

UNIVERSITY OF PÉCS
Doctoral School of Earth Sciences

**The State and Opportunities for the Development of Rural
Tourism in the Transcarpathian Beregvidék**

Theses of PhD Dissertation

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PÉCS, 2019

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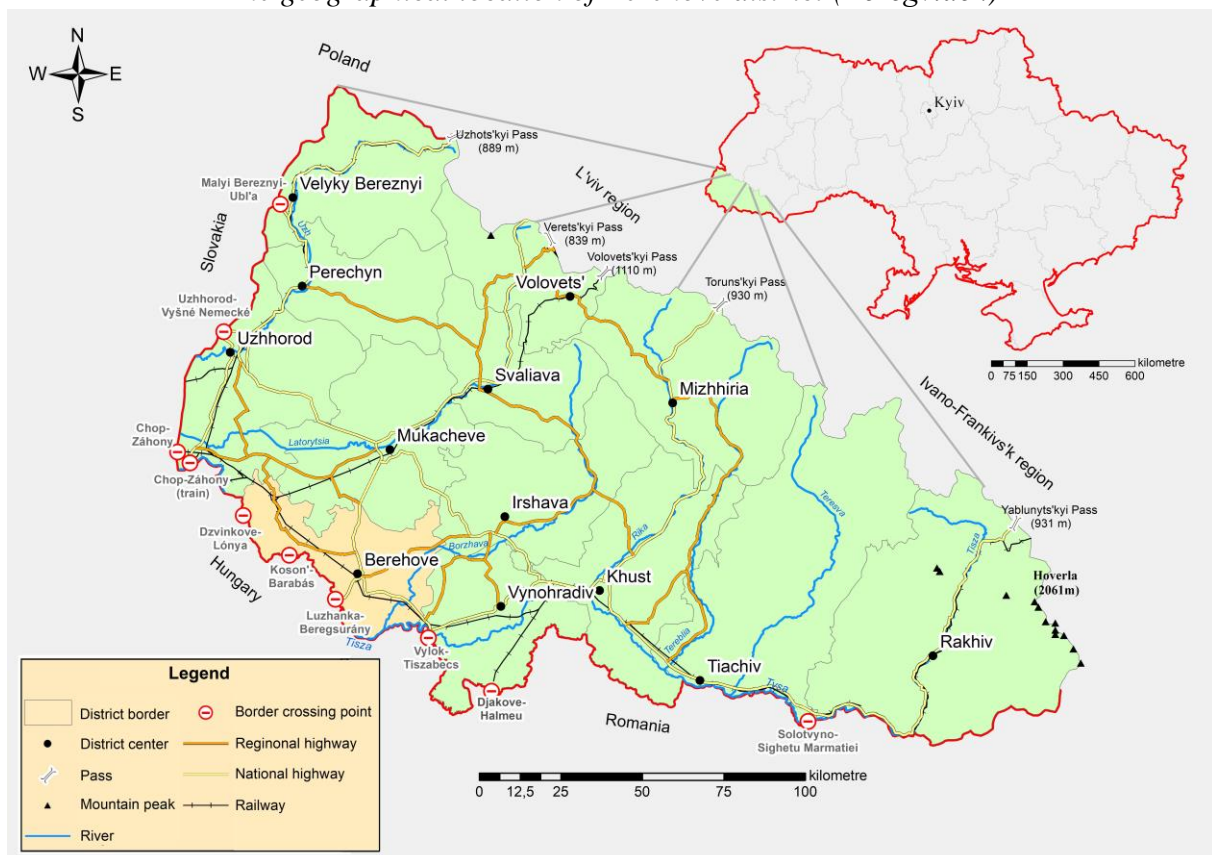
Introduction

After the Treaty of Trianon the territories that were torn away from historical Hungary – Transylvania (Erdély), Transcarpathia (Kárpátalja), Upper Hungary (Felvidék), Burgenland (Őrvidék), Prekmurje (Muravidék), Voivodina (Vajdaság) and Délvidék – came under the rule of different countries. Among the former Hungarian territories, this dissertation studies Transcarpathia that now forms part of Ukraine and focuses on the Berehove (Beregszász) district that is predominantly populated by the Hungarians or Beregvidék (Berehove tourist area) that covers the same territory (Figure 1).

As a result of the collapse of the Soviet Union, Ukraine became an independent country. The one-decade-long transitional period was followed by the slow development of the country's economy and tourism played a key role in it. After the change of the regime, when the borders became easier to cross, Hungary showed a major interest in Transcarpathia, a former Hungarian territory. The primary aim of visitors to Transcarpathia was to visit relatives seen long ago, to seek one's roots, to establish connections, and discover unknown romantic land. The start of the development of tourism created opportunities for the Transcarpathian population, including the Hungarians. These facts provided the impulse for the dissertation as far as *the Ukrainian Hungarian minority got engaged with tourism first and foremost via hosts and rural tourism*. That is why I considered it timely and relevant to reveal the characteristic features of tourism on the territories populated by the Transcarpathian Hungarian minority, to make the analysis showing a comprehensive, synthesizing, theoretical and practical system in the form of a dissertation.

Figure 1

The geographical location of Berehove district (Beregvidék)



Source: Author's edition

1. The aim and hypotheses of the thesis

The aim of the dissertation is to analyse Transcarpathia on the basis of significant aspects of rural tourism, the Hungarian-populated Beregvidék, to conduct a comprehensive study of its elements and to contribute to the theoretical results of the region's research of tourism, to improve the directions applied in the practice of rural tourism. To achieve this, we considered it important:

- to analyse the reasons for the changes going on nowadays in Transcarpathian tourism, to determine the region's tourist significance, its role in the country's tourism paying special attention to elucidating the political, economic and social changes that have been going on in Ukraine in recent years;
- to reveal the roots of Transcarpathian rural tourism, stages of its development;
- to compensate for the lack of statistical data and compile a database that would show the current state of rural tourism on the observation plot at a particular time and would form a comparison basis for further sampling;
- to show the functioning principles of rural tourism in Beregvidék that are based on empirical researches, to give a profound analysis of supply and demand aspects of rural tourism, to determine the tourist attractions in Berehove district (Beregvidék), to elucidate local peculiarities, changes in demand, the specific character of the settlements under analysis, as well as the population's attitude;
- furthermore, to determine the conceptual system of rural tourism on the territory populated by the Transcarpathian Hungarian community, to analyse the nature of pertaining activities, the local peculiarities.

We presuppose that *rural tourism in Transcarpathia was created as a provincial activity improving subsistence level; it meant and still does mean a breakout point for the Hungarian minority that predominantly lives in the countryside*. Furthermore, we consider that the Transcarpathian Beregvidék as a research territory under analysis at the beginning and in the 10-year process of our research period *underwent a kind of qualitative and quantitative development, as well as structural transformation in the field of rural tourism*.

2. Research methods

From the point of view of theoretical and methodological substantiation of the dissertation built around the study of rural tourism as well as verification of practical significance, several primary and secondary methods were applied simultaneously, that is the research was conducted on the basis of triangulation principle (DECROP, A. 1999; BABBIE, E. 2000; TOMCSÁNYI, P. 2001). Side by side with processing relevant specialized literature, use of quantitative methods, we tried to apply qualitative data collection results to analyse the research theme in depth, thus making it more subtle and accurate.

2.1. Researches based on secondary sources:

Analysis of secondary sources comprises one part of the dissertation:

- First of all, it means *tourist introduction to Transcarpathia* as well as studying specialized literature (in Hungarian, Czech, Russian, and Ukrainian) dealing with the research of tourism.
- Secondly, *the research results of Hungarian, Ukrainian and international specialized literature on rural tourism* are compared and assessed to substantiate the theoretical and methodological background of the thesis.

- Furthermore, to elucidate the theme it was necessary to *analyse tourist statistical data with reference to Ukraine and Transcarpathia*; these presupposed the description of supply and demand characteristic features of tourism, as well as determining changes. *I paid special attention to the 2013 and 2017 data.*
- I relied on specialized literature in revealing the research target area *Introduction of Beregvidék's tourist attractions.*

2.2. Researches based on primary sources

The most significant primary methods of the research were *questionnaire survey* and *in-depth interviewing*. Three questionnaire surveys and one in-depth interview form the basis of the doctoral dissertation (Table 1). In the course of conducting questionnaire surveys, interviewers helped me in my work; they were students of Ferenc Rákóczi II Transcarpathian Hungarian College of Higher Education.

Questionnaire I: The questionnaire surveying the hosts' age

To carry out the research a questionnaire was elaborated in 2008 that was suitable to survey the rural hosts in Beregvidék that comprises the majority of the Hungarian population in Transcarpathia. The questionnaire contained 46 open- and closed-ended questions. The rural hosts within the territory under research were collected from Internet sources and from information offered by Berehove and District Rural Tourism Society. Filling the questionnaires out was performed in several stages: In 2009 it was done in six settlements (Bene, Chetfalva (Csetfalva), Velyka Bakta (Nagybakta), Hecha (Mezőgecse), Koson' (Mezőkaszony), Vary (Vári)), in 2011 and 2013 two more (Borzhava (Nagyborzsova), Zapson' (Zápszony)), and in 2018 four new settlements were added (Dyida (Beregdeda), Velyka Byihan' (Nagybégány), Muzhiievo (Nagymuzsaly), Orosiievo (Sárosoroszi)). In 2018 we repeated the 2009 survey in 5 out of 6 settlements with a less profound analysis. We collected a total of 195 questionnaires from 12 settlements (Table 1).

The dissertation aims at analysing a 10-year period that enables the reader to see the changes that have been going on. In the course of the analysis, we attempted to elucidate the differences between the organized and spontaneously developing rural tourism that evolved in time, the changes in clientele, the quality of guesthouses, their capacity, etc.

In Transcarpathia rural tourism actively functions in Hungarian or partly Hungarian settlements in Berehove, Vynohradiv (Nagyszőlös), and Khust (Huszt) districts. Vyshkovo (Visk) was one of the first Transcarpathian settlements that started tourist activity right after the change of the regime. We asked 13 hosts in this settlement. Vyshkovo rural tourism was treated as a control group due to its location away from Beregvidék.

Questionnaire II: The population surveying questionnaire

In each Berehove district settlement, where host questionnaires were filled in, we asked the population's opinion on the settlement's economic condition, tourist facilities, as well as the tourists arriving in the village. The population questionnaire contained 20 questions. Out of 635 questionnaires that were collected from 12 settlements engaged in tourism, 633 could be analysed (Table 1). This number meant 5% of the¹ Hungarian population over 19 years old. In the process of filling in the questionnaires, we applied stratified sampling, not

¹ ЗАКАРПАТСЬКЕ ОБЛАСНЕ УПРАВЛІННЯ СТАТИСТИКИ (2003В) classifies the age group data of the national minorities living in the region into 4-year periods. We were not going to determine the number of residents above 18 years old as far as they were classified into the 15-19 year-old age group. Taking this into account we chose over 19 year-old adult population as study subjects for our sample.

according to age and educational level. The strata were formed according to the latest 2001² census data (ЗАКАРПАТСЬКЕ ОБЛАСНЕ УПРАВЛІННЯ СТАТИСТИКИ 2003А, 2003В). Moreover, we prepared a route description for each settlement and used it to find the informants.

Taking into account that the query took place in several stages between 2009 and 2018, we considered it necessary to complete an additional test of the sample's representativeness by comparing it with the age and gender data. The completed chi-square test did not find a significant deviation between the sample and the Berehove district 2011 data based on age and gender (ГОЛОВНЕ УПРАВЛІННЯ СТАТИСТИКИ У ЗАКАРПАТСЬКІЙ ОБЛАСТІ 2011:24).

Table 1

The number and distribution of host and population questionnaires, as well as of interviews with the organizers of rural tourism in Berehove district

Name of the settlement	Host questionnaires	Population questionnaires	Interviews	The year of filling in
1. Bene	17	46	2	2009
	5			2018
2. Chetfalva	10	28	1	2009
	9			2018
3. Velyka Bakta	2	13	–	2009
4. Hecha	11	32	1	2009
	8			2018
5. Koson'	10	76	1	2009
	5			2018
6. Vary	29	93	1	2009
	12			2018
7. Borzhava	10	54	1	2011
				2018
8. Zapson'	20	64	–	2013
9. Dyida	14	61	1	2018
10. Velyka Byihan'	14	64	–	2018
11. Muzhiievo	13	68	1	2018
12. Orosiievo	6	34	1	2018
Total	195	633	10	

Source: Author's edition

Questionnaire III: The questionnaire analysing Transcarpathian tourist demand and image

Our research analysed Transcarpathian tourist demand and image and covered tourists arriving from the region's largest source market – Hungary. The questionnaires were filled in along Transcarpathia's border, focusing on Hungarian-populated settlements, while the query was conducted in 2005 among the tourists that arrived here. Research areas were mainly in Berehove district (Berehove district: Bene, Dyida, Berehove, Chetfalva, Borzhava, Koson', Vary; Vynohradiv district: Vynohradiv, Shalanky (Salánk); Khust district: Vyshkovo where part of the population is engaged in rural tourism. We could use 248 out of 250 filled in questionnaires (SZILÁGYI Zs. et al. 2006; SASS E. et al. 2007).

The questionnaires were always analysed with the help of SPSS Data Editor and Microsoft Office Excel software. The data were tested proportionally to the number of cases

² Neither at the beginning of the research, nor in the process of writing the dissertation did Ukraine have newer official census data than the 2001 ones.

and where available old and new results were compared. For the sake of transparency of open-ended questions (e.g. satisfaction with the living conditions provided in the living quarters as well as where do hosts expect tourists from, etc.) the answers were categorized afterwards. For the sake of illustration, the results were presented in charts and in some cases in diacartograms. The latter was done by means of ArcGis 10.4 software.

I. In-depth interview: For organizers of rural tourism/leaders of civil organizations

With the aim of substantiation of rural tourism questionnaire survey results or their possible confutation, we conducted in-depth interviews in 2018 in Transcarpathian settlements inhabited by Hungarians with organizers of rural tourism in the settlements, mayors (in most cases mayors themselves were the organizers), as well as with heads of civil organizations. A total of 12 people were queried. The majority (10 people) work in Berehove district (Table 1), one interviewee works in Vynohradiv, and one more in Khust.

The in-depth interview questions cover three subject areas: 1. *History of rural tourism, its settlement/spatial organization*; 2. *The organization and its activity*; 3. *The notion of rural tourism and its activity areas*. Each subject area contains 7, 15, and 24 questions. The answers to questions will not be introduced as separate subchapters but will be used in appropriate places of the dissertation as a confirming or refuting information source.

3. Summary of results

The analysis of specialized literature for the dissertation researching Transcarpathian rural tourism in Beregvidék resulted in filling out and analysis of 1089 questionnaires that were supplemented with in-depth studies realized in elaboration and analysis of 12 in-depth interviews. In the course of conducted research we have determined Transcarpathia's role in Ukraine's tourism in the light of East-Ukrainian events, revealed the roots of Transcarpathian rural tourism, the stages of its current development, the causes of its emergence, its significance in the life of Transcarpathian Hungarians, we have compiled a database to show the peculiarities of the supply of rural tourism in Beregvidék, the causes of changes, and have determined the characteristic features of demand. As a result of the conducted research, our aims were realized and the hypotheses were verified.

In the course of studying specialized literature that serves as theoretical substantiation of the dissertation, we have come to the conclusion that in the past 100 years the powers controlling Transcarpathia – as it has already been mentioned in the introduction – did not leave without a trace. Everyone tried to form the region and its people according to their liking, this resulted in *linguistic, cultural, religious and architectural variegation of the area*, whose origin quick-witted historians could explain for hours and *whose characteristic features local tourist industry tries to present and exploit as advantageous*. From the point of view of research history of Transcarpathian tourism, essential and significant information fits together like a mosaic; the ruling powers formed the mosaic pieces in their own original language. The geological and mineral resources hidden in the ground interested everybody, encouraged researches, and the beauty of the land enthralled everybody. *Some built an airport, bridges, tourist hostels, while others erected huge sanatoriums and brought a great number of people from their mother country for treatment and recreation. The highland, territories appropriate for winter and hiking tourism, thermal-, medicinal- and mineral waters have the strongest attractive force*. A great part of materials promoting tourism in the area deal with these.

❖ *Positioning Transcarpathian tourism and causes of the changes*

Transcarpathia and Beregvidék that are under analysis now form part of Ukraine, thus they cannot be isolated from the economic, political, social, and other events going on in the country. The East-Ukrainian conflict that started in 2014 and had been escalating ever since, as well as the annexation of the Crimean peninsula significantly influenced life in Transcarpathia. The conducted statistical analyses prove that this situation rendered a huge influence on the country's economy, leading to a decrease in GDP and exercised a definitely negative influence on the tourism industry. Compared to 2013 the country's tourist traffic significantly decreased mainly due to the exclusion of tourist traffic on the territories that are no longer under the control of the country and as a result, foreign tourists stayed away from the country. Even so, ***the country's tourism did not stop, just decreased and changed direction.*** Commercial accommodation traffic revealed that ***it took the direction towards safer territories and followed a north-western tendency.*** The available data confirm the fact that Ukraine still has territories with tourist centres showing outstanding activity, however, their number, compared to the previous results (see SASS E. 2008) – after the annexation of the Crimean Peninsula – fell from five to four: 1. Capital city; 2. Close to the sea (the Black Sea and the Sea of Azov); 3. The Carpathian region; 4. The vicinity of Dnipropetrovsk region tourist centres.

Transcarpathia belongs to the *Carpathian region* tourist centre. In 2017, despite the difficult economic situation and in contrast with 2013, the tourist centre managed to achieve the greatest increase in the number of commercial accommodation and guest-nights. Thus, ***domestic demand increased for the region and Transcarpathia.*** Tourists arriving in Transcarpathia gladly choose the region's rural accommodation as well. Deficiencies of statistical data collection as well as the fact that rural tourism is still in the grey economy lead to the situation when the number of tourists in statistical statements is not real, thus they are not suitable for drawing credible conclusions.

We see the cause of the increase in demand in the fact that the population lost its favourite recreational area, the Crimean Peninsula and as a result had to look for inland destinations, for instance, *the Carpathian region*. In Transcarpathia, the demand increased for health tourism objects, built heritage, natural sights, cultural values, wine, and gastronomy. Home tourists show a special interest in Beregvidék's numerous thermal water facilities.

❖ *Revealing the roots of Transcarpathian rural tourism*

In the course of researching Transcarpathian *rural tourism*, we found out from the Hungarian specialized literature that ***tourism had greater traditions in Transcarpathia's highland areas than in its plains.*** *Az Utas Könyve* (1939, 1941) revealed in written form and on a map that Transcarpathia has 34 popular among tourists and organized communities with accommodation on a fee-paying basis, gives information on their organization level, as well as on the opportunities offered in private houses, their organization. Tourism in highland areas consisted of mainly offering accommodation which can be rather related to active tourism and lack of commercial accommodation, but not typical rural, countryside offers. *Among the Hungarian-populated settlements only Vylak (Tiszajlak), Berehove, Koson', Mukachevo (Munkács), Solotvyno (Aknaszlatina), Vyshkovo and Khust hosts accommodate tourists in private houses and private apartments.* The latter three settlements are also located in the highland or on its border.

In the period after WWII feebly functioning tourism stopped in organized settlements. In the unstable economic period of change of the regime after the collapse of the Soviet Union, in the process of looking for subsistence opportunities, Transcarpathian people recognized the prospects behind rural tourism as well as its positive influence on the economy and society. This way rural tourism started to develop on Transcarpathian plains as a kind of income supplement.

❖ **Stages of development of Transcarpathian rural tourism**

In the process of assessing the 12 in-depth interviews we determined that from the 1990s to the present day in the Transcarpathian Hungarian-populated territories rural tourism underwent and still undergoes continuous changes, transformations, developments that can be divided into three stages:

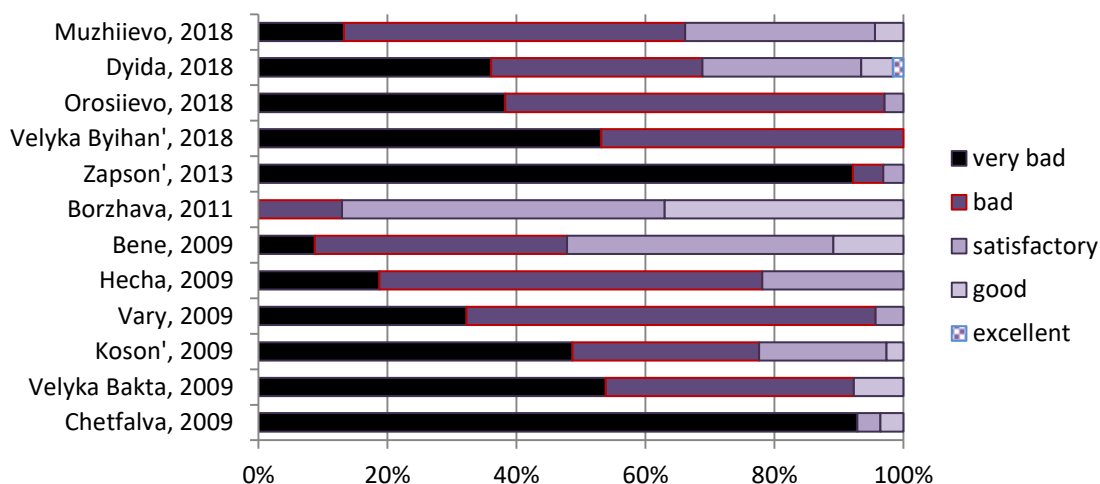
- 1st stage (1989-1999): rural tourism, emerging demand for rural tourism, occasional accommodation, modest hospitality;
- 2nd stage (2000-2009): increasing demand, improvement in quantity and quality, search for and creation of organized settings;
- 3rd stage (2010-to the present day): further quantitative, qualitative development, economic crises, the emergence of a new clientele, a higher level of organisation and representation of interests (Transcarpathian Hungarian Tourist Council), rating of guesthouses.

❖ **The significance of rural tourism in the life of the Hungarian population**

Interviews with organizers of rural tourism reveal that after the change of the regime, when the Soviet (Ukrainian)-Hungarian international and local border traffic was opened in 1989, Hungarian tourists (relatives, friends, associations establishing connections, etc.) came, were heartily received, the 1990s brought a difficult economic situation and all these factors resulted in the emergence of rural tourism in the majority of settlements populated by the Hungarian minority. *In the beginning, the pedagogues, who had been living for months without salary, were those innovative people who saw an opportunity in this activity. Thus, rural tourism was established as a means of livelihood assistance/improving, income supplement, an activity encouraging the Hungarian population to stay; nowadays it is a kind of breakout point in people's lives taking into account the East-Ukrainian events.* It is best proved by the fact that compared to the beginning the number of families engaged in rural tourism – not only in Beregvidék but also in other territories with Hungarian population – has increased. In the course of our research, the population's opinion confirmed that the majority of settlements in Beregvidék are still in a difficult economic situation. People are dissatisfied with the local job opportunities (Figure 2), family members are often unemployed, they often commute to nearby towns, many of them look for subsistence opportunities in neighbouring countries. The majority of those engaged in rural tourism do it to get extra income to their full-time job.

Figure 2

Judgement on the job opportunities offered by the settlements on the basis of the population pattern (N=633)



Source: Author's edition

After the evolution of the well-organized system of rural tourism and in the process of over 20 year-long continuous functioning of special significance is the preservation of the Hungarian population's identity (via the strengthening of Hungarian-Hungarian relations, the establishment of partner schools, settlements and churches. Furthermore, due to the entertainment of arriving tourists, rural tourism contributed to the renewal of local folk music, folk dance and old crafts, to the revival of home-made goods, making handicraft presents, their sale, various, mainly gastronomical events, as well as festivals based on rural lifestyle.

The East-Ukrainian conflict led Transcarpathian people living in Beregvidék to a deadlock once again, thus exercising a negative influence on rural tourism as well. *The interviews with Transcarpathian Hungarian organizers of rural tourism reveal that due to the influence of hybrid war in Ukraine all the foreign (first of all Hungarian) reservations were cancelled in 2014 and the foreign tourists started returning to Transcarpathia in 2016. The national currency's large-scale inflation and lack of tourists meant a huge loss of income for families engaged in rural tourism. However, total bankruptcy could be relieved by the buoyancy of the domestic demand.*

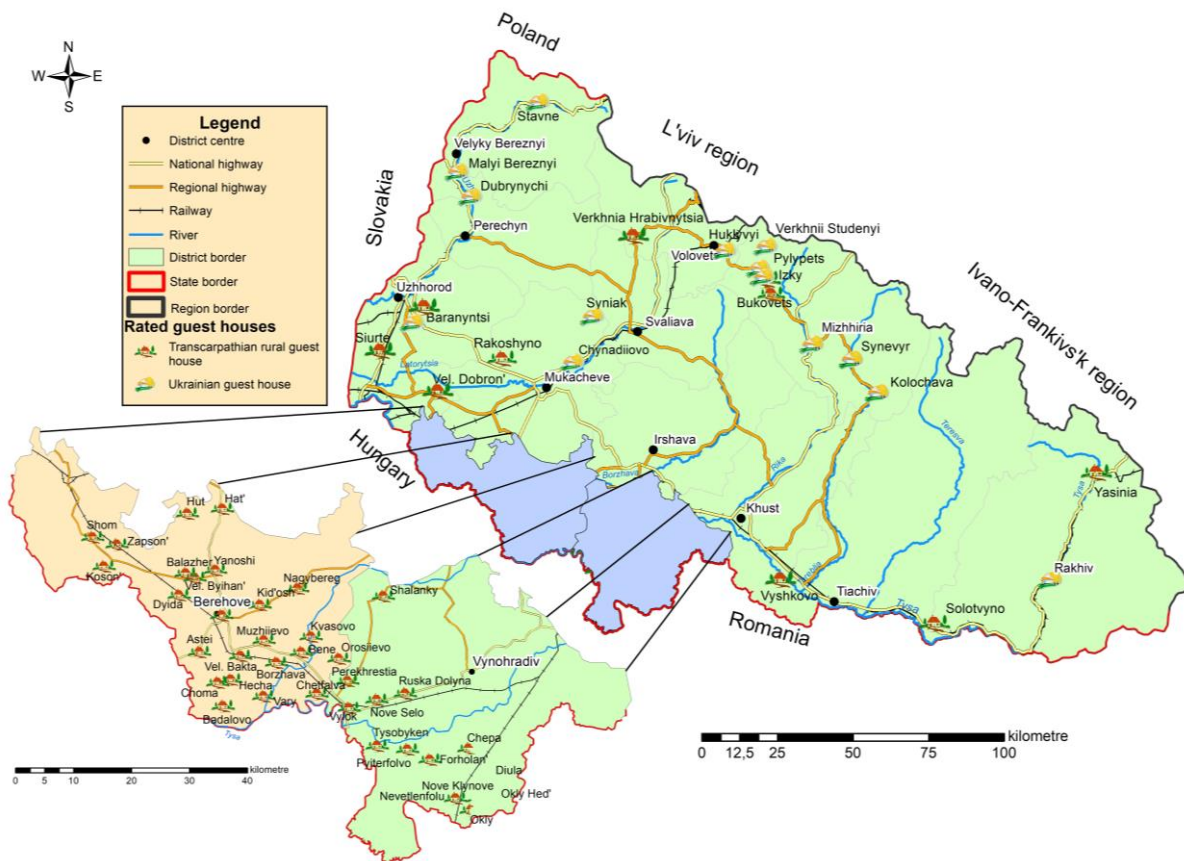
❖ **Rural tourism database**

In Berehove district, Beregvidék tourist area, where Transcarpathia's Hungarian community lives, takes place the most intensive rural tourist turnover: Until 2011 11 settlements were engaged in organized rural tourism (Bene, Dyida, Chetfalva, Kvasovo (Kovászó), Hecha, Koson', Velyka Bakta, Borzhava, Muzhiievo, Orosiievo, Vary), in 2013 they were followed by 3 more settlements (Zapson', Yanoshi (Makkosjánosi), Velyka Byihan'). On the basis of the regional distribution of guesthouses rated in 2018 by the Transcarpathian Hungarian Tourist Council, we can state that today ***over half of Berehove district settlements (23 settlements, Figure 3) are engaged in this activity, and 184 hosts already have a rated guesthouse. We estimate there are over 300 rural hosts in Beregvidék.***

We conducted our rural tourism-related research in 86% of settlements actively engaged in rural tourism by 2013; we had a total of 195 host and 633 population attitude surveys filled in. As a result of fragmentation of filling in time and ***compensating for lack of statistical data we managed to create a settlement-based host database that can be compared with itself*** (survey I: in 2009 and 2011 (N=89), survey II: in 2013 and 2018 N=106) ***and serve as a well-grounded starting point for future researches and as a sample applicable for other Transcarpathian tourist regions.***

Figure 3

The territorial distribution of rated rural guesthouses in Transcarpathia



Source: author's edition on the basis of <http://kmtt.info> and www.greentour.com.ua

❖ **Characteristic features of Beregvidék, peculiarities of its tourist attractions**

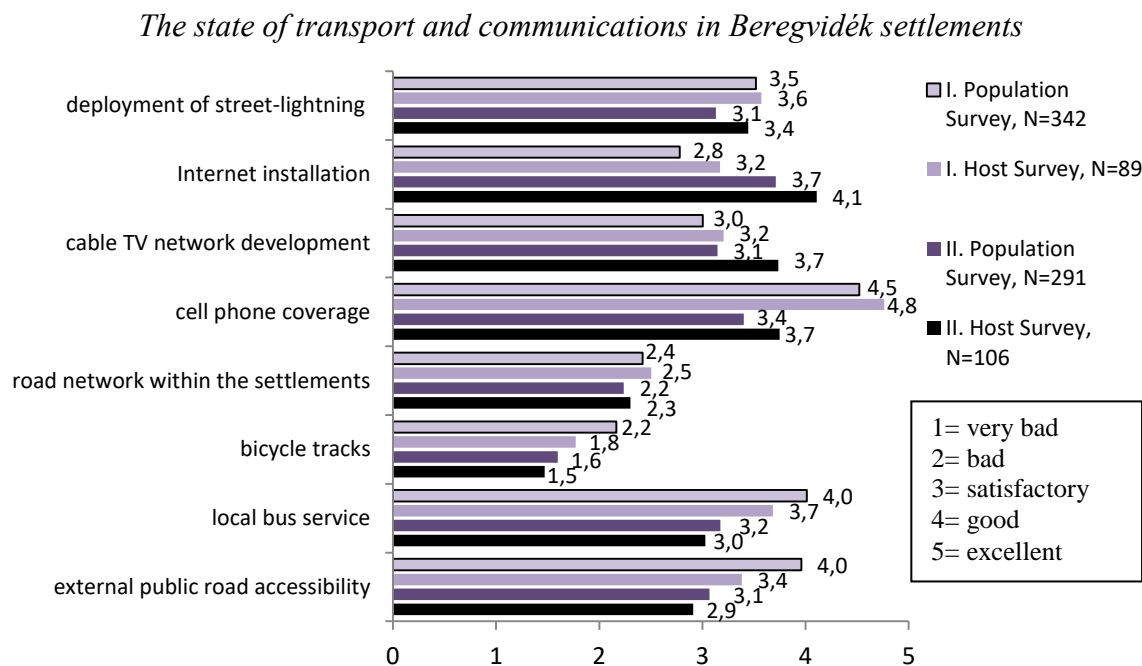
Our studies reveal that the number of real tourist attractions in Beregvidék and their catchment area is low, and the regional appearance shows a concentrated picture. Its central part is in Berehove, the district's administrative, intellectual and cultural centre that is surrounded with a less intensive peripheral area – the nearby settlements. Besides these, few or no attractions are observed.

Among the area's natural, cultural and special attractions cultural values stand out, namely the building complex in the historical centre of Berehove, the Reformed Church temple with a boarded ceiling in Chetfalva and the famous Bereg folkweave that has survived as folk art. Furthermore, in the sphere of natural values, an ever more emphasized and decisive role is played by balneological supply, as a result of increasing exploitation of thermal and medicinal waters – Berehove and Koson' are of key significance here. It is worthwhile to form the new image of Beregvidék around these values as far as they complement the area's wine and culinary ones, gastronomical and wine festivals, cultural programs, as well as the rising folk music and folk dance traditions.

From the points of view of the technological infrastructure of the area's tourism, i.e. transport, communications, facilities enhancing tourist activity, accommodation and tourism assets, our studies testify to lack of development that can cause a reduction in turnover in the long run. The number of accommodation and catering establishments is satisfactory, their quality, however, in some cases leaves much to be desired. The spread of brands guaranteeing high-quality service and tourist activities has not yet been achieved, yet rural tourism has developed. Due to lack of tourist infra- and suprastructure, their inadequacy we cannot yet

speak of product development. The biggest problem is the condition of bicycle and road network; even the local population is dissatisfied with it (Figure 4).

Figure 4



Source: Author's edition

❖ *Characteristic features of the population's attitude*

The hosts state that the attitude of residents of the settlements dealing with rural tourism towards tourists is very positive; the latter is characteristic of the whole population of multinational Transcarpathia. The majority of the asked Hungarian residents welcome tourists in their settlement, talk to them and help them if requested. Thus, we can clearly state that the settlements are suitable for the reception of tourists on the part of and from the point of view of the local population. The families engaged in rural tourism are genial, open, friendly and this is the reason they put their heart and soul to their work. The arriving tourists are also very satisfied with superior hospitality.

❖ *Principles of functioning and peculiarities of Transcarpathian rural tourism*

Rural tourism was formed depending on the region's natural conditions, national peculiarities and possibilities, therefore they are of different developmental and organizational levels and do not show a completely uniform image. Our observations, experiences and studies show that the present differences in Transcarpathian rural tourism can be classified according to the following points of view:

- 1 according to the location of the guesthouses in the area: in the lowland or highland,
- 2 the location of guesthouses proportionally to the settlements: scattered or grouped,
- 3 according to the organization level of rural tourism: spontaneously developing or controlled,
- 4 on the basis of the rural hosts' national peculiarities (folk culture, gastronomy, religion): Hungarian, Ukrainian or other nationality,
- 5 in accordance with the services offered by the hosts: accommodation only, board and lodging, or board, lodging and activities,
- 6 based on the clientele served: predominantly domestic or predominantly foreign,
- 7 taking into account the clientele's way of travelling: individual or group tourists,

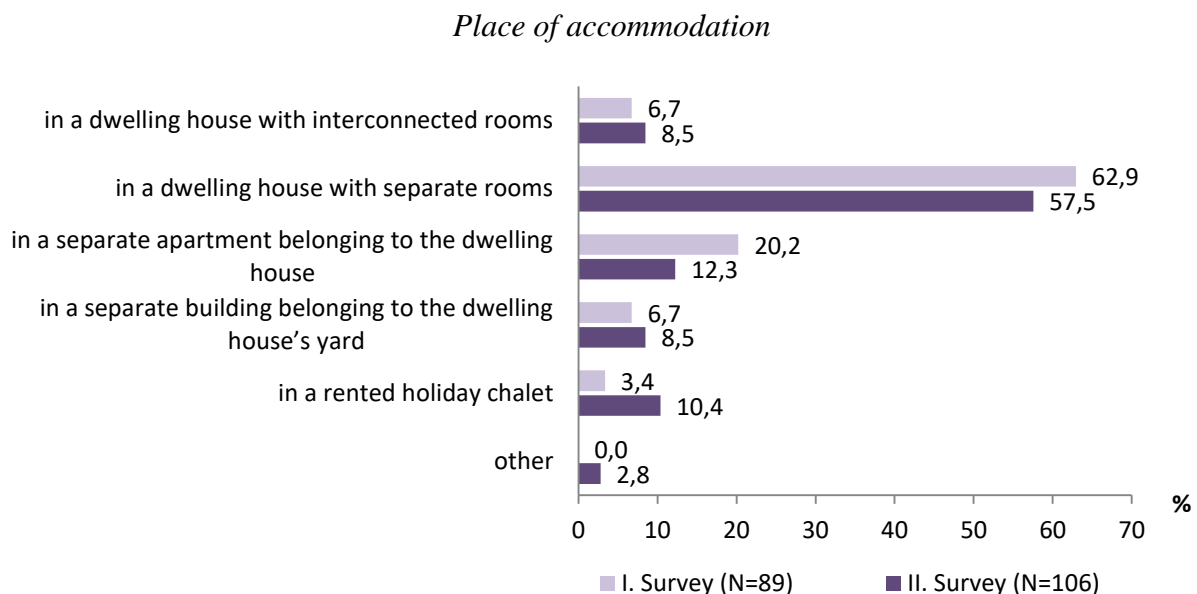
8 in compliance with the clientele's preference of spending free time: tourists taking tours/star tours or arriving with the aim of recreation /rest/cure.

Whether it is highland or plain, spontaneously developing or controlled rural tourism, none of them was created and is further developing strictly along the agricultural and agrarian lines. The people living in Beregvidék make use of the opportunities given to them and engage in agricultural activity, however, we ascertained that **rural tourism in Beregvidék is very loosely connected to agricultural activity as far as curtilage activities in the settlement are rarely available services.** The peculiar character of Transcarpathian rural tourism is that **almost all Hungarian settlements engaged in rural tourism have one (or more) tourism organizer who controls local hosts, performs organizational tasks of providing board for tourists arriving in groups by bus.**

❖ **Quantitative and qualitative changes, structural transformation of rural tourism in Beregvidék**

In Beregvidék rural tourism mostly uses cubiform houses built before 2000 and two-storey dwelling houses, least often farmhouses are used. In the majority of guesthouses, the host and his family live in the same house and receive guests in separate rooms (Figure 5). In survey I the hosts could hold a total of 473 people (+51 extra beds), while in survey II they could hold 765 people (+95 extra beds). During survey I, 5 tourists were accommodated in 3 rooms of a guesthouse, while in the course of survey II, there were 7 tourists in 3 rooms. In both cases guests were predominantly accommodated in a double room; sanitary facilities and amenities were shared with the host or were built separately for the guests; the kitchen was mostly shared with the host. These results cover both quantitative and qualitative changes.

Figure 5

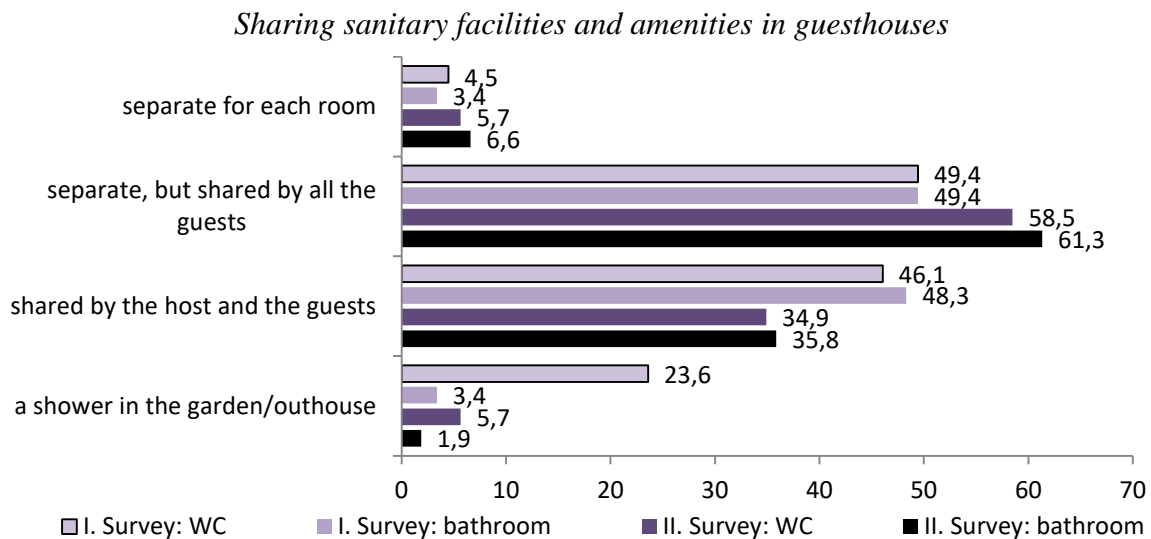


Source: Author's edition

In the about 10-year period under analysis, the comparison of two data series revealed that **in Beregvidék there began the division of the guests' and hosts' comfort zone. Survey II showed an increase in rented holiday chalets with bathrooms and washrooms shared by the guests or built separately for each guest room (Figure 6). This, in general, resulted in higher comfort and quality level of the guesthouses.** However, it cannot be ignored that the number of sanitary conveniences built for every room is still very low (below 10%). This explains the fact that the majority of guesthouses rated from 2018 were classified into 2 and 3

sunflower categories. Thus, tourist location is still characterized by the fact that it functions first of all as a private house, satisfying the demands of the family, and only secondly does it function as a guesthouse.

Figure 6



Source: Author's edition

Our results also show that *having no capital rural hosts can develop, improve the quality of their houses and services very slowly*. One-season turnover and the seasonal revenue obtained from it can also be an obstacle for the financing and realization of larger investments. However, it is very positive that rural hosts who have never been supported now can realize their ideas for development via tourist tenders of Egán Ede Economic Development Programme. One of the conditions of participation in the tender was the **rating of guesthouses which alone is a great step forward in quality assurance and the tourists' orientation**.

In the course of studying rural tourism in Beregvidék, we experienced a quantitative increase in the number of settlements, families and guesthouses engaged in rural tourism, as well as in bedspace. The interviews revealed that **compared to the beginning now the number of settlements and residents engaged in rural tourism has increased**. However, explosive growth was caused by increasing domestic demand which can be explained by the restoration of Beregvidék's thermal baths, their popularization in the country and it was further strengthened by the East-Ukrainian conflict. Increase in quantity during survey II resulted in the increase in the average number of bedspaces in guesthouses by two, while the average number of rooms did not change, but the rate of three- and four-bedspace rooms increased, while the number of single rooms on offer decreased. Our studies reveal that these changes are characteristic of the guesthouses in those settlements (Zapson', Velyka Byihan') that recently joined (in early 2010s) and accommodate mainly inland tourists. It is well-known that the majority of these hosts do not offer board for their guests, thus, there is no wonder that the majority of these guesthouses have kitchens for tourists.

The quantitative change led to the structural transformation of rural tourism. Side by side with well-organized rural hosts co-working in groups, there emerged spontaneous, individually functioning ones, whose activities, services and clientele vary compared to the former ones. It has been mentioned in the course of the study several times that there are considerable differences between the previously organized and functioning rural tourism receiving first of all Hungarian, and secondly domestic groups, and the spontaneously organized rural tourism. The latter form is probably closer to rural tourism in its classical

sense for the guests arrive individually or together with their families and stay in the settlement for a longer time compared to the previous case, however, they do not make use of the catering offered by the housewife for they are mainly attracted by the thermal waters. Within the framework of organized rural tourism, side by side with provision of accommodation much more significant is the role of board and organizing of activities, when the guests more frequently get in contact with the traditions introducing folk culture, folk music, folk dance, wine tasting, however, guests arrive in groups by bus and Transcarpathian natural and historical values are the major attraction.

❖ *Major characteristics of rural tourism demand*

It cannot be said that today's tourists choose rural tourism because there is not enough good quality commercial accommodation as it was in the 1990s and early 2000s. Therefore, we can state – and the studies conducted in Beregvidék prove it – that intelligentsia from Hungary and active senior age group choose the services of rural tourism due to reasonable prices, human relations, the need for linguistic identity, the desire to discover one's roots and low income. Furthermore, it is the favourite accommodation of inland tourists who like the countryside, come to cure themselves, want to take a holiday, have low income and are open for Hungarian culture.

All the hosts participating in the survey have foreign tourists, while about half of them (48.3%) have inland guests as well, while the second sample showed a higher rate of inland tourists (83.0%) and a lower rate of those who have foreign clientele as well (72.6%). The results show that *the composition of clientele changed*.

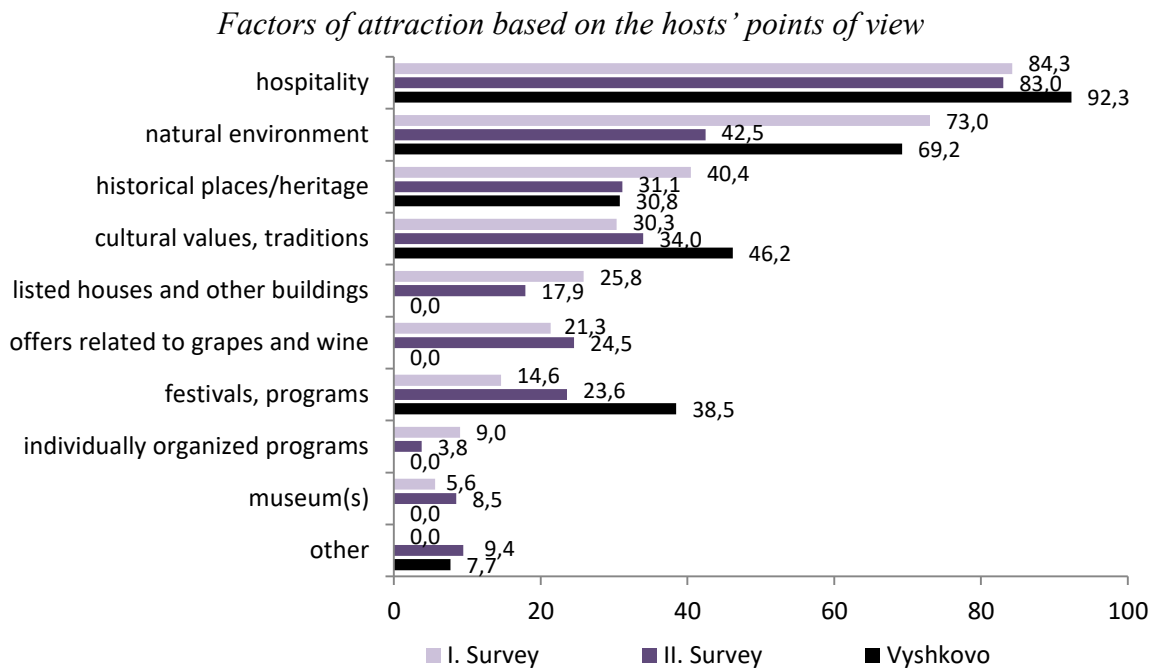
Both kinds of clientele arrive predominantly by bus, in groups to the majority of settlements engaged in rural tourism, however, in case of domestic tourism there are numerous guests who arrive individually to some settlements (Koson', Zapson', Velyka Byihan'). Guests predominantly arrive in Transcarpathia in summer months, however, there are changes here as well: hosts accommodating more inland tourists (survey II) claim they have a similar turnover in May (mainly due to Ukrainian May holidays, long weekends) as in July and August. Domestic tourists predominantly come from bigger Ukrainian cities (Kyiv (Kijev), L'viv (Lemberg), Odesa (Odessza), while foreign tourists arrive mainly from Hungary (survey I: 96,6%, survey II: 62,3% reference), while the rate of tourists from Romania, Slovakia, the USA and other countries is much lower.

❖ *Definition of rural tourism*

Our research of Transcarpathian rural tourism in Beregvidék testifies to the fact that *it is realized exclusively in rural environment, accommodation and catering are provided in a family environment (with local authentic food and beverages). It is a well-organized, income supplementing tourist activity. Foreign or inland tourists arrive in groups or individually to discover Transcarpathia's natural and man-made beauty. The core of attraction of Transcarpathian rural tourism can be defined as a rural person who is close to nature, as well as the traditional Transcarpathian hospitality (Figure 7).*

In contrast with Ukraine, rural tourism in various regions of European countries is much more developed, purposeful, has settled functioning, state support system in which rural tourism is in harmony with regional development. Therefore, Transcarpathian rural tourism cannot yet compete with European counties' level of rural tourism, however, we can borrow their good example. Moreover, we cannot exclude the opportunity of learning from them.

Figure 7



Forrás: Author's edition

However, we cannot state that compared to the European expectations and practice, the way rural tourism functions in some Transcarpathian territories is standing out or is inappropriate. Rather, it is specific, unique, formed under the influence of everyday routine and the areas' peculiar characteristic features. It also undergoes continuous modifications to satisfy the ever-changing needs. It might not bear all the typical features of rural tourism and cannot be called a complete tourist product, but Transcarpathian Hungarian rural hosts know their clientele, their demands and will do their best to leave their guests satisfied. Moreover, the host families can feel this activity's positive influence that improves the quality of life and preserves the community. We hope that in the future it will be possible to express the annual turnover of rural tourism statistically in numbers and this way rural tourism will be promoted in the hierarchy of Transcarpathian tourist products.

4. Suggestions for improvement of rural tourism in the Transcarpathian Beregvidék

For rural tourism to develop further in the future there are both numerous opportunities and many tasks to do for Beregvidék hosts that are closely related to the state, regional, micro-regional management and administration of justice.

Tasks to be completed:

- to determine the rural tourism's state, regional and micro-regional economic role;
- to pass the laws and provide the legal background for the functioning of rural tourism, to create the system of support at the national level;
- to liquidate the villages' excessive underdevelopment in infrastructure;
- to organize, maintain and make viable the relations between micro-regional and higher-level rural tourism participants;
- to create a fully operational marketing strategy that would help rural tourism actors get to the market more easily;
- to solve the settlements' sewage and waste treatment problems for the sake of environmental protection and sustainable development.

Strategic aims for development:

- to create a living country house system as a key to the opportunities of organized (receiving groups) rural tourism development;
- to render high-quality services, to increase the level of comfort in the rural guesthouses via the development of infrastructure and means;
- to specialize and expand the range of services that would encourage the hosts to introduce new services and would further increase and segment clientele. To expand the guesthouse's special offer according to the Hungarian pattern we suggest the following categories:
 - rural taste and/or craft gastronomical products (cheeses, jams, syrup) guesthouse
 - child-friendly guesthouse
 - craftsman- and/or tradition-keeping guesthouse
 - viticulturist's guesthouse
 - beekeeper's guesthouse
 - organic farmer's guesthouse
- a calm and quiet country life, the formation of appeal for making rural living space attractive, creation of elements of supply for tourism (thematic trips (e.g. Hungarian gastronomical trip, wine trip), nature trails, lookouts, game- and/or bird-watching locations, forest schools, riding-schools, bicycle trips);
- creating a closer relationship between rural tourism and other products (health tourism, wine tourism).

Currently highly potential is the tender supported by Hungary's Government, announced by Egán Ede Transcarpathian Economic Development Centre, aimed at supporting the development of rural tourism. It can help carry into effect part of the above-mentioned proposals.

After solving problems that are generally present in Ukraine and influence tourism, the leading branch of rural tourism can become an indicator of rural development in Transcarpathia. Therefore, in Transcarpathia as well hospitality has to be preserved and further steps have to be made for the future development, for the expansion and preservation

of clientele. As a result of countryside development, expansion of the range of services, rural tourism in its classical sense that is aimed at getting to know the area's "true" values, the attractive force of rural tourism would increase, the tourism product would become stronger and more competitive, would preserve the local Hungarian community and would guarantee its economic development.

5. Other directions of the research

The conducted research offers a deeper insight into Transcarpathian tourist goods, the functioning of rural tourism, in particular, focusing on the rural tourism of Berehove tourist area. Therefore, taking into account the great size of the territory there are still unanswered questions and aspects to study within this theme.

To continue the research it would be necessary, first of all, to actualize and refine the applied methods, namely the list of questions in the questionnaire, to expand them with other topics in compliance with the present situation. In the latter case, we mean the economic and profitability issue of rural tourism, as well as a detailed analysis of tourist turnover.

Territorial expansion of the research may include revealing the state of rural tourism, its capacity, peculiarities of functioning, as well as its importance in the life of the local population in Transcarpathia's other tourist areas or administrative units. The obtained results can help conduct a comparative analysis, to reveal the territorial peculiarities, differences and similarities of rural tourism by means of concrete data. Only after completing this research can we draw real conclusions on Transcarpathian rural tourism.

Territorially the research could cover all the Hungarian minority population in the Carpathian Basin and analyse whether rural tourism is such a breakout point elsewhere as well as it is in Transcarpathia. We have done the first steps by researching Upper Hungary and we believe it will be continued.

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