



Catalonia will make promotion of itself in Moscow as a destination specialising in health tourism within the framework of the MITT international tourist fair

- **The Catalonian Minister of Trade, Tourism and Consumer Affairs agreed with the leading employers' association of the Russian tourist industry the celebration of a health tourism convention during the month of June in Catalonia, with the participation of 40 tour operators from the Russian Federation.**
- **The initiative falls within the agreement between the Catalonian Ministries of Trade and of Health to promote the internationalisation of the companies in the Catalonian health sector (medical centres, spas, beauty centres, and so on).**

Wednesday, 22 March 2006.– Catalonia is making promotion of itself as a tourist destination specialising in the health tourism within the framework of the Catalonian participation in the MITT international tourist fair in Russia. Josep Huguet, the Catalonian Minister of Trade, Tourism and Consumer Affairs, currently in an official trip to Moscow, met today with Sergey Shpilko, the President of the Russian Federation's Tourist Industry Union, to round up the agreement that will allow the celebration in Catalonia of a convention specialising in health tourism ***“to encourage the arrival of a greater number of Russian tourists to Catalonia”***, said the Minister. And he added, ***“In these last years, we have detected a certain flow of visitors from eastern European countries who contract the services of Catalonian health centres in towns along the Costa Brava and the Costa del Maresme, where they can get treatment or even be operated on and, in addition, take advantage of the attractiveness of our land”***.

Turisme de Catalunya and the Russian Association Travelling Industry – a tourist association that includes all the tour operators in the Russian Federation – will sign an agreement in Moscow on Friday to promote the celebration of



this congress in Catalonia. According to Minister Huguet, ***“the Russian sector points to a 25% increase in the number of tourists in Catalonia, out of which 8% take advantage of the trip to carry out medical tourism”***.

On the other hand, the Minister also pointed to the importance of an agreement with this association ***“so that Catalonia may consolidate its health tourism offer, such that, together with the spa and gastronomy offer, it may allow us to diversify from the ‘sun and beaches’ scene”***. Finally, the Minister added that, ***“it is a product under strong demand, and one that allows us to ‘de-seasonalise’ beyond the high season and to promote the excellent health service offered by Catalonia”***.

This action, which in principle has been scheduled for the month of June, will rely on the participation of some fifty Russian tour operators. It has been made possible thanks to *Turisme de Catalunya* with the aim of promoting the projection of Catalonia as a tourist destination specialising in this product. *Turisme de Catalunya* takes part yet another year in the MITT fair with its own stand and the presence of some twenty companies from the Catalonian tourist sector.

During his stay in Moscow, Minister Josep Huguet has also met with the leading tour operators that promote Catalonia (Vremia, Natalie Tours, Vko, Neva and Capital Tour), and with representatives of the tourist administration of the Russian government, in order to analyse the development perspectives of this sending market to Catalonia. Specifically, the Minister had a meeting with V. Strzhalkowsky, his Russian counterpart and Head of the Federal Tourist Agency, and with Grigory Antyufeev, the Head of the Moscow government's Tourist Administration.

Participation of Catalonia at the MITT Moscow fair

Minister Huguet inaugurated this morning the stand of Catalonia at the MITT international tourist fair, one of the leading international events of the tourist sector, which is being held this week at the Russian capital. V. Strzhalkowsky, the Russian Minister of Tourism and Head of the Federal Tourist Agency, invited the Catalonian Minister to join the inaugural party.

Turisme de Catalunya's presence at this year's fair consists of a stand of 400m² with the presence of some twenty Catalonian tourist companies and entities: Ancodes Viajes; Derby Hoteles; Estival Park Salou; La Roca Village; Alva Park Resort & Spa; Hotel Ra, Beach Thalasso-Spa; Dahab Travel; Hotel Majestic; Keytel; Viajes Terramar Tour; Abba Hoteles; Marfil Travel; Rigat Park & Spa Hotel; Sol Vip Travel; Hotel Le Meridien; Viajes Novovira; Hotel Casa Fuster; Port Aventura; Montserrat; Patronat de Turisme Costa Brava Girona (including the following tourist offices: Castell-Platja d'Aro, L'Escala, Blanes, Segur, Calonge-Sant Antoni, Besalú, Lloret de Mar, Pals, Palamós, Castelló d'Empúries, and Roses); Turisme de Barcelona and Patronat de Turisme de la Diputació de Tarragona (municipal tourist offices of Vilaseca-Salou and



Cambrils).

Catalonia pioneered tourist promotion in the eastern European countries, with the inauguration of its first Tourist Promotion Centre there in 1993. *Turisme de Catalunya* currently has offices in Moscow and Kiev, and is studying an extension towards other markets of more recent incorporation into the European Union.

Catalonia had 146,800 Russian tourists in 2005

According to figures issued by the *Observatori de Turisme de Catalunya*, in 2005 146,000 tourists from the Russian Federation (+ 8.6%) visited Catalonia, totalling 1.4 million night stays (+ 6.8%). The tourists arriving from the eastern European countries characterise themselves by their high degree of loyalty to Catalonia – 40% of tourists had visited the country before. Their average stay is approximately of 10 days, a figure well above the average figure for foreign tourists (7.8 days). The sun and the beach is the product most often chosen by the Russian market, as well as the destinations with a high entertainment component combined with the cultural and commercial offer.