

ROMANIA'S ABILITY TO ATTRACT FOREIGN TOURISTS: EVOLUTION AT REGIONAL LEVEL

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Abstract:

This article aims to reveal the evolution of foreign tourists number in Romania from a regional point of view. We analyzed the values of the arrivals and night spent indicators, but also of the net occupancy rates of the accommodation capacities. There are differences among the regions of Romania from these indicators values point of view. The share of foreign tourists in total arrivals and nights spent number differ quite much from region to region in Romania. The trend is ascendant for arrivals and night spent, but compared to the EU average the share of foreign tourists in Romania is still low. Net occupancy rate is also under the EU average and in Romania there are some changes needed in tourism industry, in order to benefit from the opportunity of attracting tourists from the EU Member States, like some other Eastern and Central European countries did.

Key words: tourism, Romania, arrivals, nights spent, occupancy rate of accommodation capacity

JEL classification: L83

INTRODUCTION

Tourism experienced an extraordinary growth in the last decades. Some of the Europe countries are and remain among the tourist top destinations of the world. In the same time, in the Eastern and Central Europe there is a great potential - including traditions, rural tourism, gastronomy, authenticity - not fully exploited also because of the poor infrastructure and poor promotion (Scutariu & Nastase, 2018). Some of the Eastern and Central European countries that joined EU used this opportunity to attract more tourists, especially from the older EU Member States. This study focuses on the evolution of foreign tourists' number in Romania at regional level. We analyzed the number and the share of foreign tourists' arrivals and night spent, but also the net occupancy rate of tourist accommodation capacities. For our analysis we have used secondary data provided by Eurostat, on the basis of which we calculated evolution indexes and we elaborated appropriate types of graphs.

GENERAL CONTEXT

Bogru and Bulut (2018) confirm in a study on some European countries that there is an interdependence between economic growth and tourism development and these two phenomena stimulates each other. The highest participation in tourism relative to their population was reported in Finland, Luxembourg, Sweden, the Netherlands and the Czech Republic, while the lowest participation was in Romania, Bulgaria, Greece, Italy and Portugal (UNWTO 2018, p.33). Nine EU destinations in Central and Eastern Europe registered increases of arrivals in 2017 (+6%), the highest growth being recorded in Latvia (+12% through October), Romania (+11% through November) and the Czech Republic (+10% through September) (UNWTO 2018, p.27).

The freedom of movement contributed to the intensification of tourism activity among the EU countries. However, there are also other non-EU countries that can be considered an important source of tourists. The cooperation should also strengthen with countries that can become a source of tourists for European destinations (Nicula, Spânu and Neagu, 2013). As for Romania, the EU remains too the most important source of tourists. In our previous studies we revealed that,

compared to the other EU countries, Romania has a number of arrivals and nights spent lower than other smaller countries, fact which reveals a relative low number of arrivals, and also a relatively low number of nights spent compared to the other EU countries (Scutariu, 2018).

Providing competitive tourism services adaptable to structural changes is possible by training and continuous training of human resources, and can give Romania the opportunity to be redefined as a tourist destination (Rațiu and Oroian, 2012). Some of these things happened, but it is interesting to see if, in the latest years, Romania managed to attract more tourists than in the first years after EU adhering.

EVOLUTION OF FOREIGN TOURISTS NUMBER ARRIVALS IN THE REGIONS OF ROMANIA

Analysing the total number of arrivals by regions, we can see big differences that are increasing over time and an increasing trend stopped only by the economic crisis. The most visited regions are RO12 Center (Transylvania), RO32 Bucharest-Ilfov (the capital city region), RO22 South-East (seaside) and RO11 North-West (North Transylvania including Maramureș). The South-West Oltenia region attracts the lowest number of tourists, a number of about 4 times lower than the highest value (Figure no. 1).

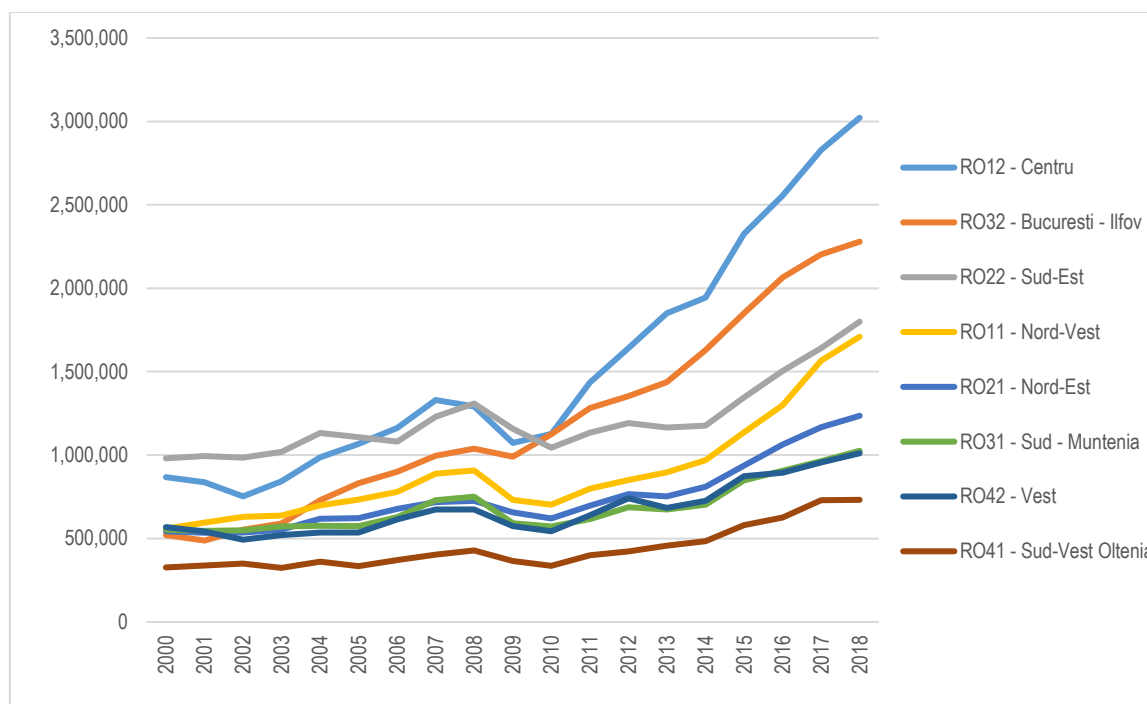


Figure no. 1. Arrivals at tourist accommodation establishments in Romania by regions, 2000-2018

Source: Eurostat (http://appsso.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/nui/show.do?dataset=tour_occ_arn2&lang=en)

The share of the foreign tourists' arrivals in total tourists' arrivals in Romania is one of the lowest of the EU. At country level, as well as at the regional level, there is a low increasing tendency. However, the regional differences tend to conserve. By far the most visited region by the foreign tourists is Bucharest-Ilfov (in 2018 56,63% of the arrivals being foreign tourists arrivals), much higher compared to the Romania average (21,74%) and the EU average (40,18%). The next regions are West and Center with values around 18-19%. The lowest values are of approximately 6%, recorded in South-West Oltenia and South-East regions (Figure no. 2). It is surprising that the South-East region have such a low value, but in this seaside region the offer can be improved and better promoted abroad in order to attract more foreign tourists.

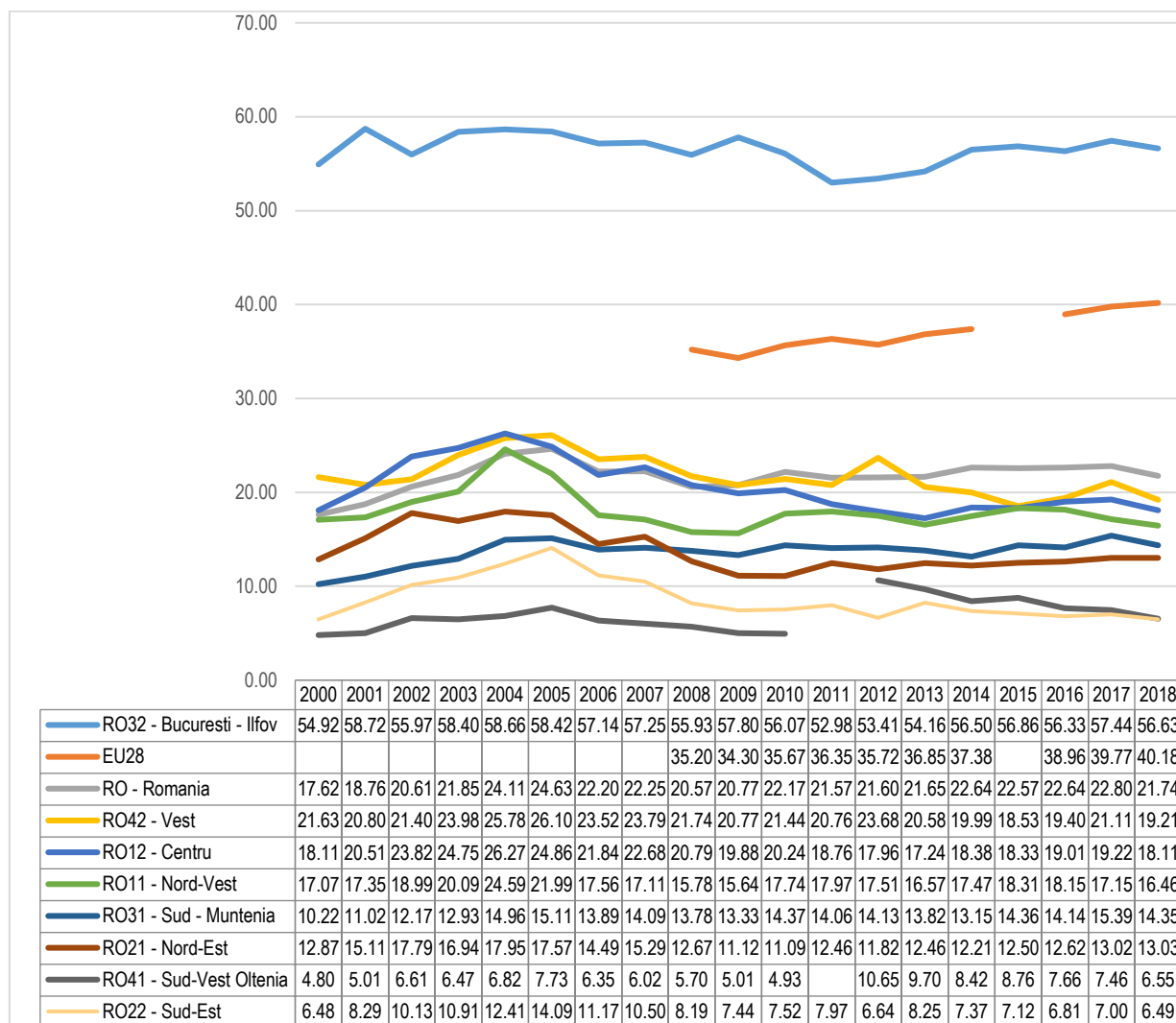


Figure no. 2. Arrivals from foreign countries share in total arrivals at tourist accommodation establishments in Romania by regions, 2000-2018

Source: Eurostat (http://appsso.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/nui/show.do?dataset=tour_occ_arn2&lang=en)

For the period 2000-2018, in almost all the regions of Romania the increase of foreign tourists' arrivals number is higher than the one of total tourists' arrivals (highlighted in Annex, Table no.1). The main increases of the number of tourists arrivals in Romania by regions are in: RO32 Bucharest-Ilfov (increase of more than 4 times for total and for foreign), RO12 Center (increase of more than 3 times for total and for foreign), RO11 North-West (increase of more than 3 times for total and of almost 3 times for foreign) and RO41 South-West Oltenia (increase of more than 2 times for total and of 3 times for foreign).

EVOLUTION OF FOREIGN TOURISTS NUMBER OF NIGHT SPENT IN THE REGIONS OF ROMANIA

In Romania, at regional level, there are quite high differences in terms of nights spent. The highest number of nights spent are registered in RO22 South-East (seaside) and RO12 Center (Transylvania), followed by RO32 Bucharest-Ilfov (the capital city region) and RO11 North-West (Transylvania). The South-Muntenia region is on the penultimate place, while South-West Oltenia registers the lowest number of nights spent. The trend is increasing, but the effects of the economic crisis are more obvious than in the case of arrivals (decreases in 2009 and 2010) (Figure no. 3).

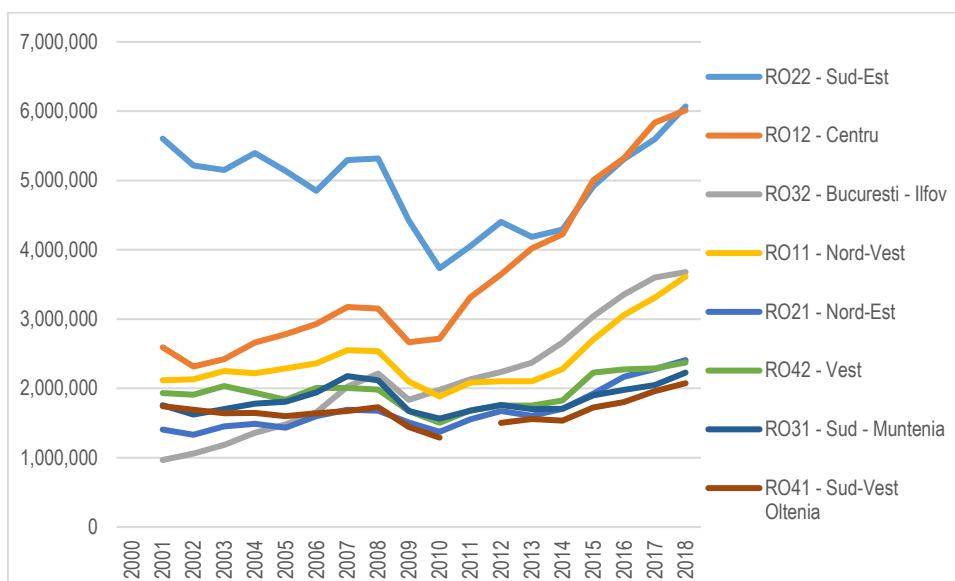


Figure no. 3. Nights spent at tourist accommodation establishments total in Romania by regions, 2000-2018

Source: Eurostat (http://appsso.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/nui/show.do?dataset=tour_occ_nin2&lang=en)

Romania have a very low share of foreign tourists nights spent in total nights spent. At regional level, the foreign tourists’ nights spent share in total tourists nights spent shows an increase evolution, but the differences are kept. RO32 Bucharest-Ilfov region have a significantly higher value (58,98%) compared to the country average (18,64%), to the other regions and also higher than the EU average (49,22%) (Figure no. 4). Other high values are in West and Center regions (approximately 18%), and the lowest values are in South-East and South-West Oltenia. South-East region have problems in attracting foreign tourists, but it has a great potential, being a seaside region.

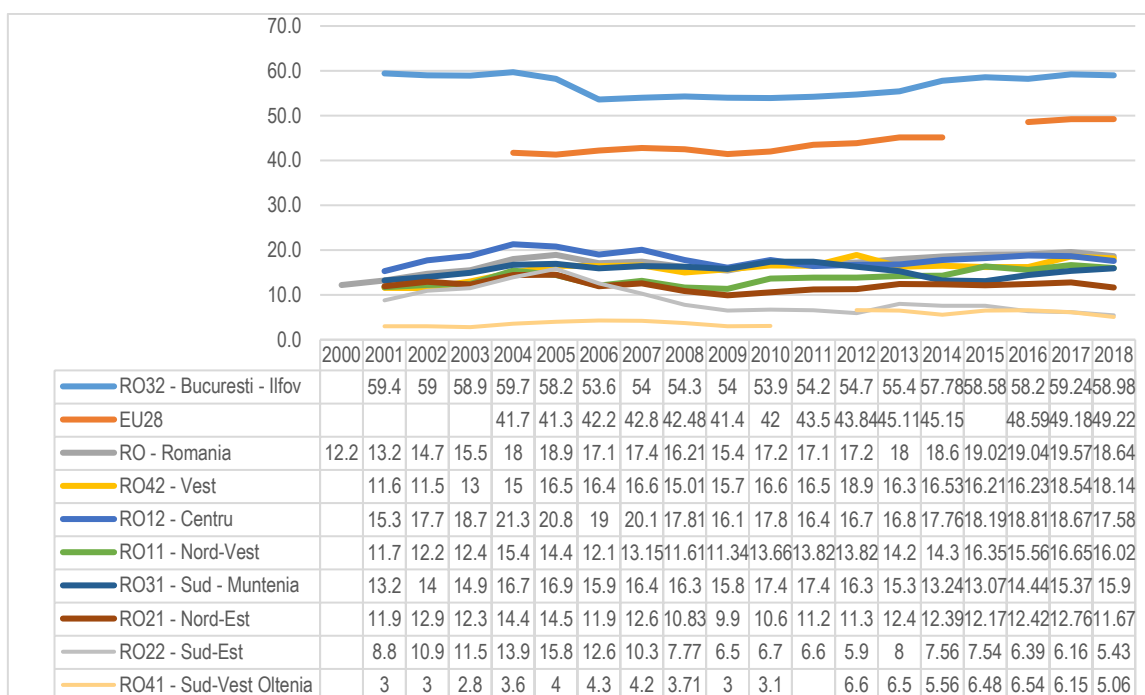


Figure no. 4. Nights spent at tourist accommodation establishments in Romania by regions: share of foreign countries in total, 2000-2018

Source: Eurostat (http://appsso.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/nui/show.do?dataset=tour_occ_nin2&lang=en)

From 2000 to 2018, in most of the regions the number of foreign tourists nights spent increased more than the total number of tourists nights spent (highlighted in Annex, Table no. 2). The main increases were recorded in RO32 Bucharest-Ilfov (increase of almost 4 times for total and for foreign), RO12 Center (increase of more than 2 times for total and of almost 3 times for foreign), RO11 North-West (increase of more than 2 times for foreign), RO41 South-West Oltenia and RO42 West (increase of almost 2 times for foreign).

EVOLUTION OF NET OCCUPANCY RATE OF BED-PLACES IN ACCOMMODATION CAPACITIES IN THE REGIONS OF ROMANIA

Romania has one of the lowest occupancy rates in the EU (38,02% in 2018), much under the EU average (49,01% in 2018). At regional level there is an increasing trend, the differences also increasing quite much. The main rates are registered in the RO22 South-East (seaside) and RO32 Bucharest-Ilfov, followed by the RO12 Center and RO11 North-West regions, while the lowest rates are recorded in the South-Muntenia region (Figure no. 5).

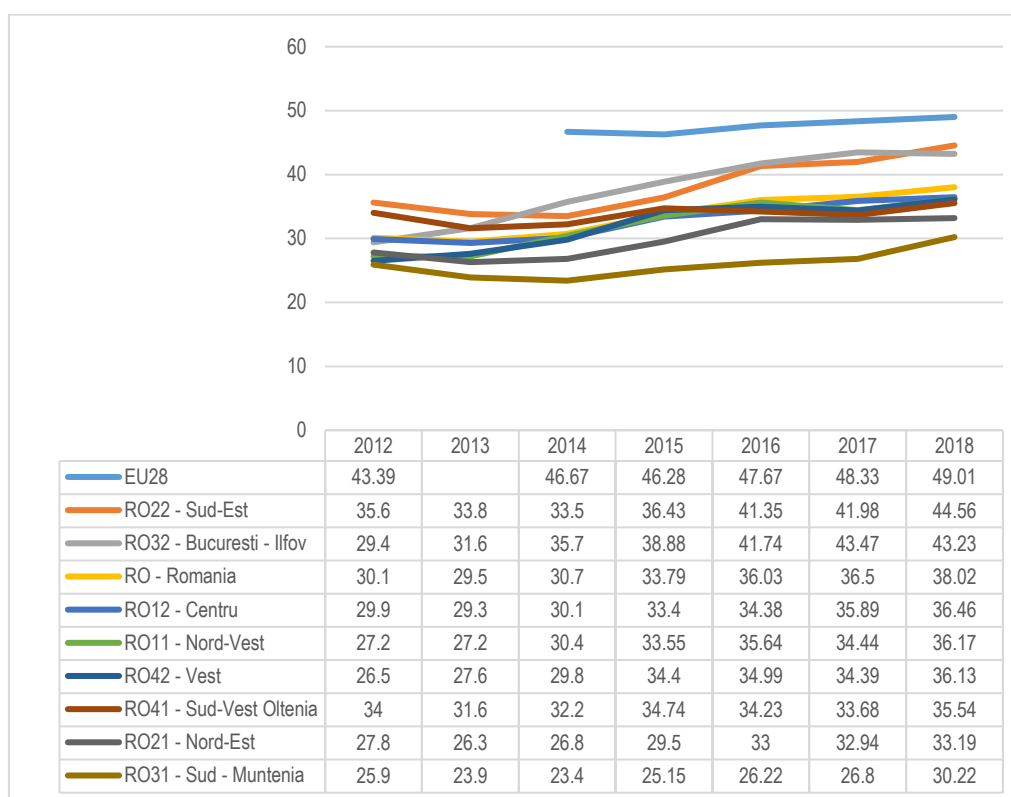


Figure no. 5. Net occupancy rate of bed-places in hotels and similar accommodation in Romania by regions, 2000-2018

Source: Eurostat (http://appsso.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/nui/show.do?dataset=tour_occ_anor2&lang=en)

There is no region in Romania to have a higher occupancy rate than the EU average (49,01%). Only South-East and Bucharest-Ilfov regions have relatively close values (44,56% and, respectively, 43,23%) to this average.

CONCLUSIONS

In Romania, the number of arrivals and night spent increased in the latest years, except for the economic crisis period, when there were some decreases. There are differences among regions in terms of arrivals and nights spent and the most visited regions are: RO12 Center, RO32 Bucharest-Ilfov, RO22 South-East and RO11 North-West. The share of foreign tourists in the total number of arrivals and nights spent is very low compared to the EU average. Only RO32

Bucharest-Ilfov region have a higher share, followed at a big distance by the RO12 Center and RO42 West regions. The foreign tourists number of arrivals and night spent increased, and also the share of foreign tourists in total tourists. However, compared to the EU average, these high differences are maintained at almost the same level. The occupancy rate in Romania is also quite low compared to the EU average, only 2 regions being relatively close to it.

Even if in Romania, the number of foreign tourists increased, this country did not manage to attract EU tourists like other countries did. Besides this, many Romanian tourists choose a destination abroad for the same prices as in Romania and sometimes a better quality. That is why in Romania there are still needed radical changes in the concept and quality of tourist services, with adequate infrastructure to regain Romanian tourists or to attract new Romanian and foreign tourists, so the economy could register incomes that might come from this sector (Harja & Stângaciu, 2013). The high differences among the Romanian regions in tourism activity are caused by the different potential and the different types of tourism. Unfortunately, the high potential existing in some areas is still not fully exploited, even if some progress has been made in the latest years.

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ANNEX

Table no. 1. Evolution index for arrivals at tourist accommodation establishments in Romania: total and foreign countries, 2000-2018

Region	Evolution index for arrivals (total)	Evolution index for arrivals (foreign countries)
RO - Romania	260,48101	321,38
RO11 - Nord-Vest	305,49404	294,59
RO12 - Centru	348,15842	348,15
RO21 - Nord-Est	227,56857	230,42
RO22 - Sud-Est	183,52468	183,74
RO31 - Sud - Muntenia	185,70899	260,6
RO32 - Bucuresti - Ilfov	438,26027	451,87
RO41 - Sud-Vest Oltenia	223,77625	305,27
RO42 - Vest	177,73262	157,85

Source: own elaboration by Eurostat data

(http://appsso.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/nui/show.do?dataset=tour_occ_arn2&lang=en)

Table no. 2. Evolution index for nights spent at tourist accommodation establishments in Romania: total and foreign countries, 2001-2018

Region	Evolution index for nights spent (total)	Evolution index for nights spent (foreign countries)
RO - Romania	157,0557	221,9797
RO11 - Nord-Vest	170,6766	233,3818
RO12 - Centru	232,0515	266,4498
RO21 - Nord-Est	171,2627	168,485
RO22 - Sud-Est	108,3369	66,5082
RO31 - Sud - Muntenia	126,7063	152,8303
RO32 - Bucuresti - Ilfov	380,1884	377,5693
RO41 - Sud-Vest Oltenia	118,9073	197,5513
RO42 - Vest	122,8282	192,3161

Source: own elaboration by Eurostat data

(http://appsso.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/nui/show.do?dataset=tour_occ_nin2&lang=en)