

Evolution and Trends in the Dynamics of Services in Romania: Impacts on the National Economy

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ABSTRACT:

This article aims to explore the evolution and current trends in the field of services in Romania, analyzing the factors that have influenced the dynamics of this sector and the impact on the national economy. The investigation and research stage of this project focuses on the following aspects: the definition of services, the etymology of the concept and their evolution in Romania. The various categories of services, namely education, tourism, transport, post and telecommunications and health will be examined to highlight their variety and importance in the national economy. A crucial aspect in understanding the dynamics of services in Romania is the identification of the factors that influenced the development of this sector. At the same time, government policy and relevant legislation in the field of services will be investigated, examining the measures taken to support the development and competitiveness of this sector. Another important aspect of the project consists in evaluating the impact of the dynamics of services on the Romanian economy. The contribution of the service sector to the national Gross Domestic Product, employment, exports and regional development will be analyzed. We will also explore the opportunities and challenges facing service businesses in Romania and examine issues related to innovation, digitization and service quality in the context of international competition.

Keywords: development, population, Romania, services

1. Introduction

This paper aims to analyze and present the importance of services in the fields of education, transport and tourism, the service industry is an important pillar of our economy and society, with a major impact on the quality of life and socio-economic development. In education, service is fundamental to ensuring access to quality education, training and skills development needed today (Rădulescu, Mănescu et al., 2023). Evaluating and analyzing educational services will allow us to understand their importance in shaping our future (Angheluta et al., 2021). Transport, especially public transport, is an essential service that connects communities and facilitates the mobility of the population (Bran et al., 2018). Assessing the price, efficiency and sustainability of transport services can provide us with information on how to improve the infrastructure and services available to citizens (Algieri, 2006). Tourism is a dynamic and growing sector that contributes significantly to the economy and promotes the cultural and natural heritage of a country

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(Dima et al., 2020). Understanding the value and impact of tourism services can facilitate the development of tourism destination management and promotion strategies (Sequeira& Macas Nunes, 2008).

Therefore, in this paper we propose to explore the importance of services in the fields of education, transport, tourism, in order to better understand their role in our society, and to contribute to the development and optimization of these vital sectors. Services are an essential sector of the modern economy, playing a crucial role in the socio-economic development of a country (Allen&Arkolakis, 2014). In recent decades, the importance of services has grown significantly, becoming a major source of economic growth, employment and innovation. This paper explores the importance of services in the economy and their role in socio-economic development

2. Dynamics of Services in Romania

Services are a vital component of the economy, playing an essential role in the development and prosperity of a country (Alam, I. 2002). In the context of globalization and rapid technological changes, the service sector has become increasingly relevant and dynamic in Romania's economy (Burlacu, Diaconu et al., 2022). Through this article, we aim to obtain a broad perspective on the dynamics of services in Romania, highlighting the importance of this sector for economic development and offering relevant recommendations for improving its competitiveness and sustainability. Next, the project will explore each mentioned service in detail.

2.1. Services in education

Education services represent an essential field of the service sector in Romania, having a significant impact on the development and quality of the education system (Burlacu & Jiroveanu, 2009). These services cover a wide range of activities, including teaching and knowledge delivery, vocational training, student counseling and guidance, competency assessment and certification, curriculum development and management of educational institutions (Mair&Jago, 2010).

In Romania, education is a continuously developing sector and faces various challenges and opportunities (Radulescu et al., 2020). Among the major challenges are equal access to education for all pupils and students, modernization of the educational infrastructure, improvement of the quality of the education process and adaptation to new technologies and needs of the labor market (Radulescu et al., 2021).

Table 1. Educational units by education levels

| Education levels UM: Number | Year | | | | |
|--------------------------------|------|------|------|------|------|
| | 2018 | 2019 | 2020 | 2021 | 2022 |
| Total | 7047 | 7020 | 7001 | 6970 | 7015 |
| Ante-preschool | 29 | 29 | 28 | 23 | 21 |
| Preschool | 1175 | 1171 | 1175 | 1153 | 1200 |

| | | | | | |
|------------------------------|------|------|------|------|------|
| Primary and Gymnasium | 4027 | 4003 | 3994 | 3998 | 4002 |
| Secondary school | 1497 | 1482 | 1468 | 1461 | 1459 |
| Professional | 63 | 77 | 81 | 83 | 85 |
| Post-Secondary school | 160 | 165 | 164 | 162 | 159 |
| Foreman technician | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| Bachelor's degree | 95 | 92 | 90 | 89 | 88 |

Source: INS

On the other hand, education services offer opportunities for innovation and development, through the implementation of digital technologies in the learning process, the creation of educational programs adapted to the requirements of the labor market and the collaboration between educational institutions **and the business environment** (Gallouj& Savona, 2009). The education system in Romania has experienced significant transformations in recent years, **to** adapt to the new requirements and challenges of contemporary society (Burlacu, Angheluta et al., 2021). The reforms in the educational approach, the integration of technology, the adjustment of curricula and the promotion of inclusion were some of the key aspects that influenced the dynamics of the Romanian education system (Ionita & Burlacu, 2009).

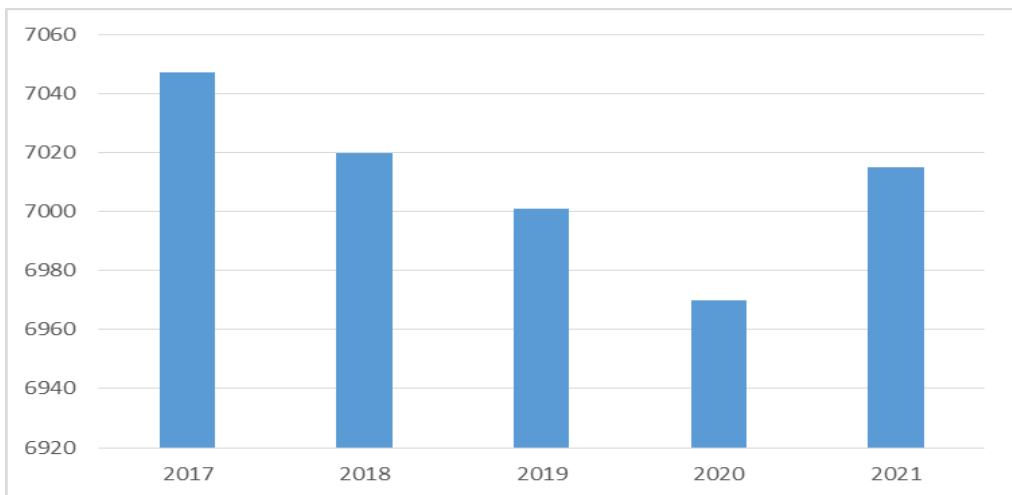


Figure 1. The evolution of educational units over the years. Source:INS

Analyzing the information in table 1, we can note that in five years, between the years 2018 and 2022, we find that the largest number of educational institutions is found in the year 2018, with a total of 7047 units. In second place, in 2019, we observe a number of 7020 educational units. On the third position, in the year 2022, we find a number of 7015 educational units. In the year 2020, on the fourth place, we have a number of 7001 educational units, and on the last position is the year 2021, with a number of 6970 educational units.

According to Figure 2, in 2018, the largest number of educational institutions in Romania was registered in the primary and secondary education sector, with a total of 4027 educational units. It was followed by high school education, which registered 1497 school units, and preschool education, with a number of 1175 education units. Pre-school education registered only 29 educational units, ranking second to last in terms of the number of units. On the last place is the technical education of foremen.

Post-secondary education had a number of 160 educational units, while vocational education recorded 63 educational units. University education registered a total of 95 educational units. In the year 2021, the educational landscape in Romania was characterized by a significant presence in different levels of education. At the top of the ranking were primary and secondary schools, registering an impressive number of 4002 educational institutions, underlining the importance of basic education. The kindergartens follow nearby, which have a total of 1200 units, contributing to the early development of children and their preparation for the next stages of education. High schools ranked third, registering 1,459 units, providing students with the knowledge and skills needed to continue higher studies. In addition, the vocational education sector comprised 85 units, offering specialized training in practical fields.

Post-secondary schools contributed to the educational spectrum with 159 units, providing advanced training and professional skills. The technical foremen schools were represented by a single Unit, emphasizing specialized training and the development of superior technical skills (Misra et al., 2016). Lastly, universities offering bachelor's programs registered a total of 88 units, highlighting the importance given to higher education and academic progress.

Analyzing the relevant statistical data for the period 2018-2022 regarding the distribution of educational institutions in Romania, significant conclusions can be drawn, and pertinent proposals can be made to improve the educational system. During this period of time, stability can be observed in terms of the order and distribution of educational units. Primary and secondary education consistently represented the largest number of educational institutions, demonstrating the importance placed on solid foundations in education and thorough preparation of students at these early stages. This conclusion supports the need for continued investment and efforts to secure adequate resources, train qualified teachers, and develop a relevant and up-to-date curriculum for students. At the same time, it is important to mention the constant growth of preschool and high school education units during the analyzed period.

This trend reflects the concern for early education and the preparation of students before they enter primary education, as well as the importance of their preparation for the higher stages of education. Proposals in this direction include developing and modernizing the infrastructure for kindergartens and high schools, ensuring adequate resources and

promoting educational programs adapted to the needs of students (Evanschitzky, Wangenheim & Woisetschläger, 2011).

We also observe the presence of a small number of educational units in professional, technical foremen and undergraduate university education (Androniceanu & Burlacu, 2017). In the context where the labor market is constantly changing and requires specialized skills, more attention is needed to promote these types of education and develop relevant educational programs to meet social and economic needs (Ladaru *et al.*, 2022). Proposals could include collaboration between educational institutions and business to adapt vocational education programs to market demands and facilitate a smoother transition of graduates into the workplace.

The analysis of statistical data from the period 2018-2022 reveals the importance of continuing efforts to consolidate primary and secondary education, to develop preschool and high school education, as well as to promote professional and technical education. The proposals can contribute to improving the educational system and ensuring quality training for students, in line with the demands and needs of contemporary society.

2.2. Transport services

Transport services are an essential component of the economy, ensuring the mobility of goods and people between different locations. The contribution to the Gross Domestic Product of transport services is measured by the added value they bring to the economy. Through transport services, trade, production and exchange of goods between various regions and countries is facilitated.

Table 2. Passengers transported in intercity and international transport

| Modes of transport UM: Thousands of passengers | Year | | | | |
|--|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|
| | 2018 | 2019 | 2020 | 2021 | 2022 |
| Total | 414.965 | 449.774 | 448.568 | 331.333 | 341.811 |
| Rail transport | 69.057 | 66.500 | 69.708 | 50.559 | 54.937 |
| Road transport | 325.532 | 361.338 | 355.556 | 273.454 | 275.551 |
| Transport on inland waterways | 154 | 120 | 111 | 134 | 146 |
| Airline | 20.222 | 21.816 | 23.193 | 7.186 | 11.177 |

Source: INS

In the period 2018-2022, the intercity and international transport sector in Romania experienced a fluctuating evolution in terms of the number of passengers transported. In 2018, a total of 414.964 passengers were registered, while in 2019 their number increased to 449.774. However, in 2019 there was a slight decrease, with the

number of passengers reaching 448.568. A significant aspect is represented by the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the transport sector. In 2021, the number of passengers decreased significantly, registering only 331.333 passengers, which represents a decrease of approximately 26.14% compared to the previous year. This decline is largely attributed to travel restrictions imposed in the context of the pandemic and uncertainty about the safety of travel.

However, there is a slight rebound in the year 2021, with a number of 341.811 passengers, registering an increase of about 3.16% compared to the previous year. This increase can be attributed to the gradual relaxation of travel restrictions and the reopening of certain routes and services. Overall, the evolution of the number of passengers carried in intercity and international transport in Romania reflects the significant impact of external events, such as the pandemic, on the transport industry.

As can be seen in the graphs below in the period 2018-2022, the transport services sector in Romania has undergone significant changes and had to adapt to the challenges and constantly evolving conditions. The year 2018 recorded a total of 414.9645 travelers in Romania. Of these, road transport was the predominant mode, with 325.532 passengers, representing approximately 78.4% of the total. Rail transport registered 69.057 passengers, representing approximately 16.6% of the total, and air transport registered 20,222 passengers, representing approximately 4.9% of the total. Inland waterway transport recorded a relatively small number of passengers, only 15 4, representing approximately 0.05% of the total.

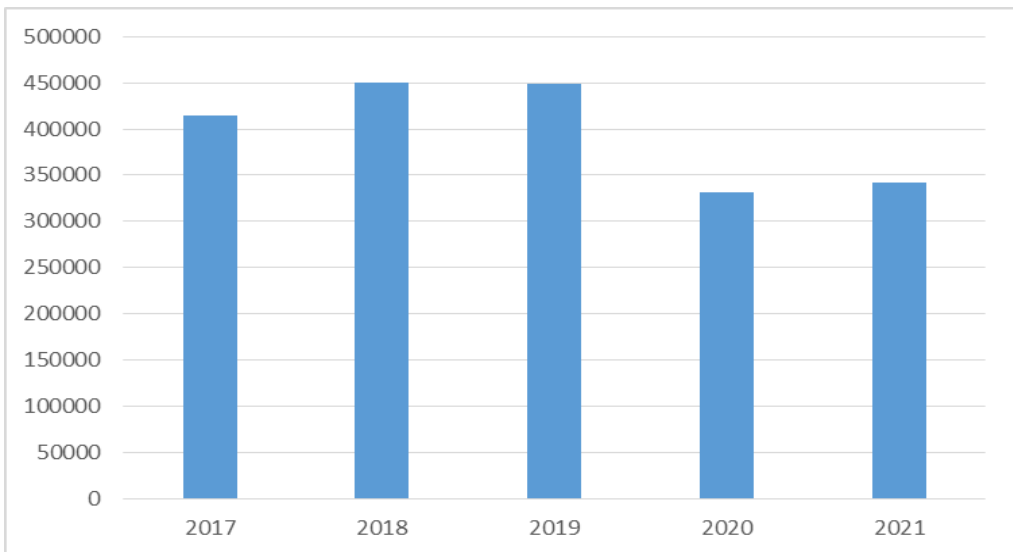


Figure 1. Total passengers transported per year. Source: INS

The data show that the COVID-19 pandemic had a significant impact on the transport industry in Romania, especially on-air transport, which recorded a significant decrease in the share of services. It is important to continue monitoring the evolution of the pandemic and adapt strategies accordingly. In the context of the decrease in the share

of air transport, the opportunity to develop and promote other modes of transport, such as rail and road transport, can be considered. These modes of transport can be harnessed to ensure connectivity and mobility within the country, as well as to facilitate the transport of goods (Burlacu & Stoica, 2012). To improve transport services in Romania, more attention is needed to the infrastructure.

It is important to develop and modernize the railway, highway and national road networks so that there is adequate infrastructure for efficient and safe transport (Louro & Cunha, 2001).

Given the significant increase in the share of inland waterway transport services in certain periods, the development of this mode of transport can be promoted and supported. Investments in infrastructure, such as upgrading waterways and facilitating access to river ports, can help increase the attractiveness of inland waterway transport (Gallouj & Savona, 2009).

To improve transport services, effective collaboration between the public and private sectors is important (Radulescu *et al.*, 2018). Authorities should develop partnerships with transport companies to identify and implement innovative solutions, such as advanced technologies to manage traffic and improve the passenger experience. In the context of travel restrictions and reduced demand for international travel, domestic tourism and local transport can be promoted (Burlacu, *et al.*, 2023). The development of attractive tourist packages, the promotion of local destinations and the facilitation of access by rail and road transport can contribute to the revitalization of the tourism sector and the support of transport services.

2.3. Services in tourism

Tourism services are a set of activities and facilities offered to tourists during their travels and stays. These services are designed to meet the needs and wants of tourists and provide them with a pleasant and memorable experience during their travels. (Araujo & Spring, 2006).

Tourism in Romania registered a significant increase in the period 2017-2020, attracting an increasing number of foreign tourists and contributing to the economic development of the country. This growth was influenced by the diversity and beauty of natural landscapes, the rich cultural heritage and a series of efforts undertaken to promote Romania's tourist destinations.

In terms of natural landscapes, the Carpathian Mountains and the Danube Delta were important tourist attractions during this period. Mountain tourism has registered a significant increase, with areas such as Valea Prahova, Braşov, Sibiu and Maramureş being appreciated.

These destinations offer a variety of outdoor activities such as hiking, skiing, mountain biking and rock climbing. The Danube Delta, one of the largest and best-preserved deltas in Europe, was also a popular destination (Dima *et al.*, 2020).

Tourists had the opportunity to explore the beauty of this region through boat trips or canoe rides, admire the rich flora and fauna and discover local traditions. Also, Romania's cultural heritage has attracted many foreign tourists. Medieval fortresses, fortified Transylvanian churches, and traditional villages were major attractions.

Table 3. Overnight stays in tourist accommodation structures at tourist destinations

| Tourist destinations UM: Number | Year | | | | |
|--|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|
| | 2018 | 2019 | 2020 | 2021 | 2022 |
| Total | 27.092.523 | 28.644.742 | 30.086.091 | 14.579.140 | 22.747.562 |
| Spa resorts | 4.204.898 | 4.405.740 | 4.805.188 | 2.208.832 | 3.426.251 |
| Resorts in the coastal area | 4.316,379 | 4.553.407 | 4.657.955 | 3.267.464 | 4.840.471 |
| Resorts in the Mountain area | 4.178,123 | 4.544.949 | 4.810.148 | 2.613.246 | 4.186.048 |
| Danube Delta area | 210.334 | 371.797 | 380.375 | 299.766 | 294.730 |
| Bucharest and the cities of the county seat | 10.341.681 | 10.712.186 | 11.055.160 | 4.119.604 | 6.849.529 |
| Others localities and tourist routes | 3.841.108 | 4.056.663 | 4.377.265 | 2.070.228 | 3.150.033 |

Source: INS

Tourists had the opportunity to discover Bran and Peleş castles, the Black Church in Braşov, Sighişoara, Cluj-Napoca and other cities with a rich cultural heritage. In terms of tourism promotion, significant efforts have been made to attract foreign tourists to Romania. Marketing campaigns and digital promotion had an important role in increasing the visibility of Romanian destinations.

Also, the organization of cultural events and festivals has helped to attract more tourists. However, during the mentioned period, tourism in Romania was also affected by the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. In 2020 and the first months of 2021, the tourism industry suffered a significant decline due to travel restrictions and health concerns. However, as restrictions eased, domestic and international tourism began to recover.

Tourist destinations are an essential component of the tourism industry and reflect the diversity and attractions of a country (Chae, 2012). This analysis aims to examine the evolution of tourist destinations in Romania in the period 2017-2021, providing an academic perspective on changes in the number and types of these destinations over a five-year period. To carry out this analysis, we used the available data on the number of tourist destinations in different categories for each year between 2017 and 2022. The data were obtained from official and relevant sources in the field of tourism. The analysis was

carried out by comparing and interpreting the numerical evolution of different types of tourist destinations.

The analyzed data shows that the tourism industry was strongly affected by the COVID-19 pandemic in the period 2020-2021. The share of tourist destinations in the total has seen significant declines, and certain categories, such as spa destinations and seaside destinations, have suffered considerable losses. The pandemic has had a negative impact on tourism demand and travel of increasing the share of other localities and tourist routes in 2017-2019 indicates the increased interest in exploring lesser known or less traditional destinations. This can be an opportunity for the development of tourism services in these areas and their promotion to tourists. Data analysis shows that tourists' preferences have changed during the analyzed period.

Urban destinations such as Bucharest and county seat cities have gained in popularity, while traditional destinations such as spas have seen declines. Tourism services should adapt to these changes and offer tourism experiences and products that meet the new preferences of tourists (Kowalkowski, Kindström& Brehmer, 2011).

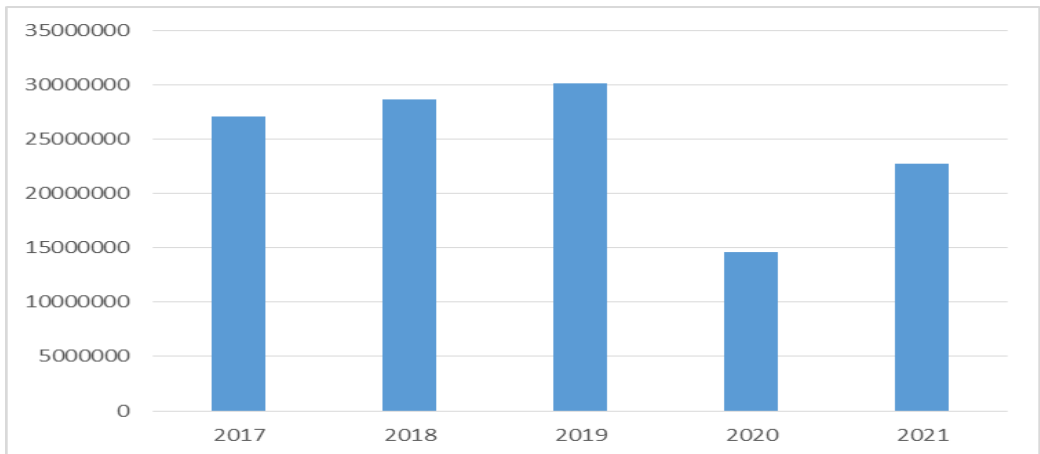


Figure 2. Total overnight stays in tourist accommodation structures by year. Source: INS

3. Conclusion

To ensure an optimal balance between the demand and supply of health services, it is essential that the authorities and service providers regularly monitor and assess the needs of the health system. By identifying trends and anticipating future needs, appropriate measures can be implemented to ensure an efficient and adapted health system. Education and continuous training of medical personnel are essential aspects in the provision of quality health services. Investments in the professional development of medical personnel in various specialties are necessary to respond to the evolving needs of patients and to maintain a high standard of medical services. Innovation in medical technologies and collaboration between different levels of healthcare are other important aspects in improving health services. The use of advanced technologies can lead to increased efficiency in diagnosis and treatment, and collaboration between hospitals, clinics and

doctors of different specialties can enable a holistic and multidisciplinary approach to patient care. Ensuring a good state of health of the population requires continuous efforts in monitoring and adapting medical services, improving communication between specialties, investing in education and continuous training, developing medical infrastructure and promoting prevention and innovation. These measures can ensure a high quality of health services and contribute to the well-being and prosperity of communities. The development of the educational system plays a very important role in the formation of a skilled workforce and in stimulating innovation and creativity. To ensure quality education, significant investments in educational infrastructure, teacher training and development, as well as constant updating of school curricula are required.

Investments in educational infrastructure are essential to provide an adequate and modern learning environment for students. Developing and modernizing kindergartens and high schools, equipping them with advanced facilities and technologies, as well as creating inspiring learning spaces can contribute to improving the educational experience. Teacher training is a fundamental aspect in ensuring quality education. Investments in teacher training and professional development can enhance their skills and ability to adapt teaching methods to students' needs. In addition, the promotion of mentoring programs and the exchange of good practices between teachers can contribute to increasing the quality of the learning process. Updating school curricula in line with the demands of the labor market is essential to prepare students for the challenges and opportunities of the modern economy. Integrating digital and technological skills into the school curriculum is particularly important in the digital age. Digital education can help students develop skills relevant to contemporary society and improve their chances of success in the future workplace.

It is also important to note that there is a small number of educational units in vocational, technical foremen and undergraduate university education. This situation can have a negative impact on the development of a skilled workforce in specific fields. Given the dynamics and constant changes in the labor market, more attention is needed to promote these types of education and to develop relevant educational programs to meet social and economic needs.

To develop an effective and relevant educational system, increased attention is needed to promote professional, technical and university undergraduate education. This involves collaboration between educational institutions and the business environment, updating educational programs and facilitating the transition to jobs. Through such measures, adequate training of the workforce can be ensured, and the needs of society and the economy can be met in a more efficient and sustainable way. An important aspect in the development of tourism is the improvement of the quality of the services offered. This involves the professional training of industry personnel so that they are prepared to provide guests with high-quality experiences and impeccable service. It is also important to promote sustainable tourism that protects the environment and respects cultural values and local traditions. Integrating the principles of sustainable tourism into the planning and management of tourist destinations can ensure long-term and balanced development of the industry.

The COVID-19 pandemic has had a major impact on the tourism industry. Falling demand and travel restrictions have significantly affected the tourism sector in recent years.

However, there are also opportunities to adapt and reinvent tourism services. In the context of changes in tourists' preferences, there is an increase in interest in urban destinations and non-conventional tourist routes. This can be an opportunity for the development and promotion of lesser-known destinations, but with high tourist potential. By adapting the offer and creating authentic experiences, the tourism sector can consistently attract tourists and diversify income. Tourism development requires close collaboration between the public and private sectors. Governments should provide support and incentives for investment in tourism infrastructure, staff training and destination promotion. At the same time, private industry operators should be actively involved in creating strategic partnerships and developing innovative and competitive tourism products. This collaboration can lead to the development of more attractive tourist offers and increase Romania's competitiveness as a tourist destination. Marketing campaigns, participation in international fairs and events and collaboration with foreign travel agencies can help increase the visibility of Romania as a tourist destination and attract more foreign tourists. It is important to emphasize the promotion of cultural wealth, the beauty of natural landscapes and the authenticity of the tourist experiences that Romania offers.

In conclusion, the development and modernization of transport infrastructure is a key factor for ensuring connectivity and mobility in Romania. Investments in infrastructure, the development of transport services and the promotion of sustainable alternatives can contribute to improving the efficiency, safety and sustainability of the transport sector. Through collaboration between the public and private sectors, a favorable environment can be created for the development of modern infrastructure and high-quality transport services.

By consolidating and improving these key sectors, Romania can strengthen its position on the domestic and international market, attracting investments, creating jobs and stimulating the sustainable development of the economy. These efforts can contribute to improving the quality of life of citizens and building a modern and competitive society.

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