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European Cities Marketing and City Break in Belgrade

European Cities Marketing organised its Annual Conference & General Assembly in Belgrade on 11th – 14th June. This event followed the City Break exhibition, which took place on 9th and 10th June, also in Belgrade.

City Break exhibition

The week started with the third **City Break** exhibition on 9th and 10th June 2008 organised by Reed Travel Exhibitions in cooperation with European Cities Marketing. Over 500 city break specialists represented 70 European destinations here. Representatives from major city break operators including Gullivers, Miki Travel, Expedia, attended City Break on a fully hosted basis for the first time. According to the participants' feedbacks, the quality of buyers was particularly high this year. The panel discussion on the aviation sector has undoubtedly contributed to the success of the City Break Exhibition 2008.

ECM Annual Conference started on Wednesday evening with the Welcome Reception at Ada Safari on the Ada Ciganlija Island. An innovation this year was that all Chief Executive's that are members, and were present in Belgrade, were invited to join for the first "Leaders' Dinner" which took place on Wednesday, at the Club of Ministers. For the CEOs this was suitable to discuss common issues concerning the cities across Europe and also to meet Ray Bloom, the chairman of IMEX.

Thursday was dedicated to the seminar "Key Performance Indicators and Tourism – Do they really measure and improve the performance of destination marketing organisations?" The content and structure of the seminar presentations, as well as the choice of speakers, were decided by Mrs. Anja Loetscher (director of Geneva Convention Bureau) and Prof. John Heeley (Chief Executive of Experience Nottinghamshire).

Leaders' Dinner
From the left: Mr. Stefan Diender, Mr. Olivier Lépine, Mr. Jean-Michel Lafond, Mr. Claes Bjerkne, Mrs. Sophie Eber, Mrs. Flavie Baudot, Ms. Pirkko Nyman, Mr. François Gaillard, Mr. Erwin Van de Wiele, Mr. Dieter Hardt-Stremayr, Mr. Frank Magee, Mrs. Heather Gough, Mr. Özen Dalli, Mrs. Oliveira Lazovic, Mr. Rémy Crégut, Mr. Ray Bloom

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Working Groups and Knowledge Groups took place on Friday, as well as the ECM General Assembly, which were open to the members to adopt the new ECM strategy. Elections of the Board members were also part of the General Assembly's programme in Belgrade. "The ECM meetings are one of the crucial elements for good functioning of our association. For our members it is the occasion to meet and share expertise during so called "Working Group meetings" where the participants focus their effort on a specific task or project. These structured meetings with an interactive method of working enable ECM to develop its activities in a very dynamic way", explains Frank Magee, the president of European Cities Marketing.

Frank Magee and Olivera Lazovic

The whole team of Belgrade Tourist Organisation ensured that everybody enjoyed their stay, by providing an exciting social programme, which included a tour of Belgrade or an excursion to its neighbour city Novi Sad. "I was delighted to have the possibility of hosting the ECM Annual Conference and General Assembly here in Belgrade. It is very important for us to welcome people from different European cities and to exchange experience and knowledge that is often very diverse and therefore extremely rich. I am glad that we had this opportunity and I express my kindest thanks to all who believed in us." expressed Olivera Lazovic, director of Belgrade Tourist Organization.

European Cities Marketing is the European leading association of City Tourism Offices and Convention Bureaus. Its network comprises 134 members spread over 31 countries. Its aim is to strengthen city tourism by
- *giving sales and marketing possibilities*
- *communicating information*
- *sharing knowledge*
- *educating*
- *and working together on an operational level.*

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