# the Future of MICE tourism in Bratislava and Slovakia

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3.12.2014 sheraton bratislava hotel

AmCham's close focus on the tourism industry only dates back to 2012. However, during this rather short period of time it has managed to establish its reputation in this field by inviting open discussion on the most current topics and the future development of tourism in Slovakia. This year's edition of the conference was organized in cooperation with Bratislava Tourist Board and, unlike the two previous years, the main topic was narrowed down to one specific field of the tourism industry.

If you're not familiar with the acronym MICE , which surely didn't fail to capture the attention and perhaps also the imagination of those who noticed this event in AmCham's calendar, it stands for "Meetings, Incentives, Conferences, and Exhibitions". Due to its favorable position, Bratislava has the potential to become a much sought-after destination for MICE tourism but it still falls short on its ability to fulfill it. In order to change that, the conference featured some of the world´s leading experts in the MICE industry.

The first keynote speaker, Pádraic Gilligan, introduced some of the most important criteria that can turn a city into a MICE -attractive destination. The following discussion included experts from the business community, and the hotel industry as well as the DMC (Destination Management Company) sector. These are the key stakeholders in the MICE arena - the creators of the demand as well as the service providers. They all agreed that, in order for Bratislava to become a respected MICE destination in the CE region, more effective cooperation between the key stakeholders, both public and private, is crucial.

The second panel was opened by Patrick Delaney, one of the globally most respected consultants in the meeting industry, who highlighted several inspiring cases of how a destination can adapt to the rapidly changing demands and trends of the global MICE industry. Monaco, Copenhagen and Gdansk served as examples of how a destination, regardless of its size and prestige, can position itself and build a strong reputation as a MICE brand. The common denominator of success for all of these cities was their unique identity around which they managed to build an attractive brand. The challenge awaiting Bratislava was thus clearly identified.

The afternoon session focused on the upcoming Slovak presidency of the Council of the EU . Hugo Slimbrouck, former president of the Society of Incentive Travel Experience (SITE ), used the example of Latvia to show how the period of July-December 2016 is crucial in terms of MICE events. Latvia will be hosting more than 200 events during its six months of EU presidency in 2015 and Slovakia should be expecting a similar outcome.

The EU presidency presents a unique opportunity for Bratislava to gain a reputation as a respected meeting destination and to build on it in the post-2016 period by further developing its identity and becoming a recognizable brand in the MICE industry.

Foto:

Padraic Giligan Director SoolNua

Patrick Delaney Director SoolNua

Hugo Slimbrouck MCI Group

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