

2013: Year of Regional Development



Zuzana Mikulášová
AmCham Leader of 2013: Year of Regional Development, Marketing Director of Welba, s.r.o

Why did you accept the role of AmCham Leader and what are your goals in this role?

The Year of Regional Development mainly focuses on the branding and presentation of Slovakia, and furthermore on related topics such as tourism, FDI, and employment. Due to my previous professional experience with diverse aspects of presenting Slovakia abroad, I took on the challenge to be the leader of the AmCham's Year of Regional Development.

My aim was to involve all relevant parties in an evaluation process and to kick off general and specific discussions concerning the presentation of the subject online and offline, evaluate the necessary framework including legal aspects, and identify all matters that influence the developments within the industry such as employment and training or targeted campaigning.

I am convinced that Slovakia, being a year-round destination, has enormous unspoiled potential and unused resources for tourism development. Overall success and an increase in the number of satisfied and returning visitors depends on the right choice of well-defined quality

In light of AmCham's FDI Strategy, the EU Strategy for the Danube Region, and the City of Košice being celebrated as the 2013 European Capital of Culture, AmCham Slovakia designated 2013 as Year of Regional Development. Therefore, we asked several professionals to share their views on the status quo and future of regional development in Slovakia.

products and services which meet the needs and desires of all chosen and potentially interesting target groups. Specifically, the challenge is to make the new tonality of the presentation appeal to the target audience by matching emotion and feeling with the new branding of the Slovak Tourism Industry.



Robert Holan
Chair of the Tourism Committee, General Manager of Radisson Blu Carlton Hotel Bratislava

What are the pros and cons of doing business in the area of hospitality in Slovakia?

Slovakia is now one of Europe's most attractive locations for doing business. Strategically located in the heart of Europe with a beneficial 'value added tax system,' Slovakia attracts companies to invest and develop in our fascinating country. Many international companies

have moved their European headquarters to Slovakia and you can really feel an international and multi-cultural flair when entering Slovakia's main cities. From a service person's point of view, being exposed to so many different cultures, nationalities, and guests' expectations and needs, it's the perfect mix for an inspirational day at work.

Slovakia has been one of the most rapid responders in a world that has introduced ambitious reforms in many areas such as welfare, tax, pensions, etc. For those of us in the hotel industry, tax legislation changes have proven to be a challenge as this has a significant impact on labor costs. The fact that the laws are changing rapidly is also an issue, as it's harder for us to budget and plan our operations accordingly.

The enormous increase of the number of hotels in Bratislava in the last few years has impacted the hotel market in many ways. Although there is more competition now, travelers have more choice and the positive result is that Bratislava's hotel standards have improved significantly. More international chains have entered the market and the quality of service in general has reached a much higher level. For us hoteliers,

guest service is a very important matter. It is after all, exactly what our profession is all about, hosting and providing a genuine and friendly service.



Iveta Niňajová
Executive Officer of the Košice Tourism Board

How has the title "European Capital of Culture" (ECOC) impacted the developments of the city and the surrounding region of Košice, and what do you expect from it in the long run?

For Košice, the ECOC title successfully eliminated the city's long-term disadvantage – low awareness of the second biggest city in Slovakia and the surrounding region of Eastern Slovakia. It has definitely helped Košice to suddenly emerge as a recommended destination for 2013 in CNN, BBC, Lonely Planet, National Geographic, and Budget Travel. Until now Košice was primarily a destination for business travelers. However, in 2013 it has also become a leisure destination, especially thanks to tourist groups from Germany and Austria, which sets the new trend in traveling to Košice. The location of Košice on the former trade route between Budapest and Krakow has influenced the economic and cultural values of the city for centuries. Being just two hours away from six UNESCO



sites and five national parks, and 40 minutes from the renowned wine region Tokaj, Košice has a great starting position for developing leisure tourism. The Košice Tourist Board is currently working on the reopening of the train route between Budapest and Krakow in the tourist season of May to October. Cooperation with the strategic low cost airline company Wizzair helped to reconnect Košice with London from September 17, and from December 12 there should be five flights per week to this destination. The success of this air route is the basis for opening more air routes to other European metropolises and support Košice in its accessibility and its ambitions of "going global".



Peter Gogola
Mayor of Banská Bystrica

Is there any cooperation between the City of Banská Bystrica and the Department of Tourism of the Matej Bel University in Banská Bystrica?

In 2012, Banská Bystrica, together with Zvolen, Sliach, and leading tourism businesses Spa Sliach Ltd., Hotel Kaskády, and Airport Sliach Ltd., founded the District Tourist Board of Central Slovakia (Oblasťná organizácia cestovného ruchu Stredné Slovensko - OOCR) to foster tourism in their region. Cooperation between the City of Banská Bystrica and the Matej Bel University is conducted within the framework of this tourist board. The OOCR and the Department of Tourism of the Matej Bel University collaborate on the project "Strategy for the Development of Tourism in the Zvolen Basin Region," which is funded by the Swiss-Slovak Cooperation Program (a block grant made of financial

contributions of the Swiss Confederation and co-financed by the state budget of the Slovak Republic). The goal of this project is to create a strategic document for managing the sustainable development of tourism in the Zvolen Basin region. It draws on Swiss experience and know-how, which is applied to foster the socio-economic development of the region. Experts on tourism from Switzerland and Slovakia supervise the implementation of the Swiss experience in the Slovak context. The City of Banská Bystrica participates in this project by assisting with data collection, analysis, and drafting the strategy for tourism development.



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