

SLOVAKIAN TOURISM MARKETING FACES LOWER BUDGET



The promotion of Slovakian tourism destinations will have to cope with lower budget. The draft budget of the state for the next year suggests lower amount of money for tourism marketing. The Transport Ministry responsible for Slovakian tourism hopes that the

draft budget will be reviewed.

While this year the sector obtained 11.2 million euros for the promotion of Slovakian tourism, next year the sum will reach only 7.5 million euros. Most of the money goes to regional tourism boards.

According to Marek Harbulak, president of the Association of Hotels and Restaurants, **if the financial resources decrease, it will impact the tourism numbers:** "Lower budget will surely result in fewer visitors like in 2014. It will lead to a drop in revenues for businesses, the government, as well as cities. It will also impact the unemployment rate."

Further investment in Slovakian tourism is endangered in case the draft budget is approved, he said.

Last year, the Slovakian mountains, chateaux and other sights attracted 4.3 million visitors, which was more than in the record year of 2013. The hoteliers reported the highest revenue in the history of Slovakian tourism - 2 billion euros.

The estimates suggest that the data for this year should be also positive. The Slovakian tourism board announced that so far 1.8 million tourists visited Slovakia since the beginning of this year, which is 20.8 percent more than last year. 1.1 million of them were domestic travelers.

The support of the government is essential for the success of the sector, according to Harbulak: "The results of the last two years confirm that the financial support of the Slovakian tourism promotion is a very good investment that brings benefits. The sector employs 370,000 people and brings profits to many cities through tourism taxes," he said.

Last year, tourists spent 5 billion euro which represented almost 300 million euros in VAT. According to Harbulak, one year of decreased budget might be enough for Slovakian tourism to be hit hard.

The Transport Ministry, which is responsible for tourism in the country, reported that they would take all efforts to increase the tourism budget for 2017. According to the ministry, less money for tourism promotion would mean that the country would not be able to compete with other European destinations.

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