

THE YOUTH TRAVEL OFFER AND THE FACILITIES GIVEN TO THE YOUTH WHEN PRACTICING TOURISM ON THE ROMANIAN MARKET

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Abstract: In Romania the strategic objectives in the development of youth travel take into account the following: increasing youth travel by attracting disadvantaged young people, setting up tourist events with an educational purpose, developing the system for youth cards, expanding programs for training and perfecting young people for professions in tourism, involving NGO's in the administration and management of tourist resources, providing tourist information of interest to the youth, etc.

Key words: youth travel, youth travel offer, facilities in youth travel.

1. The youth travel offer on the Romanian market

The existent youth travel offer on the Romanian market is determined by the main travel reasons which the youth has. Thus, some prefer to follow various non-formal education forms (theme camps, summer camps and even academic studies) during their stay, others prefer cultural activities, another category is less active and prefers rest camps, but there are also young people who prefer to participate in sports competitions. There is also a close connection between the traveler's motivations and the activities proposed by a touristic destination. More recreation activities, like "having fun" and "excitement", are tied to many other activities like going to clubs, watching sports competitions and lying on the beach.

At the present time, the offer includes the following categories of tourism products: rest camps, theme camps, cultural and educational exchange programs, various events, trips and touristic circuits, etc.

In our country encouraging youth tourism is done especially through *rest camps* for children, pupils and students. The allotment of the spots in these camps is done through a tight collaboration between the National Youth Authority, the District Schools Inspectorates, the Student Support Agency, schools and universities. The vacation time is the time destined for relaxation and it represents the vacations' fundamental component. All young people need a sufficiently long vacation in order to restore their physical and intellectual condition. Starting from the easiest definition of tourism which describes it as a "recreation form together with other activities and ways to spend free time"²³⁴ we can say vacation time can't be an inactivity period, vacation organizers must offer to the youth through touristic programs adapted to their age and preferences the possibility to discover nature, new places and people, cultural and sportive activities, either at an individual level or at the collectivity level.

The tickets in student camps for the summer and winter periods can be obtained by the students on the basis of their grades in the limits of the spots allotted per university. An important place in the students' preferences is occupied by the sea-side with its famous youth resorts (Costinești, Vama Veche, 2 Mai), but also by the series of mountain resorts (Predeal, Bușteni, Sinaia, etc).

In the summer vacation, the National Youth Authority organizes a series of *summer schools (theme camps)* in which young people can show their creative talent and can learn interesting information about different subjects. Personalities from various interest domains participate at these summer schools: university lecturers, political personalities, established journalists and representatives from the civil society. Besides these projects, the National Youth Authority organizes a series of actions with and for the youth, actions which are meant to get the young generation involved in the social life of the community.

According to their aptitudes and desires, the young people can choose from a large variety of theme camps, from journalism or environment protection to sports camps, where they exchange their experience with foreign students. For the 2007 summer camp, the theme camps supply, put at the disposal of the youth through the National Youth Authority, consisted of 20 types of theme camps, which took place in 61

recreation centers from all over the country with a total capacity of 9.000 spots, at a tariff between 162-485 RON/stay/person (see table).

Type of theme camp	No. of recreation centers	Price/ stay (RON)	Total no. of spots (no. series x no. of spots/series)
Sports camp	10	162-312	1.938
English camp	7	252-462	2.007
Ecology camp	5	267-332	775
Dance camp	5	292-348	674
Touristy orientation camp	4	264-332	456
Literature camp	3	270-282	440
History camp	3	239-352	270
Art camp	6	264-342	847
Journalism camp	2	264-312	84
Speology camp	2	312	180
Mathematics camp	2	252-282	380
Religion camp	2	239-282	94
European Integration camp	2	312-485	220
Management camp	2	362-485	98
Pedagogy camp	1	452	70
Clothes design camp	1	352	120
Education for drug prevention camp	1	264	107
„The skilled nurses” camp	1	282	300
The „Games without frontiers” camp	1	452	70
„Creative and motivational personal development” camp	1	270	200
TOTAL	61		9.330

Theme camps for the 2007 summer vacation

In the youth travel context the *cultural and educational exchange programs* are also included. They take place in Europe and at international level, with numerous countries, including Romania, actively promoting a development of these practicing means of tourism. Various tourism organisms and institutions from our country promote these kinds of programs in order to encourage young people to travel abroad and to get them interested in the patrimony and culture of other countries. In many cases they have the possibility to learn a foreign language or to study abroad. Among the most popular programs for the Romanian youth are: the youth and student mobility European programs – *The 2007-2013 Life Learning Program, Youth in Action* and *Erasmus Mundus* which annually offer to 10.000 young people the possibility to travel inside the European Union; academic exchange and employee exchange programs like *SOCRATES* (we include here Erasmus, Grundtving and Lingua), *YOUTH FOR EUROPE* and *LEONARDO DA VINCI* – and cultural exchange programs like “Work and Travel USA”, “Internship USA”, “Foreign Language Courses in Europe”, etc.

Another category of touristy products destined for the youth are the *cultural, musical and sportive events*. The most important event which positively influenced the youth travel activity in our country is *The European Youth Campaign for diversity, human rights and participation “All different, all equal”*. During October 4th – October 7th, 2007 the final event of the 2006/2007 campaign initiated by the European Council and which included 33 member countries, took place in Malmo, Sweden. Romania participated actively in this campaign by organizing different events which included 200 young people. The purpose of the campaign was to encourage and help young people to be a part in the building of a peaceful society based on diversity and inclusion, respect, tolerance and mutual understanding. This campaign was a sequel of the 1995 campaign – *The campaign against racism, anti-Semitism, xenophobia and intolerance*.

Another important *cultural event* for the Romanian youth is the one organized by the National Youth Authority in partnership with the EURO<26 Romania Association and with different providers of cultural

and recreational services. This event took place in October 26th, 2007 under the name “*White Night*” in Bucharest and 12 other counties in our country. In Bucharest the program included: free shows to various cultural institutions (The National Opera, the I.L. Caragiale National Theatre, the Odeon Theatre and the Bucharest Comedy Theatre), sportive competitions with prizes at the “Tei” Student Cultural-Sportive Complex and concerts in open air with different bands in the Bucharest Polytechnics University’s campus.

In order to promote youth travel on the intern and international market, the development and diversification of the touristy products destined for young tourists must be underlined, by offering and providing other services than the ones considered basic (accommodation and board services), especially recreation-entertainment services. Romania could also develop, after the example of other countries (like France), a network of vacation centers which are considered complementary spaces to the family and the school. These centers receive kids and young people during the vacation and have teams of qualified touristy animators whose mission is to “contribute to the inclusion, education and development of the kids during the vacation period”²³⁵.

2. Facilities given to the youth when practicing tourism

Practicing high prices and tariffs limits the youth’s access to touristy services and is mainly reflected in the diminishing number of tourists, but also in the duration of the stay, in the travel distances, etc.; at the same time, low tariffs stimulate demand, but there are also adverse reactions-for example, very low tariffs or their drastic decrease can generate a lack of trust regarding the services’ quality, and as a consequence a reduction in the number of travels.

Cutting back prices and tariffs is very important for most young people and students who travel. Generally, over half of the young people get a discount for their student status:

- up to 30% discount because of their age (till 26 years old);
- up to 25% discount for train and bus tickets;
- up to 17% discount for accommodation.

Of course, there are some discounts for the youth over 26 years old, like discounts for air-plane tickets by using membership cards, and discounts for groups.

Among the facilities for the youth prescribed by the law, the most well-known are in the following fields: *transportation*-discounts for commutation/travel tickets, subventions for the disadvantaged categories; *education*; *health*; *work/unemployment*-support in finding a work place, qualification/re-qualification free courses, facilities for employers; and *family*-financial aid at the first marriage, allowances for children, social securities benefits for poor families.

Regarding the perception over the facilities received by young people prescribed by the law or granted by institutions, almost half of the Romanian youth doesn’t know about the existence of these facilities in fields like: agriculture, habitation/terrains, tourism, NGOs/voluntary work, business/entrepreneurial, living in the rural environment, culture, work/unemployment, family, etc.

After doing researches among the youth²³⁶, 85% of them declared they have never been given the facilities offered to the youth by the law or by institutions, while only 13.5% said they have benefited from this kind of facilities. Most of the people who said they have never been giving any facilities are probably not aware or informed about these facilities present in the life of the youth (facilities for: transportation, medical assistance, education, etc.). Most young people say they “*don’t know*” or can’t answer regarding this aspect, and thus they show a total lack of information, and only a small percentage say they “*know*” about these facilities.

Besides these facilities offered to the youth for practicing tourism granted by the state, there are other categories of facilities granted by organizations and non-governmental associations which activate in the field of tourism: the Youth Hostel Romania, the EURO<26 Association, etc.

The young people who acquire the Youth Hostel Romania membership card can spend the night in one of the hostels from a network of approximately 5.000 hostels worldwide, which function under the flag of the Youth Hostel International Federation with headquarters in Washington D.C, at lower tariffs than other categories of tourists, can book on-line touristy services and can pay their counter value through these cards. Individual cards are issued annually and cost approximately 8 Euros, and the group cards which are

available for an unlimited number of people are issued for a two months period at the price of 20 Euros, or 35 Euros for a year.

The most well-known three types of discount cards used in youth travel at national and international level are issued by the Euro<26 Association, and are the following: **I.S.I.C.** - International Student Identity Card is the only internationally acknowledged card which proves the student status; **I.Y.T.C.** - International Youth Travel Card or **The Card** is addressed to young people with ages below 26 years old and is supported by the European Council as an „instrument which encourages youth mobility in Europe” by offering discounts, facilities and information in 38 countries for 4.000.000 young people; and **I.T.I.C.** - International Teacher Identity Card – the card for professors.

On the basis of these international ids acknowledged by U.N.E.S.C.O. and the European Union, students, professors and young people under 26 years old can benefit from almost 38.000 discounts to museums, theatres, medical and sportive centers, shops, clubs, in over 10.000 locations in Romania and worldwide²³⁷.

In Romania, there are four types of Euro26 cards:

1. The Classic Card – this card is available for any young men / women under 26 years old who wishes to become an associate member in the European program for youth cards. The card includes a travel medical insurance, which is compulsory when exiting the country, offered by ASITRANS and is valid for one year, regardless of the number of exits. The **Euro<26** logo ensures the acknowledgement of the card at European level and the granting of discounts and facilities in the 42 countries which are members of the European Youth Card Association (E.Y.C.A.), regardless of the owner’s country of origin. This mutuality in granting discounts and acknowledging the card is stipulated in special documents of the European Council which control the program at European level.

The Euro<26 Student Card – is an European document which acknowledges the student status at international level and is accepted as an ID CARD by 30 universities in the country and the number is growing. Its recognition as an id card for students is done through an acknowledgement and implementation protocol which is signed by the rector of the university. It is the only EUROPEAN STUDENT ID CARD recognized by the European Council and supported by the European Commission, and the presence of the **Euro<26** logo ensures its acknowledgement at European level and the granting of discounts and facilities in the 42 countries of the E.Y.C.A.

2. The BT Euro<26 Card – is the first bank card co-branded by Euro<26 in Romania and is issues by Transilvania Bank. In each European country the E.Y.C.A partner issues a bank card for discounts and insurance with a bank from that country. The Euro<26 bank card for discounts is a special card with the VISA logo which allows electronic payments, cash withdrawals and its acceptance as a payment instrument anywhere in the world; the Euro<26 logo allows access to discounts and facilities offered in 42 countries. The Euro<26 bank card is a modern instrument for managing your own finances. **The BT VISA Electron EURO<26 Card** is a debit card with an account in lei and international use, issued under the VISA Electron logo, in a co-branded regime – TRANSILVANIA BANK – EURO<26 ROMANIA. The card is destined to all young people with ages between 15 and 25, especially students. The card is connected to the current lei account of the client, which allows him on-line access to the money in the account.

The advantages of using the BT Visa Electron EURO<26 cards are:

- the possibility to efficiently manage student scholarships or the money received from parents/other resources;
- free medical travel insurance offered by BT Insurance;
- important discounts at the “EURO<26” commercial network in Romania and Europe;
- the possibility to use the card in a vast ATM and POS network, within the country and outside the borders, anywhere where the Visa Electron logo is posted, the banking transactions are done in the currency of the country in which they take place;
- the possibility to pay phone bills for Orange, Vodafone and Zapp straight for the ATMs of the Transilvania Bank with 0 lei commission;
- the possibility to change the PIN code straight from the ATMs of the Transilvania Bank with 0 lei commission;

- 24 / 7 assistance when calling 0800 80 CARD (2273) from the home phone networks and 0264/594337 when calling from abroad or from the mobile phone.

3. The BCR Euro<26 Card – from March 2006 the Romanian youth can take benefit of a Euro<26 card issued in a co-branded regime with Banca Comercială Română (The Romanian Commercial Bank), issued under the VISA and E.Y.C.A. logos.

The advantages provided by the BCR VISA Electron EURO<26 Card are:

- the owner takes benefit of discounts when purchasing goods/services on the basis of the signed contracts;
- the medical travel insurance when going abroad is included with the card, without any additional costs;
- 24 / 7 access to any ATM in the country and abroad for cash withdrawals;
- eliminating the risks involved when carrying cash;
- information and consultations offered to the cards' owners by the Assistance Service from the bank's Cards Department;
- the use of the e-BCR Internet banking service.

4. The Insurance Card Euro<26 – this insurance policy is free for all the card owners who travel abroad, by showing the passport and the Euro<26 id. The policy covers the medical expenses involved with medical treatments, medicines and materials needed to treat sudden diseases, diagnostics, and surgeries when the insured person got sick or suffered an injury during his trip. The insurance also covers hospitalization expenses, transportation and the repatriation of the patient.

The insurance can be obtained the following ways: the **Classic Euro<26 card** from ASITRANS, the **BT VISA Euro<26 Card** from BT Insurance, the **BCR VISA Euro<26 Card** from BCR Insurance.

In Romania statistics show there are over 70 thousands young people who own one of the Euro 26 card's types. This card is given to young people under 26 years old and grants discounts when purchasing a product or service. Most discounts are in Bucharest and at national level there are discounts for the museums network between 50 and 100%. In the 40 countries where this concept is developed there are about 40 million young people who own this card. Generally, it is about discounts in domains that present interests for the youth: from books, free time, accessories, clothes, photo labs, to the activities characteristic to summer: tourism, travels, vacations. We can mention here discounts for air-plane tickets, bus tickets, international accommodation, in some countries discounts for train tickets, which are quite accessible.

Known as a favorite destination for the youth, the Costinești resort has received two years ago a European stamp through the name Euro 26 Resort. There are over 50 entrepreneurs who offer discounts for accommodation, to restaurants or terraces.

The young owners of the Euro 26 Card can take advantage of the following discounts in the Costinesti resort:

- *accommodation and boarding services*: Meridian Hotel-20% for room and board, Regal Hotel-20% for accommodation, White Inn Hotel-20% for accommodation, except the July 15-August 15 period when the discount is 10%, Tomis Guest-House-10% for room and board, Perla Costinesti Villa-10% for accommodation, Tiberius Villa-10% for room and board, Victoria Villa-10% for accommodation, Meduza Camping (the Minerva Complex)-20% for accommodation, the Duca House-10% for accommodation, the DVG Terrace-20% for consummation, the Classico Terrance-10% pear meal, the Famagusta Terrance-20% per meal, the Iti-Biti terrance-10% per meal, 10% for the banana ride, La Leonida Terrace-10% for consummation, La leonida Self-service-10% per meal, Sabina Terrace-10% for consummation, 10 Flags-10% for consummation, La francezu Terrance-10% for a consummation over 15 lei, 15% for a consummation of 30 lei, 20% for a consummation of 50 lei and 30% for a consummation up to 100 lei, Popa's Central-30% for room and board, Floare de Colt-10% for consummation, Pizza Food Express (Swing Terrace)-5% per meal;
- *entertainment and recreation services*: Pub White Horse-31% for pool and internet between 9 am-4 pm, 31% for Ping-Pong between 1 am-5 am, Simona Style-20% for hair, manicure,

pedicure, sauna, massage, cosmetics, The Fairy Park-20% per ticket, the Summer Theatre-50% per ticket, Painball-20%, 10% for karts, boats-20% between 8 am-10 am and 12 pm-3 pm²³⁸.

Besides these facilities which are given to the youth to stimulate them to travel, there are also vacations which are subsidized 100% by certain institutions or organizations. Thus, the Student Support Agency organizes free camps for Christmas or the New Year for the students with good grades. For the 2005 winter vacation, the available locations were: The Herculane Watering Resort – Dacia Hotel **, Afrodita Hotel ** and Diana Hotel **, Voineasa resort – Lotru Hotel ** and Zărnești - the Gura Râului Caban.

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