

AEHT- European Association of Hotel and Tourism Schools
Organization of competitions among students in different categories

27° Annual Conference and competitions
In Belgrade, Serbia

Tourist Destination competition:

Anita Berardi, SSAT - TUR 3B

Hotel Management competition:

Sheila Citriniti, SSAT - ALB 3A

Front Office competition:

Giorgia Balabbio, SSAT - SEG2

The 17th of November we left from Agno to participate at the competitions of the AEHT Conferences of 2014. We didn't have a very clear idea of what the experience would've been like. Once we arrived to the hotel Crown Plaza in the centre of Belgrade, in Serbia, we were really amazed to see the hundreds of people that were there. There were 500 guests and competitors coming from schools from all over Europe. The hotel was amazing, a 4* business hotel with very nice and comfortable rooms, a pool & spa area and fitness room, and with very large conference rooms.

On Tuesday we were officially welcomed in the morning with the opening ceremony: there was music, videos, and traditional dance performances. After that the president of the association and the director of the Hotel Management School of Belgrade officially opened the conference. All the countries were presented to the audience. It was a very exciting moment, as the SSAT was the only school representing Switzerland at the competition. We felt very proud while walking towards the stage with the Swiss flag.

During the days of the competitions we mostly had to work in the morning. In the afternoon there was always the chance to visit the sights of the city, but we didn't attend all of the tours, because we wanted to focus on the projects for the competition. In the evening there was the possibility to go partying in the famous clubs in the city centre.

The Tourist Destination competition started on Tuesday. In the morning the teams were formed. I was in a team with two other students, one from Italy and one from Sweden. I wasn't very happy to be placed with a person that knew Italian, but in the end we only spoke in English, so it wasn't a problem. On the same day we had to take a test about tourism. On the second day we had 6 hours to develop the project, with the aim of promoting the city of Belgrade as a tourism destination, connected to a subject that we drew in the beginning of the day. The theme we picked was "Music Events" so we created a new idea for a big concert that would take place on the rivers flowing in Belgrade, the Danube and the Sava. The 12 teams competing in the Tourist Destination competition had to present their projects in front of the judges on Thursday or Friday.

The Hotel Management competition started on Tuesday with a briefing with all the judges and the participants. We were only sixteen and the teams were composed of two people from different European countries. I was in a team with a Dutch girl. We worked really well together, and we had a very good teamwork. On Wednesday we had a test about revenue and environmental management: it wasn't easy, but we reached a good result. In the afternoon and on Thursday we worked on our projects. We had to do two different presentations: for the first one we had to create an offer for a meeting in the Hotel Crowne Plaza, while the second one was about energy efficiency in a hotel "x". For this project, we had to improve our ways to recycle and spare energy. On the last day, on Friday, we had to present our projects to the other seven groups and the judges.

The Front Office competition started on Tuesday with a language test and with the forming of the teams. The teams were composed of two people from different countries and drew by the judges. There were 18 pairs total.

On Wednesday the competitions started. There were three different parts: A phone call or an e-mail to respond to, a check-in and a situation we had to handle where a guest complained about something, in this case a mother who complained about the baby-club activities in the hotel. Actors played the role of complaining guests.

On our last evening in Belgrade, at dinner we were very excited about the closing ceremony but at the same time very nervous about the results of the competitions.

In the end we were proud and content with our result.

This experience was very enriching especially because we met lots of the people from different countries with whom we had the possibility to share our opinions about tourism and hotel industries.

Overall it was really a great experience, which allowed us to grow professionally and personally. We are very proud to have had the chance to represent the school and Switzerland at the competitions, but most of all, we were also able to build lasting friendships, and this has a great value for us.

We would like to thank all the people we met in Serbia during the competitions and the audience. Our very special thanks go to Mr. Mauro Scolari and Mr. Jacopo Soldini who gave us the opportunity to take part in this special experience which we won't ever forgive.

Anita Berardi, Sheila Citriniti and Giorgia Balabbio

