

# City Branding of Bratislava: History and the Present

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THE INCREASING COMPETITION OF CITIES has caused the implementation of marketing principles in local development strategies. A very important segment of territorial marketing is the city branding. This term could refer to a country, region, tourist destination or a city. The city branding is based on a strategic approach to public relations, stating that a change of the image is an ongoing, holistic, interactive and wide-scale process (Avraham and Ketter 2008; Hospers 2004). The paper will focus on the implementation of city branding principles in local development (Case Study of the City of Bratislava). Bratislava, the largest city in Slovakia (427,000 inhabitants), became the capital city of the autonomous Slovak Republic on January, 1st, 1993 (after the agreement on Czechoslovakia's dissolution). The biggest challenge of the city is represented by the permanent trailing away behind the competitive metropolises (Warsaw, Prague, and Budapest) in most of the indicators. The aim to create a modern metropolis of Central-European importance is realised in Bratislava by several investments into the city infrastructure, making it the most attractive city for current foreign investments in Slovakia.

## NATIONAL LEGISLATIVE FRAMEWORK

Transformation processes after 1989 associated with the transition towards the market economy in Slovakia and the quest for integration into the European Union, have raised the urgent need to change the existing, or create new legislative and institutional rules of society functioning. The need for a complex system of regional development support at all the scale levels had led to the formation of the still lacking legal regulation in 2001.

The new law imposes on cities and towns the necessity of elabo-

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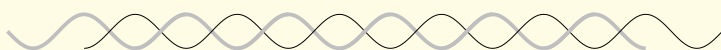
ration, approval and periodic evaluation of the development strategy of their territory (The Economic and Social Development Program PHSR). This document is a supplement to land-planning documents and should be consistent with them. The legislation in force does not determine the need for using marketing tools in the process of regional development, and therefore the marketing plan of a municipality is considered a soft Planning Document.

#### GENERAL CHARACTERISTICS OF THE CITY

Despite its settlement history reaching as far back as 5000 B C, Bratislava is regarded to be one of the youngest metropolises in Europe. It became the capital city of the autonomous Slovak Republic on 1 January, 1993 (after the agreement on Czechoslovakia dissolution). At the same time it is the largest city in Slovakia (427,000 inhabitants) with a very favorable macro-location and excellent accessibility by all means of transport within Central Europe. It lies between Vienna and Budapest on the navigable Danube river emptying into the Black Sea and by means of the Main and Rhine connected to the North Sea. Near by the city there are several gates – straits (Devin Gate, Carnunt Gate) located on the middle section of the Danube river attracting all the routes of the region into the strategically narrow area between the Litavske Mountains and the Little Carpathians, representing a barrier between the Vienna Basin and the Small Danube Basin (Buček 1995, 146). However, the mezo-location of Bratislava in relation to the territory of Slovakia is rather disadvantageous, extremely eccentric, on the south-west of the state. The micro-location of the city is characterized by the junction of the Danube lowland, the Little Carpathians and Zahorska lowland, creating a picturesque character of the city spreading over the terraces and alluvium of the Danube river and on adjacent slopes of the Little Carpathians, having a southern and south-eastern exposition suitable for the development of viniculture.

#### CITY BRANDING – HISTORICAL CONTEXT

Bratislava (since 1919 Prešporok, in German Pressburg, in Hungarian Pozsony) has played a significant role as a settlement centre on the crossroads of the Danube route and the Amber route since the an-



cient times. Already in the first century B.C. it used to be a centre of the advancing clerical and warlord central authority of the Celts. Numerous archaeological findings from that period prove the existence of the Danube Empire of Celts with significant trade concentration already in the 1st century B.C. The most important are silver coins called Biatecs (nowadays it is the symbol of the National Bank of Slovakia) (Navrátilová and Hatalová 1996, 13). In the following period the territory became a part of the northern edge of the Roman Empire (1st–4th century A.D.). In this period the Romans had built one of the largest military camps on the central part of the Danube river, known as Gerulata, representing a part of the fortification line called Limes Romanum. [217]

The first Slavs came to the territory of Bratislava during the migration of nations in the 5th century. The territory reached a significant position at the beginning of the 9th century with the formation of an autonomous state – Great Moravia Empire. The existing settlement was an important sacral, administrative, cultural and educational centre (Navrátilová and Hatalová 1996, 14).

Bratislava had maintained its central function also during the Hungarian State, being an important administrative (the seat of the self-governing region) and ecclesiastical centre of Hungarian frontier. The Castle of Bratislava had continually become one of the best fortified border forts of the Hungarian Empire, being able to resist even the Mongol invasions (1241) (Bratislava Tourist Service 2005; Bratislava v historickej skratke 2010; Navrátilová and Hatalová 1996).

The approval of several city privileges by the king Ondrej III in 1291 caused the development of trade, crafts and viniculture. 40 years later it received the coin law (1430) and the right to use the coats of arms (1436). One of the most favorable periods of its development was the reign of Matej Korvin, the king who not only confirmed all the privileges of a free royal town, but also established the first university on the territory of present Slovakia – Universitas Istropolitana in 1465, which ceased after his death in 1491 (Bratislava v historickej skratke 2010). The image of the city in the 14th–15th century can be characterized as a centre of crafts, trade and education.

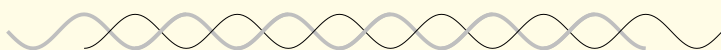
Difficult times after the invasion of the Turks into the centre of

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Hungary and the occupation of Buda brought strengthening of the Bratislava position, paradoxically. In 1531 it had become the seat of the Royal chamber of Hungary and the Royal vice governor. In 1536 it was appointed a capital city of the Hungarian empire and became the city of parliament, central offices, archbishop (1543) and coronation ceremonies of the Hungarian kings. By the end of the 18th century, during the reign of Maria Theresia, the reconstruction rush took place in the city, when the fortifications of the city were removed as a result of its wide expansion, and the number of inhabitants tripled. Bratislava became a significant cultural (1776 – establishment of a theatre with a permanent company of actors) and business center (1780 – establishment of the first manufactory) (Bratislava Tourist Service 2005). Wine was the most significant trade article. The city with its population of 33,000 inhabitants was in 1780 in first place out of all the cities in Hungarian Empire, surpassing also Buda, Pest and Debrecen (Lacika 2000, 36).

However, in 1783 it lost its significant status as a social-political centre of Hungary because Josef II. had directed that all the central offices be moved to Buda. Although it had remained the city of coronation ceremonies and of the Hungarian parliament, the loss of the position of capital city meant a significant change of the city image from a flourishing royal town to a city of provincial importance (Bratislava v historickej skratke 2010). Joseph's reform of the territorial-administrational arrangement, having just a short-term efficiency, degraded the position of the city by integrating it into the district with the seat in Nitra. From the national point of view its importance had not been weakened, however it had become the centre of enlightenment ideas of the Slovak national rebirth. The most important historical event popularizing Bratislava on the international level was the signing of the Prespork (Bratislava) Peace Treaty in 1805 after the Battle of the Three Emperors at Slavkov (Austerlitz), which led to the formal downfall of the Holy Roman Empire of the German nation (Lacika 2000, 38).

In the 19th century Bratislava had a population of 23,000 inhabitants of German nationality, 9500 Slovaks and 300 Hungarians (Navrátilová and Hatalová 1996, 16). Bratislava became the centre of



Slovak education mainly due to the establishment of the Department of Czechoslovak language and literature at the Evangelical grammar school. Its most significant period was marked by the personality of Ľudovít Štúr (1803), one of the most famous figures of Slovak national history (Bratislava v historickej skratke 2010). However it remained [219] dominantly a German town with significant representation of Slovak, Hungarian and Jewish inhabitants. For the Jewish communities, Bratislava became a famous European centre of rabbi education at Jeshivah, in the period between 1807–1839 headed by rabbi and scholar Chatam Sofer (Jeshivah was after its cancellation in 1939 renewed again in 1950 in Givat Shaul, Jerusalem, and it carries the title of Pressburg Yeshivah).

Regarding the economics, the viniculture was developing very well. From the international point of view and the position of the city, the establishment of the Hubert company in 1825 was very important, being the first company outside France to introduce the technology of sparkling wine. The beginnings of the financial sector (the first Pressburg Savings Bank – 1842) date far back to this period (Lacika 2000, 40). In 1851 the population of Bratislava was 42,178 inhabitants, and within Hungarian Empire it was surpassed only by Pest, Buda and Szeged (Matlovič 2005, 47).

After the dismissal of the last Hungarian Diet and after the relocation of political seats to Pest, the political-administrative importance of Bratislava had decreased significantly. This loss was partly compensated by intensive development of industry and culture. Another important impulse for the economic development was the abolishment of villeinage (1848) and the advance of industrialization.

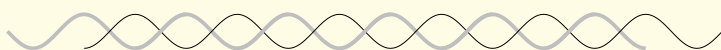
The beginning of the first European railway construction (Northern railway of Emperor Ferdinand) in 1837, connecting Vienna through Břeclav–Přerov (Czechia) with Krakow (Poland), meant a potential threat to the agricultural and wood markets from western Slovakia. Therefore, one year later the initial works started on the construction of the first horse-drawn railway in Slovakia leading from Bratislava to 14 km distant Svätý Jur (1840) and later to Trnava (1846) and Sered' (ŽSR 2008). The excellent position of the city on the navigable Danube river and the closeness of Vienna (60 km) enabled the

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development of modern kinds of transport such as a steam-driven boat (steam-navigation on the Danube river had started from 1818). New possibilities for faster transport and pro-exporting interests of Hungary led to the need for construction of the railway connection Vienna–Pest–Debrecen, with possible continuation to the Black Sea. The repeated danger of bypassing Bratislava by the construction of a railway along the right side of the Danube river was removed and the first steam train arrived at Bratislava in 1848 after four years of work (ŽSR 2008). The city was growing modern.

Industry was growing fast (gas company was established in 1859, Dynamit Nobel in 1873, the Oil refinery Apollo in 1895, Cotton company Danubius in 1900, Stein beer factory in 1873, Sweets company Stollwerck, rubber company Gumon in 1911) and therefore at the turn of the 19th and 20th century Bratislava became the second most significant industrial centre of Hungary. A bridge over the Danube river and a port were built in 1891, and operation of a power station and a street-car railway started in 1895 (Lacika 2000, 40). In 1914 a street-car connection between Bratislava and Vienna was begun (terminated in 1945). Regarding cultural development, Bratislava had attracted the attention of famous European musicians who used to present here their art and creation (F. Liszt, A. Rubinstein, F. M. Bartholdy, F. Mazas and others) (Navrátilová and Hatalová 1996, 17). Its position in the context of Hungarian cities had relatively failed. In 1900 it had 61,537 inhabitants and, considering its size, it trailed away behind Budapest, Szeged, Subotica and Debrecen (Matlovič 2005, 47).

The attachment of Bratislava to the newly formed Czechoslovakia (28 October 1918) encountered resistance from the side of Hungary, and therefore it was rescheduled for three months later (1. January 1919). During this short period of time, when the attachment agreement was about to be signed, the Hungarian and German inhabitants tried to gain the status of a so called a free town (something like a Danubian Singapore or Monaco) entitling it a Wilson town (in honor of then president of the USA in order to ingratiate themselves with the winners of WWI.) Even this short period of time was sufficient for launching the promotion of the city's name. Several postcards, stamps and maps were produced with denotation of Wilson-



stadt (Lacika 2000, 42). However, their efforts ended up in failure. In 1919 the new title of the city (Bratislava) was approved and after its attachment to Czechoslovakia, significant groups of Hungarian and German inhabitants left. Despite this, the population was still growing, mainly due to the immigration from the hinterland and Czech lands (mainly the intelligentsia) (Bratislava v historickej skratke 2010; Navrátilová and Hatalová 1996, 18). Bratislava had reached the position of an administration centre of Slovakia, which naturally contributed to the increase of its economic, social and cultural importance. The Comenius University was established in 1919 and the Slovak National Theatre in 1920. The interwar period was typical for the development of all the relevant fields of economy and intensive construction (residential and industrial areas). The newly refurbished port with a public storage became an important transfer centre between the Balkans and Hungary on the one hand, and Poland and Germany on the other (Fabricius 1991, 131). The need for the development of economic relations with the Danube countries as consumers of Czechoslovakian industrial products, led to efforts in the field of promotion in relation to potential trade partners. In 1921 the first Oriental market (originally taking place directly in the harbor) was organized, later (1923–1942) known as the Danube market. For this purpose a new show-room was built in 1931. After the cancellation of the Danube market (after WWII.) its functional use was changed and it was transformed into the Park of culture and leisure (РКО) (КОТР 2008). In 1922 a new commodity stock-market commenced its activity, which can be regarded as a demonstration of the economic emancipation and enhancement of its position. It is affirmed also by the fact that several banks, centres of trade and industrial companies settled here. Transport accessibility of the city was improved in 1923 after the implementation of a regular airline connection from Prague to Bratislava airport in Vajnory. The year 1926 meant a significant milestone in the media field, when the radio broadcasting was initiated in Bratislava. [221]

Considering the architectural works of art that became symbols of the city we can mention the first high-rise 11-floor building, known as Manderla, built in 1935, and the residential complex Avion from 1931

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(it gained the evaluation of the Building of the century in Slovakia in the category of residential buildings). In 1939–1945 Bratislava was the capital city of the Slovak Republic – autonomous state, formed on the basis of the fascist Germany decision. It was the seat of the president, parliament, government and all the offices of state administration. Part of its territory (Petržalka, Devín) was seized by Germany. The importance of the city had increased. It contributed to the development of educational and research institutions. The Technical University of Slovakia was moved to Bratislava in 1939, the University of Economics was established in 1940 and the Slovak Academy of Sciences and Arts in 1942.

After the Second World War a dynamic development of the city conditioned by industrialization and further development of non-productive activities took place. The city became an important centre of the chemical and rubber industry (e.g. Slovnaft), electro-technical (e.g. Bratislava Electro-technical Company), machine industry (e.g. Bratislava Automobile Company), glass, textile and food processing industries. The administrative area of the city expanded between 1946 and 1971. The number of inhabitants tripled (from 138,988 in 1940 to 442,197 in 1991). In spatial development it was represented by the construction of wide residential estates which have become distinctive elements of the urban structure. At the end of the communist period, two thirds of Bratislava's population lived in these blocks of flats. The largest housing estate in Czechoslovakia was built in Bratislava-Petržalka in 1973–1986, having 42,330 flats and 126,000 inhabitants (Mládek 2000, 84). The development of university education, culture and science has continued further. In 1948 the activity of film studios started, in 1949 the activity of the Slovak philharmonic, and in 1951 the Slovak National Gallery was established. In 1953 the Slovak Academy of Sciences on the basis of the Slovak Academy of Sciences and Arts was founded. Regarding the mass-media, a qualitative shift took place with the commencement of television broadcasting from the Bratislava studio in 1956. Transport accessibility of the city was improved by the initiation of the airport in Ivánka (1951). The completion of the Družba oil pipeline in 1962 from the Russian oil pipeline junction in Samara meant a significant turning-point for the



industry. In 1969 the construction of motorways was initiated from Bratislava to Prague (the first part Bratislava-Malacky was launched in 1973) and in 1972 to Košice (the first part Bratislava-Senec was finished in 1975) (Lenny 2007). The strengthening of trade and the exposition function of Bratislava was caused also by regular expositions of chemical products Incheba (1967) and then by the construction of the exhibition grounds on the right bank of the Danube river. The prestige of the city was to be increased by realization of several remarkable architectonic projects. In 1972 the second bridge over the Danube – the Bridge of the Slovak National Uprising (SNP bridge; also called the New Bridge resembling a ‘flying saucer’ or UFO) was finished. This indisputably unique structure (a one-pylon, steel, road, hanging bridge of a fan type) was listed as a ‘building of century’ in the category of bridge constructions in 2001. However, during its construction at the end of 1960s the restructuring of the western part of the historical centre of the city (Fish Square, a part Podhradie, Vydlica square) took place, creating a barrier between the castle and the historic centre and losing a significant part of the cultural heritage. The other symbolic objects are the building of Radio in the shape of a converted pyramid from 1983 (being listed as a Building of the century in the category of public buildings), the house of unions Istropolis (1981), a television tower on the top of Kamzík hill (height 194 m) and the television buildin in Mlynská dolina (1975), being the tallest building in Czecho-Slovakia with its 28 floors and a height of 107.5 m (SME 2004).

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Two developmental impulses were important for Bratislava in the last two decades. The first was the fall of the Iron curtain and the continual decrease of the barrier effect of state borders after 1989, ending with Slovakia’s entering the Schengen area in 2007. This greatly influenced the geopolitical and geo-economical position of Bratislava. The territory of the so called ‘Golden triangle of Europe’ (Vienna–Bratislava–Győr) is considered to be extremely perspective from the point of view of the city’s further development. The most important impulse and a new challenge for marketing and branding of Bratislava is the fact that on 1 January, 1993 it became the capital city of a newly formed state on the political map of the world.

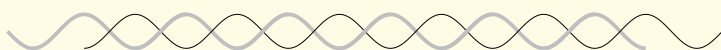
## ACTUAL CITY BRANDING OF BRATISLAVA

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The most significant social changes in the country at the end of 1989 led to the formation of new governmental bodies in the city of Bratislava after 1990. The need to reflect the newly formed social-economical situation had led to the proposal and in 1993 also to the acceptance of a strategic development document – Development strategy of the capital city of Slovakia – Bratislava (Bratislava 2008b). Then by the end of 2004, a new marketing plan of tourism development on the territory of the Slovak metropolis was approved: the Conception of tourism development for the period of 2005–2006. Its main aim was to improve the use of the existing cultural-historical and productive potential of Bratislava, along with modernization and completion of the essential infrastructure for tourism (Bratislava 2004). At the end of 2008 the city carried out a marketing research on the consumer behaviour of visitors to Bratislava, which became a basis for the marketing communication strategy of active tourism for the period 2009–2012 (Správa 2009).

Nowadays, there is discussion and preparation of the program of economic and social development of the city for the next decade (2010–2020), in which the most relevant priorities in relation to branding are: destination management with orientation towards congress and incentive (motivational) tourism, support for more effective use of the intellectual and creative potential of the city in the formation of knowledge economy, acquirement of the position of a prestige locality for investors in the field of strategic services, enhancement of life quality and quality of the city environment. The main aims and priorities of further orientation of the capital city were concluded in the following six areas:

- 1 *Bratislava – a supra-regional centre* – to strengthen the image of Bratislava as a significant and popular central European metropolis and to increase its attractiveness for visitors and tourists and to reinforce the field of tourism.
- 2 *Knowledge economy* – to improve the infrastructure and services for the development of knowledge economy in the city, to initiate and assist the development of the domestic and international



network of subjects of knowledge economy and transfer of international experiences, and to attract investments in the field of strategic services.

- 3 *Quality of life* – by means of the improvement of life quality, social background and the opportunities for active spending of leisure time, to create an attractive, open and vital city, proposing the perspectives for an active and interesting life. [225]
- 4 *Quality of the environment and urban territory* – to create the conditions for a sustainable rise in the life quality of its inhabitants, leading to the formation of acceptable environment and urban territory.
- 5 *Transport and technical infrastructure* – to improve the connection to the foreign transport systems, improve the internal mobility, based on energetically effective and environmentally conscious transport systems and propose a modern, quantitatively and qualitatively sufficient technical infrastructure according to the recent demands and future development.
- 6 *City administration and governance* – to govern the city effectively and transparently, move further in the improvement of the quality and availability of services for citizens, to the support positive attitude of the citizens and their active participation in the administration of public matters (Bratislava 2009b; 2009c).

One of the most serious problems of the contemporary metropolis of Slovakia, being a permanent unresolved issue, is the public transport of the city. The implementation of an integrated transport system (since 2010) is expected to bring better coordination of all the systems of public transport in the city. There exist some plans for the subway construction, however they have not yet been realized, and will not be realized in near future as well. Since the largest residential estate (residential zone) in Slovakia is built on the right bank of the Danube river, the only possibility of its transport connection with the city center (located on the left bank of the river) was provided by four bridges. Due to their insufficient transport capacity, construction of the fifth bridge Apollo was initiated. By the beginning of its operation in 2005, the issue of connection between the city centre and

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the largest residential zone had been partly solved, and therefore there are new plans for the construction of the sixth, motorway bridge. The Apollo bridge is one of the most outstanding constructions realized in Bratislava recently. It has influenced the overall visual image of the city and become its new symbol, replacing the previous city icon – the Bridge of SNP. This new dominant has gained a prestigious international acclaim, being awarded as the best construction work, mainly in the field of infrastructure, by the American society for technical engineering – OPAL Awards in 2006. The experts have appreciated the modern technology used for the bridge construction, innovation and its contribution to the transport development in Bratislava (Bratislava 2006). Regarding the promotion of the construction, city and country, the process of its realization was also an interesting and awarded event. It was based on continual rotation of the entire bridge, more than 500-metres long (constructed in advance on the bank of the river), to reach construction to its right place. This one week lasting event attracted the attention of domestic and foreign media not only to the construction itself, but also to the city and country as whole.

Another great construction project is the complex of multi-functional buildings under the Bratislava Castle on the riverbank of the Danube – River Park, designed by the famous Dutch architect Ericka van Egeraat. There are planned to be more than 200 luxurious apartments, a 5-star hotel, superior offices and leisure-time facilities. River Park is one of the projects by which Bratislava is trying to change its image of a provincial metropolis and to communicate the image of a new fashionable metropolis of Central-European importance (J & T 2009b). A similar construction of a new international shopping centre Eurovea, merging the riverbank and the city centre, is also situated in a valuable part of the Danube area (the final stage of its construction has already started). A large part of its space will be taken up by public areas and verdure, providing a pleasant environment for the apartments and offices that will be a part of it.

The new building of the Slovak National Theatre is also an interesting city-designing element. It is a building in post-modern style with technical components, evoking a kind of industrial impression. The construction of this modern complex – according to some au-



thors a so called 'a factory of art' – had lasted for more than 20 years and nowadays it is a part of another new profitable commercial-administrative zone of Bratislava known as Panorama City. It is a poly-functional complex, providing modern office areas and buildings of commercial character, as well as areas for leisure time activities, entertainment and night life. The silhouettes of two residential towers, 150 m tall, will become the tallest buildings in Slovakia and will change significantly the panorama of Bratislava (Pokorný 2009; J & T 2009a).

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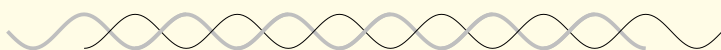
Despite the economic crisis, Bratislava is still regarded as a perspective city for investors, developers and final users. One of its ambitions is to attract the seats of large corporations and thus to strengthen its central-administrative function in the Central-European territory. Several new business centres (e.g. Bratislava Business Centre v, Apollo Business Centre, etc.) were built for this purpose and there are plans for the construction of some others. New industrial parks for technologically aimed small and medium enterprises have been developed on the territory along the borderline with Austria (Bratislava 2007). An important part of the developmental strategy of city knowledge economics should be the CEPIT Bratislava project (Central European for Innovative Technologies Bratislava), at present in its initial phase. Its main intention is to build a research-technological park in the city, proposing a platform for the cooperation of companies, educational and research institutions, service providers, creating an urban structure with a balanced combination of functions (CEPIT 2009).

Regarding the industrial production, Bratislava, along with its wider hinterland (western Slovakia), is considered to be a new Detroit. The image is created due to the presence of three automobile companies in Slovakia with increasing production, and despite the economic crisis the expectations are to produce about 900 thousand automobiles by the end of 2011. Taking into consideration the total population of the country (5,421,937 inhabitants: ŠÚSR 2010), Slovakia is on the first place in the world in automobile production per capita (HN 2008). Bratislava is the seat of the largest Slovak exporter – Volkswagen Slovakia, having the 15% of the total export in Slovakia. It produces 200,000 automobiles per year and employs about 8.5 thousand employees. One of the three most modern refineries in Europe is the

chemical company Slovnaft, producing and distributing oil products. It employs about 2.5 thousand employees (Slovnaft 2008). The majority of investments were directed to production companies and to the sector of high technologies.

[228] From the point of view of sports infrastructure improvement, the right to host the Ice hockey championship in spring 2011 (some of the matches will take place in Kosice) signified an important stimulus for the city. Due to this occasion a complex reconstruction of the original ice-hockey stadium of Ondrej Nepela as a modern purposeful arena with the capacity of 10 thousand seats is planned by the end of 2010. The investments are estimated at 40 million euro. Modernization of a poly-functional sports centre at Tehelne pole (in the immediate neighborhood of the ice-hockey arena) will be a part of the project including a public swimming pool, national tennis centre and future football stadium (Bratislava 2009a).

Bratislava as the capital is also a national cultural metropolis with the highest concentration of cultural institutions (theatres, cinemas, galleries, museums, etc.). The most important social-cultural event, attracting more than 100 thousand visitors every year, is the Bratislava Cultural summer and Castle festival (112 thousand visitors in 2009 with increasing growth tendency). It is an international event lasting for three months, with 4000 artists and performers from 20 countries worldwide. There are various performances of different genres on 20 stages all around Bratislava. One of the most significant and prestigious international festivals in Slovakia, having a long-lasting tradition (since 1964) is the event of the Bratislava music festival, which is also the only Slovak event registered in the European association of festivals EFA with its seat in Brussels. During two weeks there are about 25 symphonic and chamber concerts. An important part of this event is the International podium of young performers New Talent, organized by the European Union EBU with its seat in Geneva, under the patronage of UNESCO and the International Music Committee IMC in cooperation with the Slovak broadcasting organization (Slovakia Travel 2005). The film art contributes to the image of the city by means of the popular International Film Festival Bratislava – IFFBA, also known as the Bratislava film festival. In 2009 the festival, consist-



ing of 175 full-length, medium-length and short films, was attended by almost 20,000 spectators in three cities (Weisenbacher 2009). Since 2003 a cultural performance of Bratislava is crowning ceremony celebrations, attracting about 100 thousands spectators, is organized regularly, with 120 actors in period style costumes performing an authentic ceremony of king crowning, according to real historical events; each year is dedicated to a different king, according to chronological order (TASR 2006; Korunovačné slávnosti 2008). Among the events attracting the largest number of visitors every year are the New Year's Eve Celebrations, also known as Partyslava. The main part of the performances takes place in the historical city centre and attracts tens of thousands of domestic and foreign visitors (almost 100 thousand in 2006) (SITA 2007; HN 2010). One of the events, organized by the self-government of the capital city in order to support the development of domestic and foreign tourism in Bratislava, is the two-days Open-door program – Touch the city! During this period several attractions such as museums, galleries, zoo, botanic gardens, city tours, town hall tours, concerts, sport events, including public transport – attractive especially due to the historic street-cars and trolley buses – are available to the public free of charge (Bratislava 2008a).

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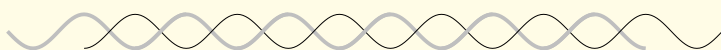
Despite the fact that Bratislava, in relation to the number of visitors, is the most important tourist destination in the country, its potential according to the city authorities is not utilized at all. The most decisive weakness that has not yet been overcome, is the insufficient promotion of the city in relation to potential visitors, usually attributed to the lack of financial resources. Despite this, in 2004 the city noticed a more than 20% annual increase in the number of foreign tourists in comparison to the previous year (Bratislava 2002). This increase was caused mainly by the development of low-cost air transport, which contributed to the revival of M. R. Štefánik airport, recording an increase of more than 90% in the number of passengers in comparison to the previous year (Horváthová 2010). Having low prices of services in comparison to the states of western Europe, Bratislava has become an attractive place for one-day or weekend shopping or party tourism. This fact was noticed by several influential European print media publishing series of contributions promoting Bratislava as

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a cheap foreign city to buy your presents (Moss 2003; *Telegraph* 2004), and due to the exciting night life as a cheap destination for clubbing tourism. The influence of this kind of transport on tourism in the metropolis of Slovakia will be verified in 2010, the first year after the collapse of the most important low-cost air transport provider SkyEurope in the autumn of 2009, because the market space has not been taken over by any other alternative haulier.

Another important event promoting the image of Bratislava and whole country was the three-day Slovakian Summit 2005, a meeting of US and Russian presidents: George W. Bush and Vladimir Putin. It was a media event of the year for Bratislava and for Slovakia, with the participation of 600 print media, 42 television crews and 30 radios (Incheba 2009). Smooth running of the session has contributed to Bratislava's reputation as a city able to organize similar events and therefore in autumn 2009 it was allowed to organize the two-day meeting of ministers of defence of North Atlantic alliance (NATO) member countries, with the participation of 800 delegates from 28 member countries and more than 300 journalists (SME 2009). The last from the series of media occasions that contributed to the image of Bratislava was a visit by Queen Elisabeth II. and the Duke of Edinburgh at the end of 2008.

Analyzing the recent activities of the city, we note that the present efforts of Bratislava are aimed at the creation of a modern metropolis of Central-European importance, proposing excellent conditions for businesses and localization of administrative centres of corporations, with the concentration of demanding research-technology activities and providing the basis for highly qualified specialists in the wide range of economic activities. For the support of communication of this intended city identity, the representatives agreed on the creation of a unified visual style of communication means for Bratislava, including a new logo, symbolizing Bratislava castle as the most popular dominant feature of the town and the slogan – 'Bratislava – little big city,' representing the equivalent of the national slogan – 'Slovakia – little big country.' However, it is necessary to mention that the existing discussion rather supports its critics, opposing the vagueness of the slogan and the fact that it associates with the complex of smallness



rather than with a positive reference to the creation of a cosy country, being the main aim of the city authorities (Capková 2005).

#### CONCLUSION

From the complex point of view, Bratislava can be regarded as a successful example of coping with the transformation development period in the context of transition from a central-bureaucratic economic and totalitarian political regime to the regime of market economy and plural democracy. Its share in the economic aggregate of Slovakia increased in the period 1997–2006 from 20.51% to 27.58% (Korec 2009), affirming its significant position as a dominant national economic centre in the Central-European economic area. The change in the strategy of a city brand mirrors the decline of the role of industry in favour of the tertiary and quaternary economic sectors (services, public administration). No doubt, the biggest challenge of the city remains the permanent trailing behind the competitive metropolises (Warsaw, Prague, Budapest) in most of the indicators. The aim to create a modern metropolis of Central-European importance is being realized in Bratislava by several investments into the city infrastructure, making it the most attractive city for foreign investments in Slovakia (60% of share within SR in 2006) currently. Future city branding will be aimed at still unfulfilled attributes such as attracting the most demanding companies' activities (management, research and development, design, etc.) and success in the competition to attract supra-national corporations' central offices.

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