

# **ASSESSING LOCAL COMMUNITIES FROM PROTECTED AREAS THROUGH ECOTOURISM – A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS**

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Tourism and natural environment find themselves in an indissoluble relationship within local communities from protected areas, such interdependence determining the development of sustainable tourism, and particularly ecotourism, in order to provide economic benefits for the communities, while having a reduced impact on the environment. Assessing ecotourism development conditions represents a must and criteria as potential, resources and local community receptiveness are used.

In this context, the paper work highlights the identified selection criteria applied for 12 local communities from Romania (Danube Delta), France (Martinique) and Italy (Sardinia) and proposes for analysis the community with the highest score from each country, based on which an assessment model was developed.

**Key words:** ecotourism, protected areas, local communities, model