



**INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF
SCIENTIFIC EXPERTS IN TOURISM**

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**Call for Contributions
(Extended abstracts)**

**75th AIEST Conference of Ideas
St. Gallen (Switzerland)
August 23, 2026 (late afternoon) – August 26, 2026 (late)**

Comprised of 3 streams of discussion:

Stream of Discussion 1 (Conference Discussion)

Tourism definition(s) revisited – 75 years after the first AIEST conference

Stream of Discussion 2 (AIEST Central Discussion)

Designing tourism systems for a sustainable future

Stream of Discussion 3

***AIEST's Advances in Tourism Research -
Perspectives of Actors, Institutions and Systems***

The International Association of Scientific Experts in Tourism (AIEST) is calling for contributions for its 75th Conference.

This is a jubilee conference that brings AIEST back to its founding place. The first conference of AIEST was contributing to the modern definition of tourism. The topics of this very special conference therefore is again linked to fundamental concepts of tourism research

The three themes and core streams of discussion at the Conference are

- (1) Tourism definition(s) revisited – 75 years after the first AIEST conference.*
- (2) Designing tourism systems for a sustainable future.*
- (3) AIEST's Advances in Tourism Research - Perspectives of Actors, Institutions and Systems.*

We are calling for academic and practitioners' contributions to these themes.

Interesting contributions NOT related to the first two themes of the Conference are very welcomed as well and will be allocated to the stream ***AIEST's Advances in Tourism Research - Perspectives of Actors, Institutions and System (Stream 3).***

The co-hosts of the Conference are Christian Laesser, Thomas Bieger, and Pietro Beritelli from the University of St. Gallen.

The location and time of the Conference will be St. Gallen (Switzerland),

- from Sunday late afternoon, August 23, 2026, until
- Wednesday late evening, August 26, 2026
(with departures on Thursday morning, August 27).

Submission deadline is February 28, 2026.

Please take note of the following special events within this conference and corresponding calls for contributions following later.

AIEST Research Clinic:

In addition to this call, and later this year, there will be a call for contributions to the **AIEST Research Clinic** on Sunday, August 23, afternoon.

Pitch Sessions:

Furthermore, we are planning **two pitch sessions** during the conference (pitch = 2-3 minutes presentation, 7-8 minutes discussion) for the following items:

- (1) **Project collaborations**, where own (planned) projects can be presented and colleagues invited to collaborate.
- (2) **Tourism definition(s) revisited**, where own proposals for adjustments regarding tourism definitions can be introduced and briefly discussed.

We will **call for contributions** to these pitch sessions in the **1st quarter of 2026**.

Consensus Session:

At the end of the conference, we will try to find a common basis for an adapted understanding of “tourism” in a structured discussion. The outcome of this discussion will be published in a paper.

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1 Overview

1.1 Introductory remarks

AIENT was the first scientific organisation in tourism. Since its foundation, the Association has engaged in *applied, interdisciplinary and solution-oriented research*. The membership of AIENT is not limited to academics. It is based on *the partnership between senior academic members and leading scientifically interested expert members* from tourism companies and organisations.

The annual AIENT conference primarily intends to facilitate exchange and to enhance amicable relations between its participants (members of AIENT and non-members, experienced and young career academics and practitioners). Moreover, it wants to provide a platform to discuss topical work from and with Academia and Practice alike in a friendly, supportive environment. So, as a delegate of a previous conference pointed out,

"AIENT conferences are spaces occupied by modest experts, helping you improve your research and/ or deal with practical challenges."

Overall, **three streams of and for discussion** shall be set up:

- **Stream of Discussion 1** to accommodate contributions to the **conference theme** *Tourism definition(s) revisited – 75 years after the first AIENT conference*.
- **Stream of Discussion 2** to accommodate contribution to the **AIENT Central Discussion** *Designing tourism systems for a sustainable future*.
- **Stream of Discussion 3**, called *AIENT's Advances in Tourism Research - Perspectives of Actors, Institutions and Systems*, to accommodate **all other contributions**.

1.2 Background of the conference theme

"Tourism definition(s) revisited – 75 years after the first AIENT conference"

The **first conference** of the International Association of Scientific Experts in Tourism (AIENT) was held in **Rome, Italy, in 1951**. The association was also founded that year with the goal of **establishing tourism as a legitimate field of study, connecting academic research with real-world decision-making in the industry**. Against this background, it was important to first create a common understanding and thus a definition of the phenomenon to be addressed, "tourism".

In 1941, the later two leading founders of the AIENT, Walter Hunziker and Kurt Krapf, had already developed a definition and introduced their understanding at the conference: tourism is *"... the sum of the phenomena and relationships arising from the travel and stay of non-residents, insofar as they do not lead permanent residence and are not connected with any earning activity."* Our **common understanding of tourism today** likely stems primarily from the World Tourism Organization (WTO), now known as UN Tourism, which defines tourism as ***"the activities of persons travelling to and staying in places outside their usual environment for not more than one consecutive year for leisure, business and other purposes"***. This definition encompasses individuals who travel to a destination and

engage in various activities for personal or professional reasons, as long as their stay is temporary and outside their typical surroundings.

Our current understanding of tourism is increasingly being challenged.

The **understanding of the system is becoming increasingly complex**, as tourism activities are becoming **embedded in more and more areas of life** and can therefore be delimited less and less. This is driven by changing living and working models (e.g. patchwork families, parallel careers, home office, workation, leisure, caretaking), which means that more and more people are moving in a dynamic network of (living) locations. This makes it increasingly difficult to define "tourism"; previous criteria such as usual place of residence, length of stay, distance or purpose of travel are no longer applicable. **Mobility is increasingly being used for basic existential functions** (such as work, education, consumption, leisure activities, maintaining social networks, etc.), which are also amalgamated in the short term. Last but not least: What we observe and try to define as **tourism has always and ultimately been the aggregated result of many individual decisions and therefore a demand-driven phenomenon**. Visitors use resource spaces that are not classic consumer goods, but serve the individual fulfillment of basic existential functions (including leisure). And, particularly important for state tourism promotion, the impact of social media platforms such as Instagram far outweigh tourism marketing efforts. Platforms such as AirBnB create capacities beyond any tourism planning.

Consequently, **numerous paradigms are challenged**. Topics affected include (1) the definition of tourism, (2) the delimitation of the tourism system, (3) tourism behavior, (4) tourism offers, (5) destinations, and (6) tourism promotion.

The **possible and non-exhaustive consequences** are potentially far-reaching and could be (selection):

- Definition of tourism:
The usual/ customary place to live and work is more a network of places - tourism is becoming less and less touristic.
- Lack of tourism system boundaries:
much of what appears to be tourism is an expression of modern lifestyles such as international families or leisure behavior.
- Tourism demand - increasingly non-touristy and situational:
Tourism demand becomes difficult to delimitate and define.
- Tourism destinations - multidimensional and no longer spatially defined:
destination management increasingly becomes customer group and/ or product management.
- Tourism offer - controlled from outside (platforms):
Either one tries to control the platforms or their consequences.
- Tourism service - traditional qualities and forms of service challenged by automation:
tourism should not be a driver of additional immigration and remain at a low level of productivity.
- Tourism can hardly be controlled and needs to be promoted less and less:
Gentrification of tourism: more productive land uses crowd tourism out.
- Tourism is less and less "necessary" in highly developed countries and is perceived as overtourism against the backdrop of strong population growth.

We hereby invite you to contribute to the discussion on the question of what tourism actually (still) is and to **find a common new understanding or ways to achieve such a new understanding in a concluding consensus session.**

The conference targets **two major types of contribution and groups of participants:**

- **Academia**, who is invited to present state-of-the-art research in one or more of the major streams of **discussion** and who are willing to contribute from their scientific perspective to build an interdisciplinary body of knowledge. Submissions shall be classified according to the stage of the work, including:
 - (1) Basic conceptual ideas, seeking general feedback;
 - (2) Research design and methodology, seeking validation of logic and plan;
 - (3) Study results, seeking inputs for its discussion;
 - (4) Study results and discussion, seeking inputs for conclusions;
 - (5) Completed studies, seeking final feedback.
- **Practice**, who is invited to provide the latest trends, concepts, and cases in the field of the streams of discussion and who may provide guidance concerning prospective research questions. Submissions shall be classified according to the stage of the work, including:
 - (1) Basic conceptual ideas or projects, seeking general feedback
 - (2) (Observed) problems or challenges, seeking an explanation
 - (3) (Explained) problems or challenges, seeking a solution
 - (4) Think tank type of session on specific topics (multilateral exchange)

For more details, refer to the following sections of this call.

1.3 Streams of discussion

As indicated earlier, there are three streams of discussion:

- **Stream of Discussion 1** to accommodate contributions to the **conference theme** *Tourism definition(s) revisited – 75 years after the first AIEST conference.*
- **Stream of Discussion 2** to accommodate contribution to the **AIEST Central Discussion** *Designing tourism systems for a sustainable future.*
- **Stream of Discussion 3**, called *AIEST's Advances in Tourism Research - Perspectives of Actors, Institutions and Systems*, to accommodate **all other contributions.**

In **all streams of discussion**, we invite participants from different scientific disciplines and tourism-related industries to contribute to the *following four major sub-streams:*

- **Actors' behaviour**, consisting of contributions focusing on behavioural issues of consumers, management, politicians, etc.;
- **Institutional settings**, consisting of contributions focusing on topics such as entrepreneurship and innovation, cooperation and strategic alliances, ITC and productivity led-growth, structural change in leading tourism-relevant industries, etc.
- **Systemic perspective**, consisting of contributions focusing on topics such as the analysis of the market forces, marketing management of destinations, tourism promotion

and policies, management of tourism related resources, sustainable development in tourism, regulation and governance of places, etc.

- **Other**, consisting of contributions that cannot be classified as above.

Please be aware that all contributions to the Stream of Discussion 1 and 2 need to be scoped around issues relating to *the topics of those streams*. No such restrictions are applicable with the Stream of Discussion 3.

1.4 Types of contributions

There are two types of contributions following the two different target groups:

- We invite **Academia** to submit topical research results or conceptual models providing the basis for inspiring and controversial sessions. The relevance of the contribution and the interest it raises are as important as the methodical rigour. Out-of-the-box thinking is encouraged. Important: The copyrights remain with authors at all times. This allows submissions of the most recent work in progress. All submissions will be double-blind reviewed.

The **format of contributions** consists of extended abstracts with a maximum (!) length of 12,000 characters Times New Roman 12 pts. (including blanks; excl. references, figures and tables). You can download a formatted master copy

(*SubMaster_AIESTConference_2026*) from Aiest homepage

<https://www.aiest.org/aiest-conference/2026-stgallen-switzerland>.

For each contribution, there will be either 10-15 minutes for presentation and at least 10-15 minutes of discussion.

- We invite **Practice** to put forward thoughts on the challenges it faces. New ideas and concepts should be discussed in an inspiring and critical way. *Out-of-the-mainstream thinking is explicitly welcomed*. The Committee of the Aiest will assess all practitioners' submissions.

The **format of contributions** consists of short PowerPoint presentations of a maximum of 10-15 charts (excluding title pages and possible references). For each contribution, there will be 10-15 minutes for presentation and at least 10-15 minutes of discussion.

1.5 Important notes around the presentation and discussion

In our introductory remarks we say:

The conference “wants to provide a platform to discuss topical work from and with Academia and Practice alike in a friendly, supportive environment”.

What does this mean:

The prime conference mission is "feedback", meaning the conference is primarily about getting good feedback for your own work. For this purpose, **10-15 minutes of discussion are deliberately and clearly quarantined** (and presentations cut-off after 15 minutes at the latest), whereas this discussion should be friendly and critical-constructive. Feedback is NOT about exchanging niceties. **The prime take-away for contributors is therefore the feedback, and not the opportunity to present.**

1.6 Awards

Overall, **4 different awards** are going to be offered at this Conference. They include:

- The **AIENT BEST CONTRIBUTION AWARD** for the overall best contribution at this Conference (irrespective if this contribution stems from an academic or practitioner).
- The **PETER KELLER AWARD** for the best contribution uniting theory and Practice (irrespective if this contribution stems from an academic or practitioner).
- The **AIENT PhD AWARD** for the best academic contribution of a PhD candidate at this Conference.
- The **AIENT CRITICAL FRIEND AWARD** for the audience member who provides the most constructive feedback on the work presented throughout the conference.

1.7 Organisation of the Conference

The programme of the Conference includes different formats:

- **Pre-conference:** AIENT Research Clinic on Sunday (cf. to separate call) as well as several different professional workshops,
- **Opening session:** Dialogue of AIENT with representatives of the host country on Monday morning,
- **Conference:**
 - Keynotes from Academia and Practice (underway);
 - Academic paper sessions with a range of different papers and presentations;
 - Practitioner presentation sessions with a range of different presentations;
 - 2 Pitch sessions, one regarding project collaborations, one regarding tourism definition(s) revisited;
 - Consensus session on tourism definition(s) revisited;
 - Technical excursion.

2 Submission guidelines

The submission guidelines are applicable no matter to what stream of discussion you submit.

2.1 Academic contributions

The submission to the Conference consists of one document consisting of a title page (1st page), classification information regarding your submission (2nd page) and an extended abstract starting from page 3. A master copy of this document (*SubMaster_AIESTConference_2026*) is available at <https://www.aiest.org/aiest-conference/2026-stgallen-switzerland>.

Please make use of that master copy.

2.1.1 Title page (page 1)

The title page needs to contain the following information:

- Title of paper
- Authors and major affiliations
- Address of the corresponding author
- Short abstract (maximum of 600 characters, including blanks) and 4-6 keywords

2.1.2 Classification page (page 2)

- At "Type of contribution", tick "Academia"
- Stream of Discussion:

Select one from two streams of discussion by ticking the corresponding box:

- 1: Tourism definition(s) revisited – 75 years after the first AIEST conference
- 2: Designing tourism systems for a sustainable future.
- 3: AIEST's Advances in Tourism Research - Perspectives of Actors, Institutions and Systems.

- Sub-stream of discussion:
Select one from four sub-streams of discussion by ticking the corresponding box:
 - Actors' behaviour
 - Institutional settings
 - Systemic perspective
 - Other
- Classification of the stage of progress of your work:
Select from five possible stages of your work by ticking the corresponding box:
 - Basic conceptual ideas, seeking general feedback;
 - Research design and methodology, seeking validation of logic and plan;
 - Study results, seeking inputs for its discussion;
 - Study results and discussion, seeking inputs for conclusions;
 - Completed studies, seeking final feedbacks.

2.1.3 Extended Abstract (page 3 et sqq.)

Submit an extended abstract consisting of max. (!) 12,000 characters Times New Roman 12 points (including blanks; excl. references) and single-spaced. This is equivalent of approximately three to four pages. However, you can add as many figures and tables as you wish. Please structure your paper as follows (always if applicable):

- Introduction/ purpose (include some remarks about the originality of the work)
- State-of-the-art (lit review)
- Design / methodology / methods
- Results and discussion
- Conclusions consisting of theoretical as well as practical and social implications (if applicable).

2.2 Practitioner contributions

The submission to the Conference consists of two documents:

- Title page (a master copy *SubMaster_AIESTConference_2026* is provided at <https://www.aiest.org/aiest-conference/2026-stgallen-switzerland>.
Use only pages 1 and 2 of this document.
- PowerPoint presentation.

2.2.1 Title page (page 1)

The title page needs to contain the following information:

- Title of paper
- Authors and major affiliations
- Address of the corresponding author
- Short abstract (maximum of 600 characters, including blanks) and 4-6 keywords

2.2.2 Classification page (page 2)

- At "Type of contribution", tick "Practice"
- Stream of Discussion:
Select one from two streams of discussion by ticking the corresponding box:
 - 1: Tourism definition(s) revisited – 75 years after the first AIEST conference
 - 2: Designing tourism systems for a sustainable future.
 - 3: AIEST's Advances in Tourism Research -
Perspectives of Actors, Institutions and Systems.
- Sub-stream of discussion:
Select one from four sub-streams of discussion by ticking the corresponding box:
 - Actors' behaviour
 - Institutional settings
 - Systemic perspective
 - Other

- Classification of the stage of progress of your work:
Select from five possible stages of your work by ticking the corresponding box:
 - Basic conceptual ideas or projects, seeking general feedback
 - (Observed) problems or challenges, seeking an explanation
 - (Explained) problems or challenges, seeking a solution
 - Think tank type of session on specific topics (multilateral exchange)

2.2.3 Presentation (from page 3)

Please submit a short powerpoint presentation consisting of 10-15 charts, excluding title pages and possible references. The presentation should contain at least the following:

- Title page and author information
- Problem/ challenge statement
- Any type of content
- Conclusions

3 Dates and deadlines

February 28, 2026	Submission deadline. Please use the master copy (<i>SubMaster_AIESTConference_2026</i>) provided on https://www.aiest.org/aiest-conference/2026-stgallen-switzerland and submit all contributions to info@aiest.org Important: If you are not able to keep that date, send an e-mail containing a short abstract to christian.laesser@unisg.ch ; we will then negotiate an extension (which normally can be granted).
April 05, 2026	Final author notification about acceptance of submission(s) and presentation at Conference
April 06, 2026	Early bird registration starts
May 31, 2026	Early bird registration ends
August 10, 2026	Registration ends; onsite registration is available
August 23, 2026	Conference begins

4 Program structure

Please find below a preliminary and very tentative program (structure). Times are approximate and only indicative.

Day	Morning	Afternoon	Evening
SUN, August 23	Arrival of delegates 12-16: Research Clinic		19-21: Welcome Reception
MON, August 24	09-10: Official opening ceremony 10-12: Oral presentation sessions	14-17: Oral presentation sessions	17-19: Aiest AGM 19-21: Dinner
TUE, August 25	08-12: Pitch session (tourism definitions revisited) and oral presentation sessions	14-18: Oral presentation sessions	18-22 Outing and dinner
WED, August 25	08-10: Pitch session (project collaboration) and oral presentation sessions 10-12: Consensus Session	13-22: Technical excursion (tba) and Conference dinner	
THU, August 26	Departure of delegates		

5 Conference fees

Please find below information about the conference fees.

	Full registration		Daily registration	
	Early bird (till May 31, 2026)	Regular (June 01, 2026 – August 10, 2026)	Early bird (till May 31, 2026)	Regular (June 01, 2026 – August 11, 2026)
AIENT members	600 EUR	700 EUR	-	-
AIENT non-members	800 EUR	900 EUR	300 EUR	350 EUR
Fees include	- Conference pack – entrance to all working sessions during the whole period of the Conference - Conference materials - Welcome Reception on Sunday - Coffee breaks from Monday to Wednesday - Lunches from Monday to Wednesday - Dinners from Monday to Wednesday - Technical excursion including transportation and activities		- Daily conference pack – entrance to the working session on the particular day - Conference materials - Coffee break(s) on the particular day - Lunch on the particular day	
Fees <u>do not</u> include	- Accommodation - Any other food and beverages - Airport transfers and any other transportation costs, apart the explicitly mentioned - Any personal expenses		- Dinner, even though it is on the same day selected - Technical excursion, even though it is on the same day selected - Accommodation - Any other food and beverages, apart from the explicitly mentioned - Airport transfers and any other transportation costs, apart from the explicitly mentioned - Any personal expenses - Please note: Daily registration does not allow for holding an oral presentation of your own work.	

	Full registration	Daily registration
Additional options for daily registered delegates, accompanying persons and spouses (tentative prices)	-	- Reception on Sunday: 50 EUR per person - Dinners: 100 EUR per person - Technical excursion: 100 EUR per person