

THE IMPORTANCE OF GASTRONOMIC TOURISM IN ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT OF ROMANIA

Mihaela ȘTEFANOVICI
Mirela MAZILU

Abstract: *Tourism occupies an important place in the world economy, representing for some states a key element in their development. Tourism has diversified its forms because, over time, the motivations of tourists have changed. This article aims to present gastronomic tourism as a new form of tourism, also representing a new concept of approach. Gastronomic tourism combines cultural, thematic features, sustainable tourism, and aims to satisfy and educate tourists in terms of local, traditional cuisine, thus bringing many benefits to residents and helping the economic sector. As a new form of tourism, gastronomic tourism is part of cultural tourism, which illustrates the culture of an area and manages to highlight traditional values. Tourism in rural areas is very popular, with specific activities, such as agrotourism, gastronomic festivals, product tastings, visiting wineries, etc. Gastronomic tourism can be considered a distinct form of cultural tourism because its main purpose is the discovery by tourists of the traditions and values of local communities, based on the specific gastronomy of places visited, customs and traditions of communities, folklore or crafts in the area. The vast majority of local guesthouses rely on this approach, as it attracts and fuels the interest of tourists. Our country has already experienced many attempts to promote the tourist potential it needs. Today, this industry still has many opportunities that can bring benefits, but a closer link must be built between the inhabitants of the communities, the public administration and the representatives of tourism being the main actors. Romania is proud, in addition to its resources, with wild nature, the diversity and complexity of landforms, the Danube Delta, medieval cities, monasteries, but, of course, traditional food.*

Keywords: *tourism; gastronomic tourism; sustainable tourism; gastronomy; agricultural product; traditional values*

INTRODUCTION

Gastronomic tourism presents a new form of tourism and is part of cultural tourism, because it includes both culinary and traditional values, including tourism in urban and rural areas, including its specific activities.

At the base of gastronomic tourism are traditional discoveries and the values of local communities and entities, combining local traditional elements,

gastronomic treasures by rediscovering local or regional values (Pribeanu & Milutin, 2018).

According to the definition given by the World Tourism Organization UMWTO, gastronomy is about much more than food. It reflects the culture, heritage, traditions and sense of community of different peoples. It is a way of promoting understanding among different cultures, and of bringing people and traditions closer together. Gastronomy tourism is also emerging as an important protector of cultural heritage, and the sector helps create opportunities, including jobs, most notably in rural destinations.

Gastronomy is part of people's social and cultural heritage, reflecting a specific lifestyle specific to each geographical area. Tourists, especially those who consider culture as their main motivation to visit a certain destination, find gastronomy as a necessary part to understand, appreciate and learn the values that a destination transmits (Pérez-Priego et al., 2019).

Research on the topic of gastronomic tourism has increased in the last ten years, conducting numerous studies and analyses prepared by many researchers in the scientific literature, increasing the relationship between gastronomy and tourism. Terms such as "gastronomic tourism", "culinary tourism" or "wine-gastronomic tourism" express the action of discovering other cultures through its typical food to obtain a unique and memorable gastronomic experience (Pérez-Priego et al., 2019). In another scientific approach, gastronomic tourism is integrated into thematic tourism, based on traditional events with a gastronomic component, organized to preserve and continue the traditions (Pribeanu & Milutin, 2018).

From the etymological point of view, the word gastronomy is derived from ancient Greek, γαστήρ (gastér) meaning "stomach" and nómos - "knowledge" or law (<http://www.finedictionary.com>).

Gastronomy is the study of the relationship between culture and nutrition and studies various cultural components that have food as a basic element, also meaning the rational knowledge of everything that signifies and has to do with feeding people, thus incorporating the customs and local traditions (Pribeanu & Milutin, 2018, p. 205). It is argued that accounts and stories of the destination's gastronomy and culinary work particularly well in individuals' efforts to "narrate experiences and feelings" (Kivela & Crofts, 2009).

Gastronomic tourism aims to educate tourists and guide them in consuming healthy food, unprocessed food and products to have bio-gastronomic values. Gastronomy and the tradition of the essential elements of gastronomic tourism that influence the development and consolidation of the brand of a destination. The local gastronomic experiences lived by tourists in

visited locations turn into unforgettable moments, fueling their appetite from visiting and discovering as many dimensions of culture as possible, which is why gastronomic tourism has become a niche market with great potential.

METHODS

This article is based on in-depth research of the analyzed subject, the consulted bibliographic sources being specialized books, scientific research, research reports and online sources specific to the chosen research field. In this paper, the analytical steps I decided to follow were:

- selecting the documentation for the chosen topic;
- identifying keywords;
- application of deductive, inductive, comparative methods, as well as analysis, which were useful to have results.

THE CONCEPT OF GASTRONOMIC TOURISM AND CULINARY TOURISM

Food or culinary tourism does not have a distant past. It began in 2001 when Lucie Long, a professor at Ohio State University, made the term and phenomenon public (Karabašević & Cleșiu, 2012, p. 270).

In 200, Erik Wolf established the organization known as the International Culinary Tourism Association (ICTA), based in Oregon USA. The Association rebranded in 2012 as the World Food Travel Association after research showed that English speakers, especially Americans, misunderstood the intended meaning of "culinary tourism". However, the first name is still known and used (Karabašević & Cleșiu, 2012, p. 270).

In the view of the World Food Travel Association, "food tourism is the act of travelling for a taste of place in order to get a sense of place" (<https://worldfoodtravel.org/>).

Another definition of culinary tourism is given by the World Tourism Organization as representing tourists or visitors that schedule their trips with the goal to taste the local cuisine of one given country or to realize activities concerning gastronomy.

Montse Fernández (2019), manager of the tourism department at Madison Market Research, believes that "culinary tourism is currently an important attraction factor in choosing a tourist destination. It is a differentiating element that complements more than motivation"

(<http://evisionturism.ro/gastronomia-treilea-motiv-importanta-alege-destinatie/>).

The gastronomic tourism is, according to Mitchell and Hall (2003) associated to a trip away from the usual place of residence, motivated in its whole or partly for the interest in food and beverage, and/or in eating or drinking. According to Hall and Sharples (2003) food tourism is an experiential trip to a gastronomic region, for recreational or entertainment purposes, which includes visits to primary and secondary producers of food, gastronomic festivals, food fairs, events, farmers' markets, cooking shows and demonstrations, tastings of quality food products or any tourism activity related to food (Martins, 2016).

The importance of this type of tourism is materialized by the fact that it leads to a local, regional and national development of the economy of the country offering a high level of tourism diversification (Florea, 2013, p. 326).

Therefore, one can talk about the management of touristic destinations, strategically designed and implemented through a marketing policy, based on specific theories, models, calculation techniques and principles. In order to offer the best experience for the tourist, a strategy which involves all the internal and external stakeholders have to be designed and implemented, offering at the same time a character of brand equity (Florea, 2013).

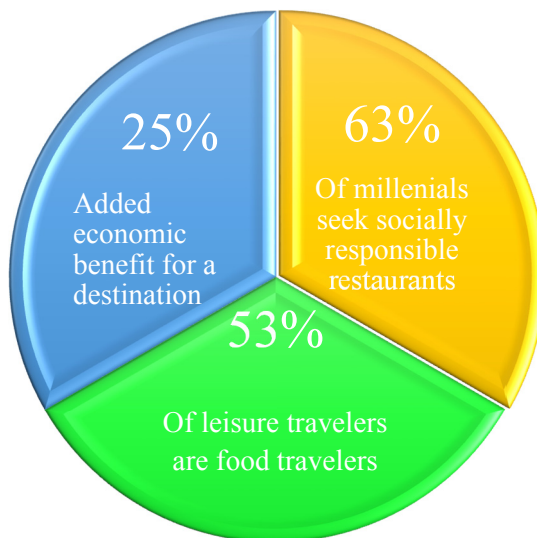


Fig. 1. Latest food tourism research

Source: Statistical data taken from World Food Travel Association

WORLD CUISINE

A cuisine is a specific set of cooking traditions and practices, often associated with a specific culture or region. Each cuisine involves food preparation in a particular style, of food and drink of particular types, to produce individually consumed items or distinct meals. A cuisine is frequently named after the region or place where it originated. A cuisine is primarily influenced by the ingredients that are available locally or through trade. Religious food laws can also exercise a strong influence on such culinary practices.

World cuisines offer a great variety in terms of flavours, tastes and combinations (**Fig. 2**). Greek, Lebanese, Thai, Spanish and Japanese cuisines are known for the seasonality of the ingredients, the colour combinations and the authentic national flavour we can experience when sampling these regional cuisines.

The recipes for Indian, Mexican and Chinese dishes are well known around the world: they were among the first “exotic” cuisines exported outside their native borders and have grown in popularity ever since. Italian and French cuisines are probably the most sought after world dishes, as the former stands for true genuine flavours, while the latter has come to signify refined and sophisticated taste.

Regardless of where each of us prefers, each dish is the pure expression of a country's heritage, geography and culture. And, of course, food is one of the best parts of any holiday (<https://www.finedininglovers.com/tag/world-cuisine>)



Fig. 2. Local food around the world
Source: TasteAtlas

African Cuisine – A tour all about flavors and spices. From Algeria to Zambia, from Cote d’Ivoire to Uganda, the African continent presents irresistible recipes of local dishes. Across Africa, gastronomy tourism can be used to drive economic growth and create jobs, including in rural communities, and help protect and promote cultural heritage.

American Cuisine – Latin American and Caribbean combine refreshing bites with slow-cooked traditional dishes, offering a cuisine full of touches that never cease to surprise our taste buds. A major component of history, tradition and identity, gastronomy has also become a major motivation to visit this region.

Asian Cuisine – The largest continent in the world offers delicacies for all types of tastes. Sweet, sour or spicy, a wide range of mouth-watering flavours is on the table. Gastronomy tourism has a unique ability to contribute to the growth of sustainable tourism in Asia and the Pacific.

European Cuisine – From the best-known Mediterranean dishes to the cuisine of Eastern Europe, the gastronomy of this region is blended together past and present, tradition and creativity. The diversity and cultural richness of European cuisine have become a leading element in attracting visitors, and gastronomy tourism is helping destinations diversify their sectors and promote rural development.

Middle Eastern Cuisine – From Egypt to Saudi Arabia, Middle Eastern cuisine represents tastes and textures of a mosaic heritage of identities. The union between gastronomy and tourism provides a platform to preserve tangible and intangible heritage, empower communities and enhance intercultural understanding.

DEFINING FOOD TOURISM INDUSTRY STAKEHOLDERS

There are 20 interrelated sectors in the food tourism industry cluster (**Fig. 3**). This includes food and beverage businesses, travel and hospitality businesses and some other related businesses and organizations such as governments, media, and academia. The World Food Travel Association acts to coalesce these sectors to form the “food tourism industry cluster.”

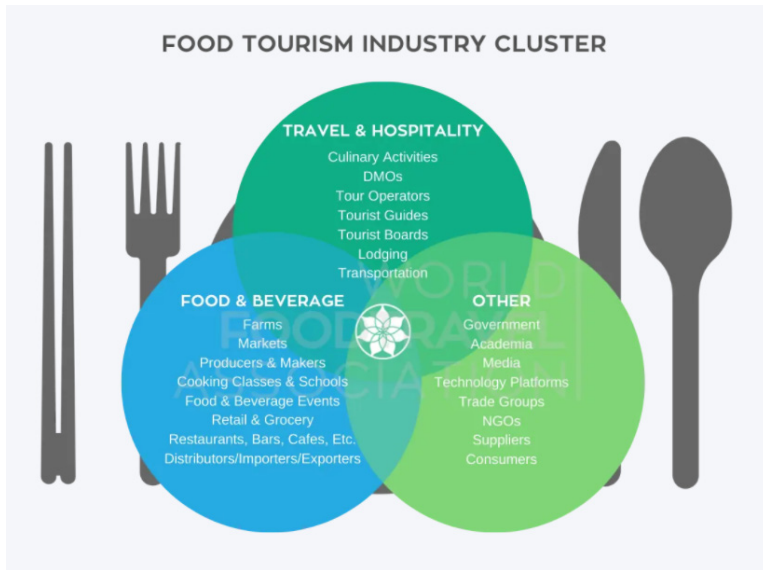


Fig. 3. Food Tourism Industry Cluster
Source: World Food Travel Association

FOOD TOURISM VALUE CHAIN

The Food and Beverage Tourism value chain can be represented as a free-flowing continuum shown here. Agriculture, food and beverage producers, foodservice and unique experiences work together to create what we know today as food tourism. Each element is just as important as the other in creating memorable food and beverage experiences, and each successive step in the chain adds more economic value than the previous step (Fig. 4).

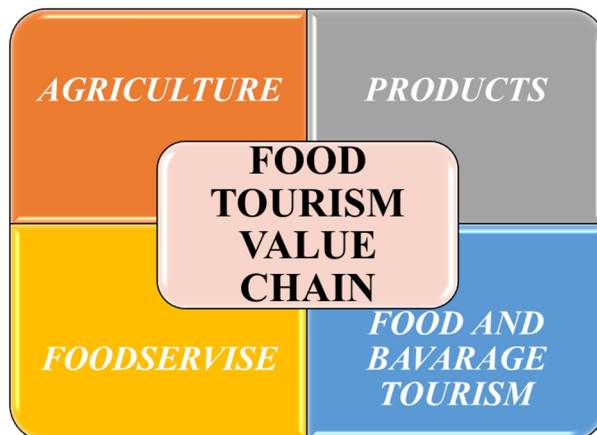


Fig. 4. Food Tourism Value Chain
Source: World Food Travel Association

ROMANIA AND GASTRONOMIC TOURISM

Since ancient times, the population of Romania has given a special interest in gastronomy. The Romanian people have been and are a lover for the culinary arts, holidays, parties and for the special events in their lives.

On the world tourism market, Romania cannot compete, at present, with the countries that have a tradition in tourism, but we must look for suitable niches to help and support the development of the tourism sector in our country. Romania has a huge potential, only that it is not exploited to its maximum capacity. Currently, gastronomic tourism is one of those niches that can bring our country to a well-deserved place in the hierarchy of countries with a reputation in the tourism market.

Romanian cuisine has been influenced by different cultures, with which it came into contact (Turkish, French, Austrian, Hungarian, Slovak, Russian, etc.). It can be said that not only did we assimilate their characteristics, but we also even improved and perfected them, thus resulting in today's cuisine, based on the diversity of local resources, on Romanian customs.

It may notes the variety of assortments of raw materials for food (meat, fish, venison, pork, beef, lamb etc. alongside aromatic plants - as spicy, a wide range of vegetables, poultry, dairy products etc.), all being very tasteful making the good food and thus highly appreciated by people (Tomescu & Botezat, 2014).

In recent years, efforts have been made in Romania to offer customers more and more products that address lifestyle, culinary culture (even gourmet), wine civilization, etc., problems almost totally neglected by most Romanians for almost seventy years (1945-1989, in the communist era and the last twenty years).

Food fairs and festivals which are organized in Romania have been a real success. Most food fairs and festivals are organized in the idea of preserving and transmitting authenticity and ancestral traditions. These events are more and more frequently, organized at the Peasant Museum in Bucharest, or in very visible places in the city, but also in localities/communities that start to understand this niche and to want to exploit it profitably.

Traditions, diversity and authenticity can be considered economic development resources. The consumption of traditional products, the ability to eat and buy should be encouraged directly from agri-food farmers, buy organic food several times, would make many actors propose and produce typical menus with local food and drinks.

CONCLUSION

Gastronomic tourism presents a new concept and a new form of tourism, it must be treated independently of other forms of tourism. It manages to combine the features of cultural, thematic, and sustainable tourism, with the main goal of educating tourists in traditional culinary arts, with many benefits. Gastronomic tourism facilitates the development of the economy of the communities visited, offering many local opportunities.

The motivations of tourists are very important for gastronomy because it is a variable for tourism segmentation and requires the development of a real marketing strategy to ensure healthy growth and sustainability of the local food and gastronomy.

Gastronomic tourism has real potential, but to be valued, the tourist infrastructure must ensure conditions for its good practice. In this sense, a strategy must be adopted and implemented to ensure the development and improvement of gastronomic tourism in tourist destinations.

Due to its geographical location, Romania has a diverse and complex landscape, has a huge potential to capitalize, also offers a wide range of local and traditional products that outline a rich culinary art, leading to a rise both in Europe and the world.

Gastronomic tourism has special importance in rural areas, giving authenticity to areas, revitalizing and diversifying the tourist offer of tourist destinations. Romania can present itself on the gastronomic tourism market due to the multitude of traditional dishes and dishes, as well as

In conclusion, gastronomic tourism plays a key role in protecting and promoting community values, illustrating local identity. Tourist destinations that aim to develop based on gastronomic tourism must turn their attention to the best possible quality of products, ensuring the recognition of the specificity of local products by tourists, thus marking the desire of tourists to return to the areas visited.

References

- Boiță Marius, Pribeanu Gheorghe, and Milutin Ionela Mihaela. *The Role of Gastronomic Tradition and Culture in the Development of Tourism*. "Ovidius" University Annals, Economic Sciences Series, Volume XVIII, Issue 2 /2018. 205 – 208. Accessed March 24, 2021. <https://stec.univ-ovidius.ro/html/anale/RO/wp-content/uploads/2019/02/3-2.pdf>
- Dieke C. *Research Themes for Tourism*. edited by Peter Robinson, Sine Heitmann and Peter Dieke. British Library, London, UK, 2011. Accessed March 12, 2021. https://books.google.ro/books?hl=ro&lr=&id=I3M6MdvntzMC&oi=fnd&pg=PA233&dq=GASTRONOMIC+TOURISM+%E2%80%93+A+REALITY+OF+OUR+DAYS&ots=hT0d45TB-X&sig=my5aswdbzDT0CI_1mvndFt9_BY4&redir_esc=y#v=onepage&q&f=false
- Dulău Alexandra Viorica, Coroș Monica Maria, and Coroș Marius Emil. *The Place of the Public Administration and Gastronomic Heritage in the Destination Branding and Tourism Promotion*. WSEAS TRANSACTIONS on BUSINESS and ECONOMICS. Issue 4, Volume 7, October 2010. 402 – 413. ISSN: 1109-9526. Accessed March 28, 2021. https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Monica-Coros/publication/267416706_The_Place_of_the_Public_Administration_and_Gastronomic_Heritage_in_the_Destination_Branding_and_Tourism_Promotion/links/5456b2b70cf2cf516480330b/The-Place-of-the-Public-Administration-and-Gastronomic-Heritage-in-the-Destination-Branding-and-Tourism-Promotion.pdf
- Florea Cristian. *Culinary Tourism - a key-aspect of Romanian tourism development*. International Conference on Competitiveness of Agro-food and Environmental Economy Proceedings, The Bucharest University of Economic Studies, vol. 2, pages 325-331. Accessed March 25, 2021. [http://www.cafee.ase.ro/wp-content/upload/2013edition/file\(41\).pdf](http://www.cafee.ase.ro/wp-content/upload/2013edition/file(41).pdf)
- Kock Marcelino. *The Development Of An Eco-gastronomic Tourism (egt) Supply Chain-analyzing Linkages Between Farmer, Restaurants, And Tourists In Aruba*. Electronic Theses and Dissertations, 2004-2019, Stars, University of Central Florida, 2013. Accessed March 13, 2021. <https://stars.library.ucf.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=3760&context=etd>
- Martins Marco. *Gastronomic tourism and the creative economy*. Journal of Tourism, Heritage & Services Marketing, Vol. 2, No. 2, pp. 33-37, 2016. Accessed March 31, 2021. https://www.ssoar.info/ssoar/bitstream/handle/document/67169/ssoar-jthsm-2016-2-martins-Gastronomic_tourism_and_the_creative.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y&lnkname=ssoar-jthsm-2016-2-martins-Gastronomic_tourism_and_the_creative.pdf
- Mazilu, Mirela. *Tourism– A Privileged Relation with the Lasting Development*, Revista de Marketing Online – Vol.1, Nr. 4, 2007. Accessed February 24, 2021. https://www.academia.edu/2662844/Turismul_o_relatie_privilegiata_cu_dezvoltarea_durabila
- Mehmet Kocaman, and Emel Memis Kocaman. *The Importance of Cultural and Gastronomic Tourism in Local Economic Development: Zile Sample*. International Journal of Economics and Financial Issues Vol. 4, No. 4, 2014, pp.735-744. ISSN: 2146-4138. Accessed March 24, 2021. https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Emel-Memis-Kocaman/publication/266620991_The_Importance_of_Cultural_and_Gastronomic_Tourism_in_Local_Economic_Development_Zile_Sample/links/54363915

- [0cf2bf1f1f2b619d/The-Importance-of-Cultural-and-Gastronomic-Tourism-in-Local-Economic-Development-Zile-Sample.pdf](#)
- Pérez-Priego Manuel Adolfo, María de los Baños García-Moreno García, Gema Gomez-Casero, and Lorena Caridad y López del Río. *Segmentation Based on the Gastronomic Motivations of Tourists: The Case of the Costa Del Sol (Spain)*. Sustainability 2019, 11(2), 409; <https://doi.org/10.3390/su11020409>. Accessed March 25, 2021. <https://www.mdpi.com/2071-1050/11/2/409/htm#B8-sustainability-11-00409>
- Routledge. *Tourism and Gastronomy*. edited by Anne-Mette Hjalager and Greg Richards, 3-21. Taylor & Francis e-Library, 2003. Accessed February 24, 2021. https://books.google.ro/books?hl=ro&lr=&id=mwSCAgAAQBAJ&oi=fnd&pg=PA51&dq=GASTRONOMIC+TOURISM+%E2%80%93+A+REALITY+OF+OUR+DAYS&ots=q5e0hSejTZ&sig=V1cuG-Nktx6pJxwaTcWm6n4kZTg&redir_esc=y#v=onepage&q&f=false
- Savu Cipriana, Karabašević Darjan, and Cleșiu Sabin Romulus. *Culinary tourism - A reality of our days*.
- Quaestus 15 – Contents and Editorial Board. 269 – 277. ISSN online 2343-8134. Accessed March 25, 2021. <https://www.quaestus.ro/en/wp-content/uploads/2012/02/savsakarabasevic-clesiu.pdf>
- Tomescu Mirela, and Botezat Elena. *Culinary tourism in Romania – Professional points of view*. Faculty of Economic Study, University of Oradea, Romania, 2014. Accessed March 28, 2021. https://d1wqtxts1xzle7.cloudfront.net/44654815/CULINARY_TOURISM_IN_ROMANIA_PROFESSIONAL20160412-24428-1nnzlgf.pdf?1460461334=&response-content-disposition=inline%3B+filename%3DCulinary_Tourism_in_Romania_Professional.pdf&Expires=1617300468&Signature=XNu~erED4LAsKlSoPqa80~KKwE0jrsxGOFzsBOvhxPyn936NQ8Y4aYv5f55sloM9cWCEDfg23JCo8sbLTpWeMlLnm9wUIK3XDhQhO1v~6M4hzH9vZyg1vx6fkMnLhb~Mbln4wGbvsvsqoghjYIlzFUHFP3TnIph3wDMiUemOR-h4AYFjEA6eLBHA64ZC2Xr0~kiCiKmny6lCFSaCiMtrCScMYv9bNjzPbWVH9K2HoPXJCSpo07xauydWxvC6aqW20EcOQhXG9Yzd4U8pNrpKY1b4RorqEMLiIR5vNCSerH5-ivNIWcUTd7UBaUo59UmkFmWXdmh8Uthk1V4PMbJpSg__&Key-Pair-Id=APKAJLOHF5GGSLRBV4ZA
- “GASTRONOMY.” Last modified March 28, 2021. <https://www.unwto.org/gastronomy>
- “WHAT IS FOOD TOURISM?”. Last modified March 31, 2021. <https://worldfoodtravel.org/what-is-food-tourism/>
- “WORLD FOOD TRAVEL ASSOCIATION.” Last modified March 31, 2021. <https://worldfoodtravel.org/>

NOTES ON THE AUTHORS

Mihaela ȘTEFANOVICI, Ph.D. student at the Doctoral School of Sciences, Faculty of Sciences, Geography Department, University of Craiova, Craiova, Romania. Important qualifications: master in Tourism and Sustainable Development, licensed in Geography, GIS certificate, French certificate. E-mail address: stefanovici.mihaela16@yahoo.com

Mirela MAZILU, Univ. Professor, Ph.D. at the Faculty of Sciences, Geography Department, University of Craiova, Romania. She holds a Bachelor Degree in geography from the Faculty of Geography, the University of Bucharest, Bucharest city, Romania in 1984 and Ph.D. Degree in geography from the Faculty of Geography, University of Bucharest, Bucharest city, Romania in 1995. She attended the West University of Timișoara-Center of Excellency Jean Monnet, School of high European comparative studies between 2004 and 2006 and the International summer school “Media and Intercultural Dialogue”, organized under the patronage of the International Management Science Institute-Bruxelles in 2006. Became professor in 2009 and now is Ph.D. professor at the University of Craiova, Romania. She Has many national and international research, over 15 books published a single author; university manuals; over 150 articles published in the volumes of the national and international Congresses, symposiums and seminars and also in prestigious magazines with CNCSIS range and over 150 participations to scientific events. Also, is affiliated to over 30 International Research Associations and published over 30 articles in international magazines in different fields such as: European integrations, ecology, environment protection, tourism etc. E-mail address: mirelamazilu2004@yahoo.com