

ANALYSIS OF POLICIES IN THE FIELD OF THE TOURISM INDUSTRY FROM THE REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA IN ENSURING THE SUSTAINABILITY OF SPORTS TOURISM

Mihai ONOI¹

Abstract: *As diminishing the effect of the pandemic, the tourism industry in the Republic of Moldova is starting to recover after a period in which not only local tourism suffered, but also the international one. The current research aims at the potential of the sports infrastructure in the Republic of Moldova, but also the place of sports tourism in regional policies for the coming years. The subject of the research aims at the effects of the policies implemented in recent years, which contribute to the development of sports tourism. The methods that made it possible to carry out the present research included the analysis of specialized literature and the statistical-mathematical one. The results of the research highlighted the fact that in the Republic of Moldova, among the forms of tourism on the rise are gastronomic, transit and sports tourism, the latter becoming more and more popular. All this is due to central and regional policy instruments, which in recent years have led to the development of the necessary infrastructure, a fact that allowed the organization of large-scale sports events. Moreover, they had the ability to attract athletes, who used various local tourist services during the sports events. The mentioned leads us to conclude that at the regional level, in the development policies for the coming years, most of the authorities have measures to boost sports tourism.*

Key words: *policy; sports events; sports tourism.*

1. Introduction

The central authorities support the tourism field, as a priority of the national economy with the ability to use economic mechanisms, but also through actions to protect and capitalize on the existing

tourist heritage, ensuring for this purpose a sustainable development of the field [5, p. 151]. Tourism at the local level in the Republic of Moldova represents a vulnerable field, which occupies a little significant place for the development of the national economy, but which in the

¹ „Dunarea de Jos” University of Galati, Romania
State University Physical Education and Sport, Chisinau, Republic of Moldova

last three years, paradoxically, but thanks to the pandemic, is undergoing a vertiginous evolution crystallizing new horizons and forms of tourism among them, the sports one [3], [8], which registers an important rise among lovers of outdoor activities, for those who love the extreme, but also other categories of tourists [1], [4], [14]. Thus, at the local level, the authorities try to plan, develop and manage the necessary infrastructure for these types of activities in order to attract both local and foreign tourists. That is why, in rural communities, an important aspect of this tourism form represents the vacations of tourists in the village whose purpose is to participate in the life of community settlements, or practicing sports tourism, including horse riding, cycling, kayaking, etc. [11, p.708]

In this way, the organization and promotion of tourism forms including sports at the national level are governed, to the greatest extent, by mass tourism production and increased consumption by tourists visiting the Republic of Moldova [2, p.210], which requires an analysis of the development of sports tourism and the necessary infrastructure for its practice.

2. Materials and Methods

2.1. The purpose of the research

The analysis of the policies carried out by the state institutions at the central and local level in order to ensure the sustainability of sports tourism in the Republic of Moldova.

2.2. Research objectives

1. The theoretical foundation regarding the opinion of the central and local

authorities of the Republic of Moldova on the sustainable development of sports tourism.

2. The contribution brought by the central and local authorities on the sustainable development of sports tourism at the national level.
3. Analysis of the infrastructure development necessary for the development of sports tourism in the Republic of Moldova in the last five years.

2.3. Methods

The methods that made the present research possible were focused on: theoretical-scientific foundation, pedagogical observation, statistical-mathematical method of data processing and interpretation.

3. Results and Discussion

According to Tutu C., [13, p. 291] sport is important for the socio-political life of the country, due to the fact that can contribute to strengthening the economic potential. Thus, representing a certain type of entrepreneurial activity, such as sports tourism, it can contribute to the formation of revenues for local budgets, as well as the state budget.

The sustainability of sports tourism can be ensured in the context where there are well-defined strategies that highlight the development of different sectors of the economy, a fact also supported by the policies of the European Union and the Republic of Moldova, which are directed towards the development and intensification of tourism activities that help the stability of economic activity taking into account the effects on the

environment. Thus, in the Republic of Moldova, the tourism sector developed based on three strategies [7], [9], [10], [12]:

1. Tourism development strategy in the Republic of Moldova in 2003-2015.

2. Tourism development strategy "Tourism 2020".

3. National tourism development program "Tourism 2026".

All of these had and are aimed at developing the sector itself and ensuring its

sustainability, emphasizing the capitalization of specific forms of tourism, among which is sports tourism, which is becoming more and more popular. In the aforementioned strategies, sports tourism has been assigned various aspects that over the years have brought results, and statistics show us that they have achieved their goal by ensuring a constant development (Figure 1).

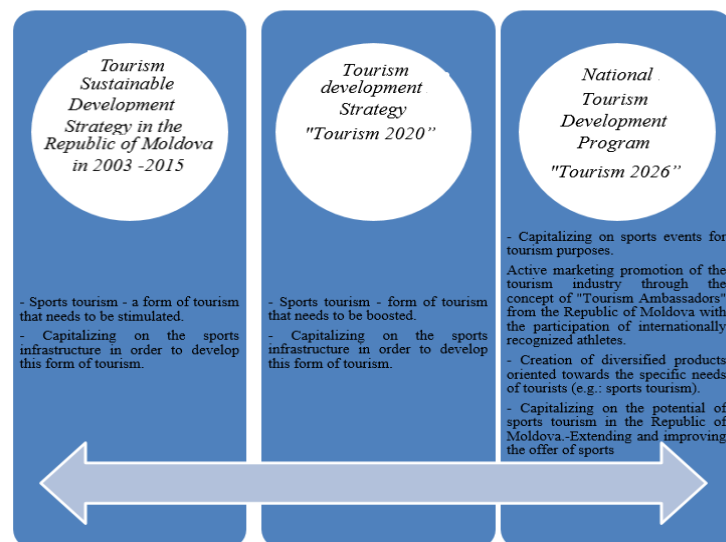


Fig. 1. The role of central authorities in the sustainable development of sports tourism in the Republic of Moldova 2003-2026

Source: Developed by the author based on national tourism development strategies and programs

Along with the development of the tourism destination management in the Republic of Moldova, tourism at the regional level is increasingly present in the development strategies of the northern, central and southern regions, a fact due to the improvement of the general infrastructure, but also the awareness that it can become a source of income for local communities. A special place in these strategies belongs to sports tourism,

which in some regions of the country is developing, attracting both spectators of various organized events and participants of certain sports events. In this sense, for the next five years, the local authorities have set their priorities in this sector to ensure the sustainability of sports tourism, but also of other forms of tourism that can be capitalized at the regional level (Table 1).

Table 1

Sustainable development strategies of the tourism sector at local level, as a component of socio-economic development strategies

Local authorities	Strategies to boost tourism at the local level	Local authorities	Strategies to boost tourism at the local level	Local authorities	Strategies to boost tourism at the local level
<i>Chisinau</i>	Tourism development strategy for the period 2022-2026 "Chisinau - tourist capital"	<i>Anenii Noi</i>	Strategic plan for socio-economic development of Anenii Noi 2022 - 2026	<i>Calarasi</i>	The integrated development strategy of Calarasi, 2021 – 2025
<i>Balti</i>	The socio-economic development strategy of Balti 2021-2025	<i>Basarabasca</i>	The integrated sustainable development strategy of Basarabasca for 2013-2017	<i>Causeni</i>	Sustainable Development Strategy of Causeni 2012-2023
<i>Comrat</i>	Regional sectoral program on increasing the tourist attractiveness of the ATU Gagauzia Development Region for 2019 – 2025	<i>Briceni</i>	Briceni development strategy 2020-2025	<i>Cimislia</i>	The development strategy of Cimislia 2022-2028
<i>Cahul</i>	- The tourism development strategy in Cahul for 2022-2026. - The socio-economic development strategy of Cahul 2023-2030.	<i>Cantemir</i>	The tourism sector development plan in the Cantemir for the period 2022-2024	<i>Crudeni</i>	Crudeni socio-economic development strategy for 2021-2025
<i>Donduseni</i>	The socio-economic development strategy of Donduseni for the period 2022-2027	<i>Drochia</i>	The socio-economic development strategy of Drochia for the period 2021-2030	<i>Dubasari</i>	Local economic development plan of Dubasari 2021-2023
<i>Edinet</i>	The local tourism development concept in Edinet 2022-2024	<i>Falesti</i>	The socio-economic development strategy of Falesti 2023-2030	<i>Floresti</i>	The socio-economic development strategy of Floresti 2021-2028
<i>Glodeni</i>	The sustainable development strategy of Glodeni for 2021-2025	<i>Hincesti</i>	The socio-economic development strategy of Hincesti 2021-2027	<i>Ialoveni</i>	The integrated development strategy of Ialoveni, 2021-2027
<i>Leova</i>	The socio-economic development strategy of Leova for the period 2021-2028	<i>Nisporeni</i>	The socio-economic development strategy of Nisporeni for the period 2021-2027	<i>Ocnita</i>	The socio-economic development strategy of Ocnita for 2017-2022
<i>Orhei</i>	Strategic plan for socio-economic development of Orhei 2021-2025	<i>Rezina</i>	- The socio-economic development strategy of Rezina, Rezina district 2022-2029 - The integrated development strategy of the Rezina district for the period 2022-2030	<i>Riscani</i>	The socio-economic development strategy of Riscani district for the period 2021-2025
<i>Singerei</i>	The socio-economic development strategy of Singerei 2021-2028	<i>Soroca</i>	The economic-social development strategy of Soroca for 2021-2024	<i>Straseni</i>	- Local tourism development strategy of Straseni 2021-2025 - The integrated development strategy of Straseni for 2021-2025
<i>Soldanesti</i>	The socio-economic development strategy of Soldanesti 2021-2026	<i>Stefan Voda</i>	The community development strategy of Stefan Voda for 2020-2025	<i>Taracia</i>	The socio-economic development strategy of Taracia 2017-2022
<i>Telenesti</i>	The socio-economic development strategy of Telenesti 2021 – 2027	<i>Ungheni</i>	The socio-economic development strategy of Ungheni 2022-2030		

Source: Developed by the author based on strategies, municipalities, districts and administrative territorial regions

From Table 1 we can deduce the fact that all districts at the local level have strategies for the development of either tourism, social-economic development, or

integrated, which emphasize the development of tourism and sports in order to develop sports tourism as a form of tourism that can ensure the development of local communities,

through: job creation, development of small and medium enterprises, etc. At the same time, they include a series of actions for the valorization of sports tourism, which are mostly focused on: the development of sports infrastructure, the promotion of tourism forms including sports, the holding of sports events, etc. (Table 2).

Sustainable development of sports tourism at the local level

Table 2

Local authorities	Actions planned to be carried out until 2026 for the development of sports tourism	Local authorities	Actions planned to be carried out until 2026 for the development of sports tourism	Local authorities	Actions planned to be carried out until 2026 for the development of sports tourism
<i>Chisinau</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Building sports-entertaining and leisure objectives. - Developing cycling tourism. - Developing active tourism - sports events (running, cycling, etc.). - Active development of sports tourism. 	<i>Anenii Noi</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Stimulating the development of the service sector: water tourism (nautical). - Organizing and running of sports events in the locality and outside the locality. 	<i>Calarasi</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Development of aero-tourism in the region. - Creating routes for cycling tourism and marking them with signs to give them the status of tourist routes. - Development of fishing tourism (sports fishing). - Capitalizing on sports potential. - Construction of the district multipurpose hall.
<i>Balti</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Development of a modern sports base. - Development of a recreational park for sports activities. - Development of sports infrastructure and promotion of sports culture. - Organization of sports events. 	<i>Basarabasca</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Promotion of sports events. - Development of sports infrastructure. 	<i>Causeni</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The development of tourism by capitalizing on the local tourist potential. - Construction of a sports complex, where organized sports activities can take place. - Consolidation of regional cooperation between neighboring districts and the provision of sports tourism services by building the Youth and Sports Center in Causeni. - Development of sports infrastructure.
<i>Comrat</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The creation of a tourist information center. - Creation of the regional sports and culture center 	<i>Briceni</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Construction of the multifunctional sports complex in the area of Briceni 	<i>Cimislia</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The sustainable development of Cimislia by creating the
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> for the development of tourism. - Creation of facilities for the development of sports tourism. -Increasing the flow of tourists by creating conditions for active recreation combined with sports activities. -Creation of a sports complex of equestrian excursions. 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> stadium. 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> sports infrastructure. - Supporting the development of sport. - Construction of the regional sports complex with a nautical field.

Table 2 (cont.)

<i>Cahul</i>	Building a modern multifunctional sports Complex of regional importance (with swimming pool).	<i>Canemir</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Supporting local businesses in the sustainable practice of tourism. - Stimulating the private initiative to practice active, sports tourism in the region. - Elaboration of the "Welcome to Canemir" events calendar, including those with a sporting connotation. - Reconstruction of a sports-tourist complex. 	<i>Criuleni</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Development of the Criuleni regional stadium. - Development of the "Cave of Surprises" tourist center for the practice of sports tourism and other forms of tourism.
<i>Donduseni</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Development of tourism, including sports as an economic sector that generates income. - Completion of the construction of the district stadium. - Restoration of the sports infrastructure. 	<i>Drochia</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Development of sports infrastructure. - Promotion of tourism in the region. 	<i>Dubasa ri</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Development of tourism in the region and its forms. - Capitalizing on the tourist heritage, including that for sports tourism.
<i>Eđinet</i>	Construction of a sports complex in the district center with a swimming pool and a universal hall for sports games (handball, mini-football, volleyball, etc.).	<i>Falesti</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Development of innovative and contemporary sports events: tourism, mountaineering, etc. -Restoration and enhancement of sports, cultural heritage etc. 	<i>Floresti</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Development tourism in the localities of the district. -Development of sports and leisure infrastructure. - Organization and celebration of cultural-artistic and sports events in the localities of the district.
<i>Glodeni</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Development of green spaces, leisure and sports facilities. - Setting up complex sports bases for several types of sports activities (football, basketball, volleyball, badminton, tennis, etc.). - Use of local lakes and ponds for the organization of sport fishing competitions. - Promotion of the event. 	<i>Hincesti</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Development of cross-border tourism. - Building multifunctional sports center. -Improving the sports infrastructure in the district - Creating and promoting the image of the organized sports events by creating the logo and 	<i>Ialoveni</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Development of tourism services in the district - Capitalizing on the local tourist potential, including the sports one. - Setting up a route for cyclists (marking, signs). - Elaboration of the Calendar of
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Championship of the Republic of Moldova in Autocross. - The revival of mountaineering at Stanca Mare in Cobani. - Diversification of the tourist offer and the development of specialized packages: sports tourism, etc. 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> applying it to the sports equipment. 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> events "Welcome to Ialoveni" which will also include sports events.

Table 2 (cont.)

<i>Leova</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Development and promotion of sports culture in Leova. - Building sports infrastructure in various localities. - Application to cross-border programs in the field of tourism, including sports one. 	<i>Nisporeni</i>	-Development and promotion of competitive tourism.	<i>Ocnita</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Building a sports complex in the district center with a swimming pool and a universal hall for sports games (handball, mini-football, volleyball, etc.). - Development and promotion of tourism in the region, including sports tourism.
<i>Orhei</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Implementation of tourism development projects in partnership with civil society. - Annual qualitative performance of sports and leisure activities. - Renovation of the boarding school for the creation of a multifunctional center with a swimming pool and accommodation during competitions. - Construction of routes for holding national and international sports competitions in various athletic disciplines. 	<i>Rezina</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Elaboration and implementation of policies for the development of sustainable tourism. -Organization and celebration of sports events in Rezina. 	<i>Rascari</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Development of adequate tourism infrastructure. - Diversification of tourist offers and development of thematic packages: gastronomic, ecological, sports tourism, etc. -Renovation of sports infrastructure. - Organization of sports activities at local, district and regional level. -Building a modern and multifunctional sports hall.
<i>Singeret</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Development of various forms of tourism. - Organizing and holding cultural-artistic and sports events in the localities within the district. 	<i>Soroca</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Integration of district tourism in national and European networks. - Consolidation of the technical-material base of the existing infrastructure and building sports and leisure infrastructure. 	<i>Siraseni</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Boosting tourism development. - Creating opportunities to spend free time actively by practicing sports. - Development of recreational areas, including sports infrastructure. - Promotion of sports personalities.
<i>Soldanesti</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The development of a tourist brand and the integrated tourist offer that includes various forms of tourism, including sports. - The development of sports grounds and the attraction of young sports specialists. 	<i>Stefan Voda</i>	Capitalizing on sport fishing and water sports on the Dniester valley.	<i>Taraclia</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Development of sport and the necessary infrastructure for its practice. - Holding cultural, sports events, etc.

Table 2 (cont.)

<i>Telenesti</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The development of a unified and integrated tourism brand that includes various forms of tourism, including sports. - Promotion of tourist, cultural, sports events, etc. - Ensuring a sustainable development of tourism in the district, including sports tourism. - Promotion of the district's sporting cultural capital. - Building the "Multifunctional Sports Complex" in Telenesti. 	<i>Ungheni</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Sustainable development and promotion of tourism and its forms. - Revitalization of sports traditions (rowing, etc.). - Revitalization of sports and recreation infrastructure. - Building multifunctional sports complex equipped with a swimming pool in Ungheni. 		
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Sports tourism is a form of tourism on the rise worldwide, a fact also confirmed by the annual reports of the World Tourism Organization, mentioning that this form of tourism includes both the movement of spectators to various sporting events and the actual participation in the event as a sportsman, with an impetus for the development of the sector as a whole with the development of the necessary infrastructure, ensuring the safety of the participants, etc., bringing substantial gains to the region and the country where the sports event takes place.

In the last 10 years, the Republic of Moldova has accelerated in this regard, with several sports edifices being built (Figure 2), being able to meet European

standards and can host large-scale sports events such as: European junior or senior championships. However, there is still a lot to be done in this regard, taking into account the fact that a large part of the built infrastructure is found in the country's capital, and at the regional level the sports infrastructure requires investment to meet the requirements. At the same time, at the regional level it is necessary to develop the tourism infrastructure, without which the sports events will not be able to be held according to the requirements, or the organization of such events presupposes specific conditions (sports, tourism infrastructure, etc.), which will certainly lead to the development and ensuring the sustainability of sports tourism.

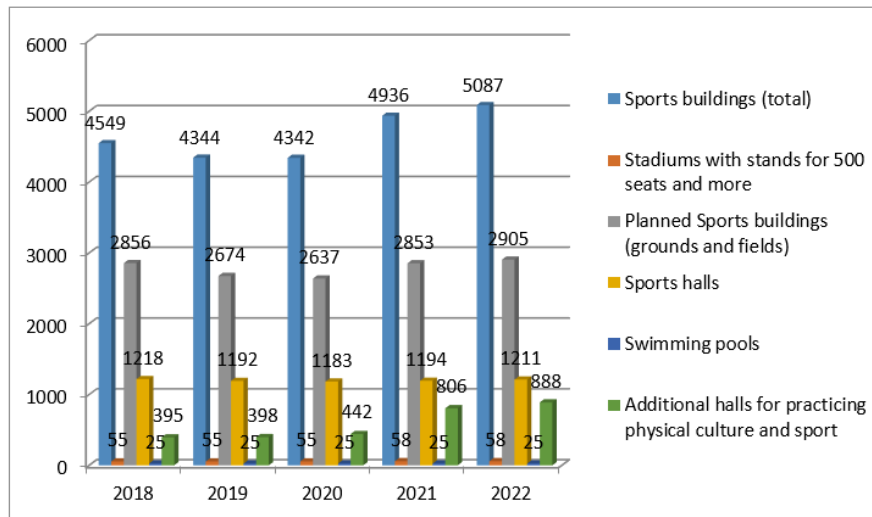


Fig. 2. Sports buildings, physical culture and health promotion centers in the Republic of Moldova during 2018-2022

Source: Prepared by the author according to the data presented by the National Bureau of Statistics of the Republic of Moldova [6]

An eloquent example of building such edifices is the “Arena Chisinau” complex, which in 2023 hosted various sports events including: the International Rhythmic Gymnastics Tournament “Spring Cup” as well as the European U-15 Weightlifting Championship and U-17, where hundreds of athletes participated. Not to mention, at the regional level, we have few large-scale competitions organized that attract hundreds of athletes, although there are beautiful examples, and one of them is the Nisporeni 2023 International Freestyle Wrestling Tournament, an event organized by the “Grigore Brasoveanu” Sports School from Nisporeni district, which attracted athletes from several countries. In this sense, the regional authorities, through the established strategies, highlight the importance of sport both in the

development of the region as a destination for sports tourism, and as a form of practice by the local population as well as guests who visit the locality to participate in various planned sports events. This is why the priority goal of the regional authorities is to ensure an efficient infrastructure that meets the requirements of those present at the event regardless of the status they possess (Table 3).

The data in Table 3 highlight the fact that, despite the poor economic situation at the national level and at the level of the regions, in the last five years, sports buildings register both slight increases in some structures and decreases in certain regional areas, a fact that highlights that the sports tourism sector is stagnating and does not contribute significantly to the development of local destinations.

Table 3

Sports buildings, physical culture and health promotion centers by Regions, Types for 2018-2022 in the Republic of Moldova

	Stadiums with stands for 500 seats and more					Planned sports buildings (grounds and fields)					Sports halls					Swimming pools				
	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Chisinau	5	5	5	6	6	297	59	309	309	316	191	190	190	190	190	17	17	17	17	18
Northern area	19	18	18	17	17	909	857	811	875	868	396	394	381	393	392	3	3	3	3	3
Center area	16	16	16	19	20	889	910	855	1 000	1 042	343	338	348	355	353	2	2	2	1	1
Southern area	10	11	11	10	9	684	572	586	595	585	233	228	222	214	213	2	3	3	3	3
ATU Gagauzia	5	5	5	6	6	77	76	76	74	94	55	42	42	42	63	1	-	-	1	-

Source: Prepared by the author based on the data of the National Bureau of Statistics of the Republic of Moldova [6]

4. Conclusions

The researches carried out highlight the fact that the policies in the field of sports tourism are evident at the regional level in the Republic of Moldova, a fact reflected in the available strategies, which will certainly ensure the sustainability of this form of tourism and emphasizing: the development of tourism by capitalizing local tourism potential; building multifunctional sports complexes, where organized sports activities can be carried out; strengthening regional cooperation between

neighbouring districts and the provision of sports tourism services by building Youth and Sports centres; developing sports infrastructure; use of local lakes and ponds for the organization of sport fishing competitions; the diversification of the tourism offer and the development of specialized sports tourism packages, etc. At the same time, the large-scale events organized in 2023 highlight that sports tourism, from a form of tourism that needed boosting according to the "Tourism 2020" strategy becomes an active form of tourism, a fact due to the policies

implemented in recent years. Although there are good results regarding the development of sports tourism in the Republic of Moldova, we consider it necessary to create a concept for its development, with an emphasis on the regions that can and have the necessary infrastructure to ensure the sustainability of this form of tourism.

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