

# conference report

## 63<sup>rd</sup> Aiest Conference Advances in Tourism Research



As it is pointed out by its promo material, Aiest – International Association of Scientific Experts in Tourism is founded in 1951 and therefore represents the oldest international association of scientific and practical tourism experts. It is a social network with around 300 members in 49 countries especially devoted to an interdisciplinary approach to serving the needs of tourism research. Its memberships includes Academics as well as a Practitioners that help in pinpointing the latest developments and trends in tourism, and devising farsighted solutions for new problems as they arise' The association also has an advisory status at UNESCO.

Since its foundation Aiest organizes a highly recognized yearly conference on the most recent developments in tourism research and practice. This year the 63<sup>rd</sup> conference was held in Izmir, Turkey from 25<sup>th</sup> to 29<sup>th</sup> of August. The specific topic of the conference was 'Advances in tourism Research: Perspectives of Actors, Institutions and Systems'. It brought together about 80 participants all over the world. Most of them are members of Aiest, and some of them are the most recognized scholars in the field of tourism research, such as Norbert Vanhove, Egon, Smeral, Geoffrey Crouch and others. During the conference 36 papers were presented in 15 parallel sessions.

Opening speech was given by the President of Aiest, Peter Keller. It was dedicated to past, present and the future of tourism business and tourism research, with the special focus on the role of Aiest organization.

Since it was an interdisciplinary conference, the main program was covered by wide range of tourism topics. For example, the field of marketing was covered by the presentations on implementation of new ICT business solutions, such are online

travel agencies or(and) social networks, in tourism industry. Tourism economics filed was covered by the discussion on the issue of varying elasticity of tourism demand, which could represent a significant obstacle in tourism forecasting, then the presentation that tried to give an explanation of the process of competitiveness in European small and medium size tourism enterprises, and the presentation that promoted knowledge-intensive services as drivers of innovation in tourism business. The tourism policy filed was covered by the presentation on the unrecognized role of participatory democracy in tourism development.

The most interesting presentation on the conference was given by Geoffrey Crouch. He presented a review article on evolutionary theory of tourist behavior. It was very interesting to hear to which extent tourist behavior could be explained by genetics and sociobiology.

Three special sessions of the conference were dedicated to young researchers. Hence, PhD students had a special opportunity to present their work in progress and to get valuable feedback. The issues which tourism PhD students were dealing with covered a relatively wide range of contemporary tourism research topics. However, they were primarily focused on applied aspects of tourism research rather than on the theoretical foundations of tourism as a special discipline related to social sciences.

Finally, it could be concluded that it is a conference with a very long tradition. Accordingly, it will certainly continue to attract tourism researchers, both, established and young with fresh ideas. Therefore it will certainly continue to be one of the most highly recognized tourism conference in the world.

*I. Kožić*