

INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON: “*CHALLENGES AND PERFORMANCE OF POST-SOCIALIST TOURISM IN CENTRAL EASTERN EUROPEAN COUNTRIES*”

May, 26-28, 2011, Bucharest, Romania

On May 26-27, 2011, Bucharest hosted to the International Conference on “Challenges and Performance of Post-Socialist Tourism in Central-Eastern European Countries”, jointly by organised the Department of Human and Economic Geography, Faculty of Geography – University of Bucharest and the Ministry of Regional Development and Tourism.

The event was intended to draw international attention to tourism. Comprehensive debate sessions on its evolution and development in both former communist countries and in the Western states were on the agenda with a view to the sustainable and ecological development of tourism. The fall of the communist regime paved the way for a long and complex process of political, economic and social restructuring and change, tourism itself having to cope with and adjust to such new challenges as economic decentralisation, a legislation in line with European demands, freedom of movement and, more recently, the economic crisis that hit all the economic sectors, inclusive of tourism. As a result, tourism acquired a dynamic character developing new forms which will make the object of studies and assessments.

Other topics of discussion were: the changes experienced by tourism destinations renowned during the communist period, the restructuring and the diversification of forms of mass tourism; emerging tourism markets; restructuring domestic and foreign tourist sectors in the tourism and hospitality industry; a new identity for old tourist destinations (avoiding the experience of some former communist states in developing certain local/regional/ national tourism brands or identities); the dual educational dimension of tourism (formal – institutionalised and organised, and non-formal – the outcome of individual experiences). All these topics were grouped by the four main themes: *New tourism markets; Evolution vs. involution and revolution in recreational activities; New tourism identities for old destinations; Tourist education vs. educational tourism.*

In the organisers’ view, selecting the papers to be presented at the Conference was meant to point out aspects of topical interest from as many sub-branches of tourism and tourism geography as possible by involving professionals in the field, geographers, tour-operators, profile decision-making bodies and institutions.

The Conference was attended by scientific researchers from Romania, Serbia, Slovakia, Macedonia, Poland, Hungary, Great Britain and Iran, outstanding personalities in this domain, among whom researchers and university staff, as well as people involved in the key sectors of the tourism industry. The purpose of this gathering was to present and debate (through papers and round tables) the latest developments in tourism and in the geography of tourism.

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