu. The intensification of the exchange of goods made that, starting with the 16th century, real centers of exchange of agricultural and handicraft products appeared at crossroads, initially in the form of villages, then transformed into fairs and, later, in the cities of Oltenita and Călărași. Thus, in 1515, Oltenița is documented and, on June 1, 1541, Călărașii (under the name of "Crăciani"). Since the end of the 14th century, near the confluence of the Mostiște into the Danube, the medieval town of Cornățel (today's Monastery) developed. As a border settlement, Lichirești hosted, at the end of the 17th century, a unit of horseback couriers of Constantin Brâncoveanu, with the role of guard and transmission of correspondence to Istanbul. Their presence contributed to the change of the name of the locality, the new name being inserted in the Austrian map from 1790: "Călărași vel Lichirești". In the 19th century, the settlement experienced an increasingly rapid development, due to the scaffolding on Borcea and the regular fairs organized here. This fact led to the relocation of the Ialomița county seat from Urziceni to Călărași and the transformation of the latter into a city, in 1833.

Regarding **the municipality of Călărași**, the historical evolution of the city can be defined by several significant aspects¹²:

- The first traces of a human settlement on the site of the current municipality of Călărași date from the Neolithic (more precisely Eneolithic, 5000 - 3800/3700 BC), as evidenced by the archaeological discoveries specific to the cultures of Hamangia, Boian and Gumelnița.

- The old name of the municipality of Călărași - Lichirești - dates from the beginning of the first settlement of permanent inhabitants, and the origin of the name is closely related to the erection here of the first church, dedicated to St. Nicholas of Mira Lichia (Tudor, 2008, p.22). Thus, the inhabitants will abbreviate the name of the place of worship by calling it "Lichia", while they will become "Lichirești".

- The first documentary attestation of the Lichirești settlement dates from 1630. Through a deed given by the ruler Leon Vodă, we find out that the Lichirești estate belonged to a certain Vlad Rudeanu, logothete of Wallachia. Although historians believe that a village with this name has existed since the time of Michael the Brave (Tudor, 2008, p.21), no document has been found that can prove this. In 1722, the first document was issued mentioning Lichirești as the property of the Colțea hospital, following its donation by the new owner, deputy Mihai Cantacuzino.

- The locality of Lichirești appears mentioned, for the first time, on a map in 1700, in the cartographic work of the stolnic Constantin Cantacuzino, printed in Padua, in Italy. Two

¹² <http://www.historia.ro>, Cătălin Ion, *10 lucruri de știut despre istoria municipiului Călărași*.

other maps, that of Anton del Chiaro, from 1718 and that drawn up by Barbie de Bocage, around 1783, mention the settlement at the bend of Borcea also under the name of "Lichirești". Instead, in the Austrian map from 1791, the locality appears recorded under the name of "Călărași vel Lichirești".

- The current name of the city begins to prevail with the year 1722, when, in Lichirești, the horseback couriers are settled. These were used by the lord of Wallachia for the purpose of transporting correspondence between Bucharest and Constantinople. The establishment of the horsemen on this estate and the more and more frequent use of their name had as a consequence the imposition of the name of Călărași, substituting the one of Lichirești.

- On May 1, 1734, Călărași is mentioned as a fair, which is a sign that the village had taken on proportions and that a more intense commercial life had begun to develop on these lands. Various foreign travelers, on their way to Silistra or Constantinople, left a series of testimonies about Călărași. For Lady Craven, Călărași is described as "a beautiful village", while Count Alexandru de Hauterive observes with interest "children playing with the kite" (Tudor, 2008, p.28).

- The current area of Călărași was often the scene of wars fought against the Turkish danger, to defend the Danube meadow. Many battles were fought, from the founding of the locality until the beginning of the 19th century. The people of Călărași lived moments of horror in 1821, with the start of the revolution led by Tudor Vladimirescu, their troubles ending only a year after the end of the revolution. Another moment of panic for the inhabitants was the Russo-Turkish war of 1828-1829. As if the losses caused by the war were not enough, in the years 1828-1830 in Călărași a terrible plague epidemic broke out, followed in the summer of 1831 by cholera.

- On November 1, 1833, on the occasion of the entry into operation of the first Commission of the city of Călărași, the first budget of 8000 lei was adopted, proposed for the modernization of the central street of the city and for the construction of a school. A significant number of private houses were built, as well as several public buildings, and the cathedral severely affected by the earthquake of 1829 was repaired. In 1852, 24 streetlamps were lit during the night, for which the Commission had to pay 1260 lei.

- The inhabitants of Călărași often expressed their desire to free themselves, so that the city would no longer be the property of the hospital to which the original Lichirești estate had been donated (later the orphanage of Călărași), to get out from under the "possession" of Colțea hospital. In this sense, they addressed the ruler Barbu Știrbei, who replied to the report in November 1849, admitting that the city will experience enormous development if it is "free". Thus, on July 28, 1851, the ruler of Wallachia came personally to Călărași and, impressed by the progress of the city and the situation of the inhabitants, decided to pay the sum of 250,000 lei for its "redemption". As a result, on September 24, 1852, the city of Călărași became a "free" city.

- The political life of the city of Călărași was, as in the whole country, extremely hectic and full of events. In this sense, an article from the local newspaper "Pământul", from December 11, 1933, testifies: "I ask myself and ask yourself: why is Duca better than Argetoianu? Vaida than Iorga? Brătianu than Lupu? Junian than Goga? Cuza than Averescu? Filipescu than Codreanu? Strength than... and the chaos in your head grows, widens, lengthens"(Tudor, 2008, p.126). Thus, for the general elections of March 1922, in Călărași, the lists of parties such as: the National Liberal Party, the Peasant Party, the People's Party, the Conservative Party and the Social Democratic Party submitted lists.

- In 1950, after the national administrative reorganization, Călărași received the status of district city, residence of the Ialomița region and of the Călărași district, within this region. In 1952, the region was disbanded and Călărași district (still residing in Călărași) was transferred to the Bucharest region. The city received the status of regional city in 1964. Subsequently, the commune of Mircea-Vodă was abolished and the village of Mircea Vodă passed to the urban commune of Călărași.

- In 1968, at the new administrative reorganization, Călărași received the status of municipality and returned to Ialomița County, re-established. Although it was the only municipality in the county, Călărași was no longer a county seat, as this was moved to the city of Slobozia. At the same time, the villages of Mircea-Vodă and Măgureni were abolished and incorporated in the locality of Călărași¹³. The city regained county seat status in 1981, when Călărași County was established, in the southern half of Ialomița County until then, together with the southeastern part of Ilfov County. The municipality had Modelu commune as a suburban commune between 1968 and 1989, after which this concept was abandoned¹⁴.

2.1.2 Natural setting

Relief. The representative forms for the county territory are the plains, meadows and ponds.

Being predominant, the plain is grouped in four units: Bărăganului Mostiștei Plain (Southern Bărăgan), Vlăsiei Plain, Burnasului Plain and Danube Meadow. To them are added meadows and ponds (Borcea Pond, Argeș, Mostiștei and Danube valleys). Being located in the southeastern part of the Romanian Plain, the relief of Călărași County is predominantly a relief of plain and meadow, the only irregularities being the settlement valleys, the so-called "crovuri", as well as the mounds, which could be rather the result of the human intervention. From the point of view of the large relief units, we distinguish¹⁵:

- The southern Bărăgan plain, between the Ialomița Valley, Mostiștea and the Danube, with the Borcea branch;
- Mostiștea Plain, between Argeș and Valea Mostiștea;
- the Danube meadow, from Căscioarele to Călărași,
- Borcea Pond, starting from Călărași and up to the Fetești-Cernavodă railway.

The surfaces between the main watercourses - the fields - are well individualized areas, characterized by flat surfaces, compared to the meadow and pond areas, the newest forms of relief resulting from the alluvial deposits of Argeș, Danube and Borcea, which do not exceed 5-10 m height compared to the sea level. Borcea Pond has numerous branches, with high ridges on the edges, which close large central depressions, divided into smaller basins. The cenotes and transversal valleys resulting from the settlement of the loess are also numerous, among the well-known being: Furciturilor Valley, Baba Ana Valley, Argovei Valley and Luica Valley. The favorable soil and relief conditions explain the predominant cereal character of the region.

¹³ ro.wikipedia.org

¹⁴ Law 2/1989, LegeOnline.ro

¹⁵ Călărași Regional statistical Directorate

In the case of Călărași County, in the category of protected areas of international interest, such as Ramsar Sites, there are: Danube Islands - Bugeac - Iortmac, a site of 82,832 ha (which also covers part of Constanța County); Borcea Branch, site of 21,529 ha (which also covers part of Ialomița County) and Iezerul Călărași, site of 5,001 ha.

The hydrographic network consists of two hydrographic basins, the Danube and Argeș basins and a sub-basin, that of Mostiște.

The Danube River, which delimits the county's territory in the south and southeast, from km 300 (Cernavodă) to km 450 (Gostinu), divides into two arms: Borcea on the left and Dunărea Veche on the right, which close between them Ialomița Pond, respectively the Great Island of Ialomita. The waters of the Danube, Borcea, Argeș and Mostiștei, with the lakes they form, occupy a significant area of over 28 thousand ha, ranking the county on the 4th place at national level, an aspect that favors the development of fishing activities. The Argeș River crosses the southwestern part of the county, on a length of 37 km, flowing into the Danube west of the municipality of Oltenița, after the confluence with Dâmbovița, near the town of Budești. There are also rivers, with plain springs, that furrow the territory of the county: Valea Berza, Furciturii, Cucuveanu, Vânăta, Argova, Călnău, Colceag, Milotina, Rasa, Jegălia, Belciugatele - rivers with permanent water gloss, on which there are arranged small fishing accumulations.

It is worth mentioning some large water accumulations, intended to mitigate floods, irrigation and fish farming, with a permanent water volume of about 580 million cubic meters: Iezer-Mostiștea, Frăsinet, Gălățui, Gurbănești, Fundulea and Măriuța.

Centralized, the hydrographic network at the level of Călărași County includes, on the one hand, main watercourses, with the following lengths: Danube River - 150 km, Borcea Branch - 66 km, Argeș River - 37 km, Dâmbovița River - 28 km. On the other hand, there are significant water resources, such as: Mostiștea Lake - 213 km long, with 5670 ha of water gloss or Gălățui Lake - 610 ha of water gloss, but also undeveloped lakes, fish ponds, etc. covering a water gloss of 3341 ha¹⁶.

Regarding the lakes, in the county there are especially anthropic lakes, represented by ponds, spread mostly on the Mostiștei valley and its tributaries: Rasa, Luica, Zboil, Barza and Pasărea. Among the natural lakes, we must mention, first of all, the river estuaries along the Danube: Mostiștea, Gălățui and Potcoava. The meadow lakes are represented here by Boianu and Ceacu from the Danube meadow, Mitreni from the Argeș meadow and Tătarul from the Dâmbovița meadow.

The flora is specific to the plain and the meadow area of the Danube, developing steppe and forest-steppe in general. The forest-steppe area stretches like a strip of variable widths in the south of the Romanian Plain, covering the western part of Bărăgan and, implicitly, of Călărași County. The expansion of anthropogenic use has caused forest-steppe grasslands to disappear for the most part, as have many of the forests, the remaining ones being heavily transformed, due to grazing in the forest and due to logging. Here you can find species of fluffy oak, bramble oak, hornbeam and Tartar maple.

¹⁶ SGA Călărași and is under the jurisdiction of the NA Romanian waters.

The steppe area is located in the east of the Romanian Plain, occupying the eastern half of Bărăgan and Călărași County. The primary steppe vegetation has been almost completely replaced by agricultural crops, and in the small areas where there is still natural vegetation, it is severely degraded due to overgrazing. In specific local conditions (pronounced excess or deficit of humidity, unfavorable conditions), there is a different vegetation from the one characteristic for the zonal conditions, called cross zonal and azonal vegetation, being represented by psammophilous vegetation (of sands, located in Bărăgan Plain).

The steppe subzone is represented by primary and derived steppe meadows, which occupy quite small areas, especially along railways and roads, as well as on communal outcrops. But even on these surfaces, the species that were once characteristic of Bărăgan have become very rare. Natural meadows can be identified by the presence of the following species: the crested wheat grass (*Agropyrum cristatum*), the woodland sage (*Salvia nemorosa*), the snake grass (*Echium vulgare*) and the rough meadow-grass (*Poa trivialis*). *Bromus* and *Setaria* grasses are also common. The forest vegetation is represented by the remains of the former forests that had occupied important areas in Călărași County, through species such as: the Grayish oak (*Quercus pedunculiflora*), the ash (*Fraxinus excelsior*), the manna ash, the European crab apple and the European wild pear.

Through the plantations, the acacia (*Robinia pseudacacia*) was introduced, which represents an important honey base, for which reason it is cultivated more and more in the households of the population, as well as in the parks of the localities. The pond subzone is more geobotanically special, being composed of mesophilic, hygrophilous, halophilic and sandy species. These vegetal associations owe their existence to the local conditions created by the presence of running waters, lakes, ponds and sand dunes along the Danube river valley.

The forests are made up of representative species, such as: the willow (*Salix alba*), the poplar (*Populus alba*) and the ash (*Fraxinus excelsior*). Through their picturesque appearance, they attract to rest and leisure the people from the neighboring localities. Several species of vines and wild vines (*Vitis silvestris*), as well as the sea buckthorn (*Tamarix galica*), developed mainly on sandy and salty soils, grow naturally in poplar and willow beds. Here we also find blackberry and raspberry bushes.

Swamp and aquatic vegetation in lakes and ponds is represented by the lesser pond-sedge (*Carex acutiformis*, *Carex riparia*), the arrowhead (*Sagittaria sagittifolia*), the Eurasian watermilfoil (*Myriophyllum spicatum*) and, more rarely, white (*Nymphaea alba*) and yellow (*Nuphar luteum*) water lilies. Other grassy species also grow in the meadow, such as: the pond fern, the field bindweed, the creeping buttercup, the water mint, the wild celery, etc. In the shallow water at the edge of lakes and ponds there is a species of algae, called the water silk (*Spirogyra*).

The characteristic **fauna** of Călărași County is varied, in accordance with the particularities of the species distribution. Thus, in the open, agriculturally cultivated areas, there are: the European ground squirrel (*Citellus citellus*), the European hamster (*Cricetus cricetus*), the common vole (*Microtus arvalis*), the lesser mole-rat (*Spalax leucodon*), etc., and the forest area is home to a rich vertebrate fauna, including: the roe deer (*Capreolus*

capreolus), the wild boar (*Sus scrofa*), the fox (*Vulpes vulpes*), the vulture (*Meles meles*), the wild cat (*Felis silvestris*), the squirrel (*Sciurus vulgaris*), etc.

The avifauna is varied, being found in deciduous forests: the common blackbird (*Turdus merula*), the chaffinch (*Fringilla coelebs*), the nightingale (*Luscinia megarhynchos*), the hawk (*Accipiter gentilis*), etc. In the Danube meadow, hydro-amelioration works have led to the replacement of natural floodplain forests with poplar plantations in monoculture, which do not provide good nesting conditions for birds. The following species are noteworthy: the gray heron (*Ardeea cinerea*), the little egret (*Egretta garzetta*), the yellow heron (*Ardeola ralloides*), the woodpecker (*Falco tinnunculus*), etc. Characteristic of Bărăgan is the great bustard (*Otis tarda*), very rare and declared a natural monument; also the common quail (*Coturnix coturnix*) and the grey partridge (*Perdix perdix*) - which have a larger distribution area and a larger herd, but also common and purple starlings (summer guests). Among the songbirds, in the steppe live the common redshank (*Tringa totanus*), the European bee-eater (*Merops apiaster*), the European roller (*Coracias garrulus*) and the well-known Bărăgan larks (*Melano sarypha calandra*).

The ichthyofauna is dominated by the characteristic species of the Danube and the lakes in the county: carp (*Cyprinus carpio*), catfish (*Silurus galanis*), caracuda (*Carassius carassius*), barbel (*Barbus barbus*), tench (*Tinca tinca*), bream (*Abramis brama*), Cossack (*Abramis ballerus*), common rudd (*Scardinius erythrophthalmus*), roach (*Rutilus rutilus*), zander (*Stizostedion lucioperca*), pike (*Esox lucius*), Perch (*Perca fluviatilis*), etc.

The fauna of hunting interest is represented by deer, rabbits, wild boars, pheasants, species of predators (foxes, ferrets, bison), as well as numerous species of sedentary birds and birds of prey, which live in the Danube meadow. Through the measures taken by the County Association of Sport Hunters and Fishermen, the hunting herds are constantly growing, especially for deer and wild boars, from which precious trophies were obtained, with gold medals at domestic and international competitions.¹⁷

The **climate** is temperate-continental with a homogeneous regime, due to the uniformity of the plain relief, characterized by very hot summers and very cold winters. In the southern extremity of the county, the specific climate of the Danube Meadow is individualized, with warmer summers and milder winters than the rest of the plain. The average annual temperature is +11.2 degrees C (in July the average temperature oscillates around 23 degrees C, and in January there is an average of -3 degrees C).¹⁸ In 2016, the average annual temperature was 12.7 degrees C, the annual maximum of 37.7 degrees C (on August 1, 2016), and the annual minimum of -19.1 degrees C (on January 25, 2016). The absolute maximum temperature recorded so far in the county was 44.0 degrees C at Argovei Valley (August 10, 1957), and the absolute minimum, -30.0 degrees C, was recorded in Călărași, on January 9, 1938. The specialized calculations show that the county benefits from a high caloric potential, whose value reaches 125 kcal / cm².

Regarding the winds, the area where Călărași is located is under the influence of the northeast (Crivățul), the southeast (Austrul) and the south (Băltărețul) winds. The cold winds accentuate the cold in the winter months, and the dry ones (the Austrian in particular)

¹⁷ The Development Plan for Călărași County for 2014-2020, Călărași County Council.

¹⁸ The National Institute of Meteorology.

intensify the heat and dryness during the summer. Regarding the frequency and intensity of the winds, the meteorological station from Călărași registers a maximum in April (from the west direction) and November (from the north direction). The highest values were recorded in 1957, when the wind speed exceeded 40 m / s.

The continental climate is also highlighted by the annual amounts of precipitation that fall on the territory of the county and in its surroundings. Thus, the average annual amount of precipitation is only 500 mm, due to the influence exerted by the ascending currents that arise on the surfaces of the lakes and the Borcea Branch and due to their moderate temperature throughout the year. Annually, there is a maximum in May-June and a minimum in July-August, when the sky is predominantly clear, which favors heat and drought - both fought on a large scale by irrigation. The snow layer persists less due to the warmings that occur during the winter; on average, the snow begins to melt in early March. The annual number of snow days oscillates around the figure of 30. During the cold season, the snow layer reaches its maximum thickness at the end of January and the beginning of February. Typically, snow layer thicknesses are relatively small. In 2012, for example, the climate regime was characterized by: fairly mild winter, without extreme temperatures, hot summer with normal temperatures from a climatic point of view, with high rainfall compared to the previous year. However, in recent years, when the climate has shown spectacular changes worldwide, atmospheric conditions have determined locally the production of heavy snow and the laying of a particularly thick layer, which exceeded 1.5 meters.

Regarding the precipitations, the average annual quantities amount to 540.2 mm in Oltenița and 503.6 mm in Călărași. Most of the precipitation falls in the warm semester (April 15-October 15), when showers accompanied by electric discharges are very frequent. Due to the uniform relief, specific to the plain area, the predominant winds in Călărași County are those that blow from the north and northeast sector, as well as those from the west and southwest, better known from the first category Crivățul and Austrul, and Băltărețul from two categories.

2.1.3. Demography

Regarding the structure of the population by mother tongue, according to the provisional data resulting from the 2011 Population and Housing Census, in Călărași County, the population with Romanian mother tongue represents 98.2%, the other percentages being of minority ethnic groups, especially Roma and Turks.¹⁹

The confessional structure of the population of Călărași County indicates that 98.8% of the population is Orthodox, the rest belonging to other religious denominations. The average life expectancy is positive, calculated at an interval of 3 years. The population density from the point of view of the territorial distribution shows a decrease compared to the density value at country level: 61.2 inhabitants / km² in Călărași County (2018), compared to 89.9 inhabitants / km² at national level.²⁰ The gender structure of the population is characterized by a slight numerical domination of the female population: 50.91% women compared to 49.09% men (<https://Călărași.nsis.ro/wp->

¹⁹ Călărași Regional statistical Directorate statistical data.

²⁰ Info 2012.

content/uploads/2019/06/ pop_dupa_dom_pe_sexe_si_med_1_iul_jud_cl_2018.htm). The analysis of the population by averages indicated in 2018 a high share of the population in the rural area 59.93% while the urban population in Călărași County was 40.07%.

2.1.4. Transport

The most important elements of the transport infrastructure are represented by the railway network, the road network and the river transport network.

The county is crossed by the A2 Sun Highway, part of the European TEN-T transport network, Pan-European corridor no. IV. Moreover, in the southern part, along the entire length of the county, there is the Danube River, which represents the Pan-European transport Corridor no. VII. Given that the county borders on the west with the capital of Romania, and on the east with Constanța County - the main exit of the country and one of the most developed seaports in the area - are created the premises for the development of the transport networks, all the more as the county borders the Silistra Region of Bulgaria to the south.²¹

Rail transport. The European transport policy focuses on increasing the share of the environment low-impact transport, emphasizing the development of the railway network. At the end of 2018, the total length of the railway lines for public use in operation in Călărași County was 188 km, keeping this value constant today. Of their total, the length of electrified lines was 147 km in 2018. In relation to the area of the county, the railway network for public use in operation had a density of 37 km per 1000 km² of territory, in 2018.²²

Road transport. In 2018, the length of public roads totaled 1346 km, out of which national roads - which include highways and European roads - had reached 501 km, and county and communal roads, 845 km.

The density of public roads per 100 km² of territory has remained approximately around the same gap in the last 15 years. Thus, it was 26.5 km in 2018.

Of the total national roads, the modernized roads covered 598 km in 2018, while the roads with light road coverings marked only 3 km.

Through the National Program for Local Development, seven years ago, ten investment works for the rehabilitation / modernization of public roads had been approved for financing, classified and framed in accordance with the legal provisions in force as county roads, roads of local interest, respectively communal roads and / or public roads inside the localities, in the following communities: Belciugatele, Căscioarele, Chirnogi, Curcani, Dorobanțu, Ulmeni, Chiselet, Ileana, Gălbinași and Jegălia.²³

²¹ The Development Plan for Călărași County for 2014-2020, Călărași County Council.

²² Călărași Regional statistical Directorate; https://calarasi.NSIse.ro/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/liniile_de_cale_ferata_in_expl_jud_cl_2004-2018.pdf

²³ The Development Plan for Călărași County for 2014-2020, Călărași County Council.

The local public passenger transport has not evolved spectacularly in the last 15 years on the territory of the county. Regarding the number of vehicles in the inventory - buses and minibuses, in 1995 there were 91 units, and in 2018 it reached only 15 units. As for the number of passengers transported during a year in buses and minibuses, in 1995 there were 5224 thousand, and in 2018 - 2142 thousand.²⁴ Over time, there has been an overload of transport vehicles. The demand was already too strong (even with a not very developed tourism).

Air transport. There are no civil airports in the county for air cargo and passenger transport, but the largest airport in Romania ("Henri Coandă" airport in Bucharest) is located at a minimum of 60 km and a maximum of 120 km from the cities in the territory. The county will be able to benefit from the advantages offered by the Constanța-Bucharest-Oradea highway plan, part of the pan-European TEN-T 7 transport network.

Shipping. The hydrographic network of the county allows the naval transport on the only existing navigation route in the county - the Danube river. The main European navigation artery, the Danube (TEN-T 18), ensures and facilitates through the river ports Oltenița and Călărași the commercial exchanges with the riparian European countries. The unsatisfactory river port infrastructure and the gradual reduction of their activity are factors that have contributed to the reduction of the use of the existing potential.²⁵

The quality and coverage of transport infrastructure reflects the degree of civilization and the willingness of communities to evolve. Most public roads in the county have had their service life expired in previous years. The transport offer still needs to be improved and adapted to the needs of the communities.

Accessibility. The municipality of Călărași has a privileged position in the south-east of Romania - it is located 120 km from the road infrastructure and 139 km from the railway infrastructure towards Bucharest and 140 km from Constanța (Table 1).

The access to these localities is much improved due to the easy connection to the A2 Sun Highway, through the national road that connects Călărași with Slobozia. The geographical location on the bank of the Borcea Branch offers the municipality of Călărași direct access to the river transport route offered by the Danube. The location of the municipality in the immediate vicinity of the border with Bulgaria and the existence of a transport line by ferry offers Călărași an international opening.

Important cities	Distance in km	Distance in time (minutes)
Fetești	50	55

²⁴ Călărași Regional statistical Directorate – selection carried out by the authors

²⁵ The Development Plan for Călărași County for 2014-2020, Călărași County Council.

Slobozia	47	45
Oltenița	69	65
Silistra	15	30
Bucharest	116	90
Constanța	148	95
Brăila	137	110
Brașov	286	230
Craiova	350	290
Iași	390	340
Cluj Napoca	560	470
Timișoara	675	540
Chișinău	402	350
Varna	156	160

Table 1. Accessibility of Călărași municipality compared to other urban centers

Inside the municipality, the street network is arranged in a rectangular shape and has a longitudinal axis oriented in the west-east direction, following the DN3 Bucharest-Călărași-Constanța road. The north-south axis runs on staggered routes, which affect the

central area: DN 21 - Slobozia street, Republicii street - Eroilor street - DN 3 in the direction of Chiciu-Ostrov-Constanța. The total length of the city streets is 150 km, out of which 123 km are modernized²⁶, which represents 82% of the total. The main access arteries in the municipality are: DN 3 from the direction of Bucharest - Lehliu, DN 3 B from the direction of Fetești and DN 21 from the direction of Slobozia. This last artery crosses the triage railways, their intersection being at the level of the railway. The local heavy transport is arranged on arteries that seek to avoid the central area, the most difficult situation being the penetration of DN 3 from Bucharest, through the Steel Mill and from Chiciu, with outlet in the central area on Eroilor Street, as well as DN 21 to Slobozia and DN 3 B to Fetești.

Heavy, local and transit transport, especially in the north-south direction, negatively affects the central area of the city, disrupting traffic and local urban function. Given the substantial increase in transit traffic between Romania and Bulgaria through the Chiciu point, it is necessary to divert heavy freight transport.

The intersections are generally undeveloped, and the area occupied by parking lots is insufficient, the existing ones being located mainly in the area of apartment buildings and in the central area. Thus, the urban plan stipulates that it is necessary to build parking spaces and space for taxis in crowded areas and re-evaluate public transport routes, to allow access to public transport utilities to residents of all neighborhoods in the city. The precarious technical condition of some public roads in Călărași Municipality made it necessary to consolidate, re-asphalt and modernize them.²⁷

2.1.5. The economic activity

Being a plain county, agriculture is the basic economic activity in Călărași. Relevant for the specifics of the area is the fact that 83% of the total area of the county represents the agricultural area, which places Călărași on the 9th place in the country as an extension of the agricultural area, of which more than 96% - 411 thousand ha (2.9 % of the country's agricultural area) is represented by arable land, which places Călărași County on the 5th place at national level. Vegetable production is mainly oriented towards the cultivation of grain cereals, oil plants and fodder plants.

²⁶ ro.wikipedia.org

²⁷ The Development Plan for Călărași County for 2014-2020, Călărași County Council.

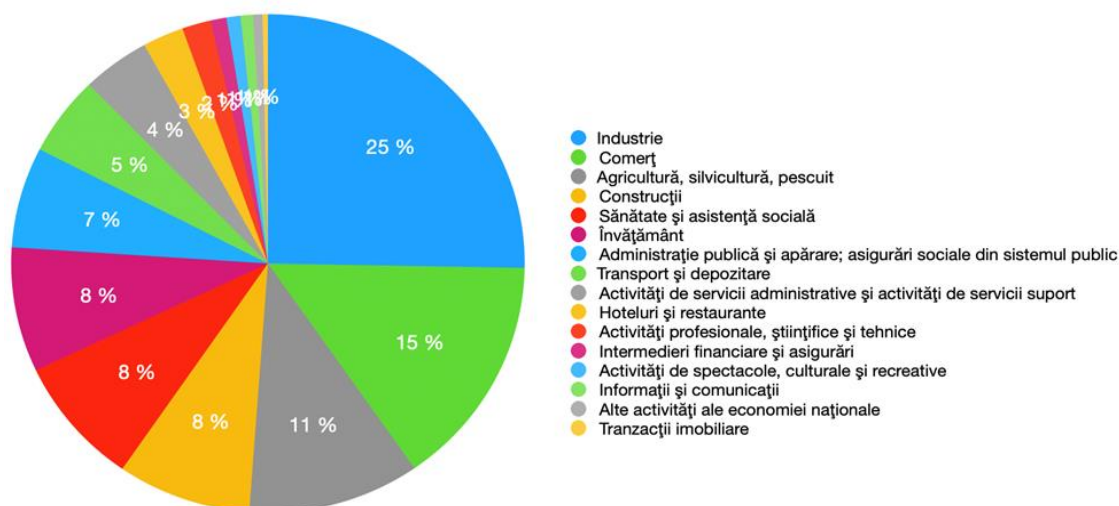


Chart 1: The share of the number of enterprises in the economy of Călărași County (2018). Source: NSISE. We notice that the sector associated with tourism has a share of 3% (10th place out of 16).

However, the indicators “Density of enterprises per 1000 inhabitants” in the territory showed in the county a value lower than 20 in 2011. Although the number of enterprises was almost double in the entire Romanian cross-border territory (437,232 enterprises in 2011) compared to the Bulgarian related territory (286,850 enterprises in 2011), the density of enterprises per 1000 inhabitants registered higher values at the level of the Bulgarian district territories.

The number of enterprises active in the tertiary sector in Călărași County in the period 2008-2018²⁸ registered a slight increase. Thus, in 2008 there were 5021 enterprises, out of which 170 were active in the “Hotels and restaurants” sector, and in 2018 a total of 5157 enterprises were reached, out of which 174 in “Hotels and restaurants” (152 with less than 10 employees, 22 with 10-49 employees).

The average number of employees by activities of the national economy in Călărași County (CAEN REV. 2) in 2018 showed that out of a total number of 42,994 people, 10,878 worked in industry, 3,628 in construction, 1,114 in tourism / hotels and restaurants, 1,841 in administrative and support service activities, and only 378 people in entertainment, cultural and recreational activities.²⁹ Regarding the unemployment rate, in the period 2009-2018 the county registered a decrease from 9.2% in 2009 to 4.2% in 2018.

2.1.6. Tourism

Tourism. The touristic reception structures with tourist accommodation functions counted on July 31, 2018 in Călărași County a total of 29 units, out of which 8 hotels and motels, 1 hostel, 14 tourist villas and bungalows, 3 boarding houses and 3 agrotouristic boarding houses, the same statistics as a year ago.

²⁸ https://calarasi.nsise.ro/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/unit_loc_active_2018_jud_cl.pdf

²⁹ https://calarasi.nsise.ro/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/nr_med_sal_pe_activ_ale_ec_nat_2018_jud_cl.pdf

Anii	Capacitate de cazare		Sosiri (mii)	Înnoptări (mii)	Indicii de utilizare netă a capacității în funcțiune (%)
	Existență ¹⁾ (locuri)	În funcțiune (mii locuri-zile)			
1995	346	118	10	30	25,2
2000	359	138	10	29	21,3
2001	399	150	5	19	12,5
2002	428	142	8	26	18,1
2003	533	177	7	36	20,2
2004	566	198	9	38	19,0
2005	546	196	12	53	27,0
2006	541	199	14	83	41,7
2007	553	199	14	52	26,2
2008	527	188	16	53	28,3
2009	463	171	10	27	15,8
2010	534	192	11	28	14,4
2011	561	191	11	34	17,6
2012	612	202	12	32	15,7
2013	643	223	11	34	15,4
2014	843	278	16	35	12,7
2015	843	283	18	37	13,1
2016	868	289	19	38	13,3
2017	885	299	22	52	17,3
2018	885	279	22	55	19,6

Table 2. Capacity and activity of tourist accommodation, in Călărași County, period 1995 - 2018. Source: NSISE

However, there is no accommodation unit such as: tourist inn; tourist cottage; camping or cottages; tourist stop; holiday village; accommodation on the ship; student and preschool camps.³⁰ In 2014, there were 17 touristic reception units in total, with similar values to the number of hotels, hostels and boarding houses, but then there was still a campsite. From a single tourist villa type unit in 2014, a number of 14 tourist villas and bungalows were immediately reached in the following year, 2015, a number that was kept until 2018.

Tipuri de structuri de primire turistica	Tipuri de turisti	Macroregiuni, regiuni de dezvoltare si judete	Anul 2011	Anul 2012	Anul 2013	Anul 2014	Anul 2015	Anul 2016	Anul 2017	Anul 2018	Anul 2019	Anul 2020
			UM: Numar									
			Numar	Numar	Numar	Numar	Numar	Numar	Numar	Numar	Numar	Numar
Hoteluri	Romani	Calarasi	11132	12766	15659	13864	13879	14539	16733	24002	24241	15435
-	Straini	Calarasi	3094	2336	2391	6478	7648	6994	6540	10618	14373	1439
Hosteluri	Romani	Calarasi	82	65	11	632	58	1808	1861	598	3690	705
-	Straini	Calarasi	362	399	638	711	451	263	248	153	1379	2
Moteluri	Romani	Calarasi	12075	7407	6692	5814	8104	7793	18781	11630	13783	2297
-	Straini	Calarasi	4797	4845	2844	2195	1389	761	1845	2976	1980	165
Bungalouri	Romani	Calarasi	254	352	280	550	3314	3480	3842	3777	4946	3215
-	Straini	Calarasi	12	35	25	63	99	110	235	197	490	61
Casute turistice	Romani	Calarasi	807	1269	2445	1073	:	:	:	:	:	:
-	Straini	Calarasi	31	44	98	270	:	:	:	:	:	:
Pensiuni turistice	Romani	Calarasi	400	1769	2990	3635	1911	2424	1563	655	2100	:
-	Straini	Calarasi	91	202	130	210	122	164	162	58	4	:
Pensiuni agroturistice	Romani	Calarasi	64	51	110	:	:	:	:	:	:	:
-	Straini	Calarasi	422	110	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:

Table 3. Overnight stays in touristic reception structures by types of structures, period 2011 - 2020. Source: NSISE.

With Romania's accession to the European Union and in the following period, the local activity of operationalizing the accommodation capacity in the county became more dynamic, especially in the municipality of Călărași. In seven years, the number of accommodation increased by 194 units from 2000 to 2007. And after the global economic crisis that also affected the cross-border region of the Danube, from 2010 to 2018, 351

³⁰ https://calarasi.nsise.ro/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/struct_de_primire_turist_cu_funct_de_cazare_turist_jud_cl_2014_2018.pdf

accommodation places were added in the county (see Table 2.) But what shows the true state of the touristic movement in the territory is the accommodation capacity in operation. In 2009 and 2010 there was a decrease in the number of overnight stays compared to the more prolific years of 2005-2007, justified by the decline in tourism at national and European level, and also reflected by a low net capacity utilization index, of 14.4%. In 2018 and 2019, the number of overnight stays increased, but insufficiently compared to the existing offer. The pandemic that set in in 2020 has blocked any evolution, for the time being.

2.2. Silistra District

The etymology of the name has several variants. In Romanian, Dârstor; in Bulgarian, Дръстър, meaning Drăstăr, then Силистра, meaning Silistra; in Latin, Durostorum; in Byzantine Greek, Δορόστολον, meaning Dorostolon; in the Byzantine language, Theodoropolis; in Turkish, Silistre. There are so many names for the same area, because Silistra is among those territories that have had various dominions over time, going through a dizzying historical state circuit.

Thus, we see below the diversity of the state belonging of the Silistra district, in a chronological order from the present to the most ancient times:

-  Bulgaria from 1940 to the present
-  Romania 1918–1940
-  Bulgaria 1918
-  Romania 1913–1918
-  Bulgaria 1878–1913
-  Ottoman Empire 1419–1878
-  Wallachia 1386–1419
-  Despotate of Dobrogea 1347–1386
-  Vlach-Bulgarian Tsardom 1186–1347
-  Eastern Roman Empire 981 AD – 1186
-  Bulgarian Land 976 AD – 981 AD
-  Eastern Roman Empire 971 AD – 976 AD
-  Kievan Rus' 969 AD – 971 AD
-  Bulgarian Land 700 AD – 969 AD
-  Eastern Roman Empire 330 AD – 700 AD
-  Roman Empire - 330 AD.

Geographical location. The Silistra district is located in the northeast of Bulgaria, on the border with Romania, having as coordinates: the parallel 44 ° 7 ' north latitude and the meridian 27 ° 16 ' east longitude. It borders the Dobrich district to the southeast, Shumen to the south, Razgrad to the southwest and Ruse to the east. In the northern part, it is bordered by the Danube River and the southern part of Romania. It was part of Greater Romania under the name of Durostor County. It became part of Bulgaria on September 6, 1940, following the Craiova Agreement, a treaty imposed by the Central Powers. It has an

area of 2846 km², with an altitude of 6 m above sea level and a population of 111957 inhabitants.³¹

Administrative organization of the territory. It is worth mentioning, first of all, the administrative organization of Bulgaria, in order to understand the meaning and position of Silistra in the context. Bulgaria has been divided, since 1994, into 28 “regions”, called “oblasts” and 264 “communes”, transliterated: “communities”, which represent the smallest local ATUs. They are used to organize the local public administration. Each commune has a certain territory, limits, a statistically analyzed population, a name and an administrative center. The commune comprises one or more localities adjacent to the one of residence, from which it usually derives its name.



Figure 3. Silistra District

A commune must meet the following conditions:

- the population of over 6000 inhabitants in the settlements included in it;
- the existence of a locality that is a unique traditional center, with developed social and technical infrastructure, for community services;
- includes all neighboring towns and villages, where there are no conditions for the creation of separate communes or which cannot be annexed to other neighboring communes;
- the maximum distance from the commune residence to any of the component localities is at most 40 km.

At the same time, it should be noted that, in terms of statistical reporting, Bulgaria is divided into two large "zones": 1. Northern and South-Eastern Bulgaria; 2. South-West and Central-South Bulgaria. The first includes four regions, and the other - two regions. Each "region" is made up of "districts". Silistra district is part of the North-Central Region of zone no. 1. Each district has several communes. And communes include municipalities / towns and villages.

Silistra District is a first-order administrative-territorial unit and includes:

- 7 communes (basic ATUs); 68 town halls; 5 urban localities and 113 villages;
- among the 7 communes, **Silistra commune** includes:

³¹ ro.wikipedia.org; Demographic Info 2016- Bulgaria National Institute of Statistics.

- **Silistra city** - residence of Silistra commune and residence of Silistra district;
- 18 villages.
- The surface of Silistra commune is 515.89 km² and has 51386 inhabitants.³²

2.2.1 Background.³³

After the victory over the Dacians, Emperor Trajan established here one of the most capable military units of the Roman Empire - Legio XI Claudia. Its 6,000 soldiers built a well-fortified camp, whose impressive ruins are located in the northeastern part of Silistra. Around the legion's camp the formation of a civilized settlement began. In the 4th-7th centuries Durostorum was the most important fort of the Eastern Roman Empire. The emperors Diocletian and Valens paid special attention to the city, making several visits to Durostorum, and at the end of the 3rd century and the beginning of the 4th century a fortified castle was built.

In late antiquity (4th – 6th centuries) Dorostol (this is the Greek name) became a center of Christianity and Christian culture. Between 303 and 362, 12 martyrs of early Christianity died here.

Khan Asparuh (681 - 701) is credited with restoring the town of Drustar (this is how the town was called in the Middle Ages).

Even after the conversion of the Bulgarians to Christianity at Drustar, an episcopal see was established, headed in 870 by Bishop Nikolay. The peak of the city's spiritual development was when it became the capital of the first Bulgarian patriarch Damian in 927. Drustar retained its patriarchal residence status, being used by Tsar Simeon during the heavy war with the Hungarians in 894-895.

At the end of the 10th century, Drustar became the arena of the great Bulgarian-Russian-Byzantine war from 969 to 971. After a three-month siege in June 971, Prince Svetoslav of Kiev handed over Drustar to the Byzantine Emperor John Tzimiskes (969-976). After the final conquest of Bulgaria by the Byzantine emperor Basil II in 1000, Drustar - Dristra became the capital of the huge region of Paristrion (Podunavia), covering all of northern Bulgaria and Dobrogea. In the 11th and 12th centuries, it maintained its position as the leading religious center in northern Bulgaria.

During the uprising for the liberation of the Asănești family from 1185-1188, Drustar was again transformed into a pillar of the restored Bulgarian kingdom, the seat of the governors and metropolitans of Dobrogea.

Around 1277, for a time, the city was the center of Tsar Ivailo's rebellious army. There is good reason to believe that at the end of the 13th century in Drustar the future king Theodor Svetoslav acted as a despot. At the end of the 14th century, the independent principality of the despot Terter was formed here, who minted silver and bronze coins. On these, on ornaments and objects, he places the symbol of his independent despotic power - the two-headed eagle. Around 1380 Drustar was under the scepter of Tsar Ivan Shishman (1371 - 1396), but in 1388 he was forced to hand it over to the Ottoman Turks. To this

³² ro.wikipedia.org; Demographic Info 2016- Bulgaria National Institute of Statistics.

³³ According to the 2011 Census

difficult choice, the Byzantine chronicler Leonclavius attributed the following words to the Bulgarian ruler: *"Silistra surpasses all my cities, both in size and in the grandeur of the buildings, the wealth of the inhabitants and also in the fortress, which is the best and most famous"*.

In the autumn of 1389, taking advantage of Sultan Baiazid I's war against the Seljuks in Asia Minor, the Wallachian voivode Mircea I conquered Drustar (Silistra).

In 1391, Sultan Baiazid sent an army to Drustar. The citizens agreed to the voluntary surrender of the fortress and the possibility to withdraw to Tarnovo. However, a directed conflict ensued in which part of the population was killed and Silistra was conquered.

After the defeat of Baiazid I by Tamerlane in 1402, Mircea I recaptured Drustarul and Dobrogea.

After the pacification of the Ottoman Empire after the defeat of Emir Karaman in Asia Minor and the liquidation of the revolt of Sheikh Bedretin in Ludogoria around 1417, Sultan Mehmed I banished Mircea I from Dobrogea and Silistra. The city eventually entered the borders of the Ottoman Empire and the capital of the huge Silistra Sanjak was established here.

After the Ottoman conquest, Silistra retained its strategic position, as it had in the medieval Bulgarian state. The city became the center of one of the largest administrative units in the Rumelia (European) provinces of the empire – Silistra Sanjak, which covered large areas, spread north to the Dnieper River, south - to Strandzha, and west - bordered by Nicopolis Sanjak. The most important settlements that became part of the Silistra Sanjak, which later became centers of smaller administrative units (nahii), are: Rusokastro, Anhialo (now Pomorie), Yambol, Karnobat, Aytos, Sozopol, Mesemvria (now Nessebar), Provadia , Varna, Shumen, Madara, Balchik and the whole of North Dobrogea, including the territory between the Danube and the Dnieper or the so-called Ochakovo land.

At the end of the 18th century and the beginning of the 19th century, Silistra and its surroundings became an arena of hostilities between the Ottoman Empire and Russia. The series of wars affected the fortifications of the city. During the war of 1806-1812, Silistra was captured twice - June 1810 and October 1811 - by the Russian troops.

In 1837 Sultan Mahmud II visited Silistra. Around the Crimean War (1853 - 1856) the construction works of the fortification system in Silistra were completed. Along the southern and southeastern hills of the city there was a first line of seven independent fortifications - two at the bottom of the harbor and five on the ridges of the hills. The fortifications in question are in the shape of a pentagram - embankments with stone trenches and ordinary stone blocks. The main fort of Silistra is located in the center of Medjidi tabiya. The others are: Liman tabiya, Chenghel tabiya, Deghirmen tabiya, Inanla tabiya, Arab tabiya, Kyuchuk Mustafa tabiya and Chair tabiya.

On February 10, 1878, Silistra greeted the Russian liberation troops. In the post-liberation period, Silistra became one of the main economic and business centers in South Dobrogea.

In the second half of the 20th century, Silistra became an industrial and agricultural center in north-eastern Bulgaria, competing with Ruse due to its strategic position on the Danube and with Dobrich due to its fertile agricultural land.

The city of Silistra is the administrative center of the Silistra region, a port city on the Danube, one of the most important cities in Dobrogea.

2.2.2. Natural setting

Relief. In general, the Bulgarian sector of the Danube cross-border area consists of 54% of lowland and field areas, 31.3% of hilly areas and 14.7% of mountainous areas.³⁴ The relief is low altitude. The Danube plain is covered with loessoid formations. The Silistra district, along with Razgrad and Ruse, has a significant agricultural area compared to the non-agricultural land.

In 2006, a degree of forest cover of 20.7% was measured for Silistra, as a forest area. In this district, there are the fewest km of watercourses in the Bulgarian sector of the cross-border area (76 km, i.e. 2.06% of the total length of watercourses in the area). Measurements from 2008-2010 also showed the area of the district as having a moderate risk of landslides. The rivers Iskar, Vit, Osum, Yantra, which fragment the Danube Plain in a south-north direction, create areas that generate landslides.

Here it is worth mentioning the category of protected areas of international interest, represented by biosphere reserves, designated on the basis of the criteria established by the MAB / UNESCO Committee. In the case of Silistra, we have the Srebarna Biosphere Reservation, Ramsar site, of 892 ha, wetland of international importance, designated on the basis of the criteria established by the Secretariat of the Ramsar Convention.

Climate. The climate is temperate continental, homogeneous due to the unitary geographical structure. In the immediate vicinity of the Danube, the climate specific to the Danube meadow is individualized, with warmer summers and milder winters than in the rest of the plain.

2.2.3. Demography

During the time it was part of the Kingdom of Romania, Silistra had a total population of 17,339 inhabitants, of which: 5,984 Bulgarians, 5,418 Turks, 3,794 Romanians and other minorities.³⁵ As a result of the encouragement of the establishment of the Aromanians in the Balkans and of the Romanians from other provinces in that period, the share of the Romanian element increased more, and Romanians from the Bulgarian Timoc also settled here.³⁶ Thus, by 1937, the Bulgarian population was 37%, remaining more numerous than the Romanians.

Although the population of the region was mostly Turkish-Tatar, the Christian-Orthodox was predominantly Bulgarian, but with minorities - around 10% - Romanians, Gagauz and Greeks.³⁷ In 1940, according to Bulgarian statistics, the population of the

³⁴ Analysis and diagnosis of the current situation within the Romania – Bulgaria cross-border area, 2015.

³⁵ *Recensământul general al populației României din 29 decembrie 1930*, Vol. II, pag. 186-187.

³⁶ *Coloniștii români timoceni din Cadrilater*; Magazin Istoric, Anul XL Nr. 12 (477), December 2006.

³⁷ The Ottoman Census of 1850.

territory had 286,000 inhabitants, mostly Bulgarians and Turks, with over six thousand Romanians.

After the ratification of the Craiova Treaty, in 1940, the Romanian population in this territory was moved to North Dobrogea through a mandatory population exchange with the Bulgarians. Thus, about 110,000 Romanians (from Quadrilateral and the south of the Danube) settled in Romania at that time from Bulgaria, and 77,000 Bulgarians left Romania for Silistra.

In the second half of the 20th century, Silistra became a significant industrial and agricultural center in northeastern Bulgaria. This led to an increase in the city's population until 1985. After that, until February 1989, the population suffered a slight decrease. After the fall of the communist regime in Bulgaria, many residents of Silistra began to migrate to or outside other parts of the country, including the cross-border area north of the Danube.

Ethnicity	1910	1930	1940	2001 ³
Total	282.007	378.344	407.515	357.217
Bulgarians	134.355 (47,6%)	143.209 (37,9%)	150.962 (37,1%)	248.382 (69,53%)
Romanians	6.348 (2,3%)	77.728 (20,5%)	106.534 (26,2%)	591 (0,17%)
Turks	106.568 (37,8%)	129.025 (34,1%)	147.196 ¹ (36,1%)	76,992 (21,55%)
Tatars	11.718 (4,2%)	6.546 (1,7%)	(*) ²	4,515 (1,26%)
Rromi	12,192 (4,3%)	n/a (0,8%)	(*) ²	25.127 (7,03%)

¹Tatars, Gagauz and Rromi are included in this number.

²They are included in the "Turks" row.

³The Asakovo commune, which is now part of the Varna Region, is not included.

Source: ro.wikipedia.org

Table 3. The Quadrilateral population in 1910, in 1930, in 1940 and in 2001:

The Silistra district ranks last in terms of population in the entire Bulgarian cross-border region of the Danube. The share of the rural population is majority in the district, of 54.92%, compared to 45.08% of the urban population. Eight years ago, there was a share of 69.29% of the urban population in Silistra, followed by Tutrakan and Alfatar with 56.08% and 54.07%, respectively. Two ATUs are entirely made up of rural localities: Sitovo and

Kaynardzha, with 12 and 15 villages, respectively, in the composition of each. The largest population losses were in the municipalities of Glavinitsa and Tutrakan. Silistra registered large population decreases both in the city and in the villages, with 14.98% and 21.54%, respectively, population reductions.³⁸

At the end of 2019, before the manifestation of the Sars Cov2 pandemic, the population of the whole of Bulgaria had 6,951,482 inhabitants, with 202,302 fewer inhabitants than in 2015; in the district of Silistra, in 2019 there were 108,018 inhabitants³⁹, compared to 109,271 inhabitants in 2018 and with over 5,000 fewer inhabitants than in 2015. Keeping the territorial proportions, it can be seen how in the cross-border region of the Danube, the demographic movement was much stronger, and the mobility of locals was greater, in the sense of looking for better living opportunities elsewhere. Here is an additional reason for the touristic development of the area to be a chance for the evolution of local communities.

The male population (52,738 inhabitants, in 2019) is almost equal to the female population (55,280 inhabitants, in 2019), the latter being slightly more numerous - a phenomenon that is not surprising and has long been recorded in many regions of the globe.

Workforce. After the last world economic crisis, the Silistra district registered large increases in the salary structure, of 70.5%, increases due to the expansion of commercial activities in the territory and the expansion of service activities - which increased their salary structure by approx. 10%. In the period 2015-2019, the number of employees stabilized around 21,000, finding an increase in the average annual salary of 40% (Table 4.).

	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
The annual average number of employees with a labor agreement (number)	21191	21152	21126	20986	20914
The annual average income and salaries of the employees based on the labor agreement (leva)	7494	7967	8672	9434	10572
The unemployment rate (%)	21,8	16,7	12,7	11,1	13,3

Table 4. Labor force in the period 2015-2019

The unemployment rate reached 13.3% in 2019, 2.2% higher than the previous year, but 8.5% lower than in 2015.⁴⁰ Compared to the country level, 4.2% in 2019, in Silistra the unemployment rate is significantly higher. Repositioning the pole of tourist attractiveness of the area through the traditional cultural potential and natural wealth could bring success to the communities and could involve more locals in specific tourism activities.

³⁸ Analysis and diagnosis of the current situation within the Romania – Bulgaria cross-border area, 2015.

³⁹ <https://www.nsi.bg/en/content/11439/district-silistra>; Demographic Statistical Data 2015-2019.

⁴⁰ The analysis of the authors, based on the information from NSI-Bulgaria (www.nsi.bg)

2.2.4. Transport

The possibilities of moving in the space of Silistra district show another side of the degree of development of the area.

The basis of transport is given by the means of road and rail transport. Air and river transport are not representative. As can be seen in Table 6, in the reference period 2015-2019, the length of category I roads, national and European, continued to total 57 km. The regional, inter-district roads, of category II, total 147 km, and those of category III, from the rural area, reach 302 km.

No highway passes through the district. Silistra Municipality is 431 km from Sofia, the capital of Bulgaria; 141 km from Varna, the Black Sea coast; 119 km from Ruse, in the same cross-border region of the Danube. The railway lines reach 70 km in length, in total in the district.

Indicators	Years				
	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
Total length highways (km)	-	-	-	-	-
Total length category I roads (km)	57	57	57	57	57
Total length category II roads (km)	147	147	147	147	147
Total length category III roads (km)	302	302	302	302	302
Total length railway lines (km)	70	70	70	70	70

Table 6. The situation of the transport infrastructure in Silistra district, in the period 2015-2019.

Source: <https://www.nsi.bg/en/content/11439/district-silistra>; Transport statistical data 2015-2019.

2.2.5. The economic activity.

Analyzing the economic strength of the area in which the Silistra district operates, we can see its development potential. Thus, the expenditures for the acquisition of tangible

fixed assets in the North-Central Region, which includes the Silistra district, from the year before the beginning of the global health crisis, show the emphasis on economic activities.

E c Groups of economic activity (A10)	Total Bulgaria	The North-Western Region	The North-Central Region	The North-Eastern Region	The South-Eastern Region	The South-Western Region	The South-Central Region
To Total	21 873 680	1 111 075	1 593 267	2 151 108	2 365 730	10 879 749	3 772 75R
Out of which:							
In foreign property over 50%	5 277 416	146 035	255 073	357 123	463 649	2 930 081	1 125 455
Ag Agriculture, forestry and fishing	1 582 299	266 358	354 429	300 914	296 861	142 722	221 015
In Industry (except for Constructions)	6 116 290	418 651	610 970	657 691	942 830	1 625 792	1 860 356
Co Constructions	1 655 886	62 352	81 606	197 950	213 596	860 107	240 275
W Wholesale and retail trade activities, transport, accommodation and food services	5 204 875	161 010	333 158	556 485	551 037	2 831 925	771 260
Inf Information and communication	895 163	6 317	9 874	11 106	9 579	823 515	34 772
Fi Financial and Insurance activities	413 266	509	1 261	4 096	3 078	399 592	4 730

E c Groups of economic activity (A10)	Total Bulgaria	The North-Western Region	The North-Central Region	The North-Eastern Region	The South-Eastern Region	The South-Western Region	The South-Central Region
Re Real estate activities	2 194 808	92 010	46 544	178 255	148 549	1 442 764	286 686
Pr Professional, scientific, technical, administration activities and support services	1 291 163	32 547	60 751	91 384	82 306	915 026	109 149
Pu Public administration, defense, education, human health and social work activities	2 213 013	63 026	75 071	112 536	76 341	1 705 592	180 447
Ar Arts, entertainment and leisure; other activities	306 917	8 295	19 603	40 691	41 553	132 714	64 061

Table 5. Expenditures for the acquisition of tangible fixed assets by economic activity groups and regions (2019)

Source: www.nsi.bg; statistical data - Bulgarian Institute of Statistics, November 30, 2020

The same indicator showed only for the Silistra district, in 2019, the value of 163,611 thousand Leva invested in total economic activities, according to NSI data from Bulgaria.

The indicator “Density of enterprises per 1000 inhabitants” in the territory, in 2011, registered higher values at the level of the district territories in the context of the entire cross-border region of the Danube. Thus, the Silistra district also is situated in the range of 30.01-35 enterprises / 1000 inhabitants.

Analyzing the distribution of the number of employees carrying out different economic activities in relation to 1000 inhabitants, we find that, in 2012, in Silistra district the density of employees registered low high values, ranging from 150.1-200 employees / 1000 inhabitants. The number of enterprises active in the tertiary sector, at district level,⁴¹ increased 1.5 times in the Silistra district, by setting up enterprises in both commercial and service activities, within the first five years after the exit from the general economic crisis.

⁴¹ Source: figures from www.NSI.bg, 2014.

2.2.6. Tourism

The natural and historical resources of Silistra district create opportunities to develop almost all types of tourism - recreational, cognitive, cultural, religious, ecological, rural, hunting, sports, etc. However, tourism is not yet a significant economic sector in the district's municipalities.⁴² In the Silistra area, the number of touristic reception structures with accommodation function evolved in the reference period 2015-2019 as follows: 20 accommodation units in 2015, 17 in 2016, 15 in 2017, 16 in 2018 and 28 in 2019, year in which we can see an improvement in the state of affairs and an increased interest of local actors in receiving visitors.

Regarding the overnight stays at the level of each year of the same referred period (Table 7), we find an increased demand for accommodation starting with 2018, the supply being lower than the demand, and the demand remaining constant even one year before closing tourism activities due to the global health crisis.

Field: tourism	Indicators	Years				
		2015	2016	2017	2018	2019

Accommodation units (number)	20	17	15	16	28
Total overnight stays (number)	33 013	30 902	26 556	31 418	44 536

Table 7. Indicators of supply and demand for the touristic market in Silistra District, in 2015-2019.

Source: <https://www.nsi.bg/en/content/11439/district-silistra>; Tourism statistical data 2015-2019.

In the period 2013-2015, the number of accommodation units in Silistra district remained annually at 20, decreasing by three in 2016, when it reached 17, the year in which a total of 323 rooms and 604 accommodation places (beds) were registered⁴³. For the local touristic businesses, the most successful was 2015. Then the supply of accommodation was extended on the same structure of the reception units; thus, 33,013 overnight stays were registered, with incomes of 1,354,803 levs, the highest value in the referred period. In general, both the number of visitors and the overnight stays decreased during this period.

In this four-year period, 2013-2016, there was a total of 127,681 overnight stays per district, out of which 19% were foreigners (i.e., 24,590 visitors). The total number of arrivals

⁴² The Development Strategy of Silistra District for 2018-2020.

⁴³ According to the Bulgarian statistics, Table 24 from the Development Strategy of Silistra District for 2018-2020.

in the reception structures was 89,191 tourists, 14,930 being foreigners. Overnight income amounted to 5,079,538 levs.

The structure of the reception units in the district, at the level of 2016, mostly made up of hotels and motels (76%) was distributed as follows: 13 - in the city of Silistra; 3 - in the city of Tutrakan; 1 - in the village of Kaynardzha, without being officially reported other accommodation or shelter units. In recent years, private projects and investments have led to the construction of several new guest houses and family hotels in this area of the Danube. Thus, there are in Alfatar municipality - 1 family hotel; in the municipality of Dulovo - 2 hotels. The rural municipalities of Sitovo and Glavinitsa are not officially listed with accommodation data.⁴⁴

The recent situation - recorded in the year of the SARS Cov2 pandemic - of the tourist movement in the Silistra area compared to other districts in the same ATU and in Bulgaria as a whole will be further summarized (Table 8.) Thus, in terms of structures of accommodation in 2020⁴⁵, compared to a total of 3317 units in the whole of Bulgaria, the North-Central Region has 286, out of which 25 are in the district of Silistra - the penultimate, from this point of view, in the list of the five component districts of the region. In the case of accommodation in operation, out of a total of 281,666 per country, 12,427 are found in the region, out of which 787 are operational in Silistra.

Regarding the volume of overnight stays in 2020, only 5% of the total overnight stays in the region were registered in the district (i.e. 26,115), out of which 2,570 were made by foreign tourists. The year 2020 brought to the level of Bulgaria overnight revenues amounting to 645,544,880 levs, out of which, 315,517,867 levs from foreign visitors; at the level of the region, revenues of 20,257,488 levs were registered, out of which foreigners brought 4,750,416 levs, and at the level of Silistra district, the revenues obtained from overnight stays were 1,081,373 levs, out of which, in terms of foreigners, 139,213 levs were obtained.

The values of the indicators marked in the Silistra district are the lowest compared to the other component districts of the Bulgarian region, which shows the inefficiency of the touristic activity and the urgent need to change the Silistra image and to implement a destination management. These desiderata can operate in a wider framework, of the cross-border region of the Danube, together with the Romanian county of Călărași.

Zone	Structuri de primire cu funcțiune de cazare	Locuri de cazare	Locuri-nopti de cazare disponibile	Număr innoptări		Număr sosiri în structuri de primire		Venituri din innoptări (leva)	
				Total	Din care străini	Total	Din care străini	Total	Din care străini
Centru Nord	286	12 427	3 422 433	515 240	92 728	256 989	31 625	20 257 488	4 750 416
Veliko Tarnovo	123	5 307	1 432 213	224 109	48 697	107 836	14 249	8 855 270	2 388 320
Gabrovo	62	3 265	823 451	110 852	5 868	57 328	2 242	3 671 508	323 625
Razgrad	19	813	230 195	63 807	19 007	19 757	3 241	2 483 613	907 406
Ruse	57	2 255	678 208	90 357	16 586	54 937	10 400	4 165 724	991 852
Silistra	25	787	258 366	26 115	2 570	17 131	1 493	1 081 373	139 213

Table 8. Touristic movement in Silistra, the North-Central Region and Bulgaria in 2020.

Source: NSI-Bulgaria; Annual statistical data.

⁴⁴ The Development Strategy of Silistra District for 2018-2020.

⁴⁵ NSI-Bulgaria; Annual statistical data.

Chapter 3. The touristic potential of the region

3.1. Natural attractions

In the Silistra - Călărași area we find a diversity of protected natural areas, respectively nature reservations, forest reservations, wildlife reservations, Natura 2000 sites and nature monuments. The region is characterized by great biodiversity and diverse natural landscapes.

BG0002062 - Ludogorie / Bulgaria

The area is home to 115 species of birds, out of which 22 are listed in the Bulgarian Red Book (1985). Of the birds that appear here, 51 species are of European interest for conservation (SPEC - BirdLife International, 2004), 2 of which are listed in the SPEC 1 category as being globally threatened (the imperial eagle / *aquila heliaca* and the corn crake / *crex crex*), 18 in SPEC 2 and 32 in SPEC 3 as endangered species in Europe. The area provides suitable habitats for 31 species, included in Annex 2 of the Biodiversity Law, which requires special preservation measures, out of which 29 are also listed in Annex I of the Birds Directive. Ludogorie is one of the most important sites on the level of the European Union for the preservation of a complex of 9 species that breed there - the lesser spotted eagle / *aquila pomarina*, the black kite / *milvus migrans*, the long-legged buzzard/ *buteo rufinus*, the ruddy shelduck / *tadorna ferruginea*, the woodlark / *lullula arborea*, the ortolan / *emberiza hortulana*, the European nightjar / *caprimulgus europaeus*, the European roller / *coracias garrulus* and the lesser grey shrike / *lanius minor*. Most of these species prefer border habitats between forests and open areas or mosaic habitats. A large number of birds of prey also breed in Ludogoria in considerable numbers, using the forests and rocky valleys of the river for nesting and the meadows and arable land for feeding.

Ludogorie territory is not protected by the national legislation on nature preservation. There are only three protected areas for the preservation of typical landscapes, which cover less than 1% of the site. About 40% of the area is covered by the Ludogorie CORINE site, which was established in 1998 due to its value for rare, endangered habitats, plant and animal species, including birds. In 2005 it was also designated an Important Bird Area by BirdLife International.

The area is located in northeastern Bulgaria and corresponds to that of the geographical region Ludogorie, but also covers parts of western Dobrogea. It includes the territories of 14 municipalities in the districts of Ruse, Silistra and Razgrad. The relief is simple-hilly with the typical forms of dry riverbeds, loess surfaces and karst fields. Half of the territory is occupied by forests, and the other half - by agricultural land with a small part of grassland. The forests are mixed - silver lime, hornbeam or Austrian oak, sometimes with oak, beech or field maple. There are also large lots of artificial acacia plantations.

BG0002048 - Suha Reka / Bulgaria

Suha Reka is home to 193 species of birds, 58 of which are listed in the Bulgarian Red Book (1985). Of the birds that appear here, 90 species are of European conservation interest (SPEC - BirdLife International, 2004), 10 of which are listed in the SPEC 1 category as being globally threatened, 24 in SPEC 2 and 56 in SPEC 3 as endangered species in Europe. The area provides suitable habitats for 72 species, included in Annex 2 of the Biodiversity Act, which require special preservation measures, of which 66 are also listed in Annex I of the Birds Directive. The dry riverbed of the Suha Reka is one of the most important areas in the country for the ruddy shelduck / tadorna ferruginea, the long-legged buzzard / buteo rufinus, the lesser spotted eagle / aquila pomarina and the Eurasian eagle-owl / bubo bubo, where these species breed in considerable numbers. A complex of species, typical for open and transitional habitats are presented in the area, with significant breeding populations, also the ortolan / bunting hortulana, the European roller / coracias garrulus, the greater short-toed lark / calandrella brachydactyla, the woodlark / lullula arborea, the tawny pipit / anthus campestris, the Eurasian stone-curlew / burchinus oedicnemus, the barred warbler / sylvia nisoria, the lesser grey shrike / lanius minor.

Suha Reka is one of the most significant corridors for migratory birds in Dobrudzha and a typical migration site for storks and birds of prey on the Via Pontica migration route. More than 37,000 storks and 5,000 raptors pass through the area each year during the autumn migration. Some of the birds continue towards the Provadiyska river valley, and others continue towards the Batova river valley.

The national law on nature preservation does not protect the territory of Suha Reka in practice. There are only two protected areas, intended for the protection of caves, which are very small. In 1997, the area was designated an important bird area by BirdLife International. In 1998 it became part of the CORINE site due to its European value for rare, threatened habitats, plant and animal species, including birds. The proposed SPA is adjacent to a special protection area proposed in Romania.

The site covers the Suha Reka valley and its adjacent dry riverbeds, rocks and rocky ridges. It is located in Dobrudzha, north of Dobrich, and covers the section from the village of Karapelit in the south to the village of Kranovo in the north. The river disappears almost entirely on karst terrain. Between the villages of Efreytor Bakalovo and Brestnitsa a long reservoir of about 7-8 km is formed. The hills along the riverbed are covered with oak forests, rarely just Austrian oak and more often mixed forests of Austrian oak and hornbeam, in places with a mixture of manna ash. The open areas around the valley are occupied by agricultural land and grasslands, covered by variations of grass. The rocks and rocky ridges are mainly limestone, with an average height of about 20 m and numerous niches, cornices and small caves.

BG0002064 - Garvansko Blato / Bulgaria

Despite its small area, the Garvansko swamp is home to 26 species of birds, 8 of which are listed in the Bulgarian Red Book (1985). Of the birds that appear here, 5 species are of European preservation interest (SPEC - BirdLife International, 2004), 1 of which is listed in category SPEC 1 as being globally threatened, 1 in SPEC 2 and 3 in SPEC 3, as endangered species in Europe. The area provides suitable habitats for 6 species, included in

Annex 2 of the Biodiversity Law, which requires special preservation measures, 3 of which are also listed in Annex I of the Birds Directive. The swamp is one of the most important sites in the country, on the level of the European Union, of the red duck / *aythya nyroca*, which breeds here. Other species of water birds breed in large numbers, such as the red-necked grebe / *podiceps grisegena*, the little bittern / *Ixobrychus minutus* and the black-winged stilt / *himantopus himantopus*.

Almost the entire territory of the Garvansko swamp was designated as a protected area in 1985 to protect rare and endangered species of plants and water birds. It was designated as a CORINE site in 1998 due to its European value for rare and endangered plant and animal species. In 2005 it was designated an important bird area by BirdLife International.

Garvansko Swamp is located in northeastern Bulgaria, about 30 km west of Silistra, on the banks of the Danube, in the area of Garvan and Popina villages. It occupies an area flooded by the Danube in a declination of relief between the villages mentioned above. In the past, it was connected to the river. Nowadays, there is a dam in its northern part. Currently, the swamp has an area of 48.43 ha with a water depth not exceeding 0.7-0.8 m. Its banks are covered with vegetation, especially reed.

BG0002030 – Kompleks Kalimok / Bulgaria

Kalimok fish basins are one of the key places of international importance for water birds along the Danube. The area is home to 188 species of birds, 61 of which are listed in the Bulgarian Red Book (1985). Of the birds that occur there, 85 species are of European preservation interest (SPEC - BirdLife International, 2004), 9 of which are listed in SPEC category 1 as being globally threatened, 18 in SPEC 2 and 58 in SPEC 3, as endangered species in Europe. The area provides suitable habitats for 71 species, included in Annex 2 of the Biodiversity Act, which require special preservation measures, of which 64 are also listed in Annex I of the Birds Directive. The fish ponds are of global importance for the red duck / *aythya nyroca* and for the Dalmatian pelican / *pelecanus crispus*. One of the two existing colonies of black-winged stilt / *himantopus himantopus* along the Danube River is located here.

During the breeding season, the Kalimok complex is one of the most important sites in the country in the European Union for the red duck, the black-crowned night heron / *nycticorax nycticorax*, the little egret / *egretta garzetta*, the squacco heron / *ardeola ralloides*, the Eurasian bittern / *botaurus stellaris*, the Eurasian spoonbill / *platalea leucorodia*, the European roller / *coracias garrulus*, as well as for three species of terns - the common tern / *sterna hirundo*, the whiskered tern / *chlidonias hybridus* and the black tern / *chlidonias niger*.

The complex is a constant breeding and feeding site for a pair of white-tailed eagles / *haliaeetus albicilla*. During migration, a considerable number of white storks / *ciconia ciconia* and glossy ibises / *plegadis falcinellus* are concentrated in the region. During this period and in winter, the fish ponds are a place of global importance for the pygmy cormorant / *phalacrocorax pygmeus* and the summer goose / *anser anser*; they are an important place for the wintering of the fieldfare / *turdus pilaris*. In winter, large quantities

of water birds are concentrated, including the red-necked goose / *branta ruficollis* and the greater white-fronted goose / *anser albifrons*, etc.

Approximately 63% of the territory of the Kalimok complex is protected by the national law "Kalimok-Btushlen". The protected area was designated in 2001 to protect typical ecosystems and landscapes, as well as to protect endangered plant and animal species. A small part of the area, about 8%, was named in 1998 CORINE site due to its European value for habitats, rare and endangered species of plants and animals, including birds. In 1989, the area was designated an important bird area by BirdLife International. The proposed SPA is adjacent to a special protection area proposed in Romania.

The Kalimok complex includes a large former Danube swamp, transformed into fish ponds, Bezimenen Island, covered with river forests and the section of the Danube shore between them. It is located north of the village of Nova Cherna. In the 1950s the swamp was drained by building a dam that separated it from the Danube and dug drainage channels. Because the land was not suitable for agriculture, fish ponds were set up with ponds divided by wet and swampy meadows into two parts - eastern and western. The ponds dry up periodically, and the water level is maintained by pumping water from the Danube. For economic reasons, fish ponds are now abandoned. The main habitat consists of fish basins, whose surface is almost entirely covered by swamp vegetation, dominated by typha and sedge variations. The banks of the basin and the dams are covered with reeds. The banks of the drainage channel are also covered with reeds, in places interspersed with willows. Between the river and the fish basins there is a riparian forest of willows *Salix* spp and poplars *Populus* spp. periodically flooded, with thin plants and rich climbing plants. The island of Bezimenen is entirely covered by riparian forests, mainly white willow *Salix alba* and white poplar *Populus alba*.

BG0002039 - Harsovska Reka / Bulgaria

Harsovska Reka is home to 109 species of birds, 23 of which are listed in the Bulgarian Red Book (1985). Of the birds that occur there, 47 species are of European preservation interest (SPEC - BirdLife International, 2004), 1 of which is listed in the SPEC 1 category as being globally threatened, 15 in SPEC 2 and 45 in SPEC 3, as endangered species in Europe. The area provides suitable habitats for 31 species, included in Annex 2 of the Biodiversity Act, which requires special preservation measures, of which 30 are also listed in Annex I of the Birds Directive. The dry riverbed of the Harsovska River is one of the most important places in the country for the ruddy shelduck / *tadorna ferruginea*, the levant sparrowhawk / *accipiter brevipes*, the black kite / *milvus migrans*, the lesser spotted eagle / *Aquila pomara* and the long-legged buzzard / *buteo rufinus*, where these species breed in considerable quantities.

A complex of species, typical of open and transitional habitats, are present in Harsovska Reka and with significant breeding populations – the ortolan / *emberiza hortulana*, the European roller / *coracias garrulus*, the woodlark / *lullula arborea*, the tawny pipit / *Anthus campestris*, the red-backed shrike / *lanius collurio* and the lesser grey shrike / *lanius minor*.

Many years ago, the region was home to the griffon vulture / *gyps fulvus* and the mountain eagle / *aquila chrysaetos*. Growing birds use the dry valley of the Harsovska Reka as a migration corridor, part of the Via Pontica migration route. Despite the fact that no complete studies have been done on migration in the area, it is known that white storks / *ciconia ciconia*, as well as raptors, including the pallid harrier / *circus macrourus*, a globally threatened species, pass here.

Harsovska Reka does not have legal protection status under Bulgarian nature preservation legislation. In 1997 it was designated an important bird area by BirdLife International. In 1998, about 80% of the area was named CORINE site due to its European value for rare, endangered habitats, plant and animal species, including birds.

The rocky bed of the Harsovska Reka River, located in Dobrudzha, southeast of the town of Silistra. The area is a valley of the dry river, where the waters disappear on the karst terrain. A considerable part of the valley (mainly the tops of the hills) is covered by oak forests. The riverbed is covered with mixed hornbeam and field maple forests, some secondary forests and hornbeam shrubs, as well as poplar plantations. The valley is relatively straight, but it makes many bends in the village of Kutlovitsa. In many places along the riverbed there are small and massive cliffs, which at the southern end and northern end of the area rise to 60-70 m.

BG0002065 - Blato Malak Preslavets / Bulgaria

Despite its small size, Malak Preslavets supports 56 species of birds, 7 of which are listed in the Bulgarian Red Book (1985). Of the birds that occur here, 20 species are of European preservation interest (SPEC - BirdLife International, 2004), 1 of which is listed in SPEC category 1 as being globally threatened, 2 in SPEC 2 and 17 in SPEC 3, as endangered species in Europe. The area provides suitable habitats for 14 species included in Annex 2 of the Biodiversity Act, which requires special preservation measures, 13 of which are also listed in Annex I of the Birds Directive. Due to its small depth, the lake is a good place for the water lily and thus represents a good base for the species that breed here - the whiskered tern / *chlidonias hybridus*, the common moorhen / *gallinula chloropus* and the Eurasian coot / *fulica atra*. The reed belt around the lake is considerably smaller. This is why the species that breed here are much less numerous than in the other wetlands in the region, which are dominated by reeds. Malak Preslavets is one of the most important sites in the European Union for the Sandwich tern. Here the little bittern / *Ixobrychus minutus*, the ruddy shelduck / *tadorna ferruginea* and the Levant sparrowhawk / *accipiter brevipes* also breed here.

Malak Preslavets is located in northeastern Bulgaria, 33 km west of Silistra, on the banks of the Danube, in the village of Malak Preslavets. Its altitude is about 13 m. It is a lake with a constant water level, maintained by karst waters and precipitation. On its Danube side there is a dam with a lock. The water basin is about 4 m deep. Its banks are covered with reeds, and the surface of the water is partially covered by floating vegetation dominated by white water lilies. To the west and east there are low hills, covered by broad-leaved natural forests, dominated by silver lime.

ROSPA0012, Borcea Branch / Romania

It has an area of 13097 ha and is located on the territory of 2 counties: Călărași and Ialomița. The Danube River, which delimits Călărași County to the east, flows on two branches: Borcea on the left (near Fetești, Bordușani, Făcăieni, Vlădeni) and the Old Danube on the right, meeting in a single course 3 km south of Giurgeni.

Between these branches is Borcea or Ialomița Pond, which, before 1960, consisted of swamps, lakes, ponds and portions of land (ridges), on which rose meadow forests. Subsequently, as a result of Romania's agrarian development policy during the communist regime, a large part of the island was drained and gained agricultural use and only forest use on the margins. Approximately 42 species of birds protected by the Birds Directive 79/409 / EEC, 58 species listed in the Annex to the Bonn Convention on Migratory Species and 7 globally endangered bird species nest, feed or rest in the Borcea Branch site.

ROSPA0021, Ciocănești - Danube / Romania

It has an area of 904 ha. The Ciocănești - Danube site includes the area of the Boianu farm, with an area of 220ha, which is profiled on the production of juvenile fish, consisting of 12 small basins, surrounded by dams and canals with abundant submerged vegetation.

On the canals there are narrow strips of reed and other marshy plants that have emerged. In the surroundings there are grasslands, agricultural crops and poplar plantations. At a distance of approx. 3km on the Danube bank, to the south, there is a natural meadow forest. Also, on the Ciocănești island, declared a natural reservation since 2004, the meadow forest is quite old and, since from the point of view of forestry works no interventions have taken place in the last 50 years, it has a special scientific value. Approximately 29 species of birds protected by the Birds Directive 79/409 / EEC, 62 species listed in the Annex to the Bonn Convention on Migratory Species and 5 globally endangered bird species nest, feed or rest in the area of the Ciocănești - Danube site.

ROSPA0038, Danube - Oltenița / Romania

It has an area of 5951 ha and is located in 2 counties: Călărași and Giurgiu. The site is located on the Danube between km 451 and km 430 and includes both the portion of the Danube between Căscioarele-Chirnoși-Oltenița and the agricultural land that is part of the Greaca-Argeș-Chirnoși dam. The area also includes the Albina and Georgescu islands, managed by the Mitreni Forest Department (Călărași Forestry Department).

Approximately 28 species of birds protected by the Birds Directive 79/409 / EEC, 61 species listed in the Annex to the Bonn Convention on Migratory Species and 4 globally endangered bird species nest, feed or rest in the area of the Danube-Oltenița site.

ROSPA0039, Danube-Ostroave / Romania

It has an area of 16224 ha and is located in 2 counties: Călărași and Constanța. The islands in the Danube meadow are covered by natural meadow forests and plantations (with a share of over 50%), which include several types of forest habitats and meadow bushes.

In the perimeter of the site is the protected area Fossil Point from Cernavodă, a natural monument, where lower Cretaceous deposits with a rich fossil fauna appear, represented by 72 species of corals, bivalves, gastropods and brachiopods. Three of the islands of this site are also declared natural reservations: Ciocănești, Haralambie and Șoimu, which are to be described below. Approximately 38 species of birds protected by the Birds Directive 79/409 / EEC, 36 species listed in the Annex to the Bonn Convention on Migratory Species and 5 globally endangered bird species nest, feed or rest in the area of the Danube-Ostroave site.

ROSPA0051, Iezerul-Călărași / Romania

It has an area of 4024 ha. APSA Iezer Călărași is located on the territory of Cuza-Vodă commune, Călărași municipality. It is a lake of natural origin left after the partial sanitation of the old and extensive Iezer Călărași. It has undergone artificial modifications for the purpose of its exploitation as a fish farm (embankment produced in the 1960s). The surface of the water gloss is about 550 ha. The lake is supplied with water from the Danube through artificial canals. On the shore of the big lake there is a reed and typha belt of over 4ha. Around the Lake there are meadows, some relatively wet, as well as agricultural crops.

Approximately 32 species of birds protected by the Birds Directive 79/409 / EEC, 60 species listed in the Annex to the Bonn Convention on Migratory Species and 7 globally endangered bird species nest, feed or rest in the area of the Iezerul-Călărași site. The natural area overlaps the Natura 2000 site - Iezerul Călărași, and since July 2012 it is protected as a wetland, by the International Ramsar Convention.

ROSPA0055, Gălățui Lake / Romania

It has an area of 908 ha. Gălățui Lake is located between Rasa and Bogata villages, which belong to Grădiștea commune, the surface of the lake being approximately 610 ha. It is arranged as a fish pond and lacks marsh vegetation. Approximately 16 species of birds protected by the Birds Directive 79/409 / EEC, 61 species listed in the Annex to the Bonn Convention on Migratory Species and 3 globally endangered species of birds nest, feed or rest in the Gălățui Lake area.

ROSPA106, Mostiștea Valley / Romania

It has an area of 4379 ha. It includes the largest lake in the county, of approximately 1860 ha. Rising water levels by raising the initial dams led to the almost complete extinction of reeds and other emerging marsh plants.

During the migration of birds, the site hosts more than 20,000 specimens of pond birds. Approximately 26 species of birds protected by the Birds Directive 79/409 / EEC, 47 species listed in the Annex to the Bonn Convention on Migratory Species and 5 globally endangered species of birds nest, feed or rest in the Mostiștea Valley site area.

ROSPA0136 Oltenița-Ulmeni / Romania

This site is home to important flocks of protected bird species. 12 species of birds, populations of white storks that nest in the vicinity of the site and feed in the agricultural enclosure Ulmeni-Spantov-Mănăstirea are protected. Also, during the summer, you can see clusters of immature specimens (individuals in the second year of life that are not yet fit for breeding) that feed in this area.

The site is especially important during migration and in winter for populations of water bird species that feed in agricultural areas or that use islands as a place of refuge. It is important to keep the water in the rice paddies around the site. Flooded basins maintain large numbers of water birds that are important to the site. Excessive use of pesticides in the area poses a potential risk to the area's avifauna.

ROSCI0022, Danube Channels / Romania

It has an area of 26064 ha and is located on the territory of 3 counties: Călărași, Ialomița and Constanța. The site has a great diversity of protected habitats including meadows, bushes and forests excluded from forestry interventions, many of which can still be considered virgin, especially those on the islands.

ROSCI0131, Oltenița-Mostiștea-Chiciu / Romania

It has an area of 11930 ha. The proposed site includes areas occupied by agricultural crops, forests, bank protection curtains, lakes, degraded land and meadows. Compared to the mammal fauna, the birds are the most numerous, here having favorable conditions for food, rest, breeding and nesting.

ROSCI0319, Fetești Swamp / Romania

It is a wetland (swamp) in Călărași County, with habitats characteristic of *Lutra lutra* species. Also, there are 3 species of amphibians of conservative interest, but also 12 other important species of reptiles and amphibians.

Vulnerability: habitat loss and destruction as a result of overgrazing, lack of grazing, logging activities, dredging and drainage of wetland, industrial activities, surface mining, territorial development, traffic, uncontrolled tourism, pollution by chemical fertilizers, storage of household or industrial waste.

ROSCI0343, The forests of Mostiștea Forest Steppe / Romania.

The site is located in the steppe biogeographical region, in the land of the Romanian Plain, the sub-land of the Bărăgan Plain, at an altitude between 40 and 70 m. The relief form is the average plain, and the terrain configuration is flat. On the 45% of the surface of the site there are natural trees, the difference being held by plantations with non-native species - acacia, red oak, black cherry, etc..

ROSCI0088, Gura Vedei-Șaica-Slobozia / Romania

Located in the floodplain of the Danube, the site is considered an important wetland from a conservative point of view, the small forests with willow and white poplar and riparian forests mixed with oak, elm and ash along the great rivers being habitats of community interest. The site includes the Gâsca-Năsturelu Island natural reservation.

The mosaic of aquatic and terrestrial habitats favors the presence of a high biological diversity. Seven species of mammals and two species of amphibians of community interest are reported. The mammal species are represented by five species of bats (the Geoffroy's bat, the lesser horseshoe bat, the Mehely horseshoe bat, the common bat, and the common bent-wing bat), the otter and the European ground squirrel. Aquatic ecosystems and their associated habitats favor the presence of a rich fish fauna. We mention the presence in the site of 11 species of fish of community interest: the asp, the Kessler's gudgeon, the European bitterling, the Dunărița, the weatherfish, the spined loach, the striped ruffe, the Danube streber, the zingel, the Eurasian ruffe, the Pontic shad. The combination of aquatic and terrestrial ecosystems favors the presence of over 400 species of invertebrates, the river shell being of community interest.

Natural reservations

The Srebărna / Bulgaria Natural Reservation Srebarna Biosphere Park is located near the village of Srebarna, Silistra municipality, 2 km south of the Danube and 16 km west of Silistra. The fame of the Park is given by the fact that it is located exactly on the route of migratory birds from Europe to Africa - Via Pontica and, on the other hand, by the unique and diverse species of water birds that live here. The park covers Lake Srebarna and its surroundings - about 660 hectares of guarded area and a buffer zone of about 540 hectares.

Srebarna is included in the Register of Protected Areas by the Decree of the Council of Ministers. Lake Srebarna is included in the UNESCO World Heritage List and in the List of habitats for important birds in Europe (protected areas of the national ecological network within the meaning of the Law on Biological Diversity).

The reservation is home to 22 rare, vulnerable or endangered species of animals and plants, according to the European Red List of World Endangered Animals and Plants and 149 species according to the Bulgarian Red Book. There are 41 species of mammals, 11 species of reptiles and 10 species of amphibians, 24 species of fish and - the thing for which Srebarna Park is famous - 221 species of birds that nest here. These include the Dalmatian pelican, the pygmy cormorant, the glossy ibis, the Eurasian spoonbill, the mute swan, the purple heron, the white-headed goose, the red-breasted goose, the gray goose, the duck, and the western marsh harrier. Here is the only traditional breeding ground for the great egret. The reservation is also rich in plants. It has reeds and 139 other plant species, of which 13 are rare and protected from extinction. There are endemic species of frogs, willows and many more.

The floating reed islands (plauri) are another interesting thing that can be seen in Lake Srebarna. These islands, called "kochki" by the local population, never sink because

they follow the vertical movement of water. This makes life easier for the birds that live on the lake, because they make their nests on these moving islands.

In January 2018, eagles were also observed on the territory of the reservation. Raptors use the reserve as a food base. Birds eat fish, geese and small ducks. Sometimes they steal prey from other birds, such as ospreys. They also watch birds diving underwater. Eagles nest in old, tall trees around ponds.

In Srebarna there is also a museum of natural history, where you can see stuffed specimens of the lake's fauna. Another interesting attraction is the possibility for tourists to watch the birds through a video camera located on the lake. An ecological road is also created around the reservation, where visitors can enjoy the pleasant view from the specially built observation gazebos or relax on the leisure meadows.

The Ciocănești Ostrov / Romania is an island located on the Danube, near the locality of the same name. It was declared a natural reservation, representing a special avifauna protection area that occupies an area of 206.7 ha. It contains freshwater habitats with protected vegetation and fauna species. Only research, ecotourism and education activities are allowed within the reservation.

The Haralambie Ostrov / Romania is a small island located on the Danube. It has been declared a natural reservation and occupies an area of 44.9 ha. The reservation is part of the biogeographical region - steppe, in the floodplain ecoregion of the Danube. It contains freshwater habitats with protected vegetation and fauna species. The softwood forest is in a process of regeneration on more than 50% of the island's surface. Old elm trees are upstream of the island.

The Hawk Ostrov / Romania is a small island located on the Danube, near the locality of Dichiseni. It is a natural reservation within the biogeographical-steppe region, in the Danube floodplain ecoregion that occupies an area of 20.1 ha. It contains freshwater habitats with protected vegetation and fauna species. Here the softwood willow riparian forest dominates.

The Ciornuleasa Forest / Romania, forest reservation from Bărăganul Mostiștei with an area of 73.2 ha, a unique forest type in Bărăgan area due to the richness of tree vegetation species and the valuable hunting fund existing here (rabbits, wild boars, deer, pheasants). The forest is an attraction for hunters.

The Caiafele and Moroiu forests / Romania, wildlife natural reservations (15 km south of the Cernavodă Bridge). In these floodplain forests (unique in our country) there are old willows, secular poplars and lianas. Forests are important nesting areas for various birds (some of them under the protection of the law).

The Danube meadow / Romania located at a distance of 11 km from Călărași, is the main recreational area. From here you can organize boat trips to Balta Ialomiței, where fishing and hunting are practiced.

3.2. Anthropic attractions

The historical monument Mânăstirea, the Mânăstirea commune / Romania - historical monument of orthodox cult, located in the disappeared old city of Wallachia, Cornăţel. It was built in 1648 by Prince Matei Basarab.

The historical monument Frunzăneşti Monastery / Romania - founded by the boyar Radu Dudescu, built in 1732. The architectural complex consists of the church, the walls of the monastery and the cellars of the Dudescu family. It is known in the literature as "Small Văcăreşti".

The Plătăreşti Monastery (1646) / Romania, founded by Matei Basarab - **Plătăreşti commune**. It is an Orthodox monastery, located in Plătăreşti commune, Călăraşi County, at short distance from Bucharest.

The Negoieşti Monastery (1649) / Romania, founded by Matei Basarab - **Şoldani commune**

20 km from Olteniţa, on D.N. 4, at the entrance to the village of Negoieşti, on the left side, there is the most important historical monument in Călăraşi County - the Negoieşti Monastery, founded by Prince Matei Basarab. Over 360 years ago, Prince Matei Basarab built a real cathedral here, with a height of 31 meters, a length of 18 meters and a width of over 7 meters. The thickness of the church wall is over 1 meter, and in some places it exceeds 2.5 meters. In Negoieşti, near Olteniţa, Prince Matei Basarab had a summer residence between 1640 and 1650, where he met the Princely Divan, issued royal deeds and received ambassadors, the locality functioning as a true capital of Wallachia. The passing of the years, the elements of the weather and the earthquake of 1977 have left their mark on the spectacular place.

Currently, a project is underway which consists in restoring the church, changing the 3 towers on the church, restoring the painting, restoring the surrounding walls, the bell tower, building a monastic house, a tourist information point, arranging a parking lot with 52 places, drilling a deep well and a sewage treatment plant.

By restoring this monument of national heritage, Negoieşti will become an important point on the map of cultural-religious tourism. It will be for Oltenita as the Cernica Monastery is for Bucharest.

Thousands of European tourists who come on the Danube by cruise ships and dock in Oltenita, then taking the road to Bucharest, in buses that, between the Port of Oltenita and the capital, now make no stops, will be able to stop in Negoieşti to see a monument heritage specific to the 17th century, with a well-defined architectural style and representative of medieval religious art and architecture in Romania.

The Museum of the Lower Danube, Călăraşi / Romania. It was founded in 1951 and houses in a building an architectural monument from the late 19th century precious collections of prehistoric art, which exhibits over 1000 pieces, being the only museum in

Eastern Europe that has a large number of exhibits from prehistoric times. It includes three sections: archeology, ethnography-art and restoration.

The Coslogeni Pond / Romania - working point in Clinci, Roseți, Dichiseni commune. Neolithic settlement, Bolintineanu culture, 5th millennium BC Tumulus of Early Bronze Age, 3rd millennium BC Settlement belonging to several historical periods (Neolithic, Bronze Age and Daco-Getae). The Neolithic settlement belongs to the Bolintineanu culture (6th century BC) and is one of the most important prehistoric settlements in Romania. The Bronze Age is represented by a mound tomb. The Daco-Getic civilization is represented by several open settlements and an incineration necropolis.

Măriuța- At Movilă-Măriuța Village, **Belciugatele commune / Romania**. Eneolithic settlement and necropolis, from the Gumelnița culture, 4th century BC.

Sultana – Malu Roșu, Sultana Village, **Mănăstirea Commune / Romania**. Eneolithic settlement, Gumelnița culture, 4th millennium BC. The settlement of Sultana - Malu Roșu is one of the most interesting resorts belonging to the Gumelnița Culture. Research on this site began 80 years ago. One of the greatest discoveries of recent years has recently been made: a house set on fire 6,000 years ago, in which more than 150 ceramic vessels, 300 stone / flint tools and ornaments were found.

Căscioarele - Căscioarele village, **Căscioarele commune / Romania**. The only settlement of the Gumelnița culture in Romania, fully researched by the researcher Vladimir Dumitrescu. Neo-Eneolithic settlement complex, 5th-4th millennium BC.

Gălățui village, Alexandru Odobescu commune, Movila Berzei point / Romania

The archeological resort belonging to the Neolithic period is located at the end of the bridge towards Bogata, over Gălățui lake, on the high terrace of the eastern shore, in the immediate vicinity of Movila Berzei (on some maps Movila Verde or Movila Coteț), from which it is separated by a valley. The unique landscape includes a fauna and flora characteristic of Lake Gălățui, known for the therapeutic qualities and purity of its waters, called in an older times "the blue lake". In the immediate vicinity of the Neolithic settlement, Sarmatian archeological materials were discovered (2nd-4th centuries). The stratigraphy of the Neolithic settlement is as follows:

- Bolintineanu level (6th-5th millennium BC)
- Boian Giulești level (5th millennium BC)
- Boian Giulești level (4th millennium BC).

The most important construction is represented by the sanctuary with appreciable dimensions for this age. The building had round windows and massive adobe walls with white and red paint marks. The entire construction was erected on a platform of adobe and beams. Fragments of a miniature sanctuary were discovered under the platform and even embedded in it. Inside there were several quadrilateral ledges, two hearths with a high threshold, and in the center a square pillar. In addition to the pieces of furniture, a large amount of luxuriantly decorated vessels and two fragmentary anthropomorphic statuettes were discovered.

Păcuiul lui Soare / Romania

In the northeastern part of the island Păcuiul lui Soare, which splits the waters of the Danube from the Ostrov commune to the front of the Derwent hill, are the ruins of a fortress. Of the initial surface, of approximately 5 ha, probably describing a rectangular shape, only a part is preserved today, the western area of the fortress being covered by the Danube waters.

The preserved part of the island fortress is bordered in the southeast by another wall, whose length measures 240m, on a height of 5-6m, with a width between 4.20 m and 6 m, built in the "blocking" system, supported on an oak substructure. The external fortifying elements are represented by the gate, the port installation and the towers.

The gate, arranged on the northeast side, is a rectangular tower (14.70 x 10.50 m), paved with large stone slabs, actually representing a platform - foundation, with one or two floors, with two entrances (one, exterior, of grate type and a second, interior, arranged in the thickness of the enclosure wall, in this area keeping the starts of a vault from stone blocks); the access to the first floor was made of stone steps built in the curtain to the west of the gate.

The Demetriade House, Călărași / Romania

The building was built in 1888 by G. Demetriad after a project similar to that of the building located in Călărași, str. Sloboziei no. 18, which belonged to his friend Athanase Petrescu. From the date of construction, the building had the function of a single-family home, then in the 50s and 60s of the last century it functioned as a kindergarten, currently being the administrative headquarters of the Alexandru Odobescu County Library and the Children's Section of the library.

From a stylistic point of view, the building is in line with the neoclassical architecture, like most examples of civil architecture in Călărași municipality.

In 2020, the Călărași County Council began the rehabilitation works of the monument. The new "Demetriade House" will function as a section of the Museum of the Lower Danube for Natural Sciences and will host original exhibitions of different species of birds and insects from the avifauna of the Danube region.

The Orthodox Cathedral dedicated to "St. Nicholas" (1838) – Călărași municipality; The Volna (1856) - Călărași municipality and "Sf. Nicolae" - Oltenița Churches;

The Oltenița Archaeological Museum / Romania was organized in the years 1970 - 1971, being known mainly due to the objects belonging to the Gumelnița culture. It owns over 15,000 museum pieces represented by flint, clay, marble and bone tools, made of copper and gold. The museum presents achievements of contemporary artists: Al. Severin, Gheorghe Stănescu, C. Baci, Aflorii Elena, Cici Constantinescu; The "Gh. M. Vasilescu" Memorial Museum.

The building of the former Tribunal, today the Museum of Archeology and History (Oltenița / Romania, 1925, architect I. Cernescu.

The Prefecture Palace (1897), Călărași / Romania. Monument of secular architecture. Construction in neoclassical style, with concrete foundation, pressed brick walls, was built between June 1895 - January 1898 by the Italian entrepreneur Giuseppe D. Ciconi, according to the plans drawn up by the city's engineer, Ion Socolescu.

Călărași City Hall / Romania - monument of secular architecture. Built between 1886 and 1887, according to the plans of the architect Ion Socolescu, on the site of the old inn of the Epitropy of Colțea Hospital, in the city center.

The Durostorum Fortress, Silistra / Bulgaria

The fortress, built in the early 6th century, is one of the most powerful military defense facilities, unmatched in the field of late ancient or early Byzantine fortification.

The objective is renovated, preserved and maintained by the local authorities of Silistra. One can see vestiges erected by Prince Boris I after the conversion of the Bulgarians to Christianity. Admirable is the old gate and the city walls, as well as the basilica in the complex.

There is already implemented a local, cultural-historical touristic circuit, which includes Silistra and Dobrich, which includes the fortress as well, but also other cultural routes, implemented through projects of the cross-border region of the Danube, which presents the old town. The aspects presented below are also revealed during the guided tours.

The first written evidence of the existence of the city-fortress is the order of Emperor Trajan, in 106, to move the XI Claudia Legion from Pannonia to Durostorum. This attests to the fact that the city already existed as a solid fortress. For almost three centuries, the legion remained a striking force against barbarian peoples from the North.

Durostorum became a city with autonomous management and a municipality in 169, during the reign of Emperor Marcus Aurelius. In the second century, the city experienced a strong development, as an administrative, economic and important customs center. Large and beautiful public buildings, temples, basilicas, private baths and dwellings, marble statues and bas-reliefs are built in the squares; water pipes are also built. The Carpians end up conquering the city, robbing it and enslaving the inhabitants. Durostorum ends up ruined.

At the end of the 3rd century - beginning of the 4th century, a castle was built, which together with the existing legionary castrum, represents the second defense belt. Probably, in the middle of the 5th century, during the invasions of the Huns, the fortress was destroyed and, at the beginning of the 6th century, a new fortress was built, the edges of which coincide with those of the old fortress. This one has a polygonal plan.

Approximately in the year 590, the Slavs ("severii") settled here. They give a new name to the city - Drastar, and the city becomes rich and prosperous. Caravans arrived on the roads of the North and West, and on the river - ships loaded with fur, honey, wax, salt from the Carpathians and animals from Wallachia, to be shipped to Pliska and Constantinople. In the defense walls are discovered 4 solid towers, triangular and 4 pentagonal towers, each 12 m from each other. The foundations of the wall, with a depth of 3 m and a width of 3.80-3.90 m, are built of broken, small and medium stones, semi-processed, arranged in horizontal, regular rows. The binder used was lime, river sand and crushed construction pottery. Only at the northern defense wall, the construction is entirely made of stone and has no tower.

On the south wall is also discovered the early gate from the 6th century, flanked by two almond-shaped towers. The construction is very solid; due to this, the castle lasted and functioned until the beginning of the 9th century, when it was destroyed during the Russo-Turkish war.

The city played an important role in the following centuries. It became a bishopric seat and was recognized as the first of the episcopal cities in Bulgaria. In the 12th century, the city became the metropolitanate center.

The Turkish fortress Medzihidi Tabia / Bulgaria

It is a Turkish fort, a fortress south of Silistra, significant during the Crimean and Russian-Turkish wars, built in 1841-1853 by the efforts of 300 forcibly employed Bulgarians - stone cutters from Silistra and builders brought from Dryanovo.

The fortress was built to consolidate the Danube cities when the water became a natural border of the Ottoman Empire. It is the only fortress preserved entirely inside and outside from Bulgaria, during the Ottoman rule; a visiting point in the same cultural route next to the fortress of Durostorum.

The Regional Museum of History, Silistra / Bulgaria

This museum preserves the history of Silistra, from antiquity to contemporary times. Here you will find unique values of medieval Roman and Bulgarian culture, which are important both nationally and worldwide. The museum has an archaeological and an ethnographic exhibition. The museum building was built between 1923-1924, as a branch of the National Bank of Romania in the city, which at that time had been conquered by Romania.

Since 1990, it houses the **archaeological exhibition** of the History Museum. The museum is located in a garden with a lapidarium, on an area of 400 m². Its main fund contains 41,952 inventory and ancillary items - of which 18,721 inventory items. The collection presents monuments from prehistoric, ancient and medieval times. Among the unique exhibits are worth mentioning:

- Roman stone sundial, appreciated as the most impressive object discovered on Bulgarian lands;

- Roman sports helmet with griffins;
- Treasury of precious metals found in tombs from the Roman era and the Middle Ages;
- The hearse of a Roman noble magistrate, dated to the end of the 3rd century;
- The Roman type statue "puditsitiya", elaborated in Durostorum, unique for the former Roman possessions;
- A gold ring from one of the first Christians, from the end of the 3rd century;
- Gold jewelry collections, dating from the 3rd-4th and 13th- 14th centuries;
- The column with the name of Khan Omurtag;
- The seals of important Bulgarian and Byzantine rulers and aristocrats;
- Golden ornaments of the princesses (Despoția and Despina) from Drăstăr, from the 14th century;
- Collections of coins and treasures from the 4th century BC. e. n., until the 15th century AD;
- One of the largest collections of medieval crosses, from the 10th-13th centuries, etc.

The ethnographic collection of the museum covers an area of 300 m². It contains instruments, traditional clothing, comedy masks and ritual objects that reveal the life and culture of the ethnographic group from Dobrogea to Silistra, from the middle of the 19th century to the beginning of the 20th century. A costume of the indigenous population is also on display. The museum is part of the cultural routes for touristic promotion.

The Roman villa, Silistra / Bulgaria

Near the ancient fortress Durostorum, in the 2nd century, a complex urban villa ("villa urbana") was built, in which lived a rich Roman aristocratic family. At the invasion of the Goths at the end of the 3rd century and the middle of the 4th century, the building was destroyed and burned. In the 3rd-4th centuries, it had undergone expansion and over-construction. With the restoration of the city, a grand public building (17 m x 20 m) was built on its ruins with an official hall, completed by an apse and auxiliary rooms. The plan of this public building respects the architectural and construction principles of the residences of city governors and bishops from the 4th-6th centuries. It is supposed to be part of the palace of the Dorostolian bishops. To the west of the villa was a large episcopal basilica. A private bathroom of moderate size was also discovered. The objective is part of another touristic route⁴⁶ to promote the cross-border region of the Danube, between Romania and Bulgaria.

The Roman tomb, Silistra / Bulgaria

The most popular ancient monument in the country and abroad in Durostorum - Silistra, is the tomb with murals, discovered in 1942. It is considered an emblematic masterpiece of late ancient civilization in the middle of the 4th century.

The tomb has a rectangular chamber and a semi-cylindrical vault. It is made of semi-processed stones, glued with pink mortar, with a vault built of bricks. It is oriented east - west and has the dimensions of 3.30 m x 2.60 m, with a height of 2.30 m. The entrance is

⁴⁶ <http://danubelimes-robg.eu/index.php/ro/despre-ruta/harta-rutei>

from the east, being flanked by three large stone slabs, and the floor is covered with bricks. The walls are plastered with lime solution, mixed with plaster on which, before drying, the colors of the murals were applied, in the fresco of seco technique.

The rich decoration with murals (geometric figures, animals and people, hunting scenes, two couples and their maids) bears the characteristic signs of the time of Emperor Constantine. It is suspected that the talented painter who executed them came from the eastern provinces of the Empire (probably Egypt or Syria). Researchers believe that the owner left the city during the invasion of the Goths at the end of the 4th century, due to which the tomb was not used according to its destination. It is another objective included in the border touristic route.

The Ayazmoto Historic Area, Ruyno / Bulgaria

Ayazmoto Demir Baba Tekke in the village of Ruyno in the district of Silistra, in the municipality of Dulovo, is unique, with its fame as a center of worship for three different religions, 3000 years ago. It is equally revered by Alevis, Sunnis and Christians. It is hard to know which God is the owner of a canvas or a piece of paper with the wishes written on it, tied to a metal grid above the holy arch with healing water, praying to. People of different religions drink this water from the same pot. And with equal confidence they hope that the Almighty will give them one and the same: health, love and prosperity.

The area is linked to the residence of the Muslim saint Demir Baba, literally "The Iron Father", from the middle of the 16th century, as described in his biography "Vilyaetname" and has a connection with "kazalbashite" as an ethnic group. At the foot of the area, there is a healing spring "ayazmo", which gave the name of the town. The main attraction is ayazmo - a small cave with a slit on the bottom of running water, which appeared after Demir Baba threw his sword into the rock.

The cave is quite shallow, but the wall on the left cracked and formed a fireplace, in the climbers' hole, through which it could enter the upper part. At one end is clearly a visible tomb room with a carved place. At the bottom, you can see the top side of the fireplace, through which you can enter. According to a legend, Demir Baba later left the cave near the village of Ruyno and settled in the Sveshtari valley, near Isperih, where his stone tomb is located. There is also a cult for him and a place of worship.

The "Holy Trinity" Orthodox Church, Alfatar / Bulgaria

The "Holy Trinity" Orthodox Church is a cultural monument. The church was built in 1846 and is a stone building with three naves and an apse on the east wall. A small shelter is built on the west entrance.

Such architectural additions of the facade are not common in the field of architecture for our churches, which determines the uniqueness of the objective. It is worth noting the decoration of the walls with numerous blind arcades. It was found that under the current plaster are unique murals in nature and in production, which were covered by the plaster of the walls after the building burned in the second half of the 19th century. The decorations carved on the throne and the door of the iconostasis also draw the attention.

In the church are kept the original icons of the Tryavna School of the painters Dosyu Kosyuv and Angel Dosyuv - year 1846. The icons of the Virgin Mary, Holy Trinity, St. Dimitar, St. Haralambiy and John the Baptist are exhibited.

"The Holy Apostles Peter and Paul" Metropolitan Cathedral and the Coffin with the relics of St. Dasie of Durostorum / Bulgaria

The monument is 429 km from Sofia in **Silistra**. The Metropolitan Cathedral is built after the Crimean War, by craftsmen from the Dryanovo School of Architecture, by the famous Bulgarian artist, Prof. Kozhuharov. During his visit to Bulgaria in 2001, Pope John Paul II donated part of the sacred relics of St. Dasie to the Christian community in Silistra. The relics (the right humerus) are on display today in the marble sarcophagus that is kept in the church. These are the only authentic relics of a holy martyr from early Christian times discovered so far. Between 303 and 307, twelve saints were martyred in this region. Saint Dasie is one of them. He confessed to Christianity and refused to attend pagan holidays in the city, for which he was tortured and beheaded.

The church was built on the site of the "St. George" Greek Church in 1810 - which was a low building and below ground level. Fundraising was done for the new church in 1859. After several battles between Bulgarians and Greeks, in 1860 the building was erected by Master Stoiko of Drianovo. For a while there was a small school where Sava Dobroplodni taught.

The building has three naves, a small narthex and an apse. The walls are made of stone and the ceiling is made of wood. The iconostasis is carved in wood by craftsmen from the Debar School. Most of the icons in the temple are Russian. And the details and the way of decoration on the outside of the walls, with the carved frieze surrounding the building, the architecture of the west facade with the pediment folded like a ribbon show influences of Russian art.

The paintings are created by the Bulgarian muralist and scenographer Kozhuharov, who also worked on the murals in the city hall of Kunino, the cathedral of St. Dimitar in Stara Zagora, the frescoes of the churches "St. Nicolae The Miracle Worker" from Varna, "St. Ivan Rilski" from Târgoviște and "St. Petka" from Ruse. The writing style is under the influence of the Italian Renaissance and the European Secessionist Movement.

The Diocese of Durostol was among the first dioceses to appear in the Bulgarian lands, formed in the year 390, approximately. Its diocesan center was Silistra - namely, as we know the ancient Durostorum, known in history as Dorostol or Diristur or Drista or Drustur. The first bishop was Avksentij - a disciple of Bishop Ulphilas. Bishop Damian of Durostorum became the first Bulgarian patriarch, pastoring for 44 years, between 927 and 971. In 1871, the Bulgarian church and national council in Istanbul linked the diocese of Silistra and the diocese of Cherven into a single entity - the Dorostol-Cherven diocese.⁴⁷

⁴⁷ Mediapool.bg, October 13, 2003, Sinodat-Silistra-News.

In memory of the twenty-one holy martyrs who shed their blood for the faith in this region, on July 9 and 10, 2016, the First Council of the Holy Martyrs of Dorostol was organized. An icon specially dedicated for the 21 martyrs was created; ceremonies and services were marked, honored by Hierodeacon Justin, a monk at the Zograf Monastery on Mount Athos.

In 2013-2014, major renovations were made with the help of donations. The bell tower, candlesticks with suction systems to avoid damage to icons and electronic bells with 60 songs. This religious monument is included on the alternative tourism route developed a few years ago through cooperation in the Călărași-Silistra cross-border region.

The Ethnographic Museum for Fishing on the Danube, Tutrakan / Bulgaria

Tutrakan is an invariably fishing town, famous for knitting captains' fishing nets and their workshops. Whole generations and families have survived having this old profession.

Over time, Tutrakan survived into the 19th century, through an exclusive, original and unique activity for Bulgaria. The city is a stable fishing center on the Danube. At the beginning of the 20th century, Tutrakan had more than 5,000 fishermen, with more than 1,000 boats. This occupation creates an atmosphere in the city, which is specific to other localities on the Danube as well.

The Ethnographic Museum for Fishing on the Danube also includes the construction of boats and was opened in 1974, presenting the activity of the countries along the Danube River. The museum was built to carry on the spiritual culture and lifestyle of the Bulgarian communities in the fishing villages on the Danube. The exhibition is arranged in seven rooms and two interiors, in a building-monument of culture, from the beginning of the twentieth century.

The original tools of antiquity are presented in chronological order, used in modern equipment and facilities. Original bone and copper rods, harpoons, clay weights for fishing nets, iron sapkani, rudders, various types of nets, made of vegetable fibers by Tutrakan fishermen, such as: orie, difan, yang, laspernik, chigarnitsa, setka, skombrelnitsa, ukleynik, postovol, etc. can be admired. In addition to the net equipment, tools with fishing hooks are also presented.

The photos and graphics presented explain the method of fishing in the villages along the Lower Danube. In addition to the tools on display, visitors discover the public organizations of fishermen, accounting, household habits, and coordinates of their spiritual culture.

Boat construction has been developing in this region since Roman times. In the old Transmariska castle there was a workshop for repairing ships. In the last years of the 19th century, Tutrakan boats were exported to Romania, Serbia, Austria and other countries.

The Art Gallery, Silistra / Bulgaria

It was built between 1890-1891. By rehabilitating the building, all spaces can be used in optimal conditions for the exhibition and preservation of works of art, including those resulting from the project "Common Creative Camp in Snebarna", but also the development of the cultural and artistic events.

The Silistra Art Gallery is located in the former Pedagogical School in the city, built in 1892. Over 1500 works of art (painting, graphics, sculpture, etc.) are exhibited by the great Bulgarian artists - Vladimir Dimitrov - the Master, Deciko Uzunov, Zlatyu Boyagiev and others.

The gallery was built in 1892 for a pedagogical school, designed by the famous Viennese architect Edwin Petritzki in a style of late secession. It is currently a cultural monument of local importance. On the roof there is an 18th-century clock, produced by the Czech company Heinz-Prague, with four dials, each indicating the four directions of the world.

For 46 years, the gallery occupies an important place in the cultural life of Silistra and is transformed into a real museum of fine arts, along with other similar institutions in northeastern Bulgaria - Varna, Dobrich, Razgrad, Târgoviște and Ruse. The Silistra Gallery boasts works by artists such as Stoyan Venev, Vladimir Dimitrov - The Master, Zlatyu Boyagiev, Deciko Uzunov, Ilia Petrov, Nenko Balkan, Alexander Poplilov and other big names in Bulgarian painting. Among the representatives of modern currents we find Svetlin Rusev, Dimitar Ostojic, Rumens Skorcev, Lyuben Dimanov, Peter Ciuklev and many others.

The Room 13 on the second floor is very popular, where, among the works in the permanent collection, various cultural events are regularly organized - recitals, chamber concerts and authors presenting new works. The Silistra Art Gallery has established itself as a veritable art museum in Bulgaria and an important center in the cultural life of Silistra.

The Ethnographic Museum, Silistra / Bulgaria

The Silistra Ethnographic Museum was established in 1967. It is housed in a building dating from the mid-19th century - a former Turkish police building. The exhibition area is located on an area of 300 square meters, in 10 rooms. It consists of artifacts that illustrate the lifestyle and culture of the population in the region of Dobrogea and Silistra from the mid-19th century to the early 20th century.

The main collection of the museum contains approximately 50,000 valuable cultural and historical objects. The main activities are the preservation, exhibition and promotion of movable cultural assets, tangible and intangible cultural heritage, as well as those related to the study of the history of the city and Dobrogea.

In 2012, the archaeological exhibition of the museum was completely renovated, with a copy of the Roman chariot and a model of the medieval city.

During 2014-2015, during the excavation works to replace the city's sewerage network, more than 30 archeological sites were discovered and studied - mainly ancient and medieval, including the episcopal and patriarchal basilica, the unknown Fortress System of the ancient Durostorum, the Ottoman fortification system and ten representative Roman buildings.

The Museum of Natural History in the Srebarna Biosphere Park / Bulgaria

The Museum of Natural History presents the rich biodiversity of the Srebarna Biosphere Park and is located 2 kilometers south of the Danube and 16 kilometers west of the city of Silistra.

The park includes Lake Srebarna and its surroundings - about 660 hectares of guarded area and a buffer zone of about 540 hectares. There is a natural history museum in the reservation, where stuffed specimens of animals living in the area are exhibited.

The Srebarna Natural Reservation Museum is completely renovated under the European Environment Program in 2014. Today there is a new roof, completely renovated, and the carpentry, furniture, showcases and color photographs with materials in Bulgarian and English are changed. Tourists can watch binoculars, tubes and video surveillance with the pelican colony and all the inhabitants of the lake. In one salon there is an exhibition hall with drawings for children dedicated to "Ecoforum Srebarna", which has a history of 25 years.⁴⁸

3.3. Events

Smoked Olives Island / Romania

It is the only electronic music festival in Romania that takes place on an island, located on the Danube, on the border between Romania and Bulgaria, near the ferry crossing point between Călărași and Silistra.

Launched in 2010, the festival started as a nature party for a group of friends. It evolved from one year to the next, becoming a complex event, with several scenes and various artists. The festival pays special attention to nature protection and invites the public to discover the wild places on the Danube, considered "true natural sanctuaries".

The "Black & White Motor Fest" Festival / Călărași, Romania

It is an event dedicated to enthusiasts for motorcycles and rock music, which takes place in the Albatros complex The 4th Bridge.

⁴⁸ More information is available on the project's website. <http://tourism-silistra-calarasi.com/>

The “Hora mare” International Folklore Festival / Călărași, Romania

An event of great tradition, which has been organized since 1995, bringing on stage artists from around the world. At the 2019 edition, eight folk ensembles from eight countries accepted the invitation to promote their culture and dances: Argentina; Armenia; Bulgaria; France; Georgia; Italy; Lithuania; Serbia.

The International Children's Dance Festival: "Tomorrow's peace begins with today's friendship", Slistra / Bulgaria

It is the largest festival held in the city and its surroundings, which attracts guests from around the world, with a rich program:

- the clubs parade;
- concerts;
- dance learning workshops from different nations;
- "Miss and Mr. Festival".

The festival includes all dance ensembles from Silistra and abroad. It takes place with groups from Ukraine, Serbia, Georgia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Romania, India, Russia, Armenia, Turkey and Slovakia.

The Watermelon Honey Festival Karaomur / Bulgaria

The event focuses on the demonstration of how the melon honey is prepared. It takes place in August in the village of Smilets, Silistra, Bulgaria. Preparations for the festival begin in the early spring, when the watermelon is sown. Then it is followed by the picking with a song and painted carts. The hobs are buried in the ground and the hard work begins. The watermelons are separated, then the sweet liquid is filtered, from which, after long hours of stirring and cooking, an elixir of watermelon is obtained, called by the locals "majun".

The festive program includes competitive workshops:

- "The rolling pin is singing"- handmade pies;
- "Culinary fantasies with watermelon" - carving jack-o'-lanterns within watermelons;
- "Attractive review of folk costumes and jewelry from children aged 0-10 years" - a parade of original authentic costumes.

The Culinary Festival: "Vesela Dobrudjei" / Bulgaria

It takes place in October in the village of Srebarna, Silistra municipality, Bulgaria. The festival brings together master chefs, authentic and amateur. There are over 500 dishes prepared according to traditions and traditional recipes, with over 190 participants from Bulgaria and Romania. The event includes: cooking contests, creative workshops and cooking workshops for children, as well as a rich folk program.

3.4. The legal framework regarding the preservation, protection and capitalization of the cultural heritage⁴⁹

For Romania:

- Law 422/2001 for the protection of historical monuments (republished). It clarifies the term "protection" as "the set of measures of a scientific, legal, administrative, financial, fiscal and technical nature, designed to ensure the identification, research, inventory, classification, recording, conservation (including guarding and maintenance), consolidation, restoration , the capitalization of historical monuments and their socio-economic and cultural integration in the life of local communities".

- Law 5/2000-PATN, Section III - Protected areas. It states that "the urban planning documents and related regulations shall be drawn up in order to establish protected areas and shall include the necessary measures for the protection and preservation of the values of national cultural heritage in those areas".

- Law 451/2002 for the ratification of the European Landscape Convention - Florence, October 20, 2000 (the Council of Europe document on the landscape).

For Bulgaria:

- The Law on Cultural Heritage, in force since 04 / 10 / 2009 (Prom. SG. No 19 of March 13, 2009), defines the general framework for regulating the ownership, registration, research, preservation, restoration, digitization and management of cultural heritage in Bulgaria.

⁴⁹ The analysis and diagnosis of the current situation within the Romania – Bulgaria cross-border area, 2015.

Chapter 4. The SWOT analysis

Strong points

- Geographical location and natural conditions: proximity to the Danube, the attraction of the Danube - Black Sea area;
- The existence of a large number of protected areas (national parks, natural parks and reservations) included in the European Natura 2000 network;
- Proximity to areas with significant demographic concentration;
- The access infrastructure is favorable for the development of tourism, with public transport modalities to and from the localities, which either transit the localities or connect them to each other;
- The existence of an ethnographic and folklore treasure of great originality, with a rich schedule of traditional fairs and folklore events throughout the year;
- Diversity of organic agri-food products, raising awareness and demand for eco-friendly products;
- Rich ethno-gastronomic heritage;
- Reduced (or non-existent) pollution in most rural areas;
- The existence of a traditional cuisine and local / regional specialties;
- The existence of human resources: being an inhabited area all year round, human resources exist; there is no need for relocations for the season;
- Low labor cost;
- Constant development of entrepreneurship and SMEs, strong assets for diversification (agricultural land, human resources, etc.);
- Existence of studies, strategies and concerns for the cross-border cooperation at institutional, political and administrative level, in the previous and current programming period;
- Current trends in domestic, proximity tourism;
- Safety for visitors, absence of public dangers.

Weaknesses

- Lack of a governance structure in tourism at regional level and a constant and institutionally assumed policy on capitalizing the territory on tourism;
- Neglecting the importance of local products and services, concentration in low value-added sectors, activities based on low costs;
- Low level of research and development and innovation and, consequently, fragile link with sustainable development;
- Low capitalization of SMEs, difficult access to finance and information in the hospitality industry, low degree of market sophistication;
- Professionalization of poorly developed hospitality in communities, low adaptability of the workforce and low level of lifelong learning;
- Lack of awareness programs of the possibilities that tourism / hospitality offers for the well-being of communities;

- Incipient environmental degradation and the existence of a low-performance system for waste collection in rural areas and natural areas;
- Insufficiently developed touristic marketing and destination management activities, lack of touristic information / communication, absence of an online promotion system;
- Absence of a regional tourism fair;
- Low number of thematic touristic itineraries and lack of their integrated character;
- Difficulty in communicating with visitors through low level of knowledge of international languages by local communities;
- Lack of cultural training of tourism workers, in terms of cultural and historical heritage;
- Weak / inactive and involved civil society, difficulties in networking (strong individualism and limited presence of coordination).

Opportunities

- Development of a new regional, European brand, in response to the current needs of consumers of local products and services, which include uniqueness, local flavor, territorial identity, anthropic and natural specificity;
- The touristic demand specific to the ecological and rural offer of the Silistra - Călărași region is significant and constant, being influenced by the latest changes in the national and European touristic circulation;
- Diversification of funding sources through European funds for local development in the future financial framework;
- The proximity to Bucharest generates a huge market both for domestic tourism and as the main gateway for foreign tourists;
- Capitalizing through technology of local products and services;
- The existence of minimum services in localities, which favor the development of projects: medical services, primary and secondary education units, banking services - ATMs and waste collection systems, including selective collection;
- The skill and vocation, by tradition, of the locals for the capitalization of the fishery resources;
- Complementarity of local strategies with macro-regional cooperation ones (The Danube Strategy, The Black Sea Strategy, etc.);
- The existence of natural and cultural elements, as a basis for the quality of life, recreation and responsible tourism;
- The transit of localities by visitors can be transformed into an opportunity to determine them to stay longer in the area, in conditions of greater attractiveness;
- The return to the area of people who went to work abroad, especially of educated young people.

Threats

- Postponing the creation of institutional tourism structures, at the level of the region, and the implementation of working mechanisms in communities;
- Lack of technical and financial support for tourism promotion by communities, including inefficient measures to stimulate the development of the HORECA environment;

- Insufficient harmonization of various strategies, programs and projects for the development of human and social capital and poor collaboration between local stakeholders (public and private);
- Lack of good practices in the context of the pandemic;
- Internal and European competition with other regions.
- Lack of ensuring a guaranteed program for crossing the Danube;
- The economic crisis.

Conclusions

Going through the characteristics of the Silistra - Călărași cross-border region and investigating on site the actual state of local communities in the rural and urban areas, as well as of public administrations and various actors involved in tourism, to understand the evolution of this Danube region and local specifics, we focus only on a few key challenges, relevant to the construction of the strategy we will propose.

A possible approach starts from a new vision of the territory, which attributes value to identity, social capital and local natural and cultural heritage, analyzing the relations between local communities, identity and sustainable development policies.

Therefore, special attention should be paid to the notions of local identity and social capital, emphasizing the close link between these factors that refer to the relational domains present in a certain local conjuncture. Such factors can be a precondition for innovation and development, as the territory is not only the place where knowledge and capital accumulate and settle, but also the place where they are renewed, reproduced and expanded dynamically.

The sustainable development through tourism of the Silistra - Călărași region is possible by adhering to a model based on the close link between territory and tourism, in which the socio-economic regeneration of the territory is based on history, tradition and natural potential.

Recently, several areas of Europe (in the same economic and social situation as the Silistra - Călărași region) have activated, including community resources, autonomous ways for local development by asserting the local identity, the natural environment and landscape, the historical and ethno- gastronomic traditions, as well as the cultural and traditional goods.

The economic system of production is not the only element capable of generating income, but is part of a wider local ecosystem of creation, which includes historical and ethnographic heritage, man's relationship with nature, social cohesion and the so-called "social capital". Therefore, there is a need for integrated natural and human resource management policies, stimulating the public-private partnership, activating bottom-up policies, cooperation and consultation measures, new certification and identification tools (brand of the region), organizing hospitality in a diffuse way and with a low environmental

impact (accommodation with breakfast in farms, agro-tourism, etc.), professionalization of human resources.

Finally, it is a vision of the sustainable development of the territory of the region, which offers the traveler / visitor / guest a unique and special approach, strongly linked to the local community and its strong identity, and on the other hand to contain development directions oriented more on increasing the quality of life of the inhabitants and less on accelerating.

Part II. The tourism development strategy

Chapter 5. Vision and strategic objectives

5.1. The long-term vision

The configuration of the Silistra - Călărași region as a unique responsible touristic destination in the landscape of the Danube cross-border area between Romania and Bulgaria, which should generate the increase of the interest of knowing and visiting the area.

It is necessary to increase the degree of professionalism of the resources involved in local development through tourism and to place the local community at the center of touristic and administrative activities.

The Silistra-Călărași area, although not considered a touristic destination, has a number of advantages, which can contribute to its capitalization if properly exploited: the proximity of the Danube and the natural environment, the very old common history and the short distance from tourist-generating areas (ex: Bucharest). However, the differentiating element is the authenticity - the fact that the area is not yet on the usual list of tourist destinations can be a fertile challenge.

5.2. The analysis of the European, national and regional context

Following the Covid-19 pandemic, the European economy will be restructured towards an economic and social model based on the green transition, digital transformation, smart, sustainable and inclusive growth and employment, social and territorial cohesion, health and resilience, policies for the next generation, including education and skills - these being the main directions of action of the Recovery Plan for Europe, adopted in Romania in the form of the National Recovery and Resilience Plan (PNRR).

Although the field of tourism is not one of the areas directly targeted by the reform, many aspects of responsible tourism and sustainable development are among the principles of the new, more inclusive, greener and more digital economic model. In addition, by the Resolution of the Committee on Transport (TRAN) of March 2021 the European Parliament advised the member states of adopting measures in favor of tourism, including a temporary reduction in VAT on touristic services and a recommendation to include tourism among the priority sectors in the recovery plans adopted by the Member States at national level.

The measures proposed at European level respond to a critical situation regarding the unfavorable evolution of tourism due to travel restrictions, which has considerably destabilized the economies of Member States that relied on tourism revenues, such as Greece, Italy or Spain. According to a study commissioned by the European Parliament's Committee on Transport and Tourism in early 2021, around 10% of the EU's Gross Domestic Product comes from tourism, while revenues in this sector fell dramatically in 2020. International tourism collapsed in Europe in 2020, endangering up to 11.7 million jobs, representing 5.6% of the active population of the European Union. Particularly vulnerable are European companies in the tourism sector - 2.4 million companies, 90% of which are small and medium-sized enterprises, which have lost well-trained employees and are facing a liquidity crisis. In this context, the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) estimates that a return to a pre-pandemic level will not be possible before 2025, given that travelers' confidence can be restored.

The same study analyzes the situation of tourism within the European Union, where the lack of coordination between Member States on travel restrictions disrupted the 2020 season. The occupancy rate of European hotels fell by 66.4% in July 2020 compared to the previous year, but the potential of the return rate of the intra-community segment is high, given that, before the pandemic, 85% of European tourists spent their holidays inside the EU, and most destinations did not exceed a radius of 500 km around their place of residence. Moreover, 39% of European citizens expressed their intention to travel to other Member States in the near future, while 41% said they wanted to travel to their country. What stands in their way at this time is the risk of infection and the risk of being forced to remain in quarantine, as well as the arbitrary nature of the restrictions imposed. But all these risks will improve once the crisis is overcome, and in the medium term, domestic tourism is the branch of tourism which will develop the most in the Member States. The reasons behind this new trend have to do both with the lower risks of traveling to one's own country, where the conditions imposed by the authorities are known and quarantine is not mandatory, but also with the diminished incomes of Europeans. Thus, the return of domestic tourism to pre-pandemic levels will happen much sooner than the return of international tourism, it is estimated that by 2022 domestic tourists will be as active as in the past. In addition, the study anticipates the reorientation of domestic tourists' preferences towards greener and closer to nature options, which would reduce their environmental footprint.

In Romania, the pandemic reduced tourism from an economic activity that represented approximately 5% of GDP in 2019 to a decrease of 50% in the number of tourists and 80% in international arrivals. But, having many regions suitable for ecotourism, camping and hiking, we can anticipate that in Romania the domestic and sustainable destinations will develop successfully in the next period, with the potential for businesses developed on this model to last long, with a loyal clientele by providing quality services.

An analysis signed by The Conversation UK estimates that in the near and medium future, post-Covid tourism will no longer revolve around destinations, but around people. Hygiene and hospitality expectations will be higher than before, and services will focus on wellness, health, serenity and harmony. After a long period of restrictions, it is likely that people will want to reconnect with nature, spirituality and disconnect from stress, which will make religious and health-focused tourism flourish.

At regional and local level, the Silistra-Călărași region includes many destinations with significant potential for ecotourism, as well as rural and ethno-cultural destinations and is rich in religious sites and natural reservations, all of which are objectives with a high degree of attractiveness for Romanian and European tourists in the post-pandemic era. Also, with less than 20 enterprises per thousand inhabitants in Călărași County, of which only 3% in the tourism sector, and a maximum of 35 enterprises per thousand inhabitants in Silistra region, the cross-border region has great potential for the development of models of successful business in the field of tourism, especially SMEs.

In this context, the tourist development of the Silistra-Călărași cross-border region is a priority at local and regional level, in order to contribute to the economic recovery following the pandemic and to make use of the significant touristic and economic potential of the area. The return of domestic tourism will be achieved sooner than any other segments of tourism, especially in the field of green and inclusive tourism, which will facilitate the development of local business, human capital and, consequently, the increase the quality of life and standard of living for local people.

5.3. Development objectives and axes

Strategic objective 1: Defining the image of the region by building the destination brand

Specific objective: Increasing opportunities for tourism development

Axis 1: Building an identity of the region focusing on authenticity

Development directions:

- 1. Development of the destination brand Silistra - Călărași under a common name.
- 2. Elaboration of an adequate marketing plan.
- 3. Carrying out the joint communication campaign, with a focus on digitization and online platforms.

Axis 2: Promotion of common touristic products

Development directions:

- 1. Development of touristic itineraries / programs / products / events that reflect the specifics of the communities.
- 2. Connecting the offer of circuits and touristic events with the cultural-architectural aspect of the old heritage buildings, rehabilitated in Călărași and Silistra.
- 3. Interaction between visitors and communities through touristic programs focused on traditional uniqueness and surprise experiences”.

Strategic objective 2: Destination management for the Silistra - Călărași region

Specific objectives

1. Streamlining tourism management and stimulating the Romanian-Bulgarian partnership
2. Development of activities related to tourism

Axis 3: Development and strengthening of the action capacity of the destination

Development directions:

- 1. Establishment of the Touristic Destination Management Organization (OMDT).
- 2. Establishment of the Permanent Touristic Observatory (an professional instrument).
- 3. Support provided for professionals to maintain and increase their performance qualities.
- 4. Application of the principles of responsible tourism.
- 5. Strengthening partnerships with stakeholders and selecting sources of funding.

Effects:

- Amelioration of threats and risks in the destination area.
- Capitalization and improvement of infrastructure.
- Fundamental change in the availability and transparency of destination assertion data.

Axis 4: Transforming the targeted area into a "tourism pole"

Development directions:

- 1. Development of appropriate communication and promotion activities.
- 2. Emphasis on the originality of the places.
- 3. Implementation of original touristic projects, which will attract visitors.

Effects:

- Fluidization of domestic touristic flows (tourist movement on the territory of the destination).
- Increasing the attractiveness of the destination.
- Familiarization with the touristic market with a special destination.

5.4. Horizontal Axes

The principles of responsible tourism and productive hospitality are linked to the core values of the European Union, included in the Horizontal Principles set out in the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union and in the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union. Thus, through the sustainable development of tourism, the economic growth of the Silistra-Călărași cross-border region is ensured based on social inclusion, ecology and sustainability.

The sustainable development of tourism in this region aims to protect the environment, by protecting and preserving the natural heritage and increasing attention to ecology, in order to prevent and limit aggression on the environment, including compliance with the 'polluter pays' principle, preserving biodiversity and respecting nature, both in protected areas, as well as outside them. Moreover, in order to help mitigate and adapt to climate change, the Strategy aims to make efficient use of resources in tourism development and the regional economy and increase resilience to disasters, by aligning the underdeveloped tourism sector with the European standards and maximizing social and natural potential of the region.

At the same time, the priority given to the community and the locals creates the premises for equal opportunities, gender equality, non-discrimination, as well as greater accessibility for people with disabilities. Local people will benefit from training, new jobs, new opportunities in the tourism sector and increased living standards.

5.5. Correlation with the strategic objectives

The strategy is linked to the following European, national and regional strategy documents:

- Priorities for economic and social development of Călărași County in 2020 – The Action Plan for 2020 to achieve in Călărași County the objectives of the Government Program 2020, by contributing to the achievement of tourism objectives: promoting domestic tourism, supporting the resolution of the labor force crisis in tourism through actions, together with the private environment; capitalizing on and promoting the tourist potential of Călărași County; increasing the middle class by qualifying the labor force in the field of tourism and increasing the number of foreigners who visit the county annually; supporting the development of tourism infrastructure in a coherent way, taking into account the protection of sensitive ecosystems, as well as the needs manifested by the county tourism market; developing localities with touristic potential that can capitalize on protected natural areas and other resources of the county and supporting the SME sector; supporting the business environment, by encouraging the establishment and development of micro-enterprises, as well as by stimulating the activity of innovation and development; development of local human capital and identification of investment opportunities at the local level by the business environment, regional and local public authorities.
- The sustainable development strategy of Călărași county for the period 2021 - 2027, by increasing the economic competitiveness based on human capital; bridging the gap between communities; economic development and innovation; development of the service business environment; development of tourism and related services; environmental protection and sustainable management of the territory; development of cultural and leisure infrastructure.
- The European Commission's tourism policy for the period 2014 - 2020, by creating new jobs among young people; increasing the resilience of the economy in times of crisis; supporting the competitiveness, sustainability and quality of tourism at regional and local level; development of natural, historical and cultural capital; increasing the attractiveness of cities and regions, as well as developing, innovating and diversifying products and services for visitors.
- The cohesion policy of the European Parliament and the Council for the period 2021-2027, through regional development focused on innovation, digitalization, economic transformation and support for small and medium-sized enterprises; combating climate change through the practice of ecology, supporting the quality of jobs, skills, social inclusion and supporting local development strategies and sustainable urban development.
- Romania's development strategy in the next 20 years, between 2016 and 2035, through the Project No. 8 "The European Danube Project / The Danube National Strategy", through the objectives of environmental protection, agriculture, tourism and culture.
- Romania-Bulgaria Interreg VI-A Program, financed by the European Regional Development Fund, by improving the border area; development of the twin cities of Călărași-Silistra; reducing economic disparities in the cross-border region; digitalization and innovation; increased development and competitiveness of SMEs; climate adaptation and the

implementation of green technologies; increasing labor market efficiency; improving access to the labor market; promoting social inclusion and reducing poverty; cultural development and the promotion of cross-border cooperation; economic diversification, environmental protection and tourism exploitation; protection of the natural areas and reservations; climate change mitigation; investment in human capital; reducing income inequalities; deeper integration of the 2 regions; supporting the activities of tourism, related sectors and industries and developing skills in the field of tourism.

- Sustainable tourism development strategy in Bulgaria for the period 2014 - 2030.
- Romania's Tourism Development Strategy 2019 - 2030, Report on Rapid Assessment of the Tourism Sector and Strategic Action Plan, by supporting job creation in local communities in the field of tourism, including for vulnerable groups such as women, young people and people from rural environment; through the sustainable development of tourism; increasing the share of tourism in the economy; supporting innovative development in the tourism sector; increasing the quality of experiences and services at the level of touristic destinations.
- Joint strategy for sustainable territorial development of the Romania-Bulgaria cross-border area 2018, through the contribution to the Eastern Danube regional brand; implementation of an integrated information and services system for tourists in the cross-border area; promoting and capitalizing on the cross-border landscape and developing cultural touristic routes and areas.
- The National Smart Specialization Strategy SNSI 2021-2027 and The National Strategy for Research, Development and Innovation SNCDI 2021 - 2027, by creating a stimulating environment for private sector initiative, competitiveness and supporting smart specialization in tourism.
- The EU Strategy for the Danube Region SUERD, by promoting culture and tourism, direct people-to-people contacts, protecting the environment and increasing prosperity in the Danube region.

Chapter 6. Target groups and communication channels

Strategic target group associated with strategic objective 1 (Defining the public image of the region by building the destination brand):

Local and national public administration authorities
Travel agencies, local guides
Mass media, social networks, opinion leaders
Reception structures with accommodation function
Companies in the HORECA sector
NGOs, associations, profile organizations
Advertising and public relations agencies
Operators of entertainment, spa and sports services
The local population, folk artists and craftsmen
Educational and research institutions
Structures with investment potential

Strategic target group associated with strategic objective 2 (Destination management for the Silistra-Călărași region):

Local and national public administration authorities
Travel agencies, local guides
Reception structures with accommodation function
Companies in the HORECA sector
NGOs, associations, profile organizations
Operators of utility, entertainment, spa, sports services
Structures and companies with investment potential
Staff trainers in tourism
The local population

General target groups

1. Tourists, individual visitors:

- in search of originality, dynamism, diversity, entertainment, age category: 18 - 50 years.
- in search of relaxation, variety, cultural values, quality offers, age category: over 50 years and seniors.

2. Families: access to rural communities with options for services, visiting and spending time, in conditions of increased security;

3. Groups of tourists: the offer must include several hotel-type accommodation units or generous guesthouses as useful space for accommodation, meetings and food, but also a variety of visiting tours, knowledge of community life or attractions such as spa, sports or entertainment.

Tourism has a wide addressability - it mobilizes a wide participation at the community level, and the stakeholders in this field are numerous and diverse. For the

development of this strategy, we took into account 3 main categories of stakeholders: representatives of the authorities, economic agents in tourism and economic agents in other fields. At the base of the selection we took into account the direct impact that these categories have on the development of tourism. The purpose of this tool is to validate the developed strategy.

For each of the 3 categories we wrote a questionnaire consisting of 16 - 26 questions (the number varies from one category to another). The questionnaires were sent to a number of approximately 100 subjects, who were contacted by telephone to understand the purpose of the approach. Of these, 20 subjects responded. The questionnaires were completed as follows:

- 50% from urban areas, 50% from rural areas
- 40% economic agents in the field of tourism, 50% economic agents in other fields, 10% NGOs

From the discussions with the subjects and the analysis of the sent questionnaires, we can draw a series of conclusions that serve the proposed purpose, respectively validate a part of the strategy.

- fishing is the main touristic attraction, one of the problems raised being the lack of diversity of the touristic offer;
- on the other hand, other forms of tourism are viewed with skepticism and distrust that they can become long-term solutions;
- subjects have different understandings of the concept of tourism and, therefore, expectations are different;
- we can see a weak cohesion of the actors, but most of them agree that networking can lead to increased efficiency at the community level.

In order to have a clearer and more complete picture of the way in which the stakeholders perceive the tourist development of the area, we recommend an extensive research based on these questionnaires, on a representative and much more numerous group.

The communication channels

Social networks and online platforms, specific sites

- Events, mostly online (meetings, conferences) and post-pandemic (festivals, fairs)
- Guides at local and national level, from the two countries, from travel agencies, hotels, from monuments and natural reservations, from circuits or traditional locations
- Hospitable communities, with a specific way of life and access to local products and services

Mass media

- Rubrics with tourism, lifestyle, leisure, in the local and national written press
- Local travel television programs, radio interviews, documentary film
- Local programs to present the life of the communities offered to visitors
- Inclusion of communities in knowledge and promotion networks

Printed productions: touristic guides, brochures, leaflets, albums, etc.

Chapter 7. Key policy and ongoing programs

7.1. The Silistra-Călărași touristic brand

Ambition: Positioning the Silistra - Călărași area as a new touristic destination and integrating it into the European touristic circuit.

Brand promise: Uniqueness and accessibility - nature, history, people.

We turn disadvantages into advantages. The fact that the area is poorly developed from a touristic point of view determines a more direct and authentic experience. The place is not negatively affected by mass tourism, so there is room for growth on the healthy principles of responsible tourism. The lack of an identity means the lack of preconceptions and becomes the engine of integration for natural and anthropic attractions, sports activities, discovery programs, niche tourism products - all communicated in a coherent and unitary way.

7.1.1. Target audiences

The Silistra - Călărași area can have a consistent offer for the general public, starting from the natural and anthropic potential.

The main segments:

Individual tourists and families (from Romania / Bulgaria and from Europe). The behavior of tourists has changed significantly in recent years. More and more people have given up the services of travel agencies and have turned to digital tools in order to set up their own holidays, through personalization - from accommodation & meals, to transport, attractions or on-site programs. The same digital tools have increased the number of small entrepreneurs.

Sub-categories:

1. Young people: 18 - 35 years old looking for a destination with as many activity options as possible, but in the context of the area - wild natural setting, waiting to be discovered. They are active people, for whom the holiday is a long-awaited moment.

2. Families. Diversity is again an essential factor, because more family members will have different expectations and needs. The price / quality ratio is another key element, more than in the case of young people.

3. Retirees. It is an important segment, constantly growing, not influenced by seasonality, but demanding and with well-defined requirements.

Organized groups, strategic partnerships with educational and economic units.

Business and events: developing partnerships with the corporate area and specialized travel agencies.

7.1.2. Niches

The revelation of the area

With a wild and easily accessible natural setting and a rich historical heritage, the Silistra - Călărași area can become the new attraction for those who want to discover something new, and consumption will come as a consequence. The growth potential is huge and is primarily related to the touristic product and less to the infrastructure (which is generally appropriate).

Interactive / creative tourism

It is a type of tourism that requires a lot of involvement from the community and involves the participation of guests in local activities. It can be combined with cycling and environmental concerns. The routes are directly related to the community and the local organization.

Cultural tourism

The tourist route "Cultural heritage of old buildings in Silistra - Călărași" is the chance that will define the brand of the area. The rehabilitated buildings - the Art Gallery from Silistra and the Demetriade House from Călărași - will become points of interest for tourists, if they are integrated in the visiting circuit and events originally designed in the spirit of responsible tourism. The tourist route will include the rehabilitated Demetriade House (as a museum where different species of birds and insects from the avifauna of the Danube region will be exhibited) and the rehabilitated Art Gallery from Silistra (where there are / will be exhibited the works of art made within the Srebarna Joint Creative Camp, UNESCO reservation) and also the most important old and cultural buildings:

- RO-Călărași: The Călărași Municipal Museum, The Popular Theater, The Victoria Cinema, The Călărași County Administrative Palace, The Museum of Gumelnița Civilization in Oltenița, The "CAROL I" Gymnasium (former The Știrbei-Vodă Gymnasium), The Firemen House, The Ana and Marinache Popescu House
- BG-SILISTRA: The Ethnographic Museum, The Historical Museum.

The Tourist Route was Identified in the Project "Hercult - (ROBG - 491) DEVELOPMENT OF COMMON TOURISTIC PRODUCTS AND REHABILITATION OF CULTURAL HERITAGE", Funded by the Interreg VA Robg Program.

Gastronomic tourism

Gastronomic destinations create loyalty. There are attractions that the whole community benefits from - small producers, distribution companies, the workforce and hoteliers. The points of local gastronomy may be the next growth segment.

Business tourism and events (in the post-pandemic perspective)

Although it is not a good time, this type of tourism requires training. Where the infrastructure exists, it can be updated. The need for strategic partnerships is the one that needs to be addressed.

Tourist positioning: Silistra - Călărași - Surprising communities in the Danube area

7.1.3. Brand strategy

Silistra - Călărași has the potential to become an interesting touristic destination for tourists who focus on authenticity, new experiences and nature. The natural setting, the traditions and the history of the place provide the basis for a quality content both for the development of the touristic product and for the development of identity and communication. Tradition connects with the identity of the community, but has several values: the history of the place, popular traditions, the tourism culture. Diversity is an essential feature of the area - ethnic, culinary, religious diversity and natural diversity.

Brand objective: the development of the destination brand through "*novelty and authenticity*".

The Silistra - Călărași area needs the elaboration of a new identity - logo, name, values, mission, vision, tone of voice, associated universe, website design, signage, maps, promotional materials and other deliverables.

Positioning: **the Silistra - Călărași area - Surprising communities in the Danube area.**

Brand promise: **Uniqueness and accessibility.**

Mission and vision: **Identity is the most important part of the touristic product and underlies it.**

Brand values

- respect for nature, history and traditions;
- integrating community life into the touristic product, without adversely affecting it;
- quality hospitality means loyal visitors;
- the community is the main beneficiary of the tourism activity.

Marketing objectives:

- a. Increasing brand awareness and association with brand values.
- b. Increasing and retaining the number of tourists from Romania and Bulgaria, by improving the share of seasonality and weekend tourism.
- c. Increasing the competitiveness of the action area.
- d. Increasing the segment of foreign tourists.

Actions:

- Participation in tourism fairs in Romania and Bulgaria, but also in countries with which there are already links (Germany, Hungary, Moldova, Ukraine, etc.).
- Integrated communication campaign (TV / radio / digital), but with different messages for the target audience.
- Launching your own site.

- Production of good quality and relevant content (films, press articles, photographs) and the start of general partnerships with the media.
- Launching social media communication campaigns with influencers as spokespersons / ambassadors of the area.

7.2. Touristic Destination Management Organization

The establishment of the OMDT is in line with the tendencies of the European regions to articulate the policies of capitalization through tourism, through active partnership between public authorities, the associative environment, private operators, etc.

OMDT's first working tool is the **Tourist Observatory**, a service that provides public and private operators with up-to-date information useful for planning, necessary data on sector performance and entrepreneurial strategies for the private area.

Problems identified: Difficult transfer of knowledge and data about the general context between tourism stakeholders - from private companies to public authorities. Lack of correlation of existing research in tourism with research in other fields (cultural, social, anthropological, economic).

Purpose: To develop professional interventions that create: (1) sustainable research tools, (2) awareness and information among all relevant actors, (3) valuable know-how for entrepreneurs, tourism workers, actors in related fields, public authorities and academia, (3) the transition to a conscious tourism, which understands its customers and proposes new directions of development, acting in a structured manner, focused on micro, macro and meta analyzes.

General objective: Development of a professional-scientific program that regularly collects data from companies in the area that operate in tourism; to develop together with stakeholders a program of services and products for the professionalization and development of the field; to provide tourism managers and workers with regular information derived from scientific research applied at regional level, which facilitates the transfer to a more conscious and structured way of doing tourism empowers the tourism sector.

Secondary objective 1: Development of a program that includes the main actors in local development and implementation of an action plan on the transition from tourism based on "individual flair and experience" to tourism based on local, regional and international analyzes, planning and contexts, having as long-term results the addressability to all stakeholders in tourism and their active involvement in this whole process.

Secondary objective 2: Attracting actors from the tourism sector in joint activities through public consultations, events, information; their determination to become proactive in this program, by regularly disseminating data to the working group, resulting in the creation of important databases and support services for tourism actors (individual services based on the data collected and a micro-analysis, at enterprise or locality level); services at

county or region level, based on a macro analysis of the collected data, respectively information on the wider context, tourists' behavior, perceptions, trends in tourism, etc. and services for policy makers and other relevant actors, on improving legislation, support mechanisms for the field and action plans at regional or national level, through meta-analyses.

Tracked information:

a)

- the contribution of tourism to local development;
- touristic consumption (an estimate of the expenses made by tourists);
- the direct contribution of tourism to the local budget (taxes and fees);
- the number of employees / inhabitants working in tourism.

b)

- touristic flows / categories of tourists and their dynamic evolution;
- groups;
- families;
- pupils / students;
- business / events;
- sports / adventure;
- gastronomy.

c)

- the touristic reception capacity;
- accredited classic reception structures (hotels, bungalows, holiday villages, pensions, campsites, etc.);
- holiday houses;
- guest rooms (so-called "private" tourism.)

d)

- food / gastronomy;
- local restaurants;
- LPG / local gastronomy points;
- the other units.

7.3. Program activities

7.3.1. Information and promotion

- developing and launching the brand strategy;
- developing notoriety (continuous communication process, organized by campaigns);
- touristic information (continuous process);
- development of a sport fisherman's guide, including the fishing areas in the county, their location in the territory, existing facilities, existing fish species and their characteristics,

fishing ways and methods, periods in which sport fishing may be practiced, behavior and fishing rules;

- participation as a brand and touristic destination in local, regional, national and even international tourism events; focus on online developments;
- development of documentary, informative and touristic signage materials (trilinguals: Romanian, Bulgarian, English);
- the use of computerized, digital forms, web-sites, videos, social networks, webinars in all information and promotion procedures.

7.3.2. Touristic production

- action plans: season and off-season;
- development of touristic programs for discovering domestic touristic attractions / flows on the main directions: fishing & hunting, cycling, cultural & religious tourism, business tourism, family tourism;
- online work tools;
- creating centers of excellence;
- increasing the competitiveness of professionals: education / training / learning;
- the website of the touristic destination;
- creating local facilities for potential investors in the field of tourism.

7.3.3. Proposed events

In order to emphasize the identity of the region and to capitalize on the specifics of the communities that populate the area, **the multi-ethnic events** must target **categories in the following areas:**

- traditions and memory of places
- gastronomic
- folkloric - music, dances, folk costume, authentic performers
- theatrical art and pantomime
- craft art
- photographic art
- painting and sculpture etc.

Suggestions for activating the relationship between tradition and modernity:

The Walk & Shoot Photography Festival
Saffron, a multiethnic gastro-musical festival
Caleido, interethnic cultural event.

The Walk & Shoot Photography Festival

The objective of the event is to promote through photography the most important places in the Călărași - Silistra area.

In addition to the documentary function, the festival is the kind of event that, through the content created (photos), has the potential to go viral, turning into a communication campaign through participants.

For the proposed event, we estimate an audience of about 1,000,000 people, from the country and abroad.

Saffron, a multiethnic gastro-musical festival

Saffron is a cultural event based on the mix between culinary and inter-ethnic musical tastes, which celebrates the gastronomic and musical diversity of the Silistra - Călărași area.

In the spirit of the region, we propose a unique format given by the combination of the most representative elements of the identities of an ethnic group: gastronomy and music.

For three days (a weekend), representatives of each ethnic group will continuously prepare and serve the public traditional dishes in workshops and live cooking demonstrations and will offer live concerts, supported by iconic artists. The festival days will be dedicated to cooking, but also to workshops (dance, children's games) and guided tours, and the evenings will be dedicated to music.

The event can be replicated in several editions between May and September.

Caleido, interethnic cultural event

The Caleido Performing Arts Festival includes independent productions of theater, dance and performance, based on its own productions, some of them presented for the first time.

The cultural event expands the interdisciplinary, intercultural and interethnic dialogue in the Caleido Talks series, discussions that address, in turn, the theme of the festival: society seen multilaterally, through the filter of stereotypes, relationships, women, communities and recent history.

Caleido stages the cultural diversity and addresses the most important themes that polarize the current society, over the course of 5 days, in 15 live shows and broadcast online.

7.3.4. The infrastructure development

Although the list can be very long and diverse, we have identified a number of actions to develop the area's infrastructure:

- the historical settlements with great potential for mutual cooperation, such as the twin port cities of Călărași - Silistra, do not yet have the necessary connections to allow efficient connection to the land transport system. Therefore, improving the internal connectivity with the main urban agglomerations in the cross-border region, but also with

the capitals located in the vicinity, is essential for solving the territorial disparities in the area;

- diversification, modernization and development of the technical-material base of tourism and reception structures, including campsites;

- sanitation and maintenance of green spaces, especially those located in the vicinity of the main touristic attractions, those located around accommodation structures, recreational areas, parking lots, etc.;

- renovation and restoration of the facades of the accommodation units, but also of the anthropic touristic attractions such as monasteries, churches, museums, historical monuments, architecture, etc.;

- arranging peripheral areas intended for weekend tourism. They must benefit from numerous feeding structures and diverse in terms of profile, price and comfort. The accommodation structures and equipment must be in the category of simple and accessible, especially reception structures such as guest houses for residents;

- arranging areas for picnics through minimal interventions on the natural environment, without carrying out deforestation, modifications of the banks or riverbeds or concreting or asphaltting of the soil;

- developing and promoting the fishing potential and related infrastructure of the Danube area, including the establishment of markets for fishery products.

Chapter 8. Implementation measures

Specific objective	Measure	Lines of action	Actions	Possible sources of funding		
Increasing opportunities for tourism development	Diversification and development of existing touristic products	Development of infrastructure related to fishing tourism	Construction of new fishing docks and rehabilitation of existing ones in order to create landing / mooring facilities	European funds National funds Private funds		
			Stimulating the development and modernization of port infrastructure and facilities	European funds National funds Private funds		
			Establishment of markets for fishery products	Local budgets		
			Stimulating the activity of production and marketing of recreational fishing gear and accessories	Private funds		
			Establishment of a nautical club	Public-private partnership		
			Lighting of ponds where sport fishing is practiced, in order to continuously carry out the activity	Public-private partnership		
		Increasing the number of tourists by promoting fishing tourism			Maintaining and promoting sport fishing events (Press Cup, Junior Cup, Senior Cup, Corporate Cup, Beer Cup, Friendship Cup Romania - Bulgaria or on Navy Day - August 15, Danube Day - June 29 , Days of Călărași, Olteniței, etc.)	Local budgets Sponsorship
					Organizing fish cooking competitions and promoting local gastronomic art	Local budgets Sponsorship
					Development of a sport fisherman's guide to the region's fishing areas and other useful information	European funds National funds Local budgets Sponsorship
		Promotion of the local possibilities for hunting tourism			Promotion of areas intended for sport hunting according to the norms in force	Local budgets
	Development of weekend tourism					
	Diversification of tourism products by practicing new types of tourism				Creation and promotion of cultural tourism products	

		Capitalizing on the natural potential by diversifying the forms of tourism practiced (cycling, hiking, ecological tourism, fishing, hunting, etc.)	Promotion of routes for sports tourism, especially cycling tourism	European funds National funds Local budgets Sponsorship	
			Promoting birdwatching routes (including making a specific map with observation points)	European funds National funds Local budgets Sponsorship	
			Creating a thematic route for observing the micro-relief of islands and animal species	European funds National funds Local budgets Sponsorship	
			Development of specific infrastructure for practicing forms of tourism	Construction of paths for visiting	European funds National funds Local budgets Sponsorship
				Arrangement of ecological parks	European funds National funds Local budgets
		Increasing the number of accommodation places and diversifying the types of accommodation structures	Stimulating the rehabilitation process of some houses and transforming them into tourist pensions or agro-tourist households, by providing local facilities for investors	Private funds	
			Identification of accommodation spaces to be used for rent, homologation and their introduction in the tourist circuit	Public-private partnership	
			Diversification of the types of accommodation structures by providing local facilities to investors, depending on the adaptation of the type of accommodation structure to the profile of the area and the main form of tourism	Private funds	
			Identification of food and accommodation structures and creation of tourist information maps with them (their location will be made in the central points of the localities)	Local budgets	
			Introduction of signaling elements for the accommodation units	Public-private partnership	
			Organizing specific events	Media coverage of the calendar of specific events in the county: Danube festivals, gastronomic, cultural festivals, etc.	Local budgets
		Revitalization of festivals, fairs or other traditional events specific to the area		Local budgets European or national funds	
		Arranging places for the presentation and sale of handicrafts, souvenir crafts (permanent or itinerant). These will target the main tourist points (localities with potential, close to the tourist attractions)		European funds National funds Local budgets	
		Increasing the	Ensuring qualified	Developing the offer of	Public-private

	quality of touristic products	human resources and continuous improvement of human resources employed in tourism	professional training courses for tourism employees and employers and establishing partnerships with accredited professional training providers in the field	partnership
			Stimulating the organization of professional-scientific events and encouraging the participation of tourism actors in them	Public-private partnership
	Realization of the annual tourism promotion plan	Updating the touristic information library	Creating a tourism promotion program for each product / brand (participation in events, prints, communication plan) depending on the target audience	European Funds National funds Local budgets
	Creation of informative and promotional materials	Development of promotional materials that include the tourist objectives of the area, leisure possibilities, accommodation structures (brochures with tourist routes, tourist guide of the Silistra-Călărași area, reports broadcast in the media)	European funds National funds Local budgets Sponsorship	
	Participation in / organization of promotional events	Participation in local, regional, national and international tourism fairs with their own stand	Local budgets	
		Improving cross-border cooperation and promotion in the neighboring regions (participation in various local events)	Public and public-private partnership	
		Organizing or participating in professional-scientific events, which facilitate the contact of local agents with actors involved in the tourism sector at national and international level (tour operators, specialists, journalists, etc.) and promoting the region in these events, in order to increase the level to inform and raise public awareness about the potential of the area	Public and public-private partnership	
		Organizing info-trips with opinion formers, especially journalists / influencers, in order to make materials and disseminate them (especially online)	Local budgets County Council Government programs	
		Hosting already known events on the market and promoting the potential directly to the participants (forums, congresses, seminars, cultural-artistic events)	Public and public-private partnership	
	Development of a network of touristic information centers	Creation of touristic information points / centers, located in areas with heavy touristic traffic	Local budgets / EU funding	
	Creating a local brand and a visual identity	Creating the brand of tourist destination of the Silistra-Călărași area and a specific visual identity	European funds National funds Local budgets	

			that would allow the individualization of the region	Sponsorship
		Promoting the area through the Internet	Promoting the area's own tourist promotion website. The website offers information on touristic attractions, leisure potential, public catering structures, accommodation units, means of access, signaling systems, specific routes and markings, possibilities to purchase traditional products, events, etc.	European funds National funds Local budgets Sponsorship
			Encouraging online communication by stimulating the creation of materials and posting them on blogs / social media sites.	Public-private partnership
			Developing Google Ads campaigns to promote organized events or a new touristic product	Local budgets
		Tourism communication and promotion through social media and the creation of virtual communities	Permanent communication and promotion of the area through social networks. Considering the profile of social networks, the type of communication will be adapted according to the recipient and the purpose of the communication. In the case of forms of tourism focused on the idea of community (fishing, hunting) you can opt for the development of a Facebook page that brings together community members, a page constantly updated with news from the community.	Local budgets
Development of activities related to tourism	Stimulation of trade with traditional / area-specific products	Marketing of fishery products	Opening of specialty stores in touristic areas	Private funds
		Marketing of handicrafts	Manufacture and marketing of traditional fishery handicrafts	Private funds
	Stimulating the development of agro-tourism	Stimulating initiatives and investments in the agricultural areas of the county	Capitalization of the agro-tourism potential through the development of specialized households	Private funds
			Providing support for association and integration in producer networks	Local budgets
			Stimulating the production of organic food and their marketing	Private funds
Streamlining tourism management and stimulating the partnership	Improving and articulating the collaboration between the main actors in the field of tourism	Stimulating the partnership by integrating in professional networks	Joining a cluster in the tourism field or stimulating the organization at local level in cluster entities	Membership fees
			Establishment and attraction of members in OMDT and launch of the Tourist Observatory.	European funds Local budgets Membership fees Taxes
		Increasing the level of consultation in implementing policies and strategies	Organizing meetings, information workshops	County Council

Chapter 9. Control methods and good practices

9.1. Ways to control and update

The implementation of the tourism development strategy of the cross-border region requires a continuous activity to follow the evolutions, to review the constructive ideas, to consult between the involved parties from both targeted areas - Romanian and Bulgarian - on the progress made, the obstacles and, more especially on the right adjustment solutions along the way. Interventions and remedies require creativity in the inclusion of new components, for a better perspective in the objectives pursued.

Also, the connection with the touristic market must be constantly maintained. Surveying public opinion, tastes and needs of visitors who have already benefited from some touristic services in the region or potential customers is a necessity to take the pulse of touristic demand.

The relationship with service providers is another track that maintains the success of operations.

Parties concerned and stakeholders in this strategy and its implementation:

1. with responsibility for implementation and monitoring:
 1. The local authorities from each component area of the region (the city halls and the county council for Călărași county; the coordination forums and city halls of municipalities at the level of Silistra district);
 2. Associations already formed, from Romanian and Bulgarian partners, which aim at the development of the cross-border region.
2. to be attracted in the implementation process:
 1. Representatives of local associations, employers in the field of HORECA, structures for tourist reception, creation and crafts, etc.;
 2. Representatives of museum units, natural reservation sites;
 3. Representatives of travel agencies, advertising companies;
 4. Representatives of support services in tourism (equipment, utilities, construction);
 5. Local opinion leaders, vloggers, journalists dedicated to the tourist, cultural, economic field;
 6. Representatives of education and training units in the field of tourist and agro-tourist services.

Ways to follow the implementation of the strategy, to remedy, adjust and extend it:

- Hiring, by local government representatives, public relations and communication specialists, with a key role in monitoring the effects of strategy implementation, coordinating communication and message management to and from the regional market and advising local governments on the strategic and crisis approaches.

- Maintaining the constant connection, flow of information and collaboration between Romanian and Bulgarian partners, for the implementation of the common vision of tourism development of the Călărași - Silistra cross-border region, in terms of this strategy.
- Periodic monitoring and control of the completion of the proposed measures, according to the agreed deadlines and the appropriate content.
- Monitoring touristic information or related to the evolution of the region as a whole, published in the local and national press, on websites and social networks.
- Carrying out market research, opinion polls and constant dialogue, in order to gather data and information from the field, from targeted actors in the target groups in the hospitality industry, from other service providers, financial investors and communities in the region.
- Using the Tourist Observatory service to obtain updated information.
- Adapting to the changes in the immediate reality, to the evolution of the local Romanian-Bulgarian and international market, by changing some steps in the structure and development of the strategy.

The control and updating activity will focus on the following **coordinates**:

- The periodic analysis of progress;
- The data collection;
- The formulation of proposals for the strategy review;
- Communicating them to the partner or target actors;
- Defining conclusions and confirming the acceptance of the parties involved in making changes;
- Implement remedial measures or to extend and increase the quality level of the strategy.

9.2. Good practice recommendations

We further recommend a series of actions that can be examples of good practice, necessary to support the efforts to build an identity for the Călărași - Silistra cross-border region, necessary for organizing a destination management in the area and, more as anything, practices that determine and consolidate a responsible tourism.

In order to build a public identity and image of the region (strategic objective 1):

- Use of communication specialists throughout the strategy.
- Integrating tourists in the spirit and life of the host community to meet the need for novelty, relaxation and discovery.
- Constant dissemination of touristic messages to the local and national press.

For the organization of a destination management (strategic objective 2):

- Establishing the necessary partnerships in carrying out the actions in the joint plan, between the Romanian and Bulgarian representatives.
- Formation of local partnerships, public-private, between structures interested in finding integrated financing, design and implementation solutions in the "destination region".
- Collaboration with national officials in both countries for advice and assistance.

- Initiation of twinning agreement between localities with similar heritage features in the Călărași and Silistra areas, which can develop common touristic circuits and products, both on the cultural-historical-religious line and on the line of natural reservations and eco-touristic areas favorable to the movement in open air.

For both strategic objectives:

- Collaboration between local authorities, tourism service providers and the local community - as a practice of developing the form of responsible tourism, of developing communities through the touristic impact.

- Initiating the exchange of information and collaborating with experts at international level who have registered touristic successes for similar objectives.

- Completing the documentary visits, the info-trips - intended for the media and opinion leaders, influencers from abroad, but also from Romania and Bulgaria, representatives from the hospitality industry, tourism-specific NGOs - with video documentaries and webinars to familiarize them with the key areas of touristic attractiveness of the cross-border region.

- Ongoing training of destination guides and training of spokespersons in the touristic structures of the region.

- Choosing the key attractions in the region, which will be promoted constantly, consistently, but diversified, at certain times.

- Demonstrate flexibility and transparency between the partners participating in the strategy.

Examples of cumulative practices for increasing the attractiveness of natural and cultural-historical touristic objectives:

Local practices:

- Organizing routes arranged to European standards and organized tours, with clear circuits, in the area of protected natural areas, with specialized guides, to control the environmental protection and eliminate the negative impact in case of large groups.

- Elaboration of offers and integrated visiting packages, involving several local actors: touristic reception structures, catering units, transport service providers, traditional products and craftsmen, etc.

- The use of specialists in promotion and advertising by tour package providers and industry actors to emphasize the idea of unique experience offered to the tourist; development of representative sites, adapted to the specifics of local offers.

- Creating adequate cycling routes around the cultural, historical and natural touristic objectives of interest, which bring beneficial results in the economic development, environmental protection and social development of the small host communities.

Cross-border practices:

- Establishing touristic routes - as a visiting program - in synchronization with the program of routes of means of transport on the main arteries.

- Connecting areas of cross-border interest through comfortable travel, adapted to various tourist profiles. The existing and tested routes and trails are those that can minimize the impact on the environment.

- Following the establishment of partnerships at the county or district level, it is possible to create touristic offers and packages for more complex routes or for smaller segments, and their organization can go to the Călărași – Silistra cross-border level.

Chapter 10. Principles of responsible tourism and productive hospitality

The entire development of the tourism development strategy of the region will be implemented as a series of principles that govern a responsible tourism, so necessary and appropriate for an area such as Silistra - Călărași. In order to emphasize the motivation for which the branding positioning for the region was chosen and the need to develop a destination management, we bring to attention a few aspects.

The specific principles of sustainable tourism development stem from the characteristics of natural and cultural resources:

- both types of resources represent a legacy that requires care interventions for the current generation;
- there are similarities between the functions of natural ecosystems to sustain and maintain natural balance and the functions of cultural systems to sustain and maintain the identity and cultural life and vitality of human civilization. On the one hand, the notion of *diversity*, so important in the natural world, has an undisputed role in cultural systems, and on the other hand, *uniqueness* is a feature of most cultural goods.

The destination, in the vision of a leading pioneer of the concept of responsible tourism in the world, Harold Goodwin, is "a fantastic place for the community, without vulnerabilities in all respects, which thus becomes attractive for visitors, motivating them to travel there"⁵⁰. Let's look at the area of Călărași County, Silistra District and the cross-border region formed by the two territories on the Danube from the perspective of the potential to become such a destination.

The obligation of responsible tourism to create better places to live and visit requires that priority be given to the locals. Tourism is a cultural process, and the destination is a social product, while the destinations create and form attachments. Tourism plays an important role in the social construction of a place, through the commercial activities that take place, but also as a consequence of the interactions that arise there. The area of the entire cross-border region Călărași-Silistra is the right space for tourism activities to be initiated and developed in the vision of responsible tourism practices.

The principles of responsible tourism, recommended to be followed, are:

1. Understanding and respect for the values of the host community; direct communication between the visitor and the host; mutual influence.
2. Protection and preservation of the natural heritage; adopting ecological measures to prevent and limit the aggression on the environment.
3. Respect for the environment and society; identifying a balance between the economic and the ecological-social approach.
4. The local community, with all its characteristics and customs - is the core of tourism activities.

⁵⁰ H. Goodwin, The International Forum for the Responsible Tourism, 6th Edition, May 10-11, 2018, Bucharest.

5. Informed and correct programming of the touristic activity in order to combat the harmful influences on the areas and on the communities.

6. Collective actions are preferable to individual ones; cooperation and respect for others; partnerships and exchange of good practices - a common goal of enriching the touristic offer for major benefits, both for tourism providers and tourists.

7. Reconciliation between human communities; identifying together the methods of preserving and restoring the historical, cultural and natural heritage.

8. Passing on an intact heritage to future generations; the perpetuation of local customs and traditions, but also of the unaltered beauty of the environment.

9. Complex, complete and positive experience for the tourist; interaction and exchange of information between tourists and locals; deep process of direct learning through experience.

10. Human resources must support natural resources in a context where sustainable development is a necessity.

The goal of responsible tourism is sustainability. Responsible tourism attaches importance to all three pillars of sustainable development - economic, social and environmental - and accepts that priorities differ from one place to another. By taking responsibility and acting accordingly, sustainability can be achieved.

Productive hospitality highlights the human qualities specific to the area, by harmonizing the host-visitor relationship. "Productive hospitality... means to rely on the basic coordinates of history, culture, traditions and modernity, to articulate a mix for the benefit of communities, first of all. A satisfied community will also be a hospitable community"⁵¹. We have seen that this area of the Danube preserves extraordinary natural, cultural, material and immaterial values, but which are not yet sufficiently recognized as a vector of development. A focused tourism can support and regenerate them, bringing, at the same time, surprising experiences to the visitors.

⁵¹ Borşan, A., *Fragilitate, autoritate, ospitalitate productivă*, presadeturism.ro

The Tourism Development Joint Strategy for the Silistra - Călărași Cross-border Region

May 2021

Annex: Bibliography

- Andreev, J. (1996), *The Bulgarian Khans and Tsars*, Veliko Tarnovo
- Ion, C., *10 lucruri de știut despre istoria municipiului Călărași*, historia.ro
- Ionescu, S. (2015), *De unde vine numele Cadrilaterului*, adevarul.ro
- Borșan, A., *Fragilitate, autoritate, ospitalitate productivă*, presadeturism.ro
- Samarian, P. (1931), *Istoria orasului Călărași de la origine până în anul 1852*, Institutul de Arte Grafice E. Marvan, Bucharest
- Tudor, C., (2008), *Istoria orașului Călărași*, 2nd edition, revised and updated, Agora Publishing House, Călărași
- Tătaru, D., Iștoc, E. M., Sarchizian, L. (2018), *Fundamentele turismului responsabil. Evoluții pentru România*, CEIS, The Romanian Academy, Bucharest
- *** (1938), *Connaissance de la terre et de la pensée roumaines*, vol. IV, *La Dobroudja*, Académie roumaine, Bucharest
- *** (2006), *Coloniști români timoceni din Cadrilater*, Magazin Istoric, Anul XL Nr. 12 (477)
- *** Analysis and diagnosis of the current situation within the Romania – Bulgaria cross-border area, 2015
- *** Law 2/1989, LegeOnline.ro
- *** The Development Plan for Călărași County for 2014-2020, Călărași County Council
- *** The General Census of the population of Romania of December 29, 1930, Vol. II
- *** The Ottoman Census of 1850
- *** Responsible Travel Cases Report, CREST, September 2020
- *** The Development Strategy of Silistra District for 2018-2020
- *** The Sustainable Development Strategy of Călărași County for 2021-2027, Călărași County Council
- Goodwin, H., *The International Forum for the Responsible Tourism*, 6th Edition, May 10-11, 2018, Bucharest
- calarasi.insse.ro (Călărași Regional statistical Directorate)
- gstc.org (Consiulul Global pentru Turism Durabil)
- insse.ro (The National Institute of Statistics, România)
- nsi.bg (The National Institute of Statistics, Bulgaria)
- ro.wikipedia.org
- wttc.org
- untwo.org
- www.consilium.europa.eu/ro/policies/eu-recovery-plan (A recovery plan for Europe)
- <https://mfe.gov.ro/pnrr/> (National Recovery and Resilience Plan)
- Policy Department for Structural and Cohesion Policies Directorate-General for Internal Policies (2021), Relaunching Transport and Tourism in the EU after Covid-19, [www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2021/652235/IPOL_STU\(2021\)652235_EN.pdf](http://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2021/652235/IPOL_STU(2021)652235_EN.pdf)
- Antoniou, K. (2021), Post-pandemic travel: the trends we'll see when the world opens up again, <https://theconversation.com/post-pandemic-travel-the-trends-well-see-when-the-world-opens-up-again-153401>

- Priorities for economic and social development of Călărași county in 2020 - Action plan for 2020 for the achievement in Călărași county of the objectives included in the Government Program 2020 <https://cl.prefectura.mai.gov.ro/programe-si-strategii/>
- The Sustainable Development Strategy of Călărași County for the period 2021 - 2027 https://www.calarasi.ro/images/pds/Strategie%20CJ%20Calarasi_30.10.2020_draft.pdf
- European Commission Tourism Policy, 2014-2020 https://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/ro/policy/themes/tourism/
- Cohesion policy of the European Parliament and of the Council for the period 2021 to 2027 https://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/ro/2021_2027/
- Development strategy for Romania in the next 20 years, between 2016 and 2035 <https://acad.ro/bdar/strategiaAR/doc11/Strategia.pdf>
- EU Strategy for the Danube Region SUERD https://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/sources/docoffic/official/communic/danube/com2010_715_danube_ro.pdf
- The Interreg VI-A România-Bulgaria Program, funded by The European Fund of Regional Development, <https://interregviarobg.eu/program-date-generale>
- Tourism Development Strategy of Romania 2019-2030, Report on Rapid Assessment of the Tourism Sector, Strategy and Action Plan <https://sgg.gov.ro/new/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/Strategia-de-Dezvoltare-Turistic%C4%83-a-Rom%C3%A2niei-volum-2-Strategia-%C8%99i-Planul-de-Ac%C8%9Biune.pdf>
- Joint Strategy for Sustainable Territorial Development of the Romania-Bulgaria cross-border area http://suerd.gov.ro/ro/wp-content/uploads/sites/3/2018/11/Prezentare-Ro_Bg-Forum-SUERD-2018.pdf
- National Research, Development and Innovation Strategy 2021 - 2027 <https://uefiscdi.gov.ro/resource-826985>
- National Smart Specialization Strategy SNSI 2021-2027, by <https://uefiscdi.gov.ro/resource-826985>
- The Interreg VI-A România-Bulgaria Program <https://interregviarobg.eu/program-date-generale>