

## REVIVAL OF TOURISM AFTER THE PANDEMIC PERIOD

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### **Abstract:**

*This paper aims to present the effects of the pandemic on national and international tourism. The first part describes tourism in Romania and Arges county. In addition, tourist sights in these locations were also mentioned. Then we statistically analyzed the evolution of tourism in the European Union, Romania, and Arges county during the period 2017-2021; here we exposed the main trends. To realize the research aim, we focused on literature in the field as well as European and national statistics reports. In the end, we arrived at conclusions.*

**Keywords:** *tourism, tourism units, sustainable tourism*

**JEL Classification:** Z30, Z32

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## Introduction

### Literature Review

According to the International Touristic Dictionary<sup>2</sup>, tourism differs from a simple journey because it offers people the possibility to choose the place they want to visit in a country or region, satisfy their own pleasure, and discover new cultures and places. Tourists are seen as people who travel to other places than their birthplaces, for a period of less than 12 months, and for different purposes (to visit new places, to know new cultures and people) except for paid motifs.

Romania lies in the southeastern part of Central Europe, inside and outside the Carpathian mountains, on the inferior course of the Danube river (1075 km), with access to the Black Sea, at a distance which ranges between 1050 Km and 2800 km from the continent limits. Romanian seaside stretches 245km, with Musura river (bordering Ukraine) and Vama Veche (bordering Bulgaria) as extreme points. The capital city is Bucharest. The main ports at the Black Sea are: Constanța and Mangalia; the main ports at the Danube: Moldova Nouă, Orșova, DrobetaTurnu-Severin, Calafat, Corabia, TurnuMăgurele, Zimnicea, Giurgiu, Oltenița, Călărași, Cernavodă, Hârșova, Măcin, Brăila, Galați, Tulcea, Sulina. The airports are: Moldova Nouă, Orșova, DrobetaTurnu-Severin, Calafat, Corabia, TurnuMăgurele, Zimnicea, Giurgiu, Oltenița, Călărași, Cernavodă, Hârșova, Măcin, Brăila, Galați, Tulcea, and Sulina.

Romania has two components that are extremely attractive from the tourism point of view, namely:

1. The natural component, represented by spectacular landscapes, relief variety, favourable climate, factors with therapeutic value, natural factors;
2. The anthropic component, represented by artefacts of the succeeding civilizations, laic and religious art monuments, museums, museum collections, great richness of ethnography, and folk art elements of significant beauty and originality; present achievements of prestige.

All these are elements of great attraction for Romanian tourism, offering a large variety of forms: resorts (sea, mountain, curative), sports hunting and fishing, itinerant cultural tourism, professional tourism, etc.

Specifically, each form of the natural setting has tourism capacity potential. If we take the relief element into consideration, we can say that it rises from plains to

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<sup>2</sup> Neagu Silviu, *Dicționarul turistic internațional*, Sport-turismPublishingHouse, Bucharest, 1980#

hills and mountains, with the exception of the seaside and the Danube Delta which manifest original physical and geographic features.

In recent years, Romania has become a destination preferred by many Europeans (more than 60% of the foreign tourists come from EU member states) and rivals with Bulgaria, Greece, Italy, and Spain. Sea resorts such as Mangalia, Saturn, Venus, Neptun, Olimp, and Mamaia are the top attractions during the summer season. It is to be mentioned that rural tourism also develops, focusing on folk art and traditions. The main attractions are Bran Castle, painted monasteries in the north of Moldavia, wooden churches in Transilvania, and the Merry Graveyard in Săpânța. We can also mention the Danube Delta, Scărișoara, and other breathtaking caves in Apuseni Mountains.

#### **Literature review:**

Sustainable tourism was defined by the English Tourism Council in 2002 as follows: “Sustainable tourism is about managing tourism’s impacts on the environment, communities, and the future economy to make sure that the effects are positive rather than negative for the benefit of future generations. It is a management approach that is relevant to all types of tourism, regardless of whether it takes place in cities, towns, countryside or the coast.”

R. Butler (1993) gave the following definition of sustainable tourism: "tourism which is in a form which can maintain its viability in an area for an indefinite period of time".

Tourism is not limited only to accommodation and hospitality activities, transport, or entertainment (tourist attractions, amusement parks, sports facilities, museums, and so on); it is connected to all functions, processes, and major procedures practised in tourism-related fields. It is also known that the tourism industry implies functions of planning, organization, coordination, training and monitoring evaluation, covering all levels, from international to local ones. Thus, tourism is integrated into the functional unit of the economy (Simoni and Mihai, 2012).

The tourism industry in the context of sustainable development is exacerbated by its sensitivity to change, its multi-sectoral nature, and its marked dependence on the quality of the environment and host communities; “tourism which degrades any elements of host communities and nations threatens its own future” (Manning, 1999: 179).

Eber (1992) offers a supplementary definition referring to the concept under discussion: in the case when tourism has real benefits for all who are implied and it

is sustainable for the long term, one has to guarantee that the resources are not over consumed, natural and human-made environments are protected, tourism is integrated into other activities and offers real benefits to local communities, the inhabitants are implied and included in tourism planning and decision making. Moreover, people and culture should be respected.

In recent years, tourism has become a vital part of the global economy. It is important for countries such as Egypt, Greece, Lebanon, Thailand, Spain, and also for nation islands: Bahamas, Fiji, the Maldives due to the consistent financial support offered by businesses dealing with goods, services, employment, accommodation, hotels, resorts, entertainment, casinos, parks, and transport services of all types (by air, cruises, taxis).

### **Tourism in Argeş county**

One can see that tourism tends to boom in virgin and uncrowded areas. The generosity of nature offered Arges county a great variety of expressing beauty: from the splendour of the Făgăraş Mountain peaks in the north to the openness of the flat plains of Piteşti and Găvanu-Burdea in the south. The mountain area represents a quarter of the territory and offers marvellous attractions: gorges, waterfalls, caves, lakes, marked routes, and possibilities for rock climbing and skiing. Mountain tourism is practiced within Câmpulung and Curtea de Argeş areas.

37 km from Piteşti, following the national route DN 7C, there is Curtea de Argeş town, an old capital of the state, known especially for its monastery built in 1517 by an illuminated voivode, Neagoe Basarab, but also for art and architecture monuments. The archaeological vestiges date back to the Neolithic period. The town is attested in 1330 and it is a milestone of numerous historic events.

Following the same route, we reach the Vidraru hydropower and dam. The latter is 166 meters tall and keeps inside a volume of about 800 cubic meters of water, covering over 800 hectares and 14 km. The surroundings offer numerous enchanting places.

Before the Vidraru dam, on the left side of the road, there is Cetăţuia hill, 850 meters high with the Poenari Citadel on top, built in the first half of the XIVth century during the reign of Vlad the Impaler.

At a distance of 51 km from Piteşti, on route DN 73, Câmpulung municipality developed on the inferior terraces of the Târgului river, in the sub-Carpathian valley bearing the same name. Archaeological artefacts expose its existence backwards in the XIIth century. Later on, it became the capital of the feudal state

and an important commercial centre. The sights include: Town Museum, a catholic church and assembly from the XIVth - XVth century, old crosses, statues, the feudal assembly NegruVodă, including an orthodox monastery and other buildings, dating from 1215.

On the way to Bran Castle, we meet Nămăieşti village, with a cave monastery from the XVIth century, a very interesting sight with well-preserved pictures. Mateiaş mausoleum, raised to celebrate the memory of World War I heroes follows the route further on. Dragoslavele village is the next stop; it is mentioned in 1377 and is well known for the originality of traditional costumes, architecture, and beautiful landscapes. Rucar is also a great point of interest for rural tourism.

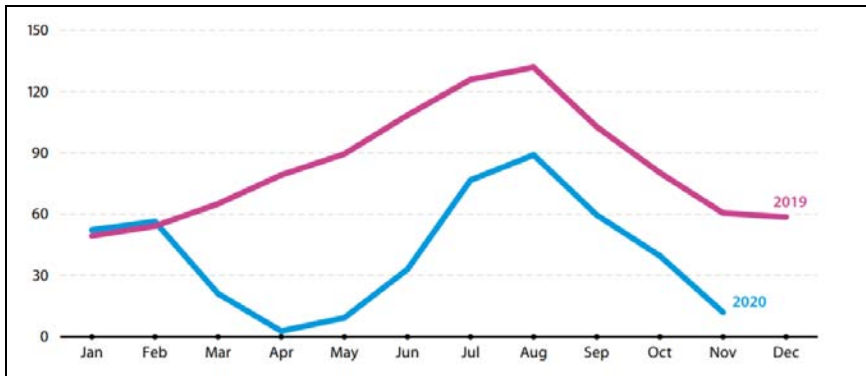
Piteşti city is the county capital and also displays old edifices, such as an orthodox church from 1656 with a school; Argeş Museum, great parks, and art galleries.

### **1. Evolution and tendencies in the EU during the Covid pandemic**

Tourism represents the vertebral column of the economy for many member states – four of them are the world's top destinations. Different regions in Europe differ a lot as concern their dependence on tourism activity. The impact is significant for islands, coastal regions, and ultra-peripheral regions as they generally depend on tourism and international transport.

The pandemic puts the EU tourism ecosystem under great pressure. As a consequence of travel restrictions and many other restrictive activities, tourism showed a sharp decline in 2020 in the EU and beyond. OCED (the Organization for Cooperation and Economic Development) estimates the decline between 45% to 70%, depending on the sanitary crisis and the recovery rhythm. The crisis affected mostly small and medium companies which confronted incertitude and faced a lack of liquidity. Jobs are also threatened. Tourism deals were affected to a great extent, with seasonal workers (23 %), many of them young (37% under 35 years old), women (59 %), and foreigners (15% from or outside the EU). We remark that tourism includes an important section of stakeholders belonging to the social economy which contribute to social inclusion.

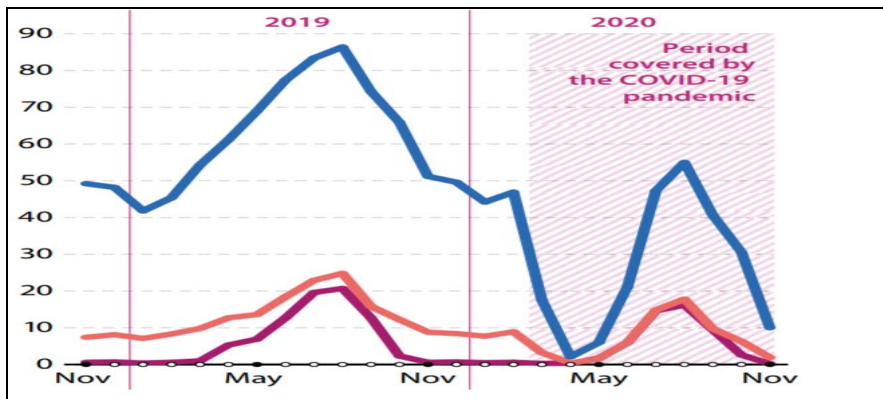
While the number of tourists who came into tourist accommodation units in EU-27 in January and February 2020 was the same as that in January and February 2019, the pandemic dropped this number in March and April as we can see in Figure 1. Concerning the period July-November 2020, there were 41-49 million arrivals, which is less when compared to the equivalent period in 2019, as the statistics show.



**Figure 1. Arrivals in tourist accommodation units January 2019 – December 2020 (millions – EU-27)**

**Source:** Key figures on European business – Statistics illustrated – 2021 edition pdf. p. 87  
<https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat>

The number of international arrivals decreased by 83% during March and April 2020 as compared to the previous year, while for the internal arrivals, the fall reached 81%. The arrivals in hotels and similar units fell by 83%; a great percentage for vacancies was noticed; an 84% fall in units for a short period of accommodation and an 89% fall in campsites, caravan parks, etc.



**Figure 2. Arrivals in tourism units after accommodation types (millions – EU-27)**

**Source:** Key figures on European business – Statistics illustrated – 2021 edition pdf. p. 88  
<https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat>

The number of arrivals in tourist units in EU-27 during 2020 was influenced by internal requests, many tourists chose their native country, rather than a foreign country as holiday destinations. October meets an increase with 31,4%, in tourist units for accommodation service. It is known that 267 million Europeans, representing 62% of the population make at least one pleasure journey a year and 78% of them spend their holidays in their native country or within EU borders.

## 2. Statistics analysis of tourism in Romania and Argeş county between 2017-2021

Many European regions, cities, and towns to a great extent, are based on cultural tourism. Technology contributed to reinventing cultural tourism during the pandemic, by opening new opportunities for creative expression and growing audiences. New tendencies appear: to discover near natural or cultural treasures which were forgotten or hidden; to taste or try locally produced or manufactured goods.

Tourism may gain due to the process of digital transition, offering new methods in managing tourist flows, opportunities, more options, and sustainable usage of limited resources. The usage of analyzing big volumes of data can create and assemble precise segments of the touristic profile and can also contribute to the understanding of tourists' tendencies and needs. Digital instruments can be, too, measures to strengthen citizens' trust that tourism and travel can be safe. This means investments in digital, including cyber security, digital innovation, and also the connection of touristic companies and actors with the present local and regional data space. This fact is of great importance in rural far and ultra-peripheral regions where tourism is fragmented and depends much on the accessibility of information and transport services.

Statistically speaking, during the period 2017-2020, the number of arrivals in the accommodation units is presented below:

**Table 1. Tourists arrivals in accommodation units**

Units accommodation		Years			
		Year 2017	Year 2018	Year 2019	Year 2020
		UM: Number of persons			
Total	Total	12,143,46	12,905,131	13,374,943	6,398,642

Source: data series, <http://statistici.insse.ro/>

From Table 1, we can see that the total number of people who arrived in accommodation units had an ascending trend in 2019; but in 2020, the number of tourists halved.

If we compare October 2020 to October 2021, at the country's borders, the number of foreign visitors increased by 74,8%, and departures abroad of Romanian tourists increased by 42,7% as the National Statistics Institute provides. All the information can be seen below, in Table 2.

**Table 2. Arrivals and spending nights in accommodation units October 2020 – October 2021**

	Arrivals			Spending nights		
	Oct.20	Oct.21	October 2021 compared to October 2020	Oct.20	Oct.21	October 2021 compared to October 2020
Foreign tourists **)	24.7	99	400.8	58.1	218.1	375.4
from which						
- Europe	21.2	75.9	358	48.7	163.8	336.3
- European Union	15.8	58.7	371.5	35.7	123.8	346.8
- Asia	1.1	8.1	736.4	2.4	22.3	929.2
- North America	1.4	7	500	4.3	16.8	390.7
- South America	*	0.6	-	*	1.3	-
- Africa	*	0.6	-	1.1	1.7	154.5

\*) values under 0.5

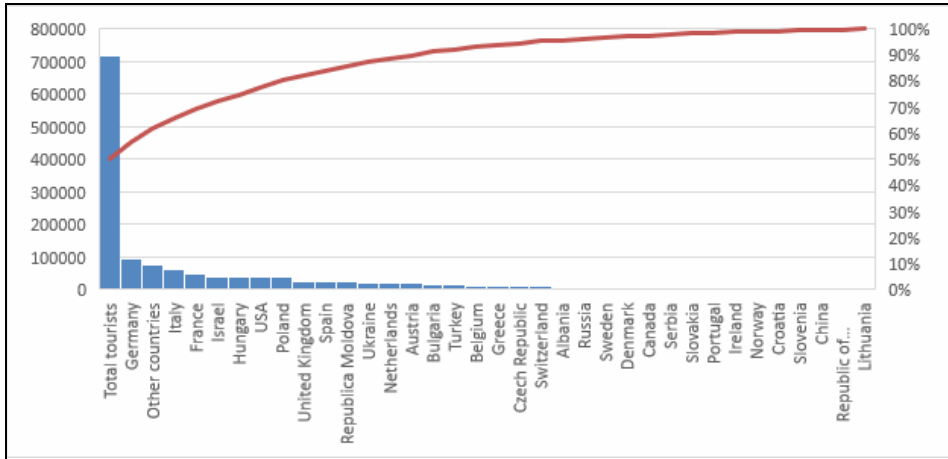
\*\*) taking into account the residence country

Source: data serieswww.insse.ro

We can remark an increase in the number of foreign tourists in Romania in October 2021 as compared to October 2020, namely 74.3 thousand people. Concerning the number of tourists who spent nights in Romania, it also increased by 160 thousand from 218.1 thousand.

If we look at the period 1<sup>st</sup> January – 31<sup>st</sup> October 2021, the number of foreign tourists after their residence country can be noticed in Figure 3, presented below:



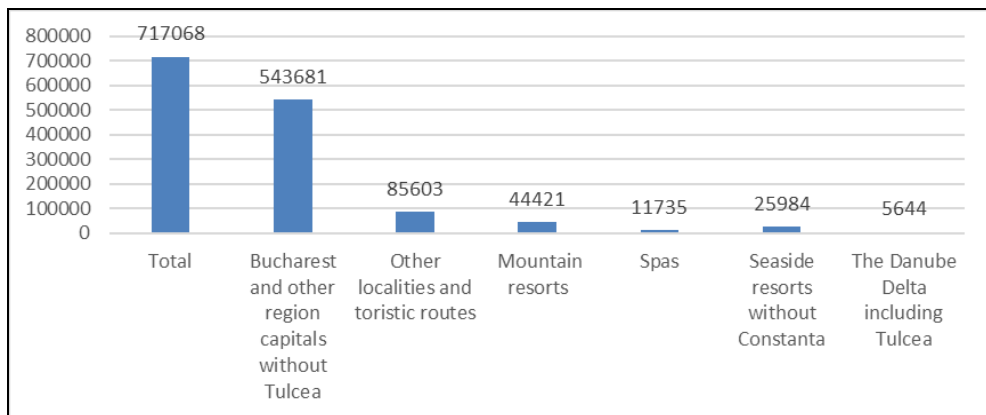


**Figure 3. Arrivals of foreign tourists, after their residence country 01 Jan 2021-31 Oct 2021**

Source: Own data processed from INS (National Institute for Statistics) data series [www.insse/](http://www.insse/)

We notice that a great number of foreign tourists belong to Europeans (76.7% of all foreigners) and 77.3% of these are from the European Union.

Depending on the touristic areas, the arrivals belonging to the same period (1<sup>st</sup> Jan – 31<sup>st</sup> Oct 2021) are shown in Figure 4:



**Figure 4. Total number of foreign tourists' arrivals (1<sup>st</sup> Jan – 31<sup>st</sup> Oct 2021) depending on the touristic area**

Source: Own data processed from INS (National Institute for Statistics) data series [www.insse/](http://www.insse/)

From Figure 4, we can see that out of the total number of foreign tourists (717,068 thousand persons), 543,681 thousand persons came to Bucharest; the second position is taken by the regional capitals and surprisingly, the Danube Delta including Tulcea city is in the last position (5,644 thousand persons).

We can also make another per cent analysis, from the point of view of foreign tourists' distribution: October 2021 as compared to October 2020, according to data shared by the National Institute of Statistics in Romania, as it is exposed in Table 3 below:

**Table 3. Foreign tourists' distribution: October 2021 as compared to October 2020**

	%	
	October 2020	October 2021
Bucharest and other regional capitals without Tulcea city	78.5	80.4
Other localities and touristic routes	12.3	12.6
Mountain resorts	6.6	4.6
Spas	0.6	1.3
Seaside resorts without Constanta city	1.5	0.7
The Danube Delta including Tulcea city	0.5	0.4

Source: statistics data series [www.insse/](http://www.insse/)

The number of nights spent in touristic units during the period 1<sup>st</sup> January – 31<sup>st</sup> October 2021 reached 18,482.2 thousand, with 40.7% higher than the same period of the year 2020. From the total number of nights spent in the above-mentioned period of 2021, Romanian tourists represented 91.6% and foreign tourists 8.4%. If we focus on the nights spent by the foreign tourists, we can say that the Europeans represent 77.2% of the whole and 76.4% of those are European Union citizens.

The average period of stay was of 2.3 days for Romanian tourists and 2.2 days for foreign tourists. The index of touristic units' usage in the period taken into consideration in 2021 was 27.8%, with slow growth of 2.8% as compared to the same period in 2020. Referring to the types of touristic units, the situation is as follows: hotels 33.6%, villas 26.6%, bungalows 26%, cruise ships 24.3%, touristic houses 20.8%, campsites 20.6%, B&B and tourist stops 19% each, hostels 18.7%, agro-tourism pensions 18.1% and cottages 16.3%.

Referring to Arges county, statistical analyses reveal the following data: tourist arrivals in touristic units during the period 2017-2021 can be seen in Table 4:

**Table 4 Tourist arrivals in touristic units during the period 2017-2021 after types of tourists, macroregions, regions, and counties**

Types of tourist	Macroregions, regions, counties	Years				
		Year 2017	Year 2018	Year 2019	Year 2020	Year 2021
		UM: Number of persons				
Total	TOTAL	12143346	12905131	13374943	6398642	8158355
	Arges	230517	247703	267349	113421	162506
Romanians	TOTAL	9383266	10108509	10691195	5944775	7441287
	Arges	184080	201079	220541	104096	145667
Foreigns	TOTAL	2760080	2796622	2683748	453867	717068
	Arges	46437	46624	46808	9325	16839

Source: data series, <http://statistici.insse.ro/>

From Table 4, we can notice that from a total number of 162.506 tourists who came into Arges county, 145,667 were Romanian tourists and 16,839 were foreigners. The increase in the number of foreign tourists in Arges was to a great extent due to the promoting actions for local products and traditions and natural landscapes.

Table 5 shows touristic structures during the period 2017-2021

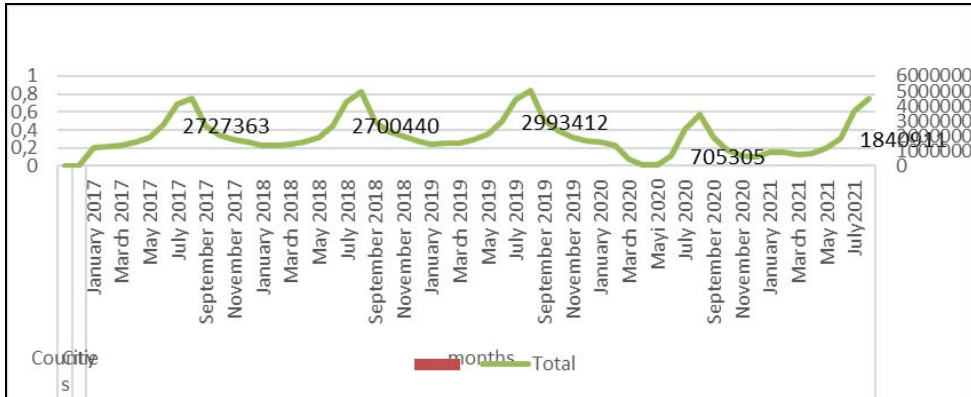
**Table 5. Touristic structures on types and counties**

Counties	Years				
	Year 2017	Year 2018	Year 2019	Year 2020	Year 2021
	UM: Number				
TOTAL	7905	8453	8402	8610	9146
Arges	297	286	296	295	297

Source: data series <http://statistici.insse.ro/>

We mention that the analyzed category has an ascending trend during the period 2017-2021 for both the total number of touristic units and the number of structures of touristic units in Arges county.

Figure 5 presents the number of nights spent in touristic units in Arges county in the mentioned period, 2017-2021:



**Figure 5 Number of nights spent in touristic units in Arges county in the period January 2017- October 2021**

Source: data series, <http://statistici.insse.ro/>

We notice that the greatest number of nights spent in Arges county happened in August every year: 52,260 nights in August 2017, 53,817 nights in August 2018, 62,573 nights in 2019, 27,964 in 2020, and 54.300 nights in August 2021. After a significant fall during 2020, under the pandemic circumstances, 2021 brings an ascending tendency.

The improvement of means of transport also contributed to a great extension of the touristic phenomenon and the development of new forms of tourism. Thus, the increase in the number of personal cars led to the appearance of secondary vacation residences for the upper-medium class population; the multiplication of air transport infrastructure and the appearance of new airlines favoured the inclusion in touristic circuits of new touristic destinations.

There is a tight relation between the development of the tourism and transport industry, in the sense that the increase in the volume in touristic circulation is due to the transport sector development.

Comfort may be an attractive factor, but at the same time, it can determine differentiation in tourists' preferences depending on types of transportation. It is known that young people prefer cars and seniors prefer less tiring means of transport. At the same time, the choosing of a specific means of transport depends on the distance, too. Thus, it is established that auto transport is used for a distance up to 100 km, railway within 100-1,000 km, and air transport is more convenient for longer distances.

In Arges county, during the period 2017-2020, the Romanian tourists' departures abroad, taking into account the means of transport show as follows: from the total number of 9,510 thousand people in 2020, 6,757 thousand preferred transport by land and 2,694 thousand by air. The least used means of transport were by sea: only 23 thousand chose it.

**Table 6. Romanian tourists' departures abroad after means of transport used**

Categories of means of transport	Year 2017	Year 2018	Year 2019	Year 2020
Total	19953	21039	23066	9510
By land	13835	14369	15791	6757
By railway	95	104	116	36
By air	5998	6541	7132	2694
By sea	25	25	27	23

Source: data series, <http://statistici.insse.ro/>

Regarding the evolution of departures abroad, we can see that the number lowered to 13,566 persons as compared to 2019, due to the pandemic restrictions.

### Conclusions:

Tourism represents the economic backbone of many member states of the European Union. The Pandemic has put the EU under great pressure. As a consequence of travel restrictions, tourism activity ceased gradually during the first term of 2020 in the EU and on the entire planet.

If we refer to the EU, the number of tourist arrivals in January and February 2020 was the same with January and February 2019, but the pandemic led to a drastic reduction in March and April 2020. In the period July and October 2020, the evolution of the statistics was similar between 2019 and 2020, but 2020 had fewer arrivals up to 41-49 million (a decrease between 33% and 97%) for each month.

In Romania, spending nights in touristic units in the period January – October 2021 came up to 18,487.2 thousand, with 40.7% more than those in the same period a year before.

Concerning the arrivals of foreign tourists in Romanian touristic units, a great number was represented by Europeans (77.2% of the total number) and 76.4% of those came from the EU.

The average stay was of 2.3 days for Romanian tourists and 2.2 days for foreigners. The indices for touristic units' net usage in the mentioned period, January – October 2021 were also presented above and showed a variety in distribution, with 33.6% in hotels as the greatest per cent and cottages with 16.3% as the lowest per cent.

For Arges county, we can say that after a significant fall in 2020, in 2021 we observe an ascending trend in the number of tourists. From a total number of 162,506 tourists, 145.667 were Romanians and 16,839 were foreigners.

In the period 2017-2020, the departures abroad of the Romanian tourists also showed that more preferred transportation by land and only a quarter preferred transportation by air.

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