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REGULATORY REQUIREMENTS FOR RURAL TOURIST ACCOMMODATION: A COMPARATIVE DOCUMENTARY ANALYSIS OF ROMANIA, FRANCE AND CASTILLA Y LEÓN (SPAIN)

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Abstract: *Rural tourism plays an important role in the diversification of tourism services and the development of rural areas. However, the regulatory requirements governing rural tourist accommodation differ across European countries. This study aims to examine and compare the legal frameworks applicable to rural accommodation establishments in Romania, France and Castilla y León (Spain), using a comparative documentary approach. Particular attention is given to accommodation facilities, equipment, services, classification requirements and rural-specific characteristics. The study highlights the similarities and differences between national and regional regulatory approaches, providing a basis for understanding how rural tourist accommodation is regulated and for further research on consumer preferences.*

• Introduction

Rural tourism contributes to the economic development of rural communities and the promotion of cultural heritage, traditions and local resources [2, 9, 10, 15]. The organisation and operation of tourist accommodation establishments are influenced by regulations concerning classification, capacity, facilities and tourism services.Legislative differences between European countries make direct comparisons of rural accommodation establishments difficult, even when they provide similar tourism services.
The objective of this study is to identify and compare the regulatory requirements applicable to rural tourist accommodation in Romania, France and Castilla y León (Spain), highlighting the particularities of their regulatory, classification and operational frameworks.
The contribution of the study consists in identifying legislative similarities and differences between the three territories, providing a basis for further research on rural accommodation facilities and services.



• Material and method

The study employs a qualitative approach based on a comparative documentary analysis of rural tourist accommodation regulations in Romania, France and Castilla y León (Spain), as applicable in October 2026 [3, 5].
The three territories were purposively selected to examine distinct regulatory frameworks: a national classification system in Romania, the regulation of gîtes ruraux within meublés de tourisme in France, and a regional regulatory system in Castilla y León.
The analysis of the relevant legislation [4, 6, 7, 13, 14] focused on five comparative dimensions:

- Regulatory framework and organisation;
- Accommodation categories and eligibility conditions;
- Accommodation capacity and facilities;
- Classification systems;
- Services and rural-specific requirements.

Relevant legal provisions were extracted and organised into a comparative matrix to identify similarities and differences. The analysis distinguishes mandatory legal requirements from voluntary classification criteria and is limited to the selected regulatory provisions, without assessing their practical implementation.

• Results and discussions

⚖️ 1. Regulatory FrameworkRomania and France apply national regulatory frameworks, while Castilla y León follows a regional system specific to rural tourist accommodation.

🏡 2. Accommodation CategoriesRomania distinguishes tourist and agritourism guesthouses; France regulates gîtes ruraux within meublés de tourisme; Castilla y León recognises hotel rural, posada and casa rural.

🛏️ 3. Romania allows up to 15 rooms and 45 beds in tourist guesthouses and 8 rooms in agritourism guesthouses. Castilla y León sets limits of 50 beds for hotel rural and 16 for casa rural, while France does not specify a numerical capacity limit for gîtes ruraux under Article L324-6.

🌳 4. Location and Rural CharacteristicsRomania emphasises land requirements, local architecture and agritourism activities. France specifies building configuration, non-metropolitan location and quality-label conditions. Castilla y León emphasises rural location and traditional architecture.

🌼 5. Classification SystemsRomania applies mandatory classification from 1 to 5 daisies, France offers voluntary classification from 1 to 5 stars, while Castilla y León uses a regional star-based classification system.

🛎️ 6. Facilities and ServicesRomania establishes mandatory equipment and agritourism-related requirements. France assesses facilities and services through voluntary classification, while Castilla y León applies category-specific standards.

• Conclusions

The comparative analysis highlights three distinct regulatory approaches: a mandatory national classification system in Romania, a national regulatory framework with voluntary classification in France, and a regional regulatory and classification system in Castilla y León (Spain).
Although rural accommodation establishments provide similar tourism services, differences in legal categories, capacity, facilities and rural-specific requirements limit their direct comparability.
The study emphasises the importance of distinguishing mandatory legal requirements from classification criteria, providing a basis for further research on rural accommodation services and consumer preferences.

