

### Sport tourism in Romania and the Romanian experience in organizing and hosting an international sport event: Case study; Bucharest International Marathon

Chivu, Cristina

Veröffentlichungsversion / Published Version

Zeitschriftenartikel / journal article

#### Empfohlene Zitierung / Suggested Citation:

Chivu, C. (2013). Sport tourism in Romania and the Romanian experience in organizing and hosting an international sport event: Case study; Bucharest International Marathon. *Cinq Continents*, 3(7), 88-113. <https://nbn-resolving.org/urn:nbn:de:0168-ssoar-359649>

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**SPORT TOURISM IN ROMANIA AND THE ROMANIAN  
EXPERIENCE IN ORGANIZING AND HOSTING AN  
INTERNATIONAL SPORT EVENT.  
CASE STUDY: BUCHAREST INTERNATIONAL  
MARATHON**

**Cristina CHIVU**

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Faculty of Geography  
University of Bucharest  
*chivucristina86@yahoo.com*

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**Cite this document:**

Chivu, C., 2013. Sport tourism in Romania and the Romanian experience in organizing and hosting an international sport event. Case study: Bucharest International Marathon. *Cinq Continents* 3 (7): 88-113 [Available online] URL : [http://www.cinqcontinents.uv.ro/3/3\\_7\\_Chivu.pdf](http://www.cinqcontinents.uv.ro/3/3_7_Chivu.pdf)

## **Sport tourism in Romania and the Romanian experience in organizing and hosting an international sport event. Case study: Bucharest International Marathon.**

**Cristina Chivu**

**Sport tourism in Romania and the Romanian experience in organizing and hosting an international sport event. Case study: Bucharest International Marathon.** Sport and tourism are worldwide considered to be the modern niches for economic development, but only high developed countries have realized that to maximize their economic impact, sport and tourism must be considered as a whole. The tourism in Romania is currently under continuous development, due to several investments in general and touristic infrastructure and also due to the strategies of capitalization and promotion of the Romanian tourist potential. Different sports are practiced in Romania from ancient times and the Romanian sport made the country known worldwide through its legendary sportsmen, but only recently sport became also an element of tourist attraction. The rebirth of physical culture and Romania's accession to European Union, offered to Romania the opportunity to exploit sport as a touristic product, generating tourist flows and tourist services consumption. Even if sport tourism is a new concept in Romania, in order to grow the economical impact of this new form of tourism, the development strategies are counting on the rehabilitation of general and specific (both touristic and sporting) infrastructure and on the exploiting of the most efficient form of sport tourism, the one related to organizing and hosting a sport event with international participation.

**Key words:** physical culture, sport tourism, active sport tourism, sport event, marathon.

**Turismul sportiv în România și experiența românească în organizarea și găzduirea unui eveniment sportiv internațional. Studiu de caz: Maratonul Internațional București.** Sportul și turismul sunt considerate la nivel mondial ca fiind nișe moderne de dezvoltare economică, însă numai statele dezvoltate au conștientizat faptul că, pentru maximizarea impactului lor economic, sportul și turismul trebuie considerate un întreg. În prezent, turismul din România se află în continuă dezvoltare, datorită unor serii de investiții în infrastructură generală și în cea turistică, dar și datorită unor strategii de valorificare și promovare a potențialului turistic românesc. Există diferite sporturi care se practică de mulți ani în România, iar sportivii români de legendă au făcut ca țara să fie recunoscută la nivel mondial, însă numai recent, sportul a devenit în România un element de atractivitate turistică. Renașterea conceptului de cultură fizică și aderarea României la Uniunea Europeană au oferit României contextul de a valorifica sportul ca produs turistic, generator de fluxuri turistice și consum turistic. Chiar dacă turismul sportiv este un concept nou în România, pentru a crește impactul său economic, strategiile de dezvoltare se sprijină pe reabilitarea infrastructurii generale și specifice (atât turistice, cât și sportive), dar și pe valorificarea celei mai eficiente forme a turismului sportiv, respectiv, organizarea și găzduirea unui eveniment sportiv cu participare internațională.

**Cuvinte cheie:** cultură fizică, turism sportiv, turism sportiv activ, eveniment sportiv, maraton.

## **1. INTRODUCTION**

The rebirth of the physical culture in the modern society shows a more increased interest for sport activities within a more numerous and varied segment of the population. From top performers to amateurs, the sport activities are assimilated as an engine of a healthy lifestyle, leisure mean but also as an economical product. Based on this trend, it is noted among the nations, the increased effort for promoting the sport as a mass educational factor as well as creating a law and institutional frame of its own.

Within this context, sport acquires social, cultural and economic features. Sport was associated with a series of concepts which only confirm its emergence in our daily life, in the economy, in identifying a nation.

The frame purpose of this study is to analyze the sport as an economical product, more precisely as a touristic product, generating touristic flows and touristic consumption. Based on defining the main concepts related to sport tourism and on reflecting the international context of sport tourism's evolution, the final objective of this paper is to create an overview of sport tourism in Romania.

The final purpose is to have an insight view on the sport tourism form that was proved to be the most efficient in generating touristic flows, active sport tourism, related to the sport events market. The case study on the evolution of Bucharest International Marathon, will provide an image of Romanian experience in organizing and hosting an international sport event.

## **2. METHODOLOGY**

In broad terms, this paperwork is an analyzing study. For drafting this study, the work has been divided in two parts, one theoretical and one practical. The first part is conceptual, here are defined the main operational concepts used forward in this study, also focusing on the personal interpretation of these concepts as on their evolution. In order to analyze the basic concepts, were chosen several definitions given by researchers from various fields, to get a more clear and objective final perspective of these concepts. In this stage also, there were pointed the main forms of sport tourism for a better visibility on the type of sport tourism detailed on the case study.

In the second part of this work follows an overview of sport tourism in Romania, with emphasis on the evolution and local conditions that have acted as restrictive or favorable elements. The case study reflects the way that Romania, and especially the capital of Bucharest, coped with organizing and hosting an international sport event. In preparing this case study, there were consulted specialized forums, articles about the event, the event's official website and the related press, feedback received from the participants (sportsmen, audience, partners and organizers, media), in order to have a complex image of the event. As an active participant to this event, two years in a row

(volunteer in organizing and amateur runner at the corporate Relay Race, in 2011 and 2012), I added to this study a personal note.

### 3. THE CONCEPTUAL FRAME

The *sport tourism* is a modern concept, and even a new form of tourism, whose development is close connected to the evolution of certain concepts like tourism and physical culture.

The concept of sport tourism developed simultaneously with the tourism concept itself, the travels based on the interest of a sport activity being lately incorporated as a motivation for practicing tourism. An equally economic and social approach of the touristic phenomenon is underlined in 1983 by the geographer Michaud, head of Superior Council of French Tourism, by listing the main reasons of touristic travels as following: "leisure, business, health, attending a professional, sport or religious convention"[1].

The sport tourism was included within the tourism definition before it was mentioned as a distinct form of tourism. In this respect, we have seen that in defining the touristic phenomenon, among others, one of the travel reasons was attending sport events. According to World Tourism Organization's specialists, sport tourism is not perceived as a different segment of the touristic offer, but it is enclosed in the category of touristic motivations as: „leisure time, relaxing, holiday"[2].

Being assimilated only recently as a distinct form of tourism, sport tourism is still a young concept, thus, when it comes to defining the term, there still are some question marks standing. There is no universally accepted definition of the sport tourism yet, but the concept has been analyzed by several specialists.

Sport tourism is defined as „a trip done in the free time in order to practice a sport activity, or as a spectator at different sport events on a determined period (less than a year) outside the residential space"[2]. This is a clean, mathematical definition of the sport tourism concept, most probably starting from the definition of tourism itself.

Another definition is more focused on the particular features concerned by this new tourist branch: "sport tourism represents all forms of active and passive involvement in sporting activity, participated in casually or in an organized way for non-commercial or business/commercial reasons that necessitate travel away from home and work locality" ([3]: 63).

A more practical definition of sport tourism is: "sport tourism is a combination of sport activities and travel; from a sport marketing and sport management perspective, it consists of two broad categories of products: sport participation travel (travel for the purpose of participating in a sport, recreation, leisure or fitness activity); and sport

spectatorial travel (travel for the purpose of spectating sport, recreation, leisure or fitness activities or events)" ([4]: 31).

Sport tourism is a niche market which can be broadly described as a tourism activity generated by participation in sporting activity. That activity can be a sporting event or competition, a tour of a sporting facility or a training camp. Participation might involve being a competitor/participant, official, or spectator.

Sport tourism presents itself under three forms, generating varied types of tourists: „leisure sport tourism” or „active sport tourism” referring to people who travel to take part in a sport activity/event, “sport tourism” which refers to people who travel to watch a sporting event and „nostalgia sport tourism” which includes visits to sport museums or stadiums [2].

Another classification divides the sport tourism in two big categories, the ranking criteria used being the number of persons attending the sporting activity. Here are distinguished two big categories: hard sport tourism and soft sport tourism [5]. For the hard sport tourism category is identified another concept given by J. Horne and W. Manzenreiter, “sport mega events” [6]– for world class sporting events, such as Olympic Games or FIFA World Cup. Soft Sport Tourism (such as hiking, skiing and canoeing) are mainly non-competitive sporting activities, implying leisure, interest for physical exercises or for certain sports.

Although sport activities can be as old as other types of activities which could have been motivations in practicing tourism, the detachment of sport tourism as an individual form of tourism manifestation occurred latter, as a result of the physical culture rebirth. The interest for sport activities dates back from ancient times, like the first manifestations of the tourism in general. If we are thinking of first Olympic Games, in 776 B.C., we can identify the first manifestations of sport tourism, that is, the travel not only of the spectators but also of the athletes from their residing places toward the event place [7].

Tourism appears as a way of diversifying the economic structure, by creating some activities or own branches, or by the development to new dimensions of branches already exists [1]. Therefore, the evolution of tourism as an economic branch would not have had an impact over the sport tourism, if it would not have been for a series of other relevant statements in sport tourism development in particular. And we are referring here to the society’s continuous interest for individual or organized physical exercise (sports) and to the peak of manifesting the common interest for the activity of sport, which is the *rebirth of the physical culture*. For example, the relaunch of Olympic Games in the 19th century represented the effort’s materialization of outstanding personalities of the European culture and represented the rebirth of the physical exercises culture as a modern concept.

By *physical culture* we understand “the result of awareness that physical exercise represents the basis of the human civilization” ([7]: 37).

The popularity of this concept and its emergence in modern society inevitably led to practicing different sports by an increased number of persons and recorded as a consequence, also the increase of the ones passionate by sport activities, either as amateur participants or spectators. Various sport events, on a small or larger scale, according to their importance, can gather or monopolize the entire attention or activity of a city (Bucharest International Marathon), of a country (Romanian Football Cup), continent (UEFA Champions League), or even the entire world (Olympic Games), with direct implications in the touristic activity by the direct consumption of touristic services and products or who are related to leisure tourism.

The synesthesia between tourism and sport comes from the fact that practicing a sport implies also the involvement of leisure, the main reason of practicing tourism in general.

According to many specialists, the sport product is positioned as a basic alternative of the entertainment. Sport activities have a pure recreational role and they are meant to contribute to an increase of good humour amongst the practitioners (tourists). It is known that attracting tourists in recreational sport activities is based on a strong recreation motivation. The activities practiced are a way of combating stress and thereby they have positive effects upon health and physical condition [1]. “Sport is an activity of entertainment” [8] is maybe one of the most concise and comprehensive definition of sport. We can say therefore that sport itself may be a touristic activity.

#### **4. AN OVERVIEW OF SPORT TOURISM IN ROMANIA**

In Romania there were discovered archaeological fonts which tie up the practicing since oldest times of some forms of physical exercise culture, among them horse riding competitions, darts, hunting, individual battles and group sporting games. Once with the development of school institutions, the physical exercise culture was introduced in schools. The names of Doctor Carol Davilla and Professor Gheorghe Moceanu are connected with the efforts to promote physical exercise education as a mandatory discipline, at the end of 19<sup>th</sup> century [7].

First references attesting the practicing of sporting tourism date from 1578, when was published in Krakow, the work of Alexander Guagnini, “Sarmatiae Europaeae description” (Sarmatic European Chronicles), a short biography of the countries in Southern East Europe. He mentions in his work about sport practicing in the Wooded Carpathians. An important moment in the history of sport tourism (mostly leisure sport tourism) was the establishment of the Romanian royal family’s summer residence in Sinaia and the beginning of building the Peles Castle in 1875 [9]. The influence of the



royal family and also the natural touristic potential, made Sinaia monopolize at that time the touristic incoming of the Prahova Valley area, which determined the diversification of the touristic offer and the development of new touristic poles in the vicinity of Sinaia town, in order to unblock the touristic traffic here, so that Prahova Valley becomes a true touristic axis, monopolizing today the incoming flow of tourists from the capital of Bucharest and surrounding towns.

Most of the mountains in Romania are fitted with facilities for practicing the winter sport, hiking and even extreme sports. The touristic infrastructure serving the sport tourism in mountain resorts does not reach modern standards as in the West-European countries. We mention here the qualitative and quantity representation as well. In terms of facilities, Romania is behind not only the West-European nations, but also toward the neighboring, Bulgaria and Hungary, that with the help of foreign investments made a big step ahead in improving the quality and representation of touristic facilities and also of the infrastructure in general. This is the reason why Romania does not represent an attraction for foreign tourists practicing winter sports, their number being very small in the mountain resorts.

Making a step back in time, we can say the inception of extreme sports worldwide around 1980, and their spreading in Romania after 1990, represented another important moment in the history of sport tourism in Romania [9]. Bungee jumping, paraglide, parachuting, tiroliana, zorbing, body flying, aerotrim are just a few examples of the extreme sport practiced today in Romania. By far the most well-known is bungee jumping, which in Romania is represented by two platforms: Vidraru dam of 166 meters and Râșnoavei Gorge of 137 meters.

Regarding the most important component of the sport tourism, the one represented by the sporting events, it is noted that Romania is not a major destination for big sporting events, the so called sport mega events.

The most sold sport in Romania is football, which often fills the stadiums, but until recently Romania did not have a stadium able to meet the international standards. Only in September 2011, Romania made a step forward in order to align with international standards, and opened the National Arena Stadium in Bucharest, the biggest in the country. The stadium extends on a surface of 108.000 m<sup>2</sup>, it is six floors high and it has a capacity of 55.000 spectators. Another step in the history of Romanian sport and tourism was certainly the challenging of hosting and organizing in May 2012, the European League UEFA football final, hosted by the National Arena in Bucharest [10]. One problem raised in this case was the violence that accompanied so far the image of Romanian football, in the country as also in international matches with participation of Romanian fans. The violence in sport is a feature of modern sport and its increase is intensely debated today and it derives from its competitive feature [11].



Romania does not have yet a material facility specific for big international events, and this issue represents a challenge even for the capital of Bucharest, because hosting such an event is not only about organizing the event itself. If we are thinking to a touristic flow of thousands of tourists, the accommodation options and the transportation system in Bucharest are a constant challenge (for example, Bucharest has only one international airport). The alternative possibilities for leisure are not sufficient. Until recently (July 2011), Bucharest was not in possession of touristic buses for city tour. Only five years ago Bucharest enrolled in the list of European capitals that organize an international marathon (Bucharest International Marathon), being until 2008 the only capital in the European Union not having its international marathon.

A number of such events (marathons and half-marathons, cross and street races) are organized annually in many other cities in the country: Tuşnad, Cluj, Arad, Făgăraş, Braşov, Timişoara etc., some of them are international (Cluj International Marathon, from 2010) but in reality, the international participation is poor and the impact of the event is local. There are also theme competitions, often associated to a humanitarian cause or for supporting some social, ecologic, cultural ideas: The Wood Cross, The Unification Cross, The Marathon of Reunification of Romanian Nation, etc. A newer trend in Romania, enjoying an increased popularity is represented by mountain marathons and half-marathons (Piatra Craiului, Muntele Mare, Cernei, Bucegi Mountains), mountain ultra-marathons (7500 Marathon - Bucegi Mountains), trail running races (Azuga, Moieciu, Ciucaş Mountains).

A real opportunity to make known the name of Romania in the international sport industry was the year of 2012, when among the 6 European sport cities, Iaşi city was also present. "The Municipality of Iaşi was chosen as a European sport city in 2012. Iaşi was chosen to receive this symbol along with the cities of Florence, Pescara and Viterbo from Italy, Preston from UK and Charleroi from Belgium. According to selection criteria, the European sport capital must be a city with a population of over 500.000 inhabitants. Iaşi is the only city in Romania which applied for this competition"[12].

The top sports were always well represented by Romanians sportsmen even outside the country (from Iosif Barbu, the first Romanian Olympic champion, to the international legends like Nadia Comaneci, Gheorghe Hagi, Ilie Năstase). The only Romanian sport museum able to support nostalgic sport tourism is the Argeş Sport Museum, opened in September 2008. It presents a permanent exhibition dedicated to famous athletes in Argeş department. Since 2011 works are underway to a museum of Romanian sport in Bucharest, at the Olympic House, but because of the lack of funding, the finalization is not complete and most of the exhibits are stored in repository.

The rebirth of the physical culture is a current trend in Romania and mostly promoted and represented in the capital of Bucharest and in the big cities. As a proof of

the Romanians increased interest for sporting activities, one noted an increment of amateur athletes, of those passionate of certain sports and those practicing a sport to be in a good physical condition. Based on these trends, the Marathon magazine made in 2010 a study regarding the practicing of recreate sports among young people in Romania. The research was made based on application of two interview grids regarding spare time and practicing recreation sports.

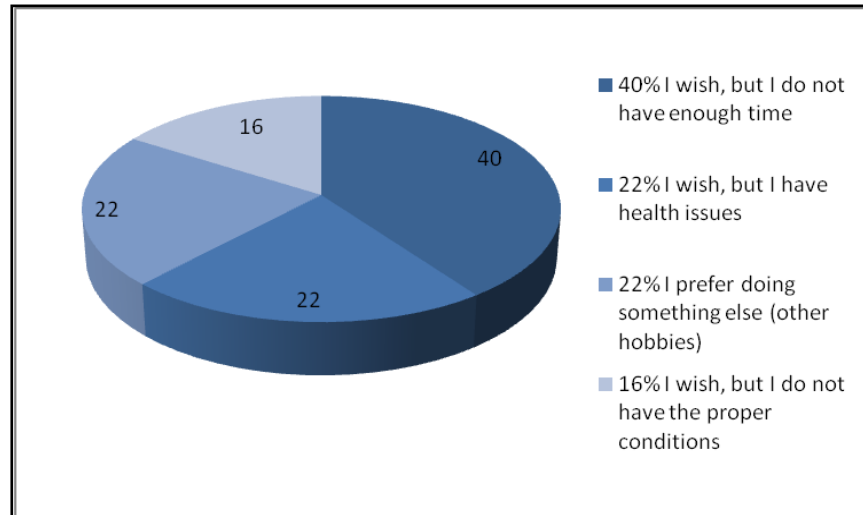


Figure 1. The reasons for avoiding practicing a recreational sport in the spare time (Romania, 2010)

Source: Păunescu M., Gherghel C., Pascal A., Păunescu C., 2010 [13]

The sample analyzed was on 730 adult persons, professionally active, aged between 22-32 years old and 33-43 years old. The result of the study (Figure 1) showed that 75% of the responders are practicing a recreate sport. From the 25% who don't practice any sport, 78% claim they are willing to practice one, but they have health problems, don't have proper facilities to practice a sport or don't have enough time. It was also noted that a significant percentage of 80% of responders are systematically practicing a recreational sport (more than twice a week – 55%, or more than twice a month – 25%), and 20% of them are practicing seasonal sports, during holidays and vacations [13].

Although the results of the study are positive or at least optimistic, in Romania, as in other European countries, the recommendations of World Health Organization are not followed. According to the program “The global strategy regarding nutrition, physical activity and health”, every person must perform a sport for at least 30 minutes every day, as a countermeasure to the sedentary life, obesity prevention and maintaining a good health.

Another relevant result for this study is the summary of the most practiced recreational sports (Figure 2). Football and different ball games are preferred by most of

the ones interviewed (45%) and only 5% from them are practicing athletics in their spare time [13].

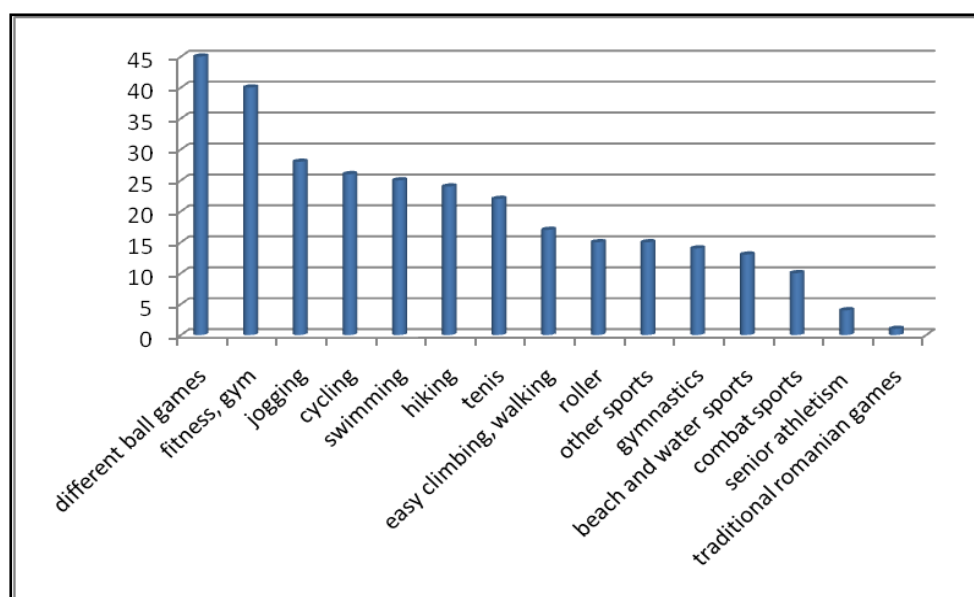


Figure 2. The most preferred forms of recreational sports (Romania, 2010)  
Source: Păunescu M., Gherghel C., Pascal A., Păunescu C., 2010 [13]

Practicing a specific sport is also a preview of the general interest that someone might have for that sport (a person passionate by football, for example, will rather play football in the spare time and will watch a football match instead of being spectator to a marathon). This is the reason why the football events are highly mediated and the street races have such a small impact on the masses.

Based on this scenario, is not hard to understand why the first edition of the international marathon of Bucharest has been organized hardly five years ago and in the meantime, the stadiums are overcrowded during a football match. Almost 30% of the respondents are jogging in their spare time and this represents the category of potential participants to an athletic street race, such as marathon, half-marathon or relay race, because all these kind of competitions addresses to both professional sportsmen and amateurs. This is one of the reasons why this kind of sport events is getting more and more numerous in Romania.

## 5. THE ROMANIAN EXPERIENCE IN ORGANIZING AND HOSTING AN INTERNATIONAL SPORT EVENT. CASE STUDY: BUCHAREST INTERNATIONAL MARATHON

Bucharest International Marathon is the biggest street international sport event hosted by the Romanian capital. The competition is internationally homologated,

officially included on the list of street world marathons and affiliated to International Association of Street Marathons.

**The international context.** As a member state of the Council of Europe, the sport industry from Romania is subscribed to European Sport Charta (1992), added with the Sport Ethic Code. In conformity with the Charta, sport must be accessible to everyone, healthy and securely, with loyalty, tolerance and satisfaction, with respect against the environment [14].

Romania’s accession to the European Union in 2007 raised a series of challenges regarding alignment of Romania to the standards of other member states of the union. At that moment, Bucharest was the only capital in Europe Union not having its own official international marathon. As a consequence, a year after the accession, in October 2008, it was launched the first edition of Bucharest International Marathon, the biggest sport event of street races in Romania. Being homologated as a member of International Association of Street Marathons since the first edition represents a proof of meeting the required international standards.

An analysis of the database provided by the Association of Road and Races Statisticians [15] shows the place occupied by Romania at global, European and Eastern European level, concerning the number of homologated street races, annually organized, with international participation.

No.	Country	Races (no.)
1.	U.S.A.	881
2.	Germany	408
3.	Denmark	371
4.	Korea	224
5.	Great Britain	192
6.	Poland	128
7.	Finland	126
8.	Canada	84
9.	France	82
10.	Russia	79
	<i>ROMANIA</i>	<i>2</i>

Table 1. Top ten countries in the world with the most numerous street races (2012)

No.	Country	Races (no.)
1.	Germany	408
2.	Denmark	371
3.	Great Britain	192
4.	Poland	128
5.	Finland	126
6.	France	82
7.	Russia	79
8.	Italy	76
9.	Netherlands	67
10.	Spain	60
	<i>ROMANIA</i>	<i>2</i>

Table 2. Top ten countries in Europe with the most numerous street races (2012)

Data source: Association of Road and Races Statisticians, 2013 [15]

It is important to mention that by street races, we are referring here to marathons (42 km), half-marathons (21 km), relay races (10, 5 km – 4 people team to gather the 42 km afferent to the full marathon) and any competitive cross street race, all gathered into one cross event (2-3 days) and that may also include other competitive races (children, wheel-chair races). To be noted also that only homologated street races have been taken into consideration here, so only the ones that have received international accreditation. Currently (2013), Romania is hosting two annual homologated street competitions, with international participation: the Bucharest International Marathon (from 2008) and Cluj International Marathon (from 2010).

The world's leader of this category are the United States of America, with 881 races organized in 2012 (Table 1), followed by Germany (which is also the European leader) with 408 competitions (Table 2). Therefore, at both global and European level, Romania is among the last positions, with only two international street races.

An analysis of Europe's situation (Table 3) shows that Northern Europe leads with 778 annual competitions, followed by Western Europe with 619, Eastern Europe with 327 and finally, Southern Europe with only 163 street races. Thus, the European average is around 38 annual competitions, but it is different from one region to another, as follows: 78 in Northern Europe, 69 in Western Europe, 22 in Eastern Europe and 10 in Southern Europe.

Noteworthy is the fact that these regional annual averages do not grow with the number of countries corresponding to each region. Although Northern and Western Europe have the highest averages, they also have the lowest number of afferent countries (10 and 9 countries), while the Eastern and Southern Europe, with much lower averages, and have also a bigger number of countries (16 and 15 countries). Therefore, the averages of the annual street races are not directly proportional to the number of countries included in each region. Once removed the criterion of the number of countries included in each region, we can conclude that street races are more numerous in Northern and Western Europe because of the general development and social mindset.

Regarding Table 3, is important to mention the fact that Eastern Europe region includes also the countries in Eurasia and Transcontinental Europe (such as Georgia, Russia, Turkey) and that there were not included in this table also the ten countries that do not have any homologated international street race (Monaco, San Marino, Moldova Republic, Albania, Andorra, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Vatican, Azerbaijan, Armenia, Kazakhstan). To be noted also that for Denmark have been included also the street races organized in Greenland.

Northern Europe		Southern Europe		Eastern Europe		Western Europe	
Country	Races (no.)	Country	Races (no.)	Country	Races (no.)	Country	Races (no.)
Denmark	371	Italy	76	Poland	128	Germany	408
Great Britain	192	Spain	60	Russia	79	France	83
Finland	126	Croatia	6	Slovakia	57	Netherlands	67
Norway	43	Greece	5	Czech Republic	26	Switzerland	25
Sweden	32	Serbia	4	Hungary	15	Belgium	18
Ireland	5	Slovenia	4	Ukraine	8	Austria	17
Estonia	4	Cyprus	3	Belarus	6	Liechtenstein	1
Latvia	2	Portugal	2	Bulgaria	3	Luxembourg	1
Lithuania	2	Macedonia	1	Romania	2		
Iceland	1	Malta	1	Turkey	2		
		Montenegro	1	Georgia	1		
<b>Total</b>	<b>778</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>163</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>327</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>619</b>

Table 3. The number of homologated street races in Europe countries, split by regions (2012)  
 Author, data source: Association of Road and Races Statisticians, 2013 [15]

Table 3 offers an image of Romania’s position in the European context. As we go up to the north, the number of homologated international street races is increasing; the same trend is visible from east to west. There are also exceptions, such as the Russian Federation, given its extension and favorable historical and economical context. Since international sport events are associated with an increased interest for physical culture, for sporting activities but also with a high level of economical development, is quite easy to localize the reasons why some south-eastern European countries are not representative when it comes to organize and host an international marathon: the infrastructure required, the high organizational costs and certainly the demand for such an event. So, even with a proper infrastructural basis, with the required financial support, if there is no demand from the people, if the society does not show an interest for sporting activities, if the rebirth of physical culture is not active enough, there are no sustainable reasons to generate such an event.

South-Eastern Europe countries are still witnessing the remains of the post-communist period, the effects of recent geopolitical conflicts and all these factors are reflected in a transitional economy, low level of economical and social development, political instability, social disorder, lack of interest for cultural meanings, the society being rather monopolized by primal social and human needs, such as peace, safety, financial resources. So this is also Romania’s frame context, where the most part of the society is not showing yet an increased interest for physical culture, sporting activities - as both healthy and leisure activities - since the Romanian society did not achieved yet a good, decent standard of life, as in most of the Northern and Western European

countries. But, as a personal note, I would add that, if we could judge by the increasing number of people jogging, riding bikes or climbing mountains, Romania is starting to make its firsts promising steps in embracing the physical culture. And this trend is what made possible the spread of street races in Romania, among other sports, and the efforts to launch Romanian sport events, such as Bucharest Marathon, with international participation.

**Partners.** The institutional partners of the sporting event represent those intermediaries in charge with the event's accreditation according to pre-established norms, with organizing and unfolding the event in a standardized and ethic normative frame [5]. These organizers can be regulatory and sanction authorities, imposing rules and regulations, determining the time and place of the event and ensure that necessary conditions are met so athletes can compete. The partners of Bucharest International Marathon, by categories', are:

- The official organizer: Bucharest Running Club association;
- National official partners: The Ministry of Youth and Sport, The Romanian Olympic and Sport Committee, Bucharest City Hall, The Lake Administration, Smart Athletic and Ro Club Marathon;
- International official partners: International Association of Marathon and Road Races and International Athletic Federation;
- Institutional partners: the referees and coaches from Romania Athletics Federation, Romanian Gendarmerie and Community Police for security and public order, Streets Administration and police forces from the Road Brigade, Education Directorate who managed the event on behalf of the City Hall.

Among the official partners of Bucharest International Marathon, every year there are also some non-governmental associations that, based on the work of around 200 volunteers, are involved in the event's organization. According to the conference press that ended the 2012 Bucharest International Marathon edition, the number of volunteers willing to get involved in organizing the event, raised significantly, so that the last edition of the marathon gathered more than 300 volunteers.

The Bucharest International Marathon is promoted and supported also by the media partners: in total 17 partners, from which 3 TV channels, 2 radio stations, 7 magazines and 6 websites [16].

**Sponsors.** The sponsors represent an important category of intermediaries in sport, but they are also sport consumers. The sponsoring companies provide the sport events with products or money in exchange with their association to the sport event, to create a positive image among audience. The event is a show of talented athletes and large audience attracts sponsors who pay for the event and ensure the access to the



audience. In addition, the sponsor is promoting the event to the audience, who is helping the event to achieve its goal or to attract the spectators [5].

The sponsor represents an important intermediary and a link between the event and final consumer, the public, so is mandatory for the organizers to ensure a proper connectivity between these three elements [8].

The sport events are mainly or exclusively financed by private funds that come from sponsors or donations, without involving public money or local budget. This is why sponsors are vital in organizing such an event and more than that, the power of sponsors and their number have become an indicator of the event's magnitude. Often, the event carries the name of the main sponsor and this is also the case of Bucharest International Marathon.

The number of sponsors that joined the organizing of Bucharest International Marathon, raised with every edition, reaching in 2011 a number of 19 sponsors: one main sponsor gave the event its name, a technical sponsor that provided the t-shirts for all athletes, the sponsor of the popular race, a hotel who accommodated the officials and the closing event of the marathon, a private network of hospitals, a series of other sponsors from various fields, such as: food, supplements for athletes, food shops, personal hygiene products, a network of shops, a network of fitness halls.

**Personalities.** Most of the sport events are associated with the image of a prominent personality from the sport industry. It is a strategy of unwritten accreditation of the event in the audience's eyes, but also a strategy to attract spectators worshipping that personality. At Bucharest International Marathon, the 2011 edition, the special guest of the event was Gabriela Szabo, nominated in 1999 as the best world and European athlete. She was the one that started the Children Race. Such personalities can also be among the athletes; at 2011 edition, among those who participated to the race, one can note also the sport manager of Steaua Bucharest, Narcis Răducanu and the best Romanian tennis player, Victor Hănescu, but also personalities from public life.

**Structure.** The structure of the event is an indicator of its complexity and magnitude. The marathon race is often accompanied by press conferences, publicity campaigns, parties organized by the official partners and sponsors, additional races with a humanitarian purpose, the official closing and winners' awarding.

The official opening of Bucharest International Marathon 2011 edition, was in May [16], 6 months prior the event, also the moment when the official promoting campaign of the marathon started. The three press conferences are the evidence of successive promotion of the event. The theme races (such as the Forest Race) were organized for fund raising purpose, for the humanitarian organizations, partners of the event. The additional trials to the main marathon race - relay race (or Corporate race), the popular race, the race in wheel chairs, for disabled persons (Photo 1), the children's

race (Photo 2) - show the complexity of the event and especially the respect for a basic principle of the European Sport Charta; according to this principle, sport must be accessible for each person, in loyalty, tolerance and satisfaction.



Photo 1. The wheelchair race at Bucharest International Marathon (2012)



Photo 2. The children's race at Bucharest International Marathon (2012)

Source: Hospice, Casa Speranței, 2012 [17]

Another principle of the Charta is pointed out at Bucharest International Marathon, by the organizing of the Forest Race: sport must be carried out with respect to environment, and by this race, Bucharest International Marathon is sending a green message and makes this a cause supported by the event. Moreover, another message sent is the empathy for the sick persons, and the evidence of it is the race "You run for them!" a raising fund race for the only palliative hospital in Romania (headquarter in Brașov), The Hospice Clinic.

The diversity of competition races addressed to various competitors, from children to adults, from professionals to amateurs, from physically fitted persons to disabled persons regardless of nationality, indicates following an ethical principle, the equal opportunities, being in the same time a message against discrimination of any kind.

Expo-Marathon, event's official exhibition was open for three days and covered the theme tents for: registration at the event, the stands of media partners for promoting and broadcasting or of the institutional partners and organizers in order to inform, the stands of sponsors with products and souvenirs.

**Promotion.** The promotion campaigns of Bucharest International Marathon were made through various communication and distribution channels, starting with several months ahead the event. Among the promoting campaigns mentioned below, during the 2011 edition, it can be noted that the event was intensely promoted on both national and international level.

International promoting actions: the 2011 April – September edition of the magazine “Distance Running” was dedicated to the Bucharest International Marathon 2011 edition; flyers distribution at Limassol Marathon, Virgin London Marathon.

National promoting actions: outdoor promotion through videos displayed on street screens, in the day of the marathon – street banners, start and finish gates; radio promotion: 30 seconds advertisements, two weeks before the marathon; television: appearance on national television – news, 30 seconds advertisements; written press: 1/1 model on page, continuous ads from May to October in 12 magazines; public relations: meetings with the journalists and press conferences; promoting materials: leaflets, t-shirts, banners, brochures, posters, flags, human size mascots for the marathon day; direct marketing: exhibition with sale on marathon day, lottery and personalized contests hosted by organizers.

Among all advertising media, the television is considered the intermediary with the strongest impact in promoting the sport events. Television companies control 70% of the prime time advertisement sale market. As the price of advertising time increases continuously, this thing makes all buying costs of advertisement rights to be covered and allows the television networks to be paid [5].

Bucharest International Marathon was not transmitted live on television, the only ads were during the sporting news where the sport event was shortly presented. This is because Bucharest International Marathon is not yet an event of major interest for Romanian masses, as it would be for example a football game. This happens basically due to the next two reasons: athleticism or street races do not represent yet in Romania a sport of high interest among the masses and Bucharest International Marathon is still a “young” event; it will certainly be more notorious after a few more editions.

**Participants.** The analysis of participants to a sport event offers a series of features to the event, as follows. The number of participants to a sport event is reflecting the size of the event and the diversity of participants is reflecting the complexity of the event. In addition, the number of foreign participants reflects the level of the event’s internationalization. A high number of foreign participants will automatically attract the consumption of touristic services specific to classic tourism (transportation, accommodation, food and even leisure). Thus we can identify the value of the event as a touristic product.

By participants at Bucharest International Marathon we will consider the athletes (professionals and amateurs, children and adults, veterans and disabled persons) as well as the audience: in 2008 – 3500 participants from 5 countries, in 2009 – 4000 participants from 20 countries, in 2010 – 5000 participants from 45 countries, in 2011 – 6000 participants from 51 countries, no data available for the 2012 edition [16].

It is important that, year by year, it has been recorded an increased number of participants (Figure 3), which means that the event is well promoted and begins to be known on a national and international level, if we take into consideration the number of countries participant to the event (Figure 4). The 2011 edition was attended by athletes from 51 countries, from three continents (Europe, Africa and America), including U.K., Italy, Ethiopia, Kenya, U.S.A., Japan, Mexico, Russia, Bahrain, Canada.

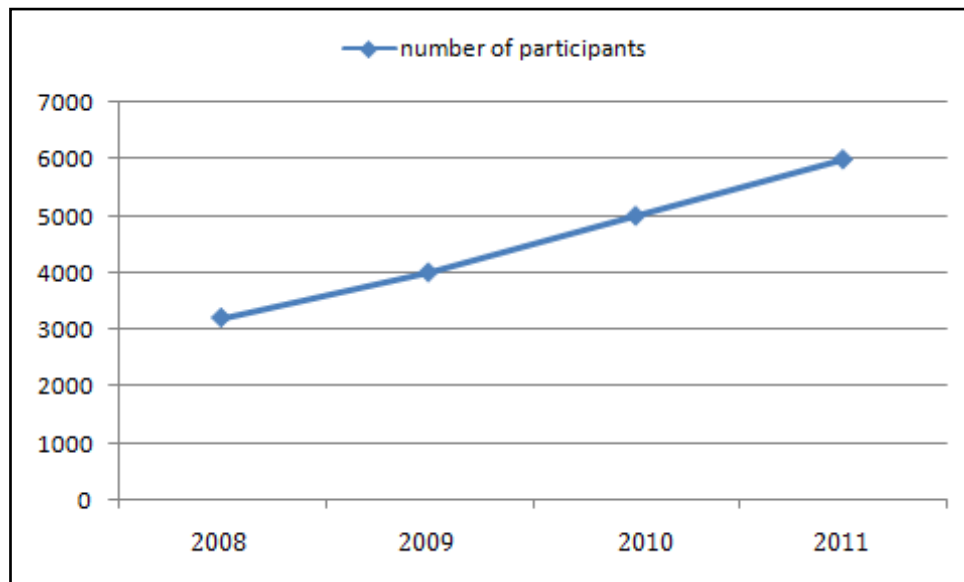


Figure 3. The evolution of the participants at Bucharest International Marathon (2008-2011)

Author, data source: [www.bucharest-marathon.com](http://www.bucharest-marathon.com), 2011 [16]

The increase rate of the number of participants is not so high (from 500 to 1000 participants from one year to another) but it represents anyway a relevant indicator to reflect the increase of Bucharest International Marathon notoriety among the ones passionate by street races. If we take into consideration the first and the latest edition with available data (2008 and 2011), the increase trend is more visible: the number of participants is almost double (from 3500 participants in 2008 to 6000 in 2011) and also the number of countries represented at Bucharest International Marathon is over ten times higher (from 5 countries in 2008 to 51 in 2011).

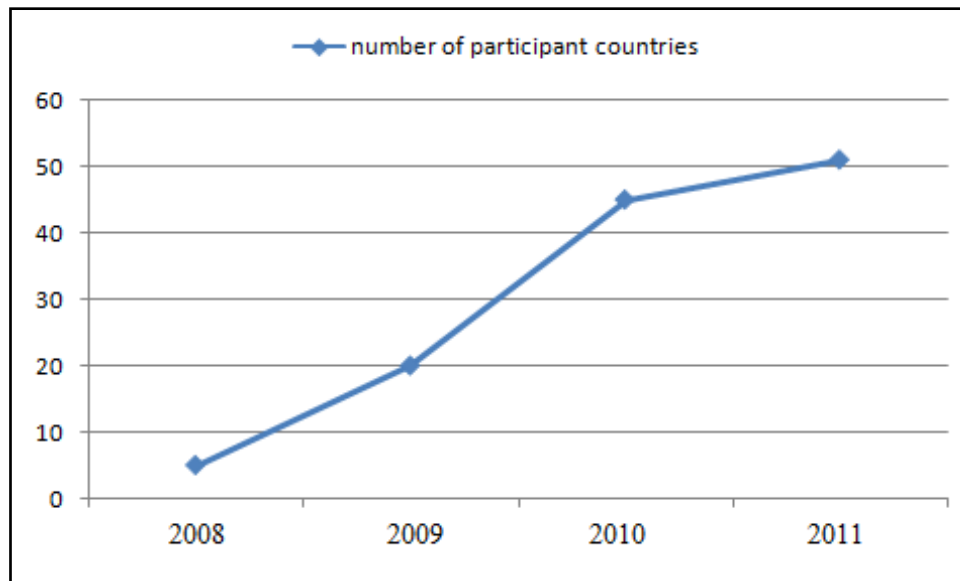


Figure 4. The evolution of the participant countries at Bucharest International Marathon (2008-2011)

Author, data source: [www.bucharest-marathon.com](http://www.bucharest-marathon.com), 2011 [16]

**Costs.** The organizing budget of a sport event is ensured in large or total proportion by private funds – from sponsors, donations and ticket selling. Part of the funds are used for organizing costs, one part is used from winners' awards, also a part is donated to humanitarian organizations involved in organizing the event.

The budget of Bucharest International Marathon is an estimation considering that many products and services are offered by the sponsors and partners of the event. In 2010 the event had an approximate 500.000 euro budget, while in 2011 the budget reached 600.000 Euro.

The value of prizes is also an indicator of the event's importance, the money prizes are supplemented by hundreds of products from sponsors: 2008 – 50 000 euro, 2009 and 2012 – unavailable data, 2010 - 100 money prizes, with amounts from 80 euro to 3000 euro, 2011 – 50 money prizes, with amounts from 100 euro to 3000 euro [16].

**Tourism.** The sport event is a touristic attraction itself, comparable in business tourism with an international convention or in the cultural tourism with a traditional festival. This represents a method of attracting the touristic flows by simply attending the event. Usually an international sporting event takes from 2 to 3, 4 days and the organizers are taking advantage of this fact, suggesting to tourists, accommodation offers or additional means of leisure, relaxation and knowledge. This is a strategy to maximize the economic impact that a sport event can have for the local economy, by attracting new revenues from tourism, but also from the intercultural exchange between tourist and local community.



Figure 5. The motto of Bucharest International Marathon:

*“Visit ROMANIA and register now!”*(2011)

Source: Distance Running, 2011 [18]

Neither Bucharest International Marathon omitted this opportunity to promote the Romanian tourism through the sport event. The motto chosen to promote Bucharest International Marathon in “Distance Running” magazine (3<sup>rd</sup> edition, 2011), was rather an invitation to classic tourism than to a sport event (Figure 5): “Visit ROMANIA and register now!” [18].

The organizers published on the event’s official site, various accommodation offers from several hotels downtown Bucharest, with special prices for this event and the reservations were available directly on the event’s website (by only filling in an accommodation reservation form). Unfortunately there are no records regarding the number or nationality of the people who contracted accommodation through this service, so there is no way to measure the economical impact of the event through the medium of accommodation demand.



Also on the event's website were presented a few touristic offers for different trips before and after the main sport event: Bucharest city tour (3 hours), one day trip or two days trip outside Bucharest (Figure 6), such as a short circuit along Prahova's Valley: including Sinaia, Braşov, Râşnov, Prejmer, Bran, with prices including transport, English speaking guide, entry ticket to the main touristic attractions, a traditional Romanian lunch [16]. Unfortunately, there are no records regarding the number of people who contracted these trips, so there is no way to analyze the impact of the event as promoter of leisure tourism.

Visit 2 world famous castles and spend a relaxing time before the marathon !

**Peles & Bran Castles – 1 day trip**

Saturday, October 8<sup>th</sup>

- Morning departure from Bucharest, at 8:00 AM
- Visit the **Peles Castle** – the former royal residence, one of the most beautiful castles in the world
- Visit the **Bran Castle** – known worldwide as **Dracula's Castle**
- Visit **Braşov** – the historic centre of the city situated at the foot of the Carpathian mountains
- Arrival in Bucharest, at 20:00 PM

October 9<sup>th</sup> 2011

**ENJOY Transylvania** BUCHAREST INTERNATIONAL MARATHON

Figure 6. One day trip offer (Bucharest International Marathon, 2011)

Source: [www.bucharest-marathon.com](http://www.bucharest-marathon.com), 2011 [16]

**Personal impressions.** As an active participant to this event (volunteer and runner in the Relay race), two years in a row (2011 and 2012), I had the chance to be involved in organizing the event but also to take part to the competition. As a volunteer in organizing, I could measure the efforts and the work involved in preparing an international event but as a participant to the race, I could see also the organizing issues and limitations. Repeating the experience, I had the opportunity to observe the event's evolution and the measures that were taken to improve the quality of the services and facilities provided to the participants. Most of the impressions exposed below are also based on the feedback received from other Romanian runners, some of them amateurs, some others regular participants to international street races.

In 2011, the marathon's main location was Alba-Iulia Square (green area)(Photo 3); this is the place which hosted the temporary tents, specially prepared for the event: Expo-Marathon (the main tent who gathered all the event's sponsors and partners), the organizing tents (for registration, info point, medical care, food supply point, hydration



point), the media tents (for interviews and conference press sessions), the main stage (for announcements and award ceremony), the runners' cloakroom.

After a few days of raining, Alba-Iulia Square got covered in mud, so to avoid the same scenario, the next year (2012), the main location of the marathon was set in Constituției Square (paved area) (Photo 4).



Photo 3. Bucharest International Marathon's mainlocation in 2011: Alba-Iulia Square (covered in mud)



Photo 4. Bucharest International Marathon's mainlocation in 2012: Constituției Square (paved)

Source: Hospice, Casa Speranței, 2012 [17]

The main tent hosted the Expo-Marathon where the sponsors and partners exposed their products and shared their activity, the info point and the registration area. The place was most of the time crowded with mixed people, ones who were waiting to register, others looking for the info point, others wanting to visit the exposition. The atmosphere was sometimes chaotic and the participants got frustrated with the situation. A solution could be having three different tents, clearly marked, for these activities: exposition, information and registration. From what I saw, most of the crowd was waiting to the registration points, where the space was insufficient and not efficiently organized for the activity (Photo 5).



Photo 5. Registration points at Bucharest International Marathon (2012)



Photo 6. The luggage storage at Bucharest International Marathon (2012)

Source: Hospice, Casa Speranței, 2012 [17]

Another aspect related to the specific infrastructure prepared for the event, was the fact that the tent designed as cloakroom for all the runners, did not reached the proper standards. The same tent, used to storage the luggage, was also the only place where runners could change their clothes. There was no intimacy for them and also, the luggage was not stored in proper conditions (down on the floor) (Photo 6).

Even if there were not proper conditions to store the luggage and there was no special tent to be used as locker room for the runners, there were also a lot of facilities and services that showed the organizers' increased interest for the safety of the participants, especially runners: permanent medical coverage and security assistance (police, gendarmerie, private security)(Photo 7), to avoid any accident or unpleasant incident; food supply and hydration points along the running route and in the main location; a special tent where the runners could get a massage after the race; mobile hydration points (on bicycles) (Photo 8) – in 2012, the hydration supplies were increased because of the high temperatures (to avoid the risk of dehydration).



Photo 7. Medical and security intervention staff at Bucharest International Marathon (2012)



Photo 8. Mobil hydration point at Bucharest International Marathon (2012)

Source: Hospice, Casa Speranței, 2012 [17]

Even with this measure, a lot of runners (especially the ones who ran the full marathon race) complained that the hydration supplies were not enough along the route and they had to run the last 10 km of the race without water since the hydration points along the route were out of supplies. The same thing happened in 2012 with the food supplies, which ran out of stock before the end of the competition. The final total of participants in 2012 was higher than the organizers previously estimated, because the number of participants registered in the last minute (one day before the competition and even in day of the competition) was higher this year compared with 2011 (because of the good weather). In 2011 instead, given the bad weather (rain, strong wind and low temperatures) a lot of runners (mostly amateurs) quit the competition before the start; more than this, given the conditions, there were just a few last minutes registrations.

## 6. CONCLUSIONS

Sport tourism in Romania is a new concept and as economic branch, it is also at the beginning of its evolution, especially compared to Western European countries where this type of tourism contributes substantially to the economic growth, basically on the strength of the common mentality that relies on the importance of the physical culture; an important role here is also the high level of general development, that provides the proper conditions (especially suitable infrastructure and legislation) to sustain different sporting activities and events.

Even if sport in Romania has a certain tradition, the rebirth of physical cultures just a new trend, but is adopted by a growing segment of population, from regular people who practice a sport as a measure to increase the quality of life, to sportsmen for whom practicing a sport is already a lifestyle. This segment of population led to the demand for sport tourism in Romania. However, the infrastructure, both general and specific, did not reach yet the proper standards in order to sustain a real development of sport tourism in Romania.

Given these two factors, sport tourism in Romania generally has a local impact, thus, most of the tourists that travel for any reason related to a sporting activity are Romanians. Yet, Romania's accession to the European Union in 2007, created a favorable context and since then, Romania made some efforts to align to the required international standards, including the sporting field. By 2008, Bucharest was the only European capital which does not have its own international marathon.

Today, Bucharest International Marathon reached the 5<sup>th</sup> edition and it is officially on the list of world's street marathons, accredited by the International Association of Street Marathons. More than this, Bucharest International Marathon became a sporting event with international participation (in 2011 - 51 countries), that grew with every edition, from 3500 participants in 2008 to over 6000 in 2012. This

shows that Bucharest International Marathon is already a landmark of Bucharest and further, Romania's also, that acts like a tourist product, generating tourist flows and international incomes.

Bucharest International Marathon is not yet a sport event well-known worldwide but if the event will grow with the same intensity that it did until now, there are chances to become representative at a global scale and to act as an example for other cities in Romania also.

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