

“CENTRU” REGION NATURAL AND ANTROPIC POTENTIAL – DEVELOPMENT PROSPECTS

Simeon Cretu

Agentia pentru Dezvoltare Regionala CENTRU

GENERAL GEOGRAPHIC SPECIFICATIONS

The “CENTRU” Development Region is situated in the centre, inside the Carpathian Mountain Big Curve, on the superior and medium courses of Mures and Olt Rivers, being crossed by the 25⁰ East Longitude Meridian and the 46⁰ North latitude parallel.

The “CENTRU” Region is geographically linked to 6 of the 7 other Romanian regions, as the distances between the center of the region and the Romanian borders are almost equal.

The regional borders separate the Centru Region: in the North from the “6 Nord-Vest” Region, in the north-east from the “1 Nord-Est” Region, in the East from the “2 Sud-Est” Region, in the South from the “3 Sud” Region and in the “4 Sud-Vest” Region, and in the West from the “5 Vest” Region.

The “CENTRU” Region gathers 6 counties: Alba, Brasov, Covasna, Harghita, Mures and Sibiu that cover 34100 km² and represent 14,31% of the Romanian territory. The surface of the region is bigger than the surface of Albania, Luxemburg, Macedonia, Slovenia or Moldova Republic. This region has 57 cities, 354 communes and 1784 villages.

The relief of the region is very diverse, mainly covered by mountains (44%), especially in the East, West and South. At the border of the “CENTRU” and “SOUTH” Regions you can find the highest Romanian mountain picks: Moldoveanu (2544 m) and Negoiu (2535 m), both situated in the Fagaras Massive. Because of their altitude and largeness, The Meridional Carpathians have been named “The Transilvanian Alps”. Covering almost all the territory of Harghita and Covasna, and significant parts of Mures and Brasov counties, The Oriental Carpathians have

medium altitudes (the maximum altitude is 2100 m, it is represented by the Pietrosu Peak in the Caliman Mountains which is situated in the CENTRU Region). The Apuseni Mountains, covering the North-West of Alba County have lower altitudes (the highest peak is Curcubata Mare in the Bihor Mountains).

A characteristic of the Oriental Carpathians and of the Apuseni Mountains is the presence of well-individualized intramountain depressions.

The climate of the CENTRU Region is temperate-continental with altitude variations. In the intramountain depressions which are situated in the East of the Region temperature inversions are often registered, as the cold air is kept there for long periods. The city of Joseni is known as the coldest area of Romania, and the lowest temperature was also registered in the CENTRU Region, in Bod village (-38,5 °C). The average annual precipitations are 550 l/ m² in the depressions that are situated in the West of the region and reach 1200 l/ m² on the highest peaks of the Carpathians in June, July and May.

The natural vegetation is very diverse and is levelled according to the altitudes. This way, in the lowest regions grows broad-leaved trees forests, and at higher altitudes you can find grazing fields. Forests of broad-leaved trees and cone-bearing trees represent the middle levels. In the culinary field of Transylvania there is forest steppe vegetation.

THE SURFACE NATURAL POTENTIAL (FORESTS, AGRICULTURAL FIELDS, GRAZING FIELDS)

The wood is one of the most important resources,

considering that beech, spruce-fir, fir, and oak forests cover 37% of the surface of the Region. That is why the CENTRU Region represents one of the biggest wood suppliers in Romania.

The forests are biologic production systems that supply the raw material that is necessary for the wood industry. They also constitute an important energy source. This kind of vegetation favoured the development of a diversified fauna.

The CENTRU Region is considered as an improper agricultural area because of its climacteric, soil and relief conditions. Though, mountains and forests cover a big part of this region, agriculture is practiced in good conditions in most of the counties. In the grazing fields, the precipitation conditions favour the livestock breeding, eliminating the effects of drought.

In the east and south of the region the main agricultural activities are the potatoes cultivation and in the lowest altitude areas the orchard growing. In the areas with depressions and hills and also in the watersides from the Centre Region agricultural areas are cultivated with wheat, braley, two-row braley, corn, beet, vegetables and forage plants. The Tarnavelor Plateau, bordered by the cities of Tarnaveni, Blaj, Medias and Aiud, as well as the surroundings of Alba Iulia and Sebs are covered with vineyards.

In 2004, the CENTRU Region had a surface of 1.894.000 ha of agricultural fields, what represented 55% of the Region's territory and 12.9% of the Romanian territory. The structure of the agricultural field is: 40.6% arable, 34.1% grazing fields, 23.9% hayfield 23.9% vineyards and 0.9% orchards.

The livestock breeding is well developed in all the counties of the "CENTRU" Region and especially in the mountains region where it represents the main rural occupation. The sheep breeding is the traditional occupation of the Cindrel Mountains, Sebes Mountains and Bran area inhabitants. The difficulties regarding the sheep products trade determined a slow diminution of this activity over the last decades. Alba, Covasna, Mures and Harghita counties are well-known for the quality of the cattle breeding and the Mures County is also famous for the porcine and poultry breeding.

NATURAL POTENTIAL OF THE SUBSOIL

Methane gaze

The most important underground resource of the CENTRU Region is the methane gas deposits that were discovered in Sărmășel in the year 1907. After the geologic research activities, the exploitation of the methane started in 1913. After 1944, other methane deposits were discovered and made available for industrial exploitation.

The biggest methane deposits in this part of Romania are located in: Nades, Zaul de Campie, Bogata, Saros, Singiorgiu de Campie, Seleus, Zău-Șăulia, Mădăraș, Sărmășel, Cetatea de Balta, Tauni, Porumbenii Mari, Avramesti, Mugeni, etc. We should underline that the methane of this region is considered as the purest one, because its composition mostly consists in dry gases. These gases are usually made of 99% methane and the rest is composed of hydrocarbons (ethane, propane, butane.)

NON-FERROUS METALLIFEROUS DEPOSITS

The non-ferrous metalliferous deposits represent another important natural resource of the Region. The Region has gold and silver exploitation in Zlatna, Baia de Aries, Almasu Mare, Rosia Montana, copper exploitation in Bucium, Almas, Rosia Poieni, Techereu, Balan and quicksilver exploitation in Izvorul Ampoiului, Madaras, Sintimbru.

Non-metalliferous deposits

The Centru Region also has non-metalliferous resources that are represented by usable non-metalliferous rocks (volcanic rocks, sedimentary rocks, detritus rocks). The eruption areas are dominated by andesite, and piroclastes – that are industrially exploited in Stânceni and Iliești-. In the Tarnavelor Plateau and the Transylvanian Plain there are important deposits of sediments, sands, marl and clay.

Huge deposits of sands from the Neocene, Miocene and Pliocene Ages are industrially exploited and used in the construction field and in the preparation of glass.

The marl deposits are not sufficiently capitalized, whereas they are very useful in the preparation of cement.

The clay is used by industrial organization or small rural workshops in the preparation of ceramic construction materials (bricks and tile).

Other important deposits are: basalt in Toplita, Galautas, Recas; andesite in Suseni, Vlahita, Tusnad, Bixad, Micfalau, Malnas-Bai; limestone in Lazarea, Voslobeni, Sandominic, Virghis, Intorsura Buzaului, Recas, Caciulata, Sinca Noua, Codlea, Bran, Moeciu, Risnov, Cristian, Tarlungeni, Brasov, Abrud, Galda de Sus; travertine in Bilbor; grit stone in Sinzieni, crystalline schist in Sadu and Lotrioara valleys; marmoreal crystals in Porumbacul de Sus, Arpaşul de Jos, Sohodol; and refractory clay in Alba Iulia, Ucea, Fagaras, Codlea, Cristian, Feldioara, Bodoc

Coal deposits

In the north-west of the Covasna County, there are many coalmines in the Capeni-Baraolt and Racos - Sud mining areas. For economic reasons, some of the mines were shut down; the only ones that remain active are the Baraolt mine, the Bodos quarry and the Racos-Sud quarry. In the CENTRU Region, coal deposits can also be found in Borsec, Jaltoca, Codlea, Cristian and Virghis.

Salt deposits

The salt (NaCl) is another resource that is present in large amounts. The main salt deposit is situated in the Jabenita village that is considered as the biggest in Transylvania. The salt has a content of 95-99% of the total volume of the deposit which is estimated at 77 billions tones. In the CENTRU Region, salt deposits can also be found in Sovata, Praid, Ocna Mures, Ocna Sibiului and Miercurea Sibiului.

THE TOURISM POTENTIAL OF THE CENTRU REGION. THE NATURAL TOURISM POTENTIAL

The relief

The relief of the Region gathers important parts of the Romanian Carpatians, the hill area of the Transilvanian plateau and the depressions that separate the contact line between the hills and the mountains.

The Giurgeului (1445m), Hasmasului (1793m) and Ciucului (1490m) Mountains are situated in the East of the region, they are separated from the Ghurghiului volcanic massive by the Giurgeului and Ciucului depressions.

The Carpathian curvature descends through the Harghita, Nemira, Vrancei, Buzaului, Bodoc and Baraolt Mountains towards the Brasov and Baraolt depressions.

In the South, the Piatra Mare and Ciucas Massives (1700-1950 m) are separated from the Bucegi Mountains (2507m) by the Predeal mountain pass.

The Piatra Craiului Massive lies in the North of the Bucegi Mountains by separating the Fagaras depression from the Brasov depression.

The Mountain chain is continued by the Fagaras Mountains, which have the highest mountain top of Romania. The depressions area of the mountains includes the Sibiu and Secas depressions: these areas are favourable to the human habitat and agriculture.

In the West of the Region, The Mures River separates the Suianu peaks from the East extremity of the Metaliferous Mountains, Bihor Mountains and The Big Mountain. The Zlatna, Abrud, Cimpeni and Trascau depressions are very old human habitats.

The high Transylvanian plain is an important agricultural area that is situated close to the volcanic peaks of the Calimani Mountains (the highest altitude is 2012m -Pietrosu Peak).

The center of the region is geographically represented by the Transilvanian Plateau with its subdivisions Secaselor, Tarnavelor and Hartibaciului Plateaux.

The CENTRU Region is covered by Mountains at 44%: Alba county (52%), Brasov county (40%), Covasna county (70%), Harghita county (60%), Mures county (22%) and Sibiu county (30%). The CENTRU Region includes the most touristic mountain of Romania. The Poiana Brasov, Predeal, Paraul Rece and Paltinis Spas are the most popular mountain spas in Romania; they are especially visited during the winter for skiing.

Hydrographical Resources

The importance of waters in tourism is due to the multiple possibilities which are offered for recreation and health restoring.

The touristic exploitation of waters concerns underground ones, hydrographical networks, lakes, mineral and thermal waters.

The Olt and Mures courses hydrographically dominate the "CENTRU" Region having different flow directions whereas they have nearby sources in the Hasmasu Mare Mountain.

The Mures river crosses the Giurgeu Depression, over 75 Km, then it crosses the Calimani-Gurghiu

volcanic mountains, over 50 Km, then the Transylvanian Plateau and after crossing the Sureanu and Trascau Mountains it leaves the Center Region towards West.

The Olt River rises at 1280 m altitude from the Hasmasu Mare Mountain. It crosses the Ciucului Depression, then the S-W extremity of Harghita Mountains descending in the Brasov Depression where it takes a large turn through the Baraolt and Bodocului Mountains descending again in the Fagaras Depression. After leaving the Fagaras Depression, the Olt River changes its flow direction; it crosses the Meridionali Carpathians through the Turnu Rosu defile.

The hydrographical tourism potential is far from being completely exploited. Still, The CENTRU Region offers large varieties of recreation and fishing locations. For this kind of activities, the main area is Covasna County which has rivers, rivulets, natural and artificial lakes: Cormos, Bodvai, Basca rivulets; Olt and Black Rivers; Padureni and Moacsa Lakes, as well as other minor lakes.

The glacial lakes Podragul, Podrăgel, Urlea, Bilea, Lacul Doamnei, Avrig, Iezerul Mare and Iezerul Mic Lacurile are also important tourism attractions. Other important tourism places are Sfanta Ana volcanic lake, Rosu lake, which represents the biggest natural dam in Romania, Iezer lake and Oasa lake.

There are also artificial lakes which were built for hidroenergetic purposes: Oasa, Tau, Capalna and Petresti on Sebes valley, Negovanu on Sadu valley, Scorei lake on Olt valley, Capalna, Frumoasa, Balan, Zetea and Moacsa. The fishing lakes are also very popular. We mention: Taureni, Zau de Campie, Bujor I, Bujor II, Saulia, Faragau, Pogaceanu in the Mures county; Raura, Bradeni, Loamnes, Mandra, Sacel, Valea Salciilor from Sibiu County; Dostat and Daia Romana in the Alba county.

In Rosia Montana, there are mining artificial lakes in Taul Mare, Taul Cornii, Tarina, Dughel si Brazi.

We should also mention the salted lakes: Ursu, Alunis, Negru, Verde and Rosu lakes in Sovata; the 12 lakes of Ocna Sibiului; Ideciu de Jos and Jabenita in Mures County. These lakes have special recreating potential for tourists, as they are used for therapeutic purposes.

The hydrographical networks which surround the urban areas are often used for recreation tourism. Such areas are Mures Valley, Tarnava Mica valley, Tarnava Mare valley, Sebes valley.

A special hydrographical category is represented by mineral springs. These springs favoured the development of various spas in the CENTRU Region: Sangeorgiu de Mures, Ideciu de Jos, Brancovenesti in Mures County; Bazna and Miercurea Sibiului in Sibiu County; Rotbav, Homorod, Persani in Brasov County; Tusnad, Borsec, Homorod, Jigodin Bai and Bilbor in Harghita County; Malnas Bai, Valcele, Sugas, Biborteni, Ozunca Bai and Zizin in Covasna County.

The flora and the fauna

The biodiversity of the Regional bio-geography is very complex. This element defines the attractiveness potential of the region. The flora is the main element of the environment; it represents the fundamental background for most of the tourism activities. Through its resources, the fauna represents the key element for hunting and fishing tourism.

The forest is considered as the most important element of the fauna. It represents the natural element of equilibrium, through ozone layer restoring, pollution absorption, erosion diminution and healthy sport tourism. With 1.220.781 ha of forest, the CENTRU Region is on second place after "North East Region" (18,7 %), as 18,5% of its surface is covered by forests.

The Region's vegetation is very diversified, it is conditioned by relief and pedoclimatic conditions. It starts with forest steppe at 200 m altitude and it ends with lawns at 2500 m. Between these extreme levels there are oak, beech and fir forests levels.

The Carpathians host over 40 endemic species of plants, the most important are: "romanița de munte" (*Achillea schurii*), "căldărușa" (*Aquilegia transsilvanica*), "cornutul" (*Cerastium transsilvanicum*), "mixandrele" (*Erzsinum transsilvanicum*), "ghintura galbena" (*Gentiana lutea*), "papucul doamnei" (*Cypripedium calceolus*), "angelica" (*Angelica archangelica*), "zabrul" (*Pinus cembra*), "smirdarul" (*Rhododendron kotschyi*), "bulbucii de munte" (*Trellius europaeus*), and "sorbul" (*Sorbus dacica*).

Other species are very scarce in Romania: "pătlagina uriașă" (*Plantago maxima*), "amăreala siberiană" (*Polygala sibirica*), "angelica de baltă" (*Angelica palustris*), "coada zmeului" (*Calla palustris*) and others. In Alba County you can find: "floarea de colt" (*Leontop alpinum*), "strugurii ursului" (*Arctostaphylos uva-ursi*), "sangele voinicului" (*Nigritella rubra*), "argintica" (*Doyas octopetala*). In Mures County, in Zau de Campie,

there is a big natural protected resort for the “bujorul romanesc” (*Paeonia tenuifolia*). In Haghita County you can find: “rozmarinul argintiu” (*Andromeda polifolia*), “roua cerului” (*Drosera rotundifolia*), and “muschiul de tundra” (*Meesea hexasticha*).

The Region’s fauna is rich and diverse, as it gathers almost half of the Romanian species of mammalian and fishes. The most important mammalian species in the Region are: “capra neagră” (*Rupicapra rupicapra*), “ursul brun” (*Ursus arctos*), “cerbul carpatin” (*Cervus elaphus*), “căpriorul” (*Capreolus capreolus*), “marmota” (*Marmota marmota*), “lupul” (*Canis lupus*), “vulpea” (*Vulpes vulpes*), “liliacul mare” (*Myotis mystis*), “liliacul pitic” (*Pipistrellus pipistrellus*), and “rasul” (*Lynx lynx*). You can also find specific species of birds such as: “corbul” (*Corvus cerax*), “cocosul de munte” (*Tetras mogalus*), “aquila de munte” (*Aquila permanina*), “fluturasul de stanca” (*Tichedreana muraria*) and “mierla de piatra” (*Monticola saxatilis*).

Among the 168 bird species that were identified in the Region, there are 5 species that have an ortofaunistic national importance: “pescărușul Asiatic” (*Larus ichthyæus*), “pescărușul de ghețuri” (*Larus hyperboreus*), “piciorongul” (*Himantopus himantopus*), “înărita” (*Carduelis flammea*) and “pasărea omătului” (*Plectrophenax nivalis*).

The Aquatic Fauna of the Region is very diverse, and specific for the Mountain Rivers.

In the mountain rivers, you can find fishes such as: “pastravul de munte indigen” (*Salmo trutta fario*), “pastravul fantanel” (*Salvelinus fontinalis*), “pastravul curcubeu” (*Salmo irideus* Gibbons), “lipanul” (*Thymallus thymallus*), “loștrita” (*Hucho hucho*).

In the hill and plain rivers, there are other varieties of fishes: “crapul” (*Cyprinus carpio*), “amurul alb” (*ctenopharyngodon idella*), “caracuda” (*Carassius carassius*), “carasul argintiu” (*Carassius auratus gibelio*), “platica” (*Abramis brama*) “morunasul” (*Vimba vimba*), “babusca” (*Rutilus rutilus*), “rosioara” (*scardinus erythrophthalmus*), “obletele” (*Alburnus alburnus*), “obletul mare” (*Chalcalburnus chalcoides*), “porcutor” (*Gobio gobio*), “avatul” (*Aspius aspius*), “scobarul” (*Chondrostoma nasus*), “cleanul” (*Leuciscus cephalus*), “cleanul mic” (*Leuciscus leuciscus*), “mreana” (*Barbus barbus*), “linul” (*Tinca tinca*), “sommel” (*Silurus glanis*), “tiparul” (*Misgurnus fossilis*), “stiuca” (*Esox lucius*), “bibanul” (*Perca fluviatilis*) and “salaul” (*Lucioperca lucioperca*).

Reserves and natural monuments

In order to preserve the scarce natural tourism resources of the CENTRU Region, we have the Law Nr. 5/2000 about the approval of the Spatial planning concerning protected areas. This normative act nominates 169 natural monuments situated in the CENTRU Region: Alba County 82, Brasov County 24, Covasna County 1, Harghita County 35, Mures County 13, Sibiu County 14. These areas represent 2.72% of the Region. In more of these areas, there are other areas that benefit from special protection, through County Council decisions.

National Parks in CENTRU Region

Bucegi National Park has a total surface of 32.663 ha and it is partially situated in Brasov County. This park hosts many reserves such as Abruptul-Bucsoiu, Abruptul Prahovean, Zanoaga, Turbaria Laptici, Babele, Omu, Vama Strunga and Ialomitei ones.

Piatra Craiului Natural Park has a total surface of 14.800 ha, it covers parts of Brasov and Arges Counties. It was opened in 1938 and it hosts the following natural reserves: Peretele vestic, Piatra Mica, Prapastia Zarnestilor, Hornurile Grindului, and Muchia Lunga

Apuseni Natural Park has a total surface of 75.784 ha, it covers parts of Bihor, Cluj and Alba Counties.

Calimani Sud National Park has a total surface of 24.041 ha, covering parts of Mures, Bistrita Nasaud and Suceava Counties.

Cheile Bicazului – Hasmas Natural Park has a total surface of 6.575 ha, it covers parts of Harghita and Neamt Counties.

There are other smaller natural parks: Fagaras, Podragu-Suru, Dumbrava Sibiulu and Muntii Cindrelului.

Balneary Potential

Centre Region hosts some balneary resources, which are extremely diversified, and numerous (mineral waters, water-bearing deposits, slated lakes, vegetable slime muds, etc.). As regards resources, the richest county is Harghita and Covasna; it is followed by Mures, Sibiu, Brasov and Alba.

In the treatment spas, are used the emissions of CO₂ and the springs that have a varied chemical composition that is linked to the postvulcanic

activity, mineral chlorified soda waters of the thermal lakes, vegetable slime muds provided by the salted lakes, carbogeous mineral waters, acid carbonated, ferruginous, calcic, sodium, etc. of Borsec, Bilbor, Tusnad, Harghita Bai, Homorod, Sanraieni, Biborteni, Covasna, Bodoc, Malnas, Valcele, Vilcele, Bixad, Baile Balvanyos, Hatuica, Martunus, Ozunca Bai, Baile Fortyogo in Targul Secuiesc, Zizin, Rotbav, Rupea, Racos si clorosodice bromurate si iodurate la Ideciul de Jos, Stânceni, Sangiorgiu de Mures, Sovata, Bazna, Ocna Sibiului, Miercurea Sibiului si Ocna Mures.

The therapeutic potential is given by the properties of these natural factors that allow curing diseases and of the tonic bioclimate of these spas. There are identified balneary factors, but until now they are not revaluated in other places of the region; future specialised studies will determine their value and the opportunity to include them in the economic circuit.

In Centre Region, there are 4 touristic resorts of national importance that were stated in 2002: Covasna- Covasna county, Baile Tusnad – Harghita county, Sovata – Mures county and Predeal – Brasov county), and other 11 are considered as having local interest: 2 resorts in Brasov: Paraul Rece and Timisu de Sus; 1 in Covasna -Balvanyos, 6 in Harghita: Baile Homorod, Borsec, Harghita-Bai, Izvorul Muresului, Lacu Rosu si Praid, and 2 in Sibiu: Bazna si Paltinis.

Anthropic touristic potential

Centre Region benefits from a valuable anthropic touristic patrimony, which is represented by numerous historical monuments, architecture and art, religious places, museums and memorial houses, architecture and popular technical creation, traditional popular events, ethnography and oral tradition, important cultural and scientific institutes, local personalities, cultural traditions of the minoritie. The heterogeneous ethnic composition of the Region generated its cultural diversity. Ethnic heterogeneity is one of its assets, as it distinguished it from the other regions.

The social-demographic potential

The social-demographic potential influences the touristic phenomenon, through human resources, services activities, or tastes of consumers for the touristic products that are specific to this territory.

The tourists circulation varies according to the population dynamic and to its structure (as regards age, professions, education, etc).

From the ethnical structure point of view, in Centre Region cohabitante Romanians (65.3%), 29,9 % Hungarians, 4% Roman people and 0.6% Germans. Concerning confesions, the orthodox religion is majoritary (63.6%), it is followed by roman-catholic 15.2 %, greek-catholic 1.7 %, etc. The ethnic and religious diversity determines cultural diversity which distinguishes Centre Region from other regions. The cultural mix influenced the region for a long time, it generated a very valuable cultural patrimony (architecture, traditions, music, handcraft), which can be touristically revaluated.

The touristic potential of the urban localities

The big number of localities that still have medieval characteristics creates premises for the development of urban tourism. Medieval fortresses, Fortified churches, Renaissance or Baroque castles, houses with big walls and tiles roofing, towers with entering gates or fortress walls, create in some localities a large network which characterize the places.

In Centre Region, the most valuable cities that own historical and architectural patrimony are:

- The town of **Alba Iulia** with the bastionara fortress (1715-1738), it is the most representative fortress of Vauban type in our country. The fortress imposes as the most significant assembly in Transilvania. The roman-catholic cathedral (XIIIth century) is the eldest and most valuable architectural monument in Transilvania. Near by, there is the Union Cathedral, that was built in 1922-1923 and which ymbolises the idea of Romanian people unity. Other important monuments are the Bathyaneum library, the Union's Museum, the Union Hal 1 and the Princely Palace.
- The town of **Aiud**, it includes the important fortress of Aiud, a complex of medieval architecture which is composed by several edifices (2 of them were used for cult and 4 were laic), they were built in the XVII-XVIIIth century and correspond to the Calvin reformed cult
- **Sebes** has an evangelical church with the highest altar of Transilvania and a fortress which was built at the end from the XIVth century to the beginning of the XVth one.
- The town of **Brasov** is situated at the bottom of the Tampa massive and represents a great touristic interest: the fortress of Brasov (1395) in which is kept the Blacksmith Bastion, the Ecaterina Gate, the Weaver Bastion (that is unique in the country) Bastionul Franghierilor, cel al Postavarilor and 3 power towers, White Tower and Black Tower. Nevertheless, the most famous monuments of Brasov are the Council Square (that was the centre and the fair

place of the old Brasov), the Council House (1490), the Schei district (the eldest location that is marked by the Romanian urban architecture and is considered as an architectural reserve), the Schei Gate, the Black Church (1385-1477) –which is one of the most important gothic monuments in the country and encloses old oriental carpets-, Sf. Nicolae church (1495) keeps a valuable mural painting of the XVIIIth century and objects of old Romanian art, lastly Bartolomeu church is the eldest architectural monument that was made in a combination of roman and gothic elements style.

- The town of **Fagaras** is situated on the middle course of the river Olt. There, the main attraction is the Fagaras fortress that is one of the strongest fortifications of Transilvania.
- **Sfantu Gheorghe** is the residence town of the Covasna County; it is situated on the superior course of the river Olt. Among the many monuments and touristic monuments, some are very important: the Fortified Reformed Church, the House with Arcades, the Secuiesc National museum, etc.
- As regards size, the second town of the Covasna County is **Targu Secuiesc**, it is an interesting medieval town due to the wheel display of the central square with the so-called “courts of crafts”, and there are also some small streets where there were handcraft shops. The centre of the town is constituted by a set of medieval historical and architectural monuments.
- **Miercurea Ciuc**, the residence town of the Harghita County is situated on the Olt’s terraces, near the Sumuleu Mare Mountain (1033 m). There, the most important touristic place is the feudal fortress Miko with 4 towers and a defense moat. Other important monuments are the Catholic church (1758), the baroque architectonical complex of Șumuleu, the school and Sf. Petru church that was built in the XIXth century and the orthodox and greek-catholic church which was built in the XXth century.
- The town of **Odorheiu Secuiesc** was one of the most important handcraft, commercial and educational centres. Nowadays, it is the economic and cultural centre of the Odorhei area, in the west part of the Harghita County. The only middle-age building that remains is the Jezus chapel, which was built in the XIIIth century. In thi town, it is also recommended to visit the fortress Bud, the roman chapel, the Székely TÁmadt church, the Tompa László memorial house, the Roman-catholic church. To finish up, on the Budvar hill (635 m), there are the ruins of a fortification of the Xth century

that is considered as an architectural monument.

- **Targu Mures**, In the centre of this town, there is a medieval fortress with seven bastions (1602-1652). Inside the fortress, there is the Reformed Church, with a main tower of 70 m and 4 smaller ones which are simetrically displayed. In Targu Mures, there are also the Culture Palace, the Roman-Catholic church that was built in baroque style in the XVIIth century and has the most beautiful altar of the country, as it is made of gilded wood and the Teleki house. The Orthodox Cathedral, which is the biggest of the countryand, has frescos on all its walls.
- **Sighisoara**, this town is situated on the river Tarnava- Mare course; it is also called “the pearl of Transilvania”, as it is considered as the most beautiful habitable medieval fortress in Europe. Sighisoara was one of the most prestigious urban centres of Transilvania; it had economic, commercial, cultural and political importance. It was founded by handcraftsmen and German merchants. Presently, the historical centre keeps having the characteristics of a small medieval town, which had had a strategic and commercial role as a central Europe border. Consequently, the old town of Sighisoara is characteristic of the German civilization of Transilvania. The historical centre has a great value because of its spatial and planametric structure and the fact there are still 90% of the fortifications whereas in Sibiu there are 30 % and in Brasov 45%. That is why Sighisoara fortifications are part of the UNESCO monuments list.
- The museum city, **Sibiul** includes over 40 buildings and constructions that were declared historical monuments and over 38 streets and public places of historical interest. In Sibiul, there are 10 museums and permanent expositions of national and international interest; the most famous of them are the Bruckenthal Museum and the ASTRA Popular Technique Museum. In the historical centre, there is the Big Square where took place the most important events of the fortress. There, there is the Roman- Catholic Church and houses that belonged to the noble people of Sibiu, Little Square with handcraftsmen shops, Huet Square. In the streets around, there were all the most f the touristic monuments: Catedrala Evanghelica, Casa Parohiala Evanghelica, Liceul Samuel de Brukenenthal. There are other monuments: Manastirea Ursulinelor, Biserica Ursulinelor, Biserica si Manastirea Franciscana, Biserica Reformata, Casa cu cariatide (Micul Palat), Catedrala Ortodoxa “Sf. Treime”, Baia populara Neptun, etc.

- The town of **Medias** presents to the tourists the Franciscan Architectural Complex which includes the church and the monastery, the Sfanta Margareta Church and the medieval towers (Pietrarilor Tower and Forkesch Tower).

THE TOURISTIC POTENTIAL OF THE COUNTRY SIDE

The country side represents a social and cultural entity which includes all the rural locations and where the main economic activity is agriculture.

In this central part of the country, villages, because of the social-historical conditions in which they developed, are an area where the Romanian spirituality interferred with the cohabitant nationalities's one. This symbiosis was full of originality and generated a very rich peasant culture.

Indeed, in 2000, the Center Region included 253 communes and 1784 villages, the density of the latter are very different from county to another one: in Alba 105,4 villages/ 1000 km², in Brasov 28 villages/1000 km², (the county's average is 55 villages/1000 km²). The high number of villages in Alba County is due to the very small locations of the Apuseni mountains area where some communes include more than 30 villages.

Every village has its own personality and character; it inspires specific characteristics and conditions of the existent infrastructure. It implies human dimension, local intimacy, praises the town hall, school, pub, traditions, things that mark people's lives. Farms, villages, natural environment and people are interdependent and they are essential elements of agro-tourism, to which they give attractivity and economic and cultural character.

The household's life remains a strong symbol for the townsmen that spend their holidays in the countryside. It's the house of the simple man, who knows the nature secrets, an animated place with which they lost contact, the place where it is possible to eat fresh products; it is the place where generations follow one another without any major changes in the lives.

From the point of view of the effects it has on the peasant households, agro-tourism appears as a country side development way, especially in the areas with difficult life conditions, like mountain or assisted areas which can hardly offer existence

means only thanks to agriculture and animal breeding.

In the Region, there are villages that are interesting because of handcrafts folkloric, cultural or historic values (museums, monuments, memorial houses, archeological sites), like the villages with fortified German churches, climatic touristical villages, or other that allow practicing sport, or visiting natural reserves nearby.

In some places, the popular creational spirit remained intact. Tradition is keeping being perpetuated, thus in some areas of the region, the popular handcraftmen keep doing what they have done for centuries.

The touristic potential of the historical and cultural vestiges

In Region's Centru territory, there are very stylistically varied historical and architectural monuments, of different historic periods and that reflect a national culture that can be Hungarian or German that influenced this area. This cultural mosaic is a very important touristic attraction, which gives specific features to the Region.

Some villages with fortified churches are part of the UNESCO list: Calnic, Biertan, Valea Viilor, Saschiz, Bunesti, Viscri, Prejmer, Darjiu. These localities have typical aspect –regular street networks, houses have high walls which are gathered around the church which is situated in the middle-; these characteristics contribute to the definition of the cultural profile of this Central Europe area.

The localities that are part of the UNESCO Universal Patrimony are an example of the localities of Transylvania which were colonized. They make a whole that is linked to historical values. As a set, the fortified churches are remarkable because there are many in a small perimeter. They constitute an exceptional architectural realization, due to the diversity and the use of defensive patterns. Thus, you can only find in Transylvania 3 types of fortifications: a church with fortified interior (Prejmer), a fortified church (Saschiz) and a church-fortress (Valea Viilor).

The churches kept precious interiors: altars, fragments of mural paintings (Dârjiu), XVIth century furniture (Prejmer, Saschiz, Valea Viilor). Until the 1980's, -these localities kept their multiethnic character.

Most of the rural walled cities became royal or feudal fortresses. The most important of them are: Rasnov (which is built on a rock), Calnic, Agnita,

Cisnadioara (that is built on a hill up the village), Slimnic, Rupea, Vurpar, Garbova, Cristian, Halchiu, Prejmer, Harman si Homorod, Tilisca, Orlat, Biertan, Atel, Cisnadia, Cata si Mosna, Sura Mica. Smaller fortresses are in Rosia, Rasinari, Jina, Poiana, Marpod, Dabarca, Racovita, Hamba and Miercurea Sibiului.

Despite their strategic position, the gothic fortresses are not very well preserved, but they are valuable from the archeological, historical and touristic point of view.

The cultural tourism potential

Another component of the cultural tourism potential is made up by the cultural-artistic institutions and events, art and technical monuments, parks and gardens, traditional gastronomy, which are numerous and varied in the region.

In the region, there are history museums of national importance: The National Union Museum Alba Iulia, The county History Museum Brasov, The First Romania School Museum in Scheii Braşovului, The Fagaras country Museum Făgăraşului, The National Hungarian Museum-Sfantu Gheorghe, The County Museum Mureş, The Hungarian Museum -Miercurea Ciuc, The History Museum -Sibiu, The ASTRA Museum, The National Museum Brukenthal. In the Region's County, cultural events of national interest take place: The medieval art festival in Sighisoara, Romania's National Day in Alba Iulia, the jazz festival in Sibiu and Brasov, film festivals, and there are also events of regional interest, like the medieval festivals in Sibiu, Brasov.

The touristic potential of the traditional art and customs

The traditional art and customs are interesting reasons to travel. Because of the relative isolation of some communities, the traditional culture is still alive: old architecture and technology (houses; buildings, gates, churches, mills), use of natural materials, techniques that are used to process wood, to weave, to embroider, to paint glass, to make ceramics and iron objects.

There is no doubt the role of traditional occupations decreases, especially as regards traditional architecture, furniture manufacture and tools production. Yet, one can still notice the different ethnographic zones with specific architecture, occupations, customs, gastronomy, etc.

Because of the vast forests of this Region, the wood was mainly used as a construction material. The areas with interesting wooden churches, houses and gates are considered as traditional architecture reserves. Most of them are made of sleepers and wooden tiles.

The importance of traditional occupations decreased because manpower was attracted by industry. Furthermore, the demand of hand-made items is small. As a consequence, the traditional occupations need to be supported.

The region economic potential

The various natural resources constitute an important promise of economic development. Because of the Region resources, there is a long tradition of mining, construction materials and wood processing industries.

Then, machines, chemical, porcelain, wood processing, food processing, and paper industries developed.

Presently, the economic activity is dominated by industry. There are two traditional zones: Brasov and Sibiu are specialized in machines and food processing industries, whereas the other four counties are specialized in processing local resources (gas, ore, salt, wood, etc.)

Due to the various reliefs, there are various forms of agriculture: sheep and cattle breeding in the mountain area, cultivation of cereal and technical plants and vine in the plain and hills area.

Located at the main national transportation ways crossroad, the region has a great potential as far as commercial activities are concerned.

In 2003, the Gross Domestic Product of Centru Region was 24,81 million RON, what represents 12,6% of the national Gross Domestic Product. The Gross Domestic Product per inhabitant was 9.750 RON in 2003, what is 7,2% higher than the national GDP per inhabitant. These figures mean Centru Region is in third position, it follows Bucharest Region and West Region.

In 2003, the economic activities participated in the GDP of the Region as it follows: industry (29%), agriculture (11,5%), constructions (5,6%) and services (42,1%).

In comparison with the formation of the National GDP, in Centru Region industry is more represented, agriculture has the same importance whereas the services and constructions are less represented.

In 2003, the productivity of labor in Centru Region was 21.531 RON per occupied person, what is

49,3% higher than the figures of 1993 and 2% higher than the productivity at the national level.

Whilst analyzing the economic structure of Centru Region, one can notice that the industrial sector is dominant (40,7%). Almost all the industrial branches are present in the region: chemical, building materials, wood processing, mining, textile, food, etc.

The factories are usually located in the urban areas and some towns are even mono-industrial. The industrial centers have all the necessary utilities: they offer to potential investors access to electricity, water, gas and sewage systems. The industrial centers usually have a qualified labor force. These benefits and the natural resources that are available make Centru Region an area that offers great business opportunities.

The roads network of Centru Region follows the axis of Mures river, Olt river, Tarnava Mica and Tarnava Mare rivers. Other roads cross the region from North to South. Brasov is the intersection point of the national transport ways that connect the North to the South, the East with the West.

The maximum density of roads is located in the valleys while the minimum density is in the mountains. The European roads E81, E68 and E60 cross the center of the region and its margins. Two highways will cross the region, what is an important development opportunity for the region.

As far as railway transportation is concerned, Centru Region has important railway junctions (Brasov, Sibiu, Teius) that connect Romania to the Central and Western Europe.

In Centru Region, there are two airports (Sibiu and Targu Mures) that are used both for internal and external flights.