

MEDICAL TOURISM IN CENTRAL & EASTERN EUROPE NEEDS FURTHER DEVELOPMENT



The obstacles and opportunities of medical tourism in Central and Eastern Europe will be discussed at the coming professional summit in Croatia.

Medical Tourism to Central and Eastern Europe is increasingly viewed as a way of fighting the recent downward trends in tourism profits. Growth in the region has been stimulated by better transport links and different prices compared to the West.

One of the issues faced by the local medical tourism providers is that most of the states of the region are former communist countries. As such, although possessing some great individual talent, often they are without a large knowledge pool to consistently market themselves to the West.

Currently, the sector is slowly developing but the infrastructure for promotion and service delivery, along with **effective partnerships with agencies around the world are needed before Central and Eastern Europe will be able to seriously compete with medical tourism giants like India and Thailand.** This, of course, leaves many opportunities for individual service providers and travel agents from the region with the necessary reach or skills.

Although well established and world-known, medical providers in India and Thailand have discovered that patients from Europe and the U.S. undergo the long journey to these countries not as often as the hospitals expected. **Today European health insurers and health authorities are sending people abroad for surgery only slowly.** India and other Asian countries are however not the preferred destinations since long-haul flights often represent a medical risk for people needing surgery or in recovery. This trend opens up many opportunities for European medical companies over the next few years.

What are the possibilities of medical tourism in the CEE countries will be one of the topics discussed at the coming Central and Eastern Medical Tourism Summit (CEEMTHS), the only medical tourism conference for this region. The event featuring speakers from the UK and the USA as well as regional experts will showcase agencies and providers to a global audience.

At the summit, training on global marketing - from web marketing to inquiry conversion and service creation - will also be provided. Furthermore, the results from the International Dental Symposium survey on Dental Medical Tourism (March 2010) will be exclusively presented at the event.

The two-day conference attracting travel agencies, spa facilities, dentists and clinics will take place in Zagreb, Croatia, on 17th - 18th May 2010.

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