

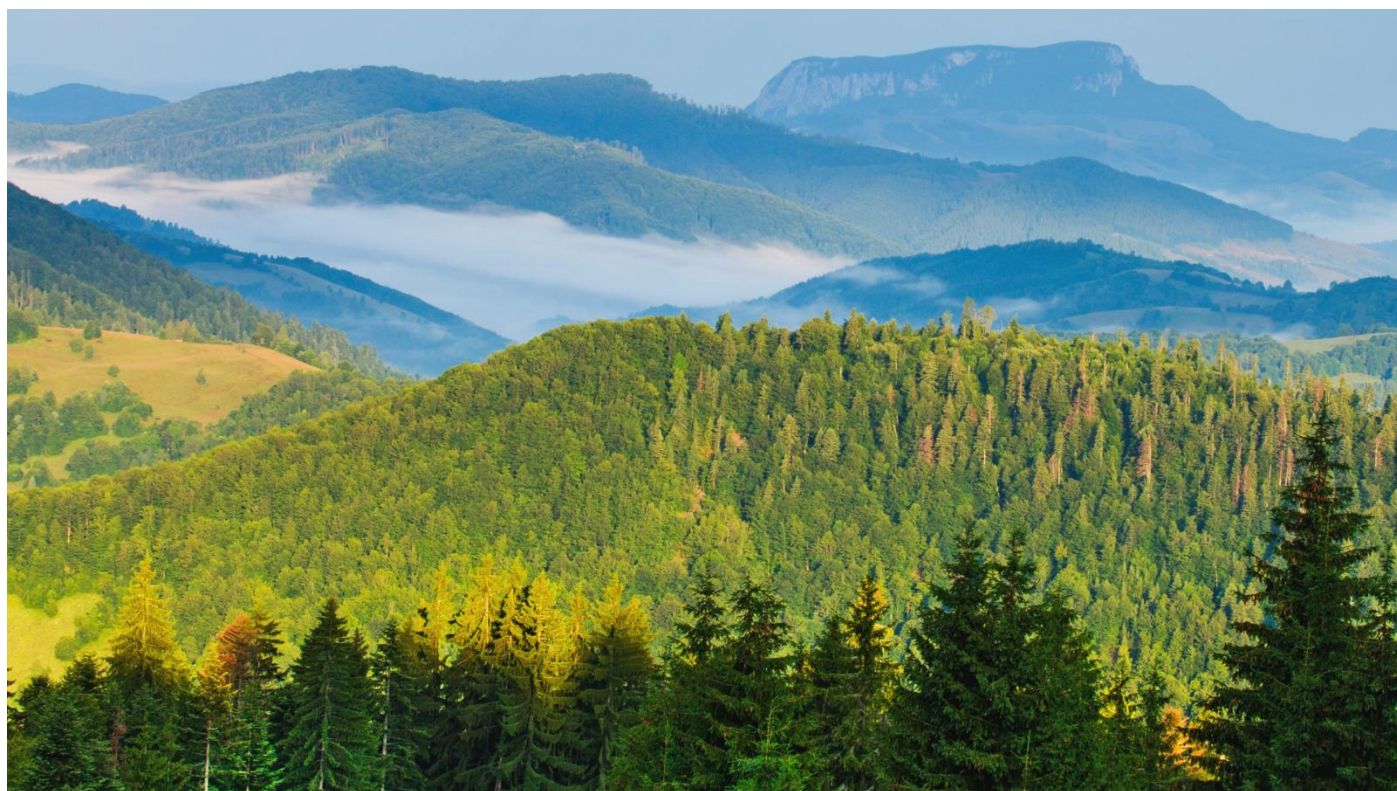
THE FUTURE OF **ECOTOURISM** | ROMANIA 2022

CONFERENCE

PROGRAM & SPEAKERS

June 21, 2022
Zăbala, Covasna County, Romania

Organized by **ADVANTAGE AUSTRIA Romania**, the **Austrian Embassy in Bucharest** in cooperation with the **Association of Ecotourism in Romania (AER)**



WELCOME



Dear participants,

Welcome and thank you for joining us today at our conference on ***“The Future of Ecotourism”***!

Tourism in Austria is a unique success story. For decades, politics, business and culture have worked together in making sure that guests from all over the world feel at home here. Hospitality and innovative thinking make Austria a role model for tourism worldwide.

It is safe to say that Austria's natural landscape and green mentality underpins holidays in Austria. Here, coexistence with nature is a way of life, visible throughout all sectors and localities. For tourists, it is an added value to know that holiday memories need not leave an environmental mark.

Even a city stay turns into a moment surrounded by nature when taking a break in one of the many parks that characterise cities such as Salzburg, Graz, and Vienna. Without even realising, many guests stay in accommodations built in accordance with ecological construction and passive house building standards.

At a first glance, tourism projects and ecological concerns often seem to oppose each other. Austrian firms, however, have been committed to sustainability for many years and use their expertise to devise practical solutions which ensure that nature and the environment are not only kept in good condition, but are also shown to represent a sustainable value and are marketed as such. Collaborating with Austrian companies means result-driven cooperation in terms of the planning, development, implementation, and ongoing monitoring of projects.

At our conference ***“The Future of Ecotourism”***, organized by ADVANTAGE AUSTRIA Romania and the AUSTRIAN EMBASSY in Bucharest in cooperation with the Association of Ecotourism in Romania (AER), we try to look beyond the horizon in order to identify and unlock the true potential of ecotourism.

Or, as one of our conference speakers put the motto of our conference to the point: ***“If everyone pulls together, that's a success. Together you have advantages that you can't achieve alone.”***

With best wishes / Cu stimă,

Gerd Bommer, Consilierul Comercial

Ambasada Austriei – Secția Comercială
ADVANTAGE AUSTRIA Romania



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The conference “The Future of Ecotourism” in Zăbala, Romania, on 21 July 2022 is organised in the context of the “ReFocus Austria” global economic initiative.

“ReFocus Austria” was launched in Vienna on 7 September 2021. The global network of Austrian diplomatic representations together with the Economic Chamber, the Austrian national tourist board, the Ministry of Economics and many other partners, as Team Austria participate in it. “ReFocus Austria” activities reflect the strong link between diplomacy and support for Austrian businesses. More than 200 events have already been organised so far.

The “ReFocus Austria” events reinforce core aspects of the Austrian economy, such as innovation, digitalisation, sustainability and tourism. In particular for tourism, the COVID-19-pandemic has been an enormous challenge for both countries, Austria and Romania.

For Austria, being a sustainable tourism destination is one of the most important aspects. To a large extent, the attractiveness of a tourism destination depends on it. The future of tourism is inseparable from sustainability.

From the conference “The Future of Ecotourism” we can expect profound insights with regard to sustainable tourism and interesting discussions with experts.

Adelheid Folie

Ambassador of the Republic of Austria to Romania

AGENDA AND TIMELINE

10.00 – 10.15 WELCOME & OVERVIEW

- Gerd Bommer | Head of ADVANTAGE AUSTRIA Romania
- HE Mrs. Adelheid Folie | Ambassador of Austria to Romania
- HE Mr. Emil Hurezeanu | Ambassador of Romania to Austria
- Florin Sergiu Dobrescu | Romanian Ministry of Entrepreneurship & Tourism
- Gregor Roy Chowdhury | Zabola Estate

10.15 – 10.35 KEYNOTE I

Sustainability & Greening of Tourism

Key Principles of Tourism Development and Tourism Education

- Prof. Dr. Christian Baumgartner
 - Professor for Sustainable Tourism at the University of Applied Sciences of the Grisons, Switzerland
 - CEO of response & ability consulting services

10.35 – 10.45 KEYNOTE II

Applied Ecotourism Concept in Romania

- Andrei Blumer | President, Association of Ecotourism in Romania (AER)

10.45 – 11.45 PANEL I – THE STATUS QUO OF ECOTOURISM IN ROMANIA

Presentation of innovative ideas in the Romanian ecotourism sector

Moderator:

Gerd Bommer | Head of ADVANTAGE AUSTRIA Romania

Speakers:

- Dragoş Anastasiu | CEO & Owner, Green Village Danube Delta
- Răzvan Marcu | Founder, Romanian Romance
- Iulia Mureşan | Communication Manager, Tăşuleasa Social (Via Transilvanica)
- Christian Macedonschi | Vice President, Braşov Hotels Association (Tour of Castles and Fortresses in Transylvania - Ruta Castelelor şi Cetăţilor)
- Hermann Kurmes | Founder, Carpathian Nature Tours
- Andrei Florescu | Manager, Domeniul Cerbilor and Aquarius Boutique Hotel
- **Q & A | Open Conversation**

11.45 – 12.00 COFFEE BREAK

12.00 – 13.00

PANEL II – WHERE DOES ROMANIAN ECOTOURISM GO FROM HERE?

POTENTIAL & CHALLENGES

Positive economic effects and challenges

Moderator:

Georg Bardeau | Austrian Honorary Consul in Timișoara, CEO Banat Agri

Speakers:

- Andrei Blumer | President, Association of Ecotourism in Romania (AER)
- Roxana Niculescu | Romanian Ministry of Entrepreneurship & Tourism
- Prof. Dr. Christian Baumgartner | Professor for Sustainable Tourism, University of Applied Sciences of the Grisons, Switzerland
- Răzvan Todor | Founder and CEO, GEODIS Todor SRL
- **Q & A | Open Conversation**

13.00 – 14.00

LUNCH BREAK & NETWORKING

14.00 – 15.00

PANEL III – APPEAR AS ONE DESTINATION. HOW IS IT DONE?

WITH KEYNOTE: ROMANIAN ECOTOURISM CLIENTS' PROFILE (2021)

Study conducted by the Association of Ecotourism in Romania on the Romanian ecotourism clients' profile. Which type of tourists are attracted by ecotourism offers. Presenting important insights into marketing activities of ecotourism destinations, which help to approach target groups more effectively.

- Bogdan Papuc | Executive Director, Association of Ecotourism in Romania (AER)

Moderator:

Stephan Stürzer | Deputy Head, ADVANTAGE AUSTRIA Romania

Speakers:

- Bogdan Papuc | Executive Director, Association of Ecotourism in Romania (AER)
 - Florian Van der Bellen | Van der Bellen Business & Tourism Consulting
 - Alois Lang | Expert, Ecotourism, Visitor Management and Public Relations
 - **Q & A | Open Conversation**
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15.00 – 16.00	<p>PANEL IV – DESTINATION MANAGEMENT & COLLABORATIVE WORK</p> <p>Successful Destination Management</p> <p>National & International Marketing Management</p> <p>Moderator: Christian Macedonschi Vice President, Braşov Hotels Association</p> <p>Speakers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Allen Coliban Mayor, Municipality of Braşov • Dr. Cristian Ciobanu Haţeg UNESCO Global Geopark • Zoltán Albert Marketing Manager, Zabola Estate & Conservation Transylvania • Roland Rauch Managing Director, Holiday Region National Park Hohe Tauern (online participation) • Andreas Bardeau President & Initiator, “Schloesserstrasse” (Tour of Castles and Fortresses in Austria) • Q & A Open Conversation
16.00 – 16.15	<p>COFFEE BREAK</p>
16.15 – 16.30	<p>SPECIAL GUEST KEYNOTE</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Charlie Ottley Writer and presenter, “Flavours of Romania” and eco-travel series “Wild Carpathia”
16.30 – 17.30	<p>PANEL V - ECOTOURISM AS A BOOST TO ROMANIAN TOURISM BRANDING</p> <p>Successfully creating a regional brand</p> <p>Moderator: Mihai Marc Project Manager, ADVANTAGE AUSTRIA Romania</p> <p>Speakers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dragoş Anastasiu Founder, Repatriot Romania • Călin Ile President, Romanian Hotel Industry Federation (FIHR) & Activist for sustainable tourism • Alina Szász Public Manager, Braşov County Council • Mihai Bârsan CEO, Brandelier & President, Romanian Touristic Brand Council • Georg Bardeau Austrian Honorary Consul in Timișoara & CEO, Banat Agri Group • Q & A Open Conversation
17.30	<p>END OF CONFERENCE</p>

KEYNOTE I

Prof. Dr. Christian Baumgartner | Owner and CEO, response & ability

Christian Baumgartner studied landscape ecology and is owner and CEO of response & ability. 1995 he founded respect - Institute for Integrative Tourism and Development and was later for a decade Secretary General of Naturefriends International. He holds a professorship for Sustainable Tourism at the University of Applied Sciences of the Grisons, Switzerland.

He has been active as university lecturer in Austria, Switzerland, Serbia and China and he is a member of numerous advisory bodies of NGOs, trade associations, EU and UN organisations.



KEYNOTE II



Andrei Blumer | President, AER – Association of Ecotourism in Romania

Andrei is one of the founders and the current president of the Association of Ecotourism in Romania (AER) since 2003.

He gained extensive practical experience in the field of ecotourism, assisting for 20 years protected areas, small scale businesses in tourism and ecotourism destinations in the region of Carpathians (Romania and Ukraine), Danube region (Danube Protected Area Network) and Black Sea region (Turkey, Georgia and Romania).

He has acquired extensive experience in developing ecotourism certification schemes for businesses and destinations in Romania, at the European level and in Botswana. He was contracted as expert by various international institutions such as USAID, UNWTO, World Bank, GIZ in different countries. He has extensively worked for WWF in Romania, Ukraine and Turkey.

PANEL I – THE FUTURE OF ECOTOURISM

Hermann Kurmes | Founder and Director, Carpathian Nature Tours

In 1999, Katharina and Hermann Kurmes founded the travel agency “Carpathian Nature Tours”, focusing on sustainable and socially responsible tourism to support the conservation of the environment and wildlife protection.

Katharina and Hermann are both founder members of the Romanian Eco-tourism Association AER and are actively involved in the implementation of ecotouristic structures in Romania on a nationwide and local level.

Katharina and Hermann are also the owners of “Villa Hermani” Guesthouse in the National Park Piatra Craiului, which opened in 2004.





Dragoș Anastasiu | Founder, Eurolines Group Romania

Dragoș Anastasiu began his entrepreneurial journey in 1995 when he founded his first company, a coach passenger line from Romania to Germany, which in only two years would become a member of the most important international passenger transport network: Eurolines.

After that first company, many more followed, around 20, that formed the Eurolines Romania Group which developed continuously, until became a reference group in transport and tourism in Romania. Outside the country, he has developed business in Germany and the Republic of Moldova. In 2017 Dragoș Anastasiu finalized the partnership with FlixBus one of the first important business line of Eurolines Group (international lines of transport). 2 years later he transferred all tourism activities to DER Touristik Group and made an exit from the travel industry.

Today, after these two success exits from transport and tourism, Eurolines Group is specialized in hospitality (Green Village Resort in Danube Delta 4*, Valea Verde Retreat in Transylvania), rent a car (Enterprise franchise) and support services.

Dragoș Anastasiu was the President of the Romanian-German Chamber of Commerce and member of the Advisory Board of Romanian Business Leaders for almost 10 years.

Răzvan Marcu | Founder, Romanian Romance | Sales and Marketing Director, MARCOM

Răzvan Marcu was born in Bucharest and studied Management at the Academy of Economic Studies of Bucharest, graduating with a master's degree in International Marketing. He has been working since the beginning of his activity at MARCOM.

Răzvan is passionate about the lands of Romania, its different landscapes, the interaction with people and photography. In his working activity he reached many areas of Romania and had the chance to observe the colors, people, the dynamic and the changing process of Romania. He initiated, together with his wife, Alexandra, the Romanian Romance project, sharing with both Romanians and expats the stories, places and secrets of Romania, via an online platform, social media channels and three printed travel guides. They transformed Romanian Romance into a national project, traveling, sharing their experiences and places, promoting the premium traditional travel of Romania and supporting the authentic and sustainable locations and businesses.



Andrei Florescu | Manager, Domeniul Cerbilor & Aquarius Boutique Hotel

After his legal studies Andrei Florescu proceeded his career in sales, management and project management.

He is developing the Horeca direction within Calcarul SA company, the landmarks being Boutique Hotel Aquarius, Domeniul Cerbilor, Casa Inna, Grill house Meet & Eat.

Andrei is also a passionate philatelist.





Iulia-Alexandra Mureșan | Communications Manager, Tășuleasa Social / Via Transilvanica

The most celebrated and important project of Tășuleasa Social is Via Transilvanica: the first long-distance trail in Romania, that stretches over 1.400 kilometres from Putna (the North-East of the country) to Drobeta Turnu-Severin (South-West, to the Danube). This trail, even though still in the making, has the potential to revolutionize the face of tourism in Romania.

Here to represent Alin Ușeriu, the president of Tășuleasa Social, is Iulia-Alexandra Mureșan. Iulia began her journey at Tășuleasa Social as a teenager, almost eight years ago. Until 2021 she was a volunteer, but after finishing her studies of computer engineering in Cluj, she realised her love of nature and her trust in the extraordinary potential of Via Transilvanica to change the country for the better, were good enough reasons for her to become more involved. She is now working as Communications Manager at Tășuleasa Social/Via Transilvanica, telling the stories of this project and also part of the documenting team for the trail, which is responsible for writing the Traveler's Guide on Via Transilvanica.

Christian Macedonschi | Vice President, Brașov Hotels Association

Christian Macedonschi is an active and passionate developer of sustainable tourism activities.

He is the CEO of Trus Horeca Services S.R.L., President of the Smart City Brașov Association, President of the Carpathian Tourism Cluster, and Co-Initiator of Oktoberfest Romania, the biggest beer event in Romania, amongst others.

Christian is a bridgebuilder, trendhunter, valuecreator, futureshaper and – last but not least – a formidable skier.



PANEL II – WHERE DOES ROMANIAN ECOTOURISM GO FROM HERE?

Răzvan Todor | Founder and CEO, GEODIS Todor SRL – Vienna/Braşov



Razvan Todor has more than 15 years of experience in the field of regional development, urban planning, natural hazard risk management and project management with European funds.

He worked in close collaboration with the Technical University of Vienna and public institutions in Romania, from government level to local administrations, mainly in mountainous areas.

Andrei Blumer | President, AER – Association of Ecotourism in Romania

See Keynote II



Romanian Ministry of Entrepreneurship & Tourism

Representative of the Romanian Ministry of Entrepreneurship & Tourism

Prof. Dr. Christian Baumgartner | Owner and CEO, response & ability

See Keynote I



PANEL III – APPEAR AS ONE DESTINATION. HOW IS IT DONE?

WITH KEYNOTE - ROMANIAN ECOTOURISM CLIENTS' PROFILE



Bogdan Papuc | Executive Director, AER – Association of Ecotourism in Romania

Bogdan Papuc has been coordinating the Association of Ecotourism in Romania (AER) for more than 8 years and he has more than 17 years of practical experience in ecotourism.

Bogdan graduated in Geography of Tourism at Babeş Bolyai University and he obtained a master's degree in marketing at the Bucharest University of Economic Studies.

He then worked in the private sector and for various NGOs in the field of tourism and he specialized in heritage interpretation, tourism marketing, and destination management organization. As part of AER's efforts to develop the network of ecotourism destinations, he coordinated the tourism monitoring activity in 6 ecotourism destinations based on which important data was gathered regarding visitors' profile, destination profile and satisfaction.

Alois Lang | Expert, Ecotourism, Visitor Management and Public Relations

Alois Lang worked in and for both sectors: nature conservation and tourism. Before he built up the ecotouristic program for Lake Neusiedl National Park (Austria) from 1993 onwards, his activities as the regional tourism manager of Lake Neusiedl focused on the marketing of nature, cycling, and wine tourism. Since then, he has often been involved in ecotourism projects in countries like Romania (Danube Delta Biosphere Reserve), Georgia, and Albania, concentrating on the integration of nature conservation with regional development. From 2005 he took three years sabbatical, working with IUCN as the coordinator of the European Green Belt initiative.

During all his working life he has been committed to nature and rural areas as a board member, both in regional marketing as well as in conservation organisations. Alois Lang retired in 2021.



Florian Van der Bellen, MBA | Owner & CEO, Van der Bellen International SRL
Business & Tourism Consulting

Florian is a specialist for sustainable tourism strategies and tourism development, marketing, destination management, inclusion, and excellence in customer service and customer experience.

Florian has 30 years of international tourism management experience in countries like Austria, Germany, Switzerland, Australia, Romania, Georgia, Armenia and on cruise ships.

He holds a degree from the Austrian College of Tourism in Innsbruck and an Executive MBA with honours from the University of Economics in Vienna.

PANEL IV – DESTINATION MANAGEMENT & COLLABORATIVE WORK

Allen Coliban | Mayor, Municipality of Braşov

Born in 1979, Allen Coliban is a proud father of two girls and Mayor of Braşov. Before being elected as mayor in 2020, he graduated from the Faculty of Management at Transilvania University in Braşov and studied Automatic Control and Computers at the Politehnica University in Bucharest.

At the age of 20, he started his own software company, working 10 years in IT and then became a business consultant and organisational development and performance management expert.

In 2016, he was elected as a Member of the Romanian Parliament, where he chaired the Environmental Committee, proposing legislation to strengthen environmental protection. As Mayor of the second most visited city in Romania, one of his priorities is to promote sustainable tourism and set a positive example for the rest of the country.



Dr. Cristian Ciobanu | Heritage manager, University of Bucharest – Haţeg County UNESCO Global Geopark | Local coordinator, Retezat Tourism Association – Haţeg County-Retezat EcoDestination

Cristian has a PhD in Geography with the paper „Study of Mental Geography in Bucharest”, which created a trend of Geographies of the mind in Romania. Since 2011 he teaches Heritage Management at the Geobiology masters, Geology and Geophysics Faculty, University of Bucharest.

Since 2012 he lives in Haţeg region, where he works at the Haţeg Country UNESCO Global Geopark and the Haţeg Country-Retezat EcoDestination. He is an UNESCO evaluator for Global Geoparks since 2018 and elected member of the European Geoparks Network Advisory Committee, 2022-2024.

Zoltán Albert | Marketing Manager, Zabola Estate & Conservation Transylvania

Started as an inspector at Covasna County Council, Zoltán was one of the founders of the Covasna County Tourism Association in 2005 and in parallel, he lead his own family business in the hotel sector taking on personal projects about Kürtös kalács or about mineral waters of Szeklerland.

In 2015 he went completely private taking part in the ‘giant step’ Zabola Estate took in those times. At present, he is working as a consultant for several tourism and medical companies and joined Zabola’s nature conservation and socio-cultural programs as well.

In his spare time, he runs a rehabilitation project on an old watermill in the north-western part of Covasna County. For Zoltán, nature is not only an abstract notion but a living space where he can pay his homage to trail running and cross-country cycling.



Roland Rauch | Managing Director, Holiday Region National Park Hohe Tauern

Roland Rauch is a specialist in brand development, market research and sustainable tourism marketing and has a professional experience in the tourism sector for more than 15 years.

Since 2019, Rauch was appointed Managing Director of the Holiday Region Nationalpark Hohe Tauern and the Nationalpark Worlds visitor's centre in Mittersill.

Before, he was Managing Director of the tourism board in Mittersill for more than ten years. He studied business administration and information management at the Salzburg University of Applied Sciences and graduated the master studies in 2003.



Andreas Bardeau | President & Initiator, "Schloesserstrasse" (Tour of Castles and Fortresses in Austria)



The lawyer Andreas Bardeau has been Honorary Consul of Romania in Styria for more than 10 years. He is currently President of the "Castle Road", which stretches through Austria, Slovenia and Croatia with 41 castles and fortresses.

He is also CEO of Bardeau Holding Romania and co-founder of the social project Asociatie Bardeau in the Banat region. As managing director of Bardeau GesmbH, he has turned the family home "Schloss Kornberg" into a regional cultural and exhibition center over the past decades. He has residences both in Kornberg Castle in Styria and in Timișoara in Romania.

SPECIAL GUEST KEYNOTE – CHARLIE OTTLEY



Charlie Ottley | Writer and presenter, "Flavours of Romania" and eco-travel series "Wild Carpathia"

Charlie is producer, director, travel channel presenter, TV script writer, journalist, and conservationist with a long history of working in the broadcast media industry.

He is also an experienced editor, copywriter, and with successful track record in online promotion, crowdfunding and social media marketing.

PANEL V – ECOTOURISM AS A BOOST TO ROMANIAN TOURISM BRANDING



Călin Ile | President, Romanian Hotel Industry Federation (FIHR) | Activist for sustainable tourism

Hotelier since 1997, Călin Ile is very involved in promoting the tourism sector to become a priority domain of the Romanian economy.

Călin Ile has graduated in tourism at ASE Bucharest and has done different tourism courses in Holland at Hotel School den Hague or in Paris - Course for International Hotel Managers by Cornell University and EHMI. In 2011, he was awarded "Hotelier of the Year" by HTB Hospitality Forum.

President of FIHR – Federation of Hotels Industry in Romania, Călin is also General Manager of IBIS Continental Hotels in Romania. As president of FIHR, Călin initiated an active campaign to support education in tourism as first priority for Hotel Association. He is a founding member of ARLITH (Association of Tourism High Schools in Romania)

He is an active militant of responsible tourism, being for 3 years responsible for CSR policies of Accor Hotels Romania. In this role, he had the privilege to support special causes in the country, like for instance the project "Plant for the Planet", which meant 2.5 million trees planted in villages in Transylvania.

Georg Bardeau | Honorary Consul of Austria in Timișoara & CEO, Banat Agri Group & Banat Business Park

Born in Styria, Georg Bardeau attended the Higher School of Tourism in Bad Gleichenberg, Austria and holds a degree as tourist manager. He works since 2002 in agriculture and real estate development in Banat. He is also active in projects to build up a framework for the promotion of Romanian agriculture products (Coalitia and Farmers Club). Together with his wife Claudia, he is also active in various charity projects.

In October 2020, Georg Bardeau was appointed Honorary Consul of the Republic of Austria for Arad, Bihor, Caraș-Severin, Hunedoara, Mehedinți and Timiș.



Dragoș Anastasiu | Founder, Repatriot Romania

See PANEL I – THE FUTURE OF ECOTOURISM.

Alina Szász | Public Manager, Braşov County Council

As a graduate in tourism, Alina Szász continued her studies with a master's degree in European Integration at Bradford University, Great Britain and a master's degree in Public Policies for Local Governments at the National Institute of Political Graduates – Tokyo Japan.

She works now as a public manager of Braşov County Council, where she coordinates the development and promotion of tourism in Braşov County in close collaboration with stakeholders from various fields (NGOs, public institutions, chambers of commerce, accommodation, food, leisure, university & research). Her activity within the local government is reflected also in the process of implementation and monitoring of the ongoing projects on tourism, climate change and mobility.

She represents the Carpathian Sustainable Tourism Platform – Centre Romania, as the coordinator for the implementation of the Strategy for the Sustainable Tourism Development of the Carpathians and a member of the Romanian National Tourism Task Force within the Carpathian Convention.



Mihai Bârsan | President, Romanian Touristic Brand Council



Mihai has 20+ years of experience in Consumer Marketing, working for P&G and the brewer giants SABMiller and Asahi in Romania and other CEE markets. As VP Marketing & Strategy for Ursus Breweries, he developed the most valuable Romanian FMCG brand portfolio. His expertise is widely recognized in the Romanian marcom industry where he chaired the local chapter of the International Advertising Association or the Effie Awards Organization Committee.

Since 2019, Mihai has committed his time and skills to entrepreneurial endeavors. He co-founded EpicVisits.com – a fast-growing marketplace for epic stays and experiences, Destination of the Year – a competition for the most attractive cities in Romania, and The Pareto Report – a comprehensive behavior and attitude research of the top 20% of Romanians by income.

At the same time, he is actively engaged in projects that aim to make Romania a better place such as the Rethink Romania think-tank or the Romanian Touristic Brand Council.

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