

THE ROLE OF THE ACADEMY OF ECONOMIC STUDIES OF MOLDOVA IN PREPARATION AND FURTHER EDUCATION FOR REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA'S TOURISM INDUSTRY

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Preamble: Human capital is one of the most important tourism resources of the enterprise, able to influence directly the company's economic activity, generating profit in case of an effective management of training and management of these resources, or loses in case of mismanagement. Human resources are unique in terms of their potential for growth and development and their ability to know and defeat their own limits, to face new challenges or demands of the present and future of the tourist branch.

Since in the provision of tourism services a direct interaction with the human factor is required, all tourism enterprises need to fill staffing needs with trained people, competent, to gain their confidence, to develop their skills, to motivate them for higher levels of development and to ensure that they will continue to maintain their commitment to the firm. The synergy between enterprise and human resources occurs only when people feel their company to be their own, its successes as their own successes, while company's failures are felt as personal failures.

During the professional training, AESM makes possible this synergy to be infiltrated to future graduates even from the stage of university, and their involvement in business in the future would help to increase financial income of businesses where they will be employed.

Through this article, the author tries to elucidate the specific of preparation and further education of the staff for the tourism industry within AESM.

Statistics

According to the National Bureau of Statistics, at the moment, in the tourism industry of the Republic of Moldova there are involved about **8206 people**, 423 tourism enterprises (**121** travel agencies and **302** travel retailer agencies) and **249** tourist accommodation structures with functions of accommodation and catering. The scriptic staff employed in tourism branch on 07.01.2016 is as follows:

• **Tourism activity:** tour operators travel agencies and retailer travel agencies – *1512 people*;

• **Structures of accommodation and catering** – *6694 people*, of which:

- Hotel 5* – 448 people;
- Hotel 4* – 1235 people;
- Hotel 3* – 649 people;
- Hotel 2* – 344;
- Hotel 1* – 108 people;
- Unclassified - 272 people;
- Hotel type apartment – 46 people;
- Motels – 46 people;
- Homes / hostels for visitors – 76 people;
- Tourism and agro-tourism pensions – 241 people;
- Spa structures – 1316 people;
- Villas, bungalows and camping – 718 people;
- Holiday camps – 1195 people.

Presenting the concept in staff preparation and further education

The essential factor in the economic and social development of any country is the human resources, the country's population at a certain time. This potential should be seen primarily as a group consumer, which identifies itself with the total population and as a collectively producer identified with labor resources, meaning the number, experience and their training level.

Human resources of a tourism enterprise represent the staff, which directly influences its program through the quality of professional training and results from their participation in everyday activities. They are the creative, active and coordinator element of the economic and social activity that takes place within the tourism enterprises.

Analyzing the current situation in the Republic of Moldova on the professional training of staff in the field of tourism, we mention that the training of specialists has become a matter quite popular in many education institutions. However, the quality of studies on the professional training of future employees has not reached the required level of tourist services market, being valued by employers as medium.

In the Republic of Moldova several accredited educational institutions are preparing employees with specialization „Tourism and hotel services”. Thus, at the Academy of Economic Studies of Moldova, State University of Physical Education and Sports, Agrarian State University of

Moldova, Free International University of Moldova, University „Perspective” etc. They are carrying out their activities departments specialized in tourism. They prepare graduates for both cycles of the full time and part-time studies. 15-22 specialized subjects are being studied, including the country's heritage, tourism economy, tourism management and marketing, technical operations in tourism, hotel services, foreign languages, etc. Annually, about 400-600 people graduate from high institutions and secondary professional specialized institutions in the field of tourism.

Academy of Economic Studies plays a very important role in training and retraining of personnel in the tourism industry. With the establishment of the first departments of tourism in Moldova in 1996, AESM has started an effective professional training for the tourism branch. The recognition of studies of tourism branch made possible employment of graduates in most tourism enterprises in the country, having the largest share of employment of young specialists in comparison with other educational institutions. This fact is due to the existence of a modern technical infrastructure and a professional approach in terms of preparation and further education promoted by the institution. From the first class and so far, the Department of „Tourism” prepared **2373** specialists for the tourism industry.

Further education in tourism is provided by the National Centre for Training in Tourism Industry subordinated to the Tourism Agency, the Higher School of Tourism and Hotel Services of the Academy of Economic Studies of Moldova and Training Center of the National Association of Travel Agencies. Within these institutions there are organized training courses for staff of tour operators travel agencies and retailer travel agencies, as well as for the staff from accommodation structures. There is proposed a number of 10-15 disciplines: management and marketing of tourism, tourism geography, operational techniques in tourism, tour guide, hospitality industry, information technology, tourism economy, accounting, rural tourism, knowledge of countries, taxation in tourism, etc. Annually about 300-400 people graduate training courses.

With the start of the activity in January 2013, the Higher School of Tourism and Hotel Services from AESM has become the undisputed leader, in spite of the existing competition in the field of continuous learning in the tourism industry. Of the total number of graduates of continuous learning courses for specialization „Tourism activity” of the tourism industry in the Republic of Moldova, 64% belong to the Higher School of Tourism and Hotel Services from AESM. This performance was made possible through the continuous support from the management of AESM, high quality of studies, taught subjects and teachers who hold these courses.

Statistics of continuous learning training courses at the Higher School of Tourism and Hotel Services AESM from *2013 to 25.09.16* is presented as follows:

№	Course title	Basic course	Continuous learning
1.	Business administration in tourism	164 people	329 people
2.	Management of tourism services	234 people	198 people
3.	Tourism guide	37 people	9 people
	Total	435 people	536 people

The staff in the tourism industry should correspond numerically in terms of training, but has to fulfill other requirements of behavior in direct customer relations.

Thus, the development and training of tourism personnel in the AESM is a continuous one, in step with the evolution of the field of activity and specific application, corresponding to the need to maintain the tourism company at a high market share.

Increasingly insistent penetration of information technology and communications on the services market requires new standards and mechanisms of tourism information while providing services. Increasingly common becomes the software applications used by tourists in the organization of trips, from the mechanisms of information (websites, virtual tours etc.) and ending with online booking and payment.

Tour operating travel agencies use the human capital in the enterprise to extend their influence on small and medium retailer travel agencies, in order to broaden their own service packages. Thus, after signing the contract of cooperation with travel agencies, tour operators give access to the online database of tourism products, selling holidays package at a net price, thus granting a maximum autonomy for agencies regarding the establishment of the commission in the desired size, maneuvering with pricing policy, based on tourism market conditions.

Implementation of this tactic is only possible in the case when a enterprise is acting based on a performant information technology management, capable of delivering in real time the diversity of tourism products, pricing policy on special offers, rapid transmission in time and space of travel packages to potential consumers.

The objectives of a company could not be achieved without an efficient use of human capital and without ensuring conditions that

guarantee the needs of employees and thus, their motivation to be loyal to the tour company they belong.

As a result of the above mentioned, in our opinion, there have been established a series of problems *and difficulties* resulting from the preparation process of staff at higher education and specialized institutions, namely:

1. lack of generalized information on staff supply and demand on the tourism market;
2. educational programs that are not adjusted to current requirements of the tourism market;
3. lack of professional teaching staff that have a practical approach;
4. the low quality of the practical training of graduates;
5. lack of a partnership between accredited educational institutions, public authorities and companies specialized in tourism on the internship programs for students;
6. lack of equipment and teaching materials suitable for the tourism industry as well as bases for production internship during the process of professional training;
7. lack of experience exchange with neighboring countries on the professional training in the field of tourism;

As a *perspective* for improving the situation in the field of professional training in our opinion would be:

1. carrying out a research study on supply and demand of professionals on the tourism market;
2. adjustment of training programs for specialists in the tourism branch to the market requirements (curriculum revisions, developing curricula for new specialties and crafts, equipping institutions with necessary equipment and teaching materials);
3. development of opportunities for staff development (seminars, conferences, roundtables, exchange of experience, training of specialists abroad);
4. creating a partnership between public authorities, educational institutions and businesses in the field on study programs and internship for student;
5. signing of agreements between higher education institutions for sharing their experiences with neighboring countries in the field of professional training;
6. training students on development of tourism package through information technologies;
7. inviting foreign IT specialists in tourism for training and implementation of new technologies in the provision of tourism services.

Conclusion

The relationship between the tourism industry and higher education and specialized institutions must be complex and interdependent. Stimulating tourism development must become a mean of promoting the development of labor force and hence, improvement of tourism depends on human resources with a high degree of training.

In these circumstances, Academy of Economic Studies and particularly the Department of „Tourism” should pay attention to information technologies and to focus in training on continuous modernization of laboratories and technological information programs applied in tourism. Only so graduates will face increasing requirements, which are desired by the labor market of the tourism industry.

*Annex 1***SWOT analysis of human resources in tourism in the Republic of Moldova**

<i>Strengths (S)</i>	<i>Weaknesses (W)</i>
<p>1. Availability of vacancies for graduates in the tourism branch.</p> <p>2. Labor force that has a certain level of professional training from other field, capable of rapid improvement for tourist branch.</p> <p>3. Young people that are turning to the tourism industry for training and development.</p> <p>4. Quite developed communication skills in foreign languages.</p> <p>5. Implementation of strategies and programs for tourism development in different regions capable of attracting the workforce in the area.</p> <p>6. Availability of tourism establishments with modern functions of accommodation and food for involving the personnel in the work field.</p> <p>7. Operation of 3 centers of professional personnel training in the tourism industry.</p> <p>8. Activity of various specialized associations capable of attracting European funds for tourism development.</p>	<p>1. Lack of qualified human resources in the tourism management and providing quality services.</p> <p>2. Lack of institutional framework for implementation of state policy in the field of human resources in tourism.</p> <p>3. Lack of the Tourism Information Office and its subsidiaries in Moldova's diplomatic missions accredited abroad that would stimulate tourism development and thus creation of new jobs.</p> <p>4. Lack at tourist attractions and museums of skilled personnel and knower of international modern languages.</p> <p>5. Professional training fairly oriented towards theory.</p> <p>6. Weak partnerships between higher education institutions and business in the field of tourism.</p> <p>7. Low investments in professional training and development of tourism.</p>
<i>Opportunities (O)</i>	<i>Threats (T)</i>
<p>1. Availability of an affordable professional training system in tourism in the process of modernization.</p> <p>2. The availability of a modern system of continuous learning in tourism.</p> <p>3. The signing of the Association Agreement with the EU, attracting European funds, engaging young</p>	<p>1. Increasing migration of the population aged less than 30 years, potential employees of tourism industry.</p> <p>2. Large fluctuation of staff in the field of tourism.</p> <p>3. Lack of favorable investment climate for investors to develop infrastructure of tourism structures with accommodation functions and</p>

<p>people in their assimilation. 4. Growing interest in the Republic of Moldova. 5. Improvement of training and continuous learning infrastructure. 6. Relatively lower costs for training and continuous learning compared to other countries. 7. The massive penetration of information and communication technology in the service sector tourism.</p>	<p>creation of new jobs. 4. Reduced competitiveness of tourism offer of the Republic of Moldova and hence reduced number of foreign tourists. 5. Salary relatively low compared to other countries or other sectors of the economy of Moldova. 6. Insufficient financial resources for training and development.</p>
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