

THE ORGANIZATION OF YOUTH TRAVEL AT GLOBAL LEVEL

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Abstract

At global level there are various associations and professional organizations aimed at promoting tourism in general and youth travel in particular. Sure, international organizations play the most important role because they include members from all over the world, but regional and national organizations shouldn't be neglected, because they contribute at the development of youth travel in their areas and have a rather important role in regional integration.

To understand how youth travel is organized internationally, this paper presents the main governmental and non-governmental organizations who play an extremely important role in developing and promoting youth travel by starting legislative projects and organizing joint actions, especially towards training young people in jobs related to tourism and leisure time, educating youth in the spirit of eco-tourism or getting them directly involved in maintaining and preserving tourism heritage.

Key words: *youth tourism, tourism organizations, models of organization for youth travel.*

JEL classification: *L31, L83*

1. INTRODUCTION

The main object of this paper is to present how youth travel is organized by reviewing the main international bodies in the field and three organizational models at European level.

Regarding the approach method of the chosen theme, we selected and analyzed the most important international organizations in youth travel, which have a special role in promoting youth mobility, as well as organizational models of this type of tourism in European countries with tradition for tourism, namely France, Germany and Italy. The main reason for choosing this research topic is the fact that currently there is an acute lack of studies in the field of youth travel, except for a few papers that tangentially approach the researched issue. It is about the studies conducted by certain national bodies and institutions, such as, for example, the paper *Le tourisme des jeunes* written by the National Board of Tourism of France in 2002, which highlights the main organizations in French youth travel.

This paper tries to emphasize a few of the issues that were not approached in previous researches and tries to create a comprehensive picture of how youth travel is organized.

2. INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS IN YOUTH TRAVEL

The first youth travel organizations emerged in France: the Central Organization for Camps and Activities for Youth and the Education League were founded in 1944, the Léo Lagrange Federation in 1950, La Federation Unie des Auberges de Jeunesse

(FUAJ) in 1956 and Union des Centres Sportifs et de Plein Air (L'UCPA) in 1963.

As a result of the scale that social tourism took at global level, it was considered appropriate to establish in 1963 the **International Bureau of Social Tourism (B.I.T.S.)**, an international association that primarily aims to favour the development and promotion of social tourism at international level.

Regarding its internal structuring, B.I.T.S. includes three categories of members:

- Active members, who can be fewer than ten because they form the General Assembly of the Bureau. They are natural or legal persons who conduct their activity in social tourism and obey the principles of individual freedom guaranteed by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, as well as the provisions of the Declaration of Montreal "Pour un vision humaniste et sociale du tourisme" (BITS, 1996);
- Honourable members of public right – are public persons who handle the management of public services in social tourism and who enjoy the prerogatives of public power, being the official representatives of the state or of regional communities;
- Honorary members – the Board of B.I.T.S. can award the title of honorary member to all natural persons who deserve this distinction.

The working bodies of B.I.T.S. are: General Assembly – congregates at least once every two years; The Board of Directors; The Executive Committee, comprising a president, a vice-president and a treasurer, representing the executive office of the Board of Directors; and General Secretariat with headquarters at Brussels.

In order to ensure effectiveness at global level, B.I.T.S. created regional sections that function in

accordance with own statutes, but defend the specific interests of this international association of social tourism.

Among the B.I.T.S. members specialized exclusively in youth travel or whose activity area is mainly youth travel are included national organisms, as well as international tourism bodies, namely:

National bodies

Belgium: AEP- Centre National de Services de Vacances; Centrum Voor Jeugdtoerisme (CJT); Les Auberges de Jeunesse; Vlaamse Jeugdherbergcentrale (VJH);

Canada: Auberges de Jeunesse de Saint Laurent Inc. HI Canada – Région St. Laurent; Hostelling International Canada; Travel Cuts;

France: Ethic Étapes; Fédération Unie des Auberges de Jeunesse (FUAJ); Jeunesse au Plein Air (JPA); Vacances Ouvertes;

Germany: Bundesforum Kinder und Jugendreisen E.V.;

Italy: Avec Tour Operator; Centro Turistico Giovanile (CTG);

Mexico: Instituto Mexicano de la Juventud; Servicio Educativo de Turismo de los Estudiantes y la Juventud de México AC (SETEJ);

Poland: Polish Chamber of Youth Tourism;

Tunisia: Société Tunisienne des Auberges et Tourisme de jeunes (ATATJ);

United States of America: Student & Youth Travel Association (SYTA);

International bodies

World Youth Student & Educational Travel Confederation WYSE-TC.

With its creation, the International Bureau of Social Tourism defined social tourism as being “all the relationships and phenomena resulting from participation in tourism, and in particular from the participation of social strata with modest incomes. This participation is made possible or facilitated by measures of a well-defined social nature” (B.I.T.S. Statute, 1963).

Over more than 40 years of existence, the main organised events (congresses, seminars, colloquia, etc.) in various regions of the world under B.I.T.S., whose focus was on youth travel, are the following:

- The first Youth Tourism Congress, which took place in Fiuggi in 1967, during which the “Youth Tourism Manifesto” was drawn-up;

- The Congress held in Vienna in 1972, when the Vienna Charter was drawn-up and launched, which referred to youth travel as a distinct form of tourism;

- The seminar “Youth Tourism” held in Trieste in 1974;

- The seminar “Development Perspectives for Social Tourism and Youth in the East-West Cooperation”, Moscow, 1990;

- The colloquium “Youth Holidays – Practices, Expectations and Perspectives”, Paris, 1994;

- the World Congress of B.I.T.S. (the 40th anniversary of B.I.T.S.), which took place in Belgium in April 2004, during which the concept of social tourism was redefined as being tourism of development;

- The World Conference of Youth and Student Tourism in Madrid, September 2004, in collaboration with the International Student Travel Confederation (I.S.T.C.) and the Federation of International Youth Travel Organizations (F.I.Y.T.O.), with the subject “European Youth Mobility”;

- World Congress of Social Tourism with the subject “Tourism of Development: challenges and new practices”, held in Canada (Quebec) in October 2008.

International Student Travel Confederation

(I.S.T.C.) is an international organization founded in 1949. The I.S.T.C. network includes over 5.000 offices in 110 countries. The purpose of this organization is to create and develop cooperation between student travel offices and other bodies and to encourage the founding of offices in countries where they don't exist, providing various benefits and promoting tourism among youth. Over 60 organizations worldwide are members of this confederation. Among the most important are five associations specialized in youth travel, namely: International Student Surface Travel Association (I.S.S.A.), International Student Identity Card Association (I.S.I.C.), International Association for Students Insurance Services (I.A.S.I.S.), Student Air Travel Association (S.A.T.A.) and International Association for Educational Work Exchanges Programmes (I.A.E.W.E.P.).

International Association of Student Camps

is an international organization founded in 1957, which aims to create connections between students and intends to support national associations. It promotes various meetings, offers advice and help to students. Its members are national associations from all over the world.

International Association of School Camps

Directors is an international organization founded in 1955 under the name “European Association of School Camps Directors”. The current name was adopted in 1980. The association aims to develop good relations between members, to facilitate exchanges of ideas and experience and to obtain information about the professional activities of its members. The members are camp directors from all over the world.

International Youth Hostel Federation

(I.Y.H.F.) is an international organization founded in 1932 under the name International Youth Hostel Association, the present name being adopted in 1942. The federation coordinates the activities of the national associations, ensures the information trade and encourages the development of youth hostels and their inclusion in the tourist circuit. The members are associations from 70 countries.

European Union Federation of Youth Hostel Associations (E.U.F.E.D.) represents the interests of the national associations of youth hostels in Europe at the level of the continent, as well as the interests of youth during their stay. Currently, 17 countries are regrouped within this federation. The network of youth hostels provides safe, welcoming and accessible accommodation areas for hundreds of thousands of young people during their stay. The federation was founded in 1987 and its goals are: to promote this trend at European level, to improve the financial and political support for this cause; to support national youth hostel associations in order to develop them; to increase the quality of tourist services; to put into practice volunteer exchanges of people aged between 18 and 25, based on youth hostels, thanks to the support of the European Commission; to support associations from the new countries joining the European Union in order to seize the opportunities provided by its extension.

Federation of International Youth Travel Organizations (F.I.Y.T.O.) was founded in 1950 in France by reuniting nine European organizations from Denmark, Italy, Germany and France. Currently, the federation includes about 450 organizations from 70 countries around the world and from Europe, profile associations representing 68% of the total. The initial mission of the federation to promote peace and understanding in the travels of young people is still valid today. Considering that the industry of youth travel grew continuously, the federation added to its original mission other objectives, such as: to promote youth mobility at European and global levels; to protect the identity of youth travel; to promote cultural, educational and global tourism; to encourage cooperation between members; to provide advice in the development of organizations specific for youth travel in countries where they don't exist or are poorly represented.

European Youth Card Association (E.Y.C.A.) is one of the three European youth networks, being consulted when drafting European youth policies and enjoying the support of the European Commission in implementing programmes and the support of prestigious youth institutions, such as EURODESK, ERYICA, EUFED.

E.Y.C.A. is a European organization that includes 56 member organizations from 42 countries, being under the patronage of the European Council by the Protocol of Lisbon (1987) and the Partial Agreement on the Youth Card (1991). The network emerged in 1986, when six European countries used separately national youth cards that offered discounts and opportunities in areas like culture, free time, sports, travels, information, goods and services (these countries were Belgium, France, Netherlands, Portugal, Scotland and Spain). Acknowledging their common goals, the national cards associations initiated the European cooperation by mutually recognising the advantages for all the card holders of

the six countries. This reciprocity between the six types of cards was the start of the idea to create a single European youth card called Euro<26. Therefore, in 1987, the Protocol of Lisbon regulated the reciprocity of the discounts in all six countries, which marked the beginning of the European Youth Card reality. A remarkable development of this phenomenon was recorded in the subsequent period, increasingly more countries joined the Euro<26 network and increasingly more young people were using the card, which was given new advantages and services, as well as support from various European institutions, like the European Council and the European Commission.

In 1991, the European Council agreed to back-up the card by adopting a Partial Agreement on the Youth Card, acknowledging it as an instrument to encourage mobility, information and the involvement of youth in Europe and part of the national youth policies. Since then, 15 European countries joined this Agreement. The Euro<26 card is becoming a youth identification card that ensures the acknowledgement of the student status and ensures benefits and discounts for young people up to 26 years old in all their areas of interest: culture, vacations, services and information, travels and transport, free time, education, shopping, etc.

International Association of Students in Economic and Commercial Science A.I.E.S.E.C.) is the largest independent, non-profit and international students association, founded in 1984 by a few students willing to rebuild their countries after the Second World War and it is run by students or recent graduates of an institution of higher education. After five year of existence, this organization was already in 14 countries, including former enemies during the war, and in 1957 it was widespread throughout Europe, then, in 1958, in conquered America, in 1961, North Africa, Asia in 1963 and the last continent that was drawn in was Australia in 1965. A.I.E.S.E.C. is present in over 800 universities from 100 countries and territories around the world, and it tried throughout history to have a positive impact on society, to develop the abilities of young students, to help them build their own career and to learn how to become good leaders. It is the international platform that allows youth to discover and develop their potential in order to have a positive impact in society.

In addition to over 8.000 leadership positions and over 350 conferences for the over 32.000 members, A.I.E.S.E.C. has an Exchange programme that offers annually to a number of over 5.000 students and recent graduates the opportunity to live and work in a different country. The merit of the Exchange programme (global work experience exchange programme) is due to the first members that met at the first so-called "Stockholm Congress" that took place in 1949, thus achieving the first 89 international exchanges among many that followed.

Since 1991, A.I.E.S.E.C. is present in Romania in the most representative universities from 14 important cities of the country. Romanian offers annually over 300 work experiences abroad through the Exchange programme aimed at students and recent graduates, and organizes over 25 conferences at local and national levels.

Association for the Support of Youth, Students and Teachers (A.S.Y.S.T.) is a non-governmental and non-profit organization, member of the World Youth Educational Student Travel Confederation WYSE TC, being primarily a mean of direct support for youth, students and teachers by finding the most efficient ways to access the services they are interested in. To this end, A.S.Y.S.T. uses as tools to facilitate tourism practice by students I.S.T.C. cards (International Student Identity Card), international products existent in 113 countries, which offer unique benefits regarding transport, accommodation, meals, information sources and culture (35.000 discounts all over the world).

Through the I.S.T.C. cards, adopted as member identification cards, A.S.Y.S.T. aims to be the best support and friend of youth, students and teachers, to offer trust and help during the years of study and professional training, so it negotiates the best discounts offers.

This paper analyzed these organisations and not others because they are the most representative forms of organization for youth travel and some of them are the first forms of manifestation for youth travel after the Second World War when cultural exchanges practiced by youth encouraged them to travel far from home, motivated by school or the desire to learn foreign languages.

3. ORGANIZATION MODELS FOR YOUTH TRAVEL

Youth travel holds an important place in global tourism and, as a consequence, knowing some of its models of organization in various countries is highly important. Because not all the countries with tradition can be analyzed, we'll try to provide an analysis of the organizational structure of youth travel on the example of the main European markets for youth travel, such as France, Germany and Italy.

3.1. France

As in Europe, the youth travel market in France is a genuine stake for tourism in terms of importance and diversity. At the level of France, the "young" tourist clientele generates important economic resources, estimating that 4.8% (Gonet, Chabret et al) of the domestic tourist consumption is generated by youth travel.

The French tourism market defines very well the sector of social and associative tourism through

the law, as well as through the presence of public, private and social companies and institutions that constitute social tourism. Even if they are rather diversified, social tourism and associative tourism have a common denominator, that of being dedicated to their role, namely the access to vacations and leisure for everybody.

From an organizational perspective, one of the most representative bodies of social and associative tourism in France is the National Union of Tourism Associations (U.N.A.T.), which was founded in 1920 by the following associations: "Automobile Club de France", "The Support Society of the Automobile Club de France", "Club Alpine Francais" and "Touring Club de France". By 2009, 57 national organizations and 460 regional organizations joined them. In figures, UNAT could be described as: in 2009, 12.070 permanent employees and 60.000 seasonal employees, 1.500 accommodation units scattered throughout the country, with a total capacity of 242.000 beds, 5.000.000 tourists, of which almost one million benefited of subsidized vacations, almost 38 million tourist days and a turnover of 1,467 billion Euros (Le Cam, 2009). The basic components of the accommodation unit network that belongs to the UNAT member association are holiday villages. 52% of this component of French associative tourism is owned by territorial communities, 38% by associative or social structures and the rest of 10% is owned by the companies belonging directly or indirectly to organizations with a non-profit purpose.

In France, associations were always the main players in youth travel for outdoor or sporting vacations or for various holidays with themes, so that the accommodation offers aimed at youth are primarily provided by them. All these organizations have a common objective, namely to promote access to vacations and leisure activities to the largest number of young people without discrimination, suggesting various sporting, cultural and educational activities at reasonable prices; regarding the personal values of youth, the emphasis is on intercommunity, personal development, youth emancipation, developing the spirit of autonomy, solidarity and mutual respect. Other organizations that are just as important are:

- Sports and Outdoor Centers Union (L'Union Nationale des Centres Sportifs de Plein Air - U.C.P.A.);
- United Federation of Youth Hostels (Fédération Unie des Auberges de Jeunesse - F.U.A.J.);
- The Union of International Meetings Centers of France (L'Union des Centres de Rencontres Internationales de France - UCRIF Etapes Jeunes);
- Léo Lagrange National Federation.

3.2. Germany

In Germany, the national tourism policy is divided in two: the educational aspect, which is the responsibility of the Ministry of Education and Youth, and the economic aspect, which is difficult to integrate in one of the structures of the German government. Therefore, this problem was solved by the *Bundesforum Kinder und Jugendreisen* organization, which proved that for the young tourist it's not important if the tourist offer is made by a non-profit organization or by an economic agent.

The idea of setting-up accommodation units aimed exclusively at young people – youth hostels (in German *Jugendherberge*) – came to a German professor named Richard Schirmann, and the first hostel with permanent service was founded in Altena, in the Sauerland region in Germany in 1912. These first youth hostels were the exponents of the German Youth Movement ideology to allow poor young people from the city to breathe fresh air in the middle of nature. The idea spread quickly overseas and eventually Hostelling International (H.I.) was founded, a non-profit organization consisting of 90 associations and youth hostel organizations, representing over 4,500 hostels in 80 countries.

In 1990, after the fall of the Berlin Wall, the hostels network unified at the level of whole Germany and the German Youth Hostel Association (*Deutsches Jugendherbergswerk - D.J.H.*) was created. The D.J.H. statute mentions as part of its goal promoting meetings between young people, a healthy life style and ecological awareness. Hostels aimed at youth belong to Regional Associations of D.J.H. and to other partner organizations.

In Germany, youth travel is represented at the level of European mobility by *Bundesforum Kinder und Jugendreisen*, which is a relatively “young” organization compared to other bodies in this area, being founded in 1997. One of the reasons is the fact that Germany doesn't have a unitary policy for youth travel because educational policy and the policy for hiring young people are organized at federal level, each of the 16 lands of Germany having their own policy regarding tourism.

Since 2002, as an acknowledgement of the youth travel importance, the International Tourism Fair in Berlin (I.T.B. Berlin) hosts a multitude of events (seminars, presentations, etc.) with the purpose to attract as many bidders in the youth travel sector and young visitors, including young families with children.

3.3. Italy

In Italy, youth travel, as a social phenomenon, it has its roots in the '60s, revolutionizing the classic patterns of family tourism by asserting the right of youth to escape from the control of the family, to discover remote destinations and to turn to

unconventional ways of travelling (for example, hitchhiking). The emergence of youth travel was largely influenced by the post-war pacifist principles of the first major international youth organizations: I.S.T.C. (International Student Travel Confederation) and F.I.Y.T.O. (Federation of International Youth Travel Organizations), which, since their founding in the 1949-1950 period, were the supporters of peace and understanding among young tourist and which still promote tourism with educational, cultural and social valences. The direct contact with nature and the close knowledge of the local population are the values characterizing youth travel, making young people the precursors of the ideas adopted by the associative forms of this type of tourism.

Starting with the '50s, social tourism acquired its own identity in terms of being born as an activity promoted by associations, unions and cooperatives in order to support the right to vacations for less favoured categories of population. It started to become a form of tourism for families, youth groups, elderly persons or people with special needs at the end of the '70s.

The most important body on the Italian youth travel market and one of the most important at European level is Student and Youth Travel Center (*Centro Turistico Studentesco e Giovanile - C.T.S.*), which is a non-profit association, founded in 1974, with 200 branches spread in Italy, as well as in countries like France, Spain, Great Britain and USA. C.T.S. sells annually approximately 400.000 tourist products, reaching a turnover of almost 150 million Euros. By using the experience gained in over 30 years regarding the development, organization and promotion of youth travel, C.T.S. collaborated with the Ministry of Social Solidarity on a project called “*Social Tourism Observer. Creating a new information system for knowing and developing youth travel in associated form*”, with the double objective to collect statistic data regarding youth travel and to experience an integrated model for collecting and analyzing these data in order to ease and to level the data base concerning associative tourism.

4. CONCLUSIONS

The current organization of youth travel at international level has a complex structure and an important number of economic agents and national bodies with different roles and activities are involved.

These are the most important youth travel organizations in the world, but there are definitely many more that function in this area due to the complex feature of this form of tourism.

Compared to other types of tourism, considered more or less developed, youth travel is well defined, being one of the most institutionalized forms of tourism.

More than in other activity sectors, in youth travel there must be close coordination between various governmental institutions and non-governmental organizations that are involved in tourism, because they address the same consumer segment

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