



Industry Briefing Papers 2016

EUROPE: HUNGARY

1. What is currently making news in your country when it comes to spa, wellness, wellness travel or well-being?

After the government has finished the modernization of the traditional thermal bathes in more than 50 cities, EU funds are available for the surrounding of this bathes, making the spa cities healthier and more attractive for wellness tourism. Hungary is traditionally strong in medical and balneological research and innovation reached the spa industry – e. g. there are several research works of the usage of grape and wine products in spa treatments. Hévíz tries to develop itself for the center of excellence of Europe of mud based treatments.

2. Please provide one sentence that describes what you think is the most important development in your country for each of the following wellness sectors:

Spas:

Spas with pool areas are built even for 3 stars hotels in Hungary. Spas separately from a hotel or public bath are still not characteristic, if not an additional element of a fitness center.

Beauty:

In Hungary the beauty industry has an own network, but we can find more and more beauty services in spas. An important aspect is the increasing bio product developments in this field.

Fitness:

Sports are traditionally important in Hungary: in 2016 the country has gained 8 Olympic gold medals (ranked 12th among the countries). In the last 5 years fitness has become integrated part of the daily life for the younger generation and the middle classes.

Nutrition:

Hungary was an agricultural country with excellent agricultural conditions. Based on this manufacturers started to create healthier varieties of their products, even using innovative research to develop functional products helping to create better health.

Wellness Tourism:

Wellness hotels are extremely successful among the Hungarian hotels, always full, because wellness holidays have become very popular, even 10 times a year going there.

Wellness Communities or Real Estate:

Real Estate industry has started to grow from this year with the help of the governmental support for families to built new houses. In few cities (e. g. in Cserkeszölő) apartment houses with healing thermal water pipelines are under construction.

3. Our theme this year is “Back to the Future.” What do you feel is your country’s most significant contribution to what is now a global wellness economy?

The Hungarian thermal springs can be really significant contribution to the global wellness economy. Not only the quantity of them (more than 1000) but the quality, the diversity of the waters, the overall high temperature (we have to cool them first, using them for heating the spas). Even more important is the fact that the thermal water and other natural healing elements are traditionally used under medical (scientific) control, as a part of complex medical treatments. The importance of this is increasing because of the shifting of spa and wellness industry from pampering and interesting exotic treatments to evidence based treatments. This is a possibility for Hungary.

4. What do you feel is the biggest challenge in your country when it comes to growing the wellness economy?

The biggest challenge could be the proper relationship between the medical and the wellness industry. In Central Europe it is definitely typical for the big medical tourism centers to do professional healing work but they became famous as bath cities. At the moment the medical tourism in Hungary operates small and medium sized surgeries. Its base is the competitive price/value rate which is obtainable here. Based of the brand and facilities of these spa cities it will be possible to expand these fields towards the motion sickness and rehabilitation, which are overlapping the wellness industry.

On the other hand it is important for the country to develop successful complex spa products and brands instead of importing them from the more developed countries.

5. While no answers are right or wrong, we would like to know what you feel is the difference - if any - between the terms/concepts of “wellness” and “well-being” in your country.

Wellness mainly means visiting spas and wellness hotels, well-being means mainly

healthy nutrition and sports for an average Hungarian. The convergence of the two topics has begun for a few years.

SUBMITTED BY:

Name: Tamás Várhelyi, MD, PhD

Title/Company: College Professor,
Eszterházy Károly University

Title/Company 2: Director of Research,
Innovative Tourism Knowledge Centre

Email: varhelyit@hotmail.com

Phone Number: (+36) 30 9431 041

