



CARPATHIAN CONVENTION

11th Meeting of the Working Group On Sustainable Tourism



MINISTRY OF ECONOMY, DIGITALIZATION,
ENTREPRENEURSHIP AND TOURISM

ROMANIA

10th - 11th of March 2026
Rzeszów, Republic of Poland

Agenda item 5 – Updates on the implementation of the Protocol on Sustainable Tourism



View from Ciucas Peak

1. Introduction – Updates on legislative framework

- The concept of ecotourism destination was developed in Romania by the Tourism central public authority in collaboration with other relevant institutions and organizations at national level (Ministry of Environment, Waters and Forests, Ecotourism Association of Romania, National Institute for Tourism Research and Development), within the Interministerial Working Group for the Development of Ecotourism in Romania, during the period 2011-2012.

- Following this process, Romania was the first country in Europe to create such a system for recognizing ecotourism destinations, a system based on the Global Sustainable Tourism Criteria (GSTC) and the European Ecotourism Labelling Standard (EETLS).



Piatra Craiului Mountains

- On the 2nd of October 2025, the Romanian Embassy in the Republic of Austria based in Vienna hosted a double event dedicated to the protection and sustainable development of the Carpathians, attended by representatives of the diplomatic corps, federal ministries, journalists specialized in sustainable development and students.
- In accordance with the approval of the Prime Minister of Romania, the envoy of the Romanian Embassy in Vienna signed, together with the Head of the Secretariat of the Carpathian Convention, the Memorandum of Cooperation between the Ministry of Economy, Digitalization, Entrepreneurship and Tourism of Romania and the Secretariat of the Framework Convention for the Protection and Sustainable Development of the Carpathians.

Relevant national Legislative framework on ecotourism includes:

- Government Decision No. 358/2019 on the approval of the National Ecotourism Development Strategy - context, vision and objectives - 2019-2029;
- Order of the Minister of Economy, Entrepreneurship and Tourism No. 1946/2024 for the approval of the Regulation on the establishment, organization and functioning of the Commission for the designation of ecotourism destinations, as well as the Evaluation Procedure for the designation of ecotourism destinations.



Relevant national Legislative framework on Long distance trails for hiking and cycling includes:

Hiking

- Law No. 288/2024 on hiking trails of national interest for recreational purposes;
- Government Decision No. 600/2025 for the approval of the Methodological Norms for the application of Law No. 288/2024 on pedestrian routes of national interest for recreational purposes;
- Government Decision No. 1252/2022 for the approval of the Methodological Norms regarding the creation, arrangement and approval of routes for pedestrian tourism;
- Government Decision No. 77/2003 on the establishment of measures for the prevention of mountain accidents and the organization of rescue activities in the mountains;
- Order of the Minister of Economy, Digitalization, Entrepreneurship and Tourism No. 2051/2025 on the establishment of the Commission for the certification of hiking trails of national interest for recreational purposes;

Cycling

- Government Decision No. 441/2022 for the approval of the methodological norms regarding the creation, arrangement and approval of cycle tourism routes;
- Order No. 4176/2024 of the minister of development, public works and administration for the approval of the Procedure regarding the homologation of cycling routes;



Relevant national Legislative framework on Local Gastro Venues includes:

- Law No. 412/2023 for the establishment and operation of local gastronomic venues
- Local gastro points are coordinated by the National Agency for the Mountainous Area

Relevant national Legislative framework on Sustainable mountain tourism destinations includes:

- National Strategy on adaptation to climate change for the period 2024-2030, with a view to 2050, approved by Government Decision no. 1010/2024 and its relevant Action Plan;
- Order no. 2441/2025 of the minister of economy, digitalization, entrepreneurship and tourism for approving the establishment of the technical working group for implementing the concept of “green mountain destinations” and the regulation regarding the organization and functioning of the working group;
- Law No. 197/2018 on the mountain: This is the fundamental law that regulates the socio-economic, sustainable and inclusive development of the mountain area. It emphasizes environmental conservation and landscape protection.



**2. Actions, programmes and projects
undertaken by the Ministry of
Economy, Digitalization,
Entrepreneurship and Tourism**

Pillar I – Ecotourism destinations

- The Ministry of Economy, Digitalization, Entrepreneurship and Tourism certifies and recertifies all ecotourism destinations in Romania. Each certification is valid for a 3 year period, with each destination having to undergo the recertification process once the certificate expires;
- To receive the status of ecotourism destination, the applicant area must meet the criteria for the designation of ecotourism destinations in Romania, set out in the Annex to Government Decision no. 358/2019 on the approval of the National Ecotourism Development Strategy – context, vision and objectives – 2019 – 2029, as subsequently amended and supplemented.
- To date, 7 ecotourism destinations have been certified by the Ministry of Economy, Digitalization, Entrepreneurship and Tourism

DESTINAȚII
ECOTURISTICE



**ȚARA
HAȚEGULUI**



- Currently, there is a draft amendment to Government Decision No.558/2017 on the approval of the Program for the Development of Tourism Investments - the Tourism Investment Master Plan - and the eligibility criteria for tourism investment projects, which envisages the introduction of ecotourism infrastructure for financing, including the financing of routes.



Pillar II - Long distance trails for hiking and cycling

- The Ministry Economy, Digitalization, Entrepreneurship and Tourism approves the hiking trails, but at local level each public authority and NGO coordinates them and keeps a record on them;
- Initiatives at local level for developing hiking trails are conducted by local public authorities and NGOs;
- Initiatives at local level for developing cycling trails are conducted by local public authorities and NGOs;
- VELO Coordination Centre as stipulated by the Government Decision No. 441/2022 for the approval of the methodological norms regarding the creation, arrangement and approval of cycle tourism routes is the body that coordinates cycling infrastructure development.



Pillar III – Local Gastro Venues

- As of 2025, 672 local gastronomy venues have been established in Romania.
- The National Agency for the Mountainous Area coordinated by the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development has organized courses and promotion campaigns of local gastro venues

Pillar IV – Sustainable mountain tourism destinations

- Based on the existing model of certifying ecotourism destinations in Romania, the Ministry of Economy, Digitalization, Entrepreneurship and Tourism intends to implement a system/methodology for the certification of green mountain destinations



Bâlea Lake in Făgăraș Mountains

The existing legal framework in Romania in what regards the ski activity encompasses:

- - Government Decision No. 801/1996 for the approval of the Norms regarding the arrangement, approval, maintenance and operation of ski slopes and trails for recreation;
- - Government Decision No. 263/2001 (*republished*) on the arrangement, approval, maintenance and exploitation of ski slopes and trails for recreation;
- - Order No. 491/2001 for the approval of the Norms regarding the approval, arrangement, maintenance and exploitation of ski slopes and trails for recreation;
- - Norms of October 5, 2001 regarding the approval, arrangement, maintenance and operation of ski slopes and trails for recreation

Based on these laws, norms and regulations, the Ministry of Economy Digitalization, Entrepreneurship and Tourism homologates all the ski slopes in Romania



Romania has implemented specific legislation in what regards certain types of accommodation:

- Government Decision No. 1267/2010 on the issuance of classification certificates, licenses and tourism patents;
- Government Decision No. 237/2001 for the approval of the Norms regarding the access, registration and protection of tourists in tourist reception facilities
- Order No. 65/2013 for the approval of the Methodological Norms regarding the issuance of classification certificates for tourist reception structures with accommodation and public catering functions, tourism licenses and patents;
- Order No. 510/2022 amending and supplementing the Methodological Norms regarding the issuance of classification certificates for tourist reception structures with accommodation and public catering functions, tourism licenses and patents, approved by Order of the President of the National Tourism Authority No. 65/2013;

Based on this legal framework, the Ministry of Economy, Digitalization, Entrepreneurship and Tourism is the sole public authority in Romania that issues classification certificates for accommodation structures, F&B structures, entertainment structures, tour operators, local/national tourism guides, ski slopes, beaches, tourist resorts, tourist mountain trails, local/national tourist information and marketing centres.

Cultural tourism routes

- In 1987, the Council of Europe launched the Cultural Routes initiative as a method of showcasing the rich cultural heritage of different countries;
- Romania is an active member of this initiative within the Enlarged Partial Agreement - Council of Europe under Law no. 59/2013;
- Based on this programme, the Ministry of Economy, Digitalization, Entrepreneurship and Tourism has developed its own voluntary recognition system for developing and promoting cultural tourism routes;



Cultural tourism routes

- As of March 2026, the Romanian Ministry of Economy, Digitalization, Entrepreneurship and Tourism has recognized 181 cultural tourism routes:
 - 46 at local level;
 - 85 at regional level;
 - 43 at national level;
 - 7 at transnational level.

- Romania also proudly contributes to 12 Cultural Routes of the Council of Europe and seven transnational cultural routes.
- A noteworthy route is the Via Mariae, a Central European pilgrimage route that connects various sites dedicated to the Virgin Mary. In 2023, the segment within Suceava County received the second prize in the European Cultural Tourism Network (ECTN) – Destination of Sustainable Cultural Tourism competition, in acknowledgment of its contribution to the category of Spiritual, Religious, and Pilgrimage Tourism. In 2021, in the same competition, the Cultural Tourist Route of the Wooden Churches in Romania and Moldova won second place in recognition of its contribution to Transnational Thematic Tourism Products, including European Cultural Routes. This route encompasses around 400 wooden churches, seven in Moldova, each holding significant cultural and historical value and dating back to medieval times.

Examples of cultural tourism routes that encompass themes related to the Carpathian Mountains in Romania

- the Ministry of Economy, Digitalization, Entrepreneurship and Tourism has recognized routes such as:
 - Carpatica Cultural Route;
 - Tara Motilor – Apuseni Mountains;
 - Legend and stone Route;
 - Via Aurea



Other projects developed

- The Romanian Ministry of Economy, Digitalization, Entrepreneurship and Tourism also has other projects underway including a pilot initiative “Recognizing thematic specialization of villages located near tourist resorts”. Villages have the option to specialize their tourism activity based on their resources and heritage;
- The project has been launched in early 2025, and up to date, over 240 villages have been recognized for their tourism potential. (e.g. gastronomy, wine tourism, equestrian tourism, cycling, nature and tranquility, collecting medicinal and aromatic plants etc.);
- An interactive map of the specialized thematic villages has also been created:

https://www.google.com/maps/d/edit?mid=1IF6Qxf_H8XMi_wBTaiROnzRqGjzSNAg&usp=sharing

3. Future objectives and conclusions

- Following the signing of the Memorandum of Cooperation between the Ministry of Economy, Digitalization, Entrepreneurship and Tourism of Romania and the Secretariat of the Framework Convention for the Protection and Sustainable Development of the Carpathians in 2025, a few elements of interest have been highlighted regarding:
 - Strengthening bilateral cooperation;
 - Organizing common promotion campaigns regarding different projects in the Carpathians;
 - Organizing common thematic working groups;
 - Fostering conservation of biodiversity;
 - Supporting sustainable management of natural resources;
 - Promoting cultural heritage;
 - Promoting sustainable economic development in the Carpathian region.

- As tourism is a complex and dynamic activity, there is always the need for analyzing and adapting the current legislative framework in order to better address present challenges and future opportunities. Increased tourism activity, erratic economic development and overtourism in a certain region might pose a significant threat and risk towards the conservation and sustainable development of a tourism destination. Nonetheless, the development of a destination should always seek to find balance between fostering economic growth, sustaining local communities and achieving long-term sustainability.