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LOCAL GASTRONOMICAL POINTS – ELEMENTS OF THE NATIONAL STRATEGY FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF ROMANIAN ECOTOURISM

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Summary: *The National Strategy for the development of ecotourism 2023-2027 has as its objective the development of the offer of ecotourism products made by local communities within ecotourism destinations/with ecotourism potential, supporting, among other things, the development of local gastronomic points (PGL) that can be found within the premises of family holdings in the environment rural, animal and agricultural farms, stables, fishing shelters, beehives, wineries, trout farms, hunting funds, where one or more activities related to primary production are carried out. According to Law no. 412/2023 for the establishment and operation of local gastronomic points, the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development will propose measures to grant support in order to establish or support the activity of local gastronomic points, within the limits of the budget provisions. The purpose of the paper is to analyze the distribution of local gastronomic points by counties and development regions, in order to identify areas with potential for development in this regard. The analysis is based on the data available in the databases of the Sanitary Veterinary and Food Safety Directorates in each county of Romania from 2023-2024.*

Key words: *local gastronomic points, National Strategy for the development of ecotourism*

JEL clasificassion: Q 01,Q26,Q57

INTRODUCTION

According to the National Ecotourism Development Strategy, Romanian rural communities can develop, by establishing Local Gastronomic Points (PGL), where you can consume dishes from local products, prepared in private kitchens within the premises of the houses in the villages, obtained according to traditional, authentic methods (Action plan of the National Eco-tourism Development Strategy 2023-2029).

By Law no.412/2023 local gastronomic points are defined as units of "utilization of local primary production, located in a rural locality, where food products are prepared and served, according to recipes specific to the area, directly to the final consumer, for a maximum number of 15 people at same time". Thus, PGL represents a concept that responds to the growing demand in our country for family-type public food establishments, which offer those who want products and food preparations specific to the geographical areas of Romania.

The Local Gastronomic Point represents an efficient way of capitalizing on products from the peasant household, in family-type public catering units, taking into account the specifics of each tourist area/region with known gastronomic traditions. Unlike restaurants or guesthouses, local gastronomic points offer tourists the opportunity to benefit from traditional, local dishes, produced and served directly by members of a family, in their own household, respecting legal hygiene requirements, without affecting people's health (National Agency of the Mountain Zone – Establishment of local gastronomic points).

Culinary products must be prepared from raw materials preferably from primary production obtained in the own household/farm, as well as from local producers or from

authorized sanitary-veterinary registered units. (Order of the President of ANSVSA no. 111/2008 and subsequent amendments and additions).

The products are prepared according to traditional methods and are intended for fresh consumption, on the same day, as soon as possible after cooking. Canned products can also be used - jams, jams, canned vegetables, canned animal preparations (Guide to good hygiene and culinary production practices).

Ignorance of the legislation as well as the steps that must be taken to establish a PGL represents a serious obstacle for rural entrepreneurs. That is why a more intensive promotion is necessary, both through the creation of a guide for those interested, a counseling program at the level of destinations, for the development of small businesses in the ecotourism sphere, as well as the creation of scientific articles and in specialized publications.

Multiple financial sources are needed for the conservation and preservation of biodiversity. This can be achieved in part through the contribution of ecotourism businesses. Economic operators, including PGL, who operate in the locality or in the respective area, can voluntarily contribute to support the financial mechanism, the funds collected through this type of mechanism can be used for nature conservation actions at the level of the rural area. Informing tourists about nature conservation projects, existing at the time in the rural area visited, can determine their participation in various direct or indirect contributory activities. Thus, tourists can contribute with sponsorships/donations to the purchase of objects made by locals or by volunteering in greening actions, monitoring some species or publishing informative articles and materials, creating exhibitions with photographic images (Action Plan of National strategy for the development of eco-tourism 2023-2029).

MATERIAL AND METHOD

The first research method used in the paper is the bibliographic analysis and aimed at extracting the existing official data in the scope of the paper's research. The data was collected by accessing the MADR and ANSVA databases. The second method used was statistical-mathematical analysis, this one studying phenomena and processes from a quantitative point of view, in order to describe them and discover the laws that govern their manifestation, by calculating statistical parameters.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Studying the available literature, I found the first information about local gastronomic points, in Romania, in 2010, when the Ivan Patzaichin - Mila 23 Association was born. This aims to support local development in the Danube Delta, but also in other natural regions in Romania, promoting and protecting their cultural and natural profile, as well as Romanian traditions (Gihd of good hygiene and culinary production practices - Ivan Patzaichin Association - Mila 23).

In 2018, Vama Buzăului was certified as a tourist resort of local interest, the main problem identified by the mayor of the town being that the tourists who came to admire the natural beauty of the area had no place to eat. This is how the idea of establishing Local

Gastronomic Points in Buzăului Customs appeared (General information - Intorsura Buzău City Hall).

The local gastronomic points aim to highlight the local gastronomic specifics, the valorization of local products, the creation of public gastronomic events (meals for tourists, brunches, tastings, tourist packages), the development of local networks.

Gradually the activity expanded, so that in November 2023, there were 303 PGLs in Romania, of which 201 - representing 66.33% of the total, in the mountain area. These come to complement, in a harmonious way, the tourist offer already existing in the mountain area (Law no. 412/2023).

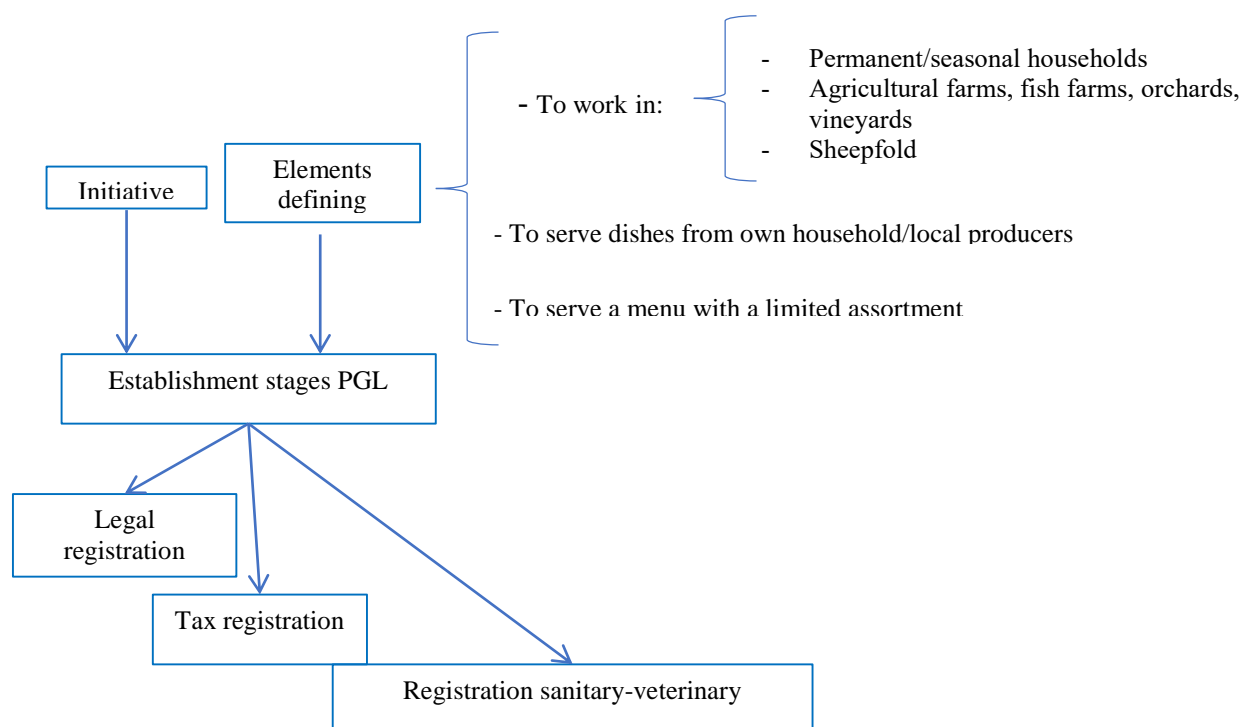


Figure no. 1 – The stages of the establishment of Local Gastronomic Points

Source: Law no. 412/2023

According to the law for the establishment and operation of Local Gastronomic Points, the legal form can be Authorized Natural Person (PFA), Individual Enterprise (ÎI), Family Business (ÎF) according to GEO no. 44/2008 or Limited Liability Company (SRL) according to Law no. .31/1990, CAEN codes being in all the cases 5610 – Restaurants (Figure no. 1).

The documents required for the registration of a PGL are the following (Table no. 1):

Table no. 1 - Documents required for registration

REGISTRATION		
LEGALLY	TAX	SANITARY-VETERINARY
- The application for legal registration is submitted to the county ONRC together with:	- The application for fiscal registration is submitted to ANAF => Fiscal Registration Certificate	- The application for the sanitary-veterinary registration is submitted to the DSVSA together with the following documents:

REGISTRATION		
LEGALLY	TAX	SANITARY-VETERINARY
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Request to check the availability and/or reserve the name of the company 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Registration at the National Fiscal Administration Agency: - SRL will keep double-entry bookkeeping - PFA, ÎI, IF will keep a single-entry bookkeeping by completing only the Register of Receipts and Payments, the Inventory Register, the Register of Fiscal Records and the Single Declaration on Income Tax and Social Contributions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Sketch of the location of the PGL activity - Copy of the registration certificate from the ORC - Copy of product sales card or manufacturer's certificate - Copy of the manufacturer's Identity Card - Proof of tax payment
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Declaration on personal responsibility regarding compliance with sanitary-veterinary legislation, labor protection, environmental protection. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - All units will use electronic marking machines for issuing tax receipts. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - DSVSA schedules a visit to the headquarters of the PGL activity.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Declaration on personal responsibility regarding the fulfillment of the legal conditions for carrying out the activity. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - At the request of customers, all units will issue the tax invoice. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - After the visit, if the conditions are met, the PGL obtains the Sanitary-Veterinary Certificate, if not, it notifies the responsible person of the deficiencies and the deadline for their remediation.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The document certifying the right of ownership/use of the space. 		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The constitution agreement concluded with the family members. 		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Copy of the Identity Card, specimen signature and special power of attorney to appoint the representative. 		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The certificate from ANZM regarding the professional training course in the field. 		

Source: Law no. 412/2023

For the establishment of a PGL, those wishing can access Sub-measure 6.2 "Support for the establishment of non-agricultural activities in rural areas", and for modernization and/or development they can access Sub-measure 6.4 "Investments in the creation and development of non-agricultural activities".

The first sub-measure has, among other objectives, the creation of new non-agricultural activities in the countryside, in particular, for small farmers or their family members. As it follows from this objective, the beneficiaries can be farmers or members of an agricultural household in rural areas, who diversify their activity by establishing a non-agricultural activity for the first time. The value of the support can be a maximum of 50,000 euros per project, money that will be granted in 2 installments: 70% after signing the Financing Agreement and 30% will be granted if the Business Plan has been correctly implemented, before the completion of 3 years from the date of signing the contract, with the mention that the last payment will be made no later than December 31, 2025.

A second mention that must be made is that the payment of the first installment is conditional on the presentation of the final document, from the environment agency. An essential condition is that the implementation of the Business Plan begins no later than 6 months from the date of the decision to grant support.

According to the instructions in the guide, applicants who propose such investments must also submit the documentation to ANSVSA in order to obtain the operating authorization in time. The applicant must be an agricultural producer or the owner/associate/majority shareholder must hold at least 50% of the shares. If the applicant is an agricultural producer, he must hold a Producer's Certificate, issued according to Law no. 145/2014 for the establishment of measures to regulate the market of products from the agricultural sector, at least 12 consecutive months before submitting the Financing Application.

The agricultural activity must be carried out at least 12 consecutive months before the submission of the Financing Application and must be maintained throughout the duration of the activity financed by the project. The maximum duration of execution of the Financing Contracts cannot exceed the payment deadline of 31.12.2025, provided for by Regulation (EU) no. 2220/2020 (Applicant Guide Sub-measure 6.2).

The second sub-measure aims to support those who develop non-agricultural activities in rural areas, with the aim of stimulating the business environment in that area, developing existing non-agricultural activities, creating new jobs, increasing the incomes of the rural population and reducing disparities between rural and urban. The value of the non-reimbursable support is a maximum of 90% of the total cost of the investment and will not exceed 200,000 euros over 3 fiscal years (Applicant Guide Sub-measure 6.4).

We accessed and processed the data available at the county ANSVSA and concluded that the emergence of Law no. 412/20023 did not produce significant changes in terms of the number of PGL. In November 2023, before the law came into force, there were 295 PGLs registered at country level, and in February 2024, this number had increased to 303, with 8 more (Table no. 2).

Table no. 2 – The impact of the emergence of Law no. 412/2023 on the number of PGL, by development region

	PGL no		Differences	
	November 2023 before the advent of the law	February 2024 after the appearance of the law	+	-
The Region North West	29	47	18	

	PGL no		Differences	
Center Region	140	124		-16
The Region North East	20	24	4	
The Region South East	53	53		
The Region South-Muntenia	16	15		-1
The Region South-West Oltenia	12	13	1	
The Region West	25	27	2	
TOTAL	295	303	25	-17

Source: author's interpretation of data from the county ANSVSA, February 2024

From the analysis of the distribution of PGL by development region, most were beginning in the Center Region (124) followed by the South-East Region (53) and the North-West Region (47) (Figure no. 2).

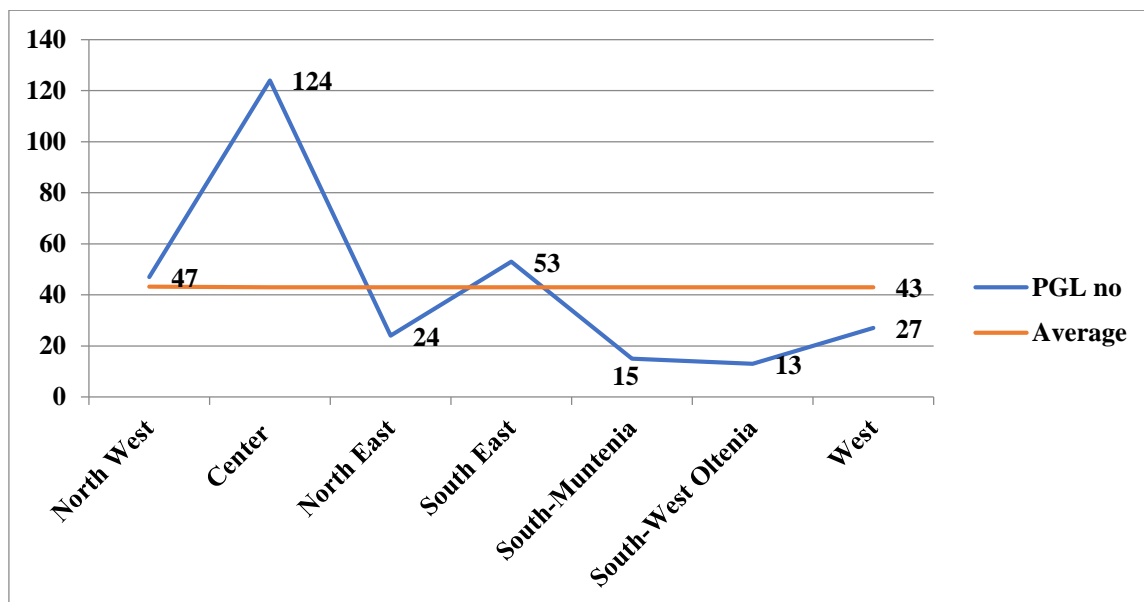


Figure no. 2 – Distribution of the PGL number by development regions

Source: author's interpretation of data from the county ANSVSA, February 2024

With the help of an interactive map (Figure no.3), we analyzed the distribution of local gastronomic points by county. Thus, we note that in the counties of Iași, Bacău, Ialomița, Ilfov, Călărași, Teleorman and Dolj there is no PGLs registered, although there are tourist attractions.

On the territory of Iași County, outside the county capital, which is very beautiful, you can visit the Cuza Palace from Ruginoasa, the Sturza Castle from Miclăușeni, the Sturza Palace from Cozmești, the Cucuteni Archaeological Site, the Ciric Forest, etc.

In Bacău County, you can visit Salina Drumul Sării, the Red Castle from Hemeiș, the George Bacovia Memorial House, the Știrbei Palace from Dărmănești, and for those who love nature outings, Poiana Uzului Lake or the Nemira Nature Reserve.

In Ialomița, in addition to the Piscul Crășani Archaeological Site and the ruins of the Geto-Dacian fortress Helis, you can also visit the Ionel Prelea Memorial House (musician), the Marghiloman Mansion or the Amara lake.

In Teleorman you can visit the Constantin Noica and Marin Preda Memorial Houses, the Coșoteni Vedeia Monastery, but also numerous natural attractions such as the Loess Cliff from Lunca, the Ostrovul Mare Nature Reserve, Suhaia Lake, the Troianul Forest Nature Reserve.

For nature lovers in the counties of Călărași and Dolj, located along the Danube, there are numerous attractions: Valea Roșie lake, Balta Ialomiței (Călărași) Ornithological Reserve Ciupercenii noi, Peony Reserve from Plenița, Prejbea-Făcăi Lake Complex (Dolj). Also in these counties we can visit the Vicina Byzantine Fortress, the Negoiești Monastery or the Jegolia Stables in Calarasi and the Amza Pellea Memorial House or the Sadova Monastery in Dolj.

Even in Ilfov, there are insufficiently promoted tourist attractions such as Brâncovenesc Palace, Știrbei Palace, Cernica Monastery or Ciorogârla Monastery with 3 altars.

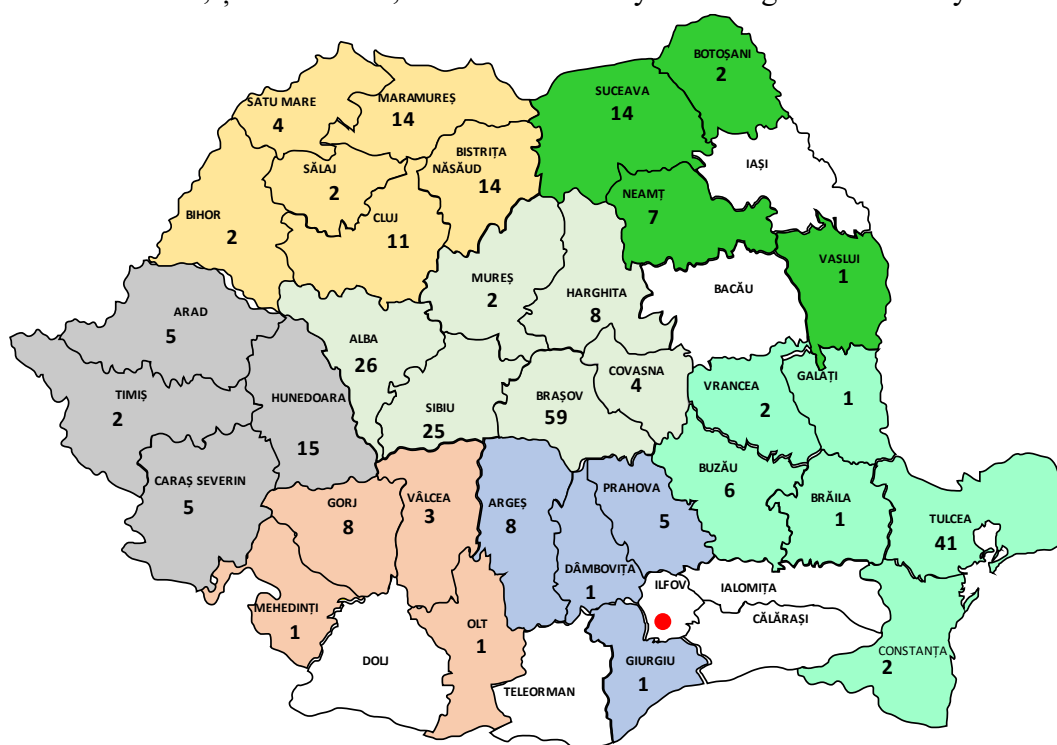


Figure no. 3 – Distribution of the PGL number by county

Source: author's interpretation of data from the county ANSVSA, February 2024

As will be seen in the SWOT analysis, the number of tourists who dine in a local gastronomic point depends directly proportionally on the tourism promotion of the area.

Table no. 3 – SWOT analysis regarding the establishment of a local gastronomic point

ADVANTAGES	DISADVANTAGES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An already existing building can be set up for serving the meal, without the need for a separate, new building. • Little documentation for setting up. • Does not require additional labor, outside the family. • It allows direct capitalization of household products. • Reduced costs of preparation, storage and transportation of raw materials and preparations. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Insufficient knowledge of the tourist potential in order to establish the location. • Insufficient knowledge of the sanitary-veterinary food preservation legislation.
OPORTUNITĂȚI	RISURI
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The rich/varied tourist potential of the rural area. • Accessing European funds. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Many and often contradictory legislative changes. • The number of tourists who dine in a PGL depends directly proportionally on the tourism promotion of the area.

Source: author's interpretation

CONCLUSIONS

The National Strategy for the development of eco-tourism provides for the development of rural communities and through the establishment/modernization/expansion of local gastronomic points. Starting from the importance of the rural area in Romania, non-agricultural development solutions seem to be taking shape.

Starting with 2010, the PGL concept began to develop first in the Danube Delta and the neighboring areas, then in the Intorsura Buzău area. Currently, in Romania, there are 303 PGL unevenly distributed throughout the country. Thus, 41% of local gastronomic points are found in the Central Region, 17.5% in the South East and 15.5% in the North West. Analyzing by county, there is a big discrepancy between the first two ranked: Braşov with 59 PGL (representing 19.5% of the total in the country) and Tulcea with 41 PGL (representing 13.5% of the total in the country) and those located on places 3 (Alba with 26 PGL, representing 8.60% of those in the country as a whole) and 4 (Sibiu with 25 PGL, representing 8.25% of those in the country as a whole).

The rich and varied tourist potential is insufficiently known and promoted, as well as the possibilities of financing the activity from non-reimbursable funds, leaving an open door for the development of rural non-agricultural activities. The essential condition is that all those involved in the proper development of rural activity - local authorities and agricultural producers - show their interest in promoting eco-tourism in the respective area, the benefits being well-known.

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