

A renewed EU Tourism Policy

European Parliament resolution of 29 November 2007 on a renewed EU Tourism Policy: Towards a stronger partnership for European Tourism (2006/2129(INI))

The European Parliament,

- having regard to the Communication from the Commission entitled ‘A renewed EU Tourism Policy: Towards a stronger partnership for European Tourism’ (COM(2006)0134),
 - having regard to the Communication from the Commission entitled ‘Agenda for a sustainable and competitive European tourism’ (COM (2007)0621) (‘Agenda 21’),
 - having regard to its resolution of 8 September 2005 on new prospects and new challenges for sustainable European tourism¹,
 - having regard to Rule 45 of its Rules of Procedure,
 - having regard to the report of the Committee on Transport and Tourism and the opinions of the Committee on Culture and Education and the Committee on Regional Development (A6-0399/2007),
- A. whereas tourism is mentioned once in the EC Treaty as an activity that can be subject to "measures" (Article 3 of the EC Treaty), but is not understood to fall within the EU's competence or to be an EU policy area;
- B. whereas the Community has a competence, however, to take measures to ensure the efficient functioning of the internal market, including tourism services (Article 95 of the EC Treaty), the consumer protection approach being a particularly relevant approach in this context;
- C. whereas the tourism sector is at the crossroads of numerous EU policies that have a substantial impact on its efficiency and its capacity to contribute to growth, employment and social and territorial cohesion,
- D. whereas, notwithstanding the fact that Parliament, in its abovementioned resolution, spelled out the guiding principles for a European sustainable tourism policy, some individual aspects of that policy should be stressed in order to enable them to be translated into reality more speedily;
- E. whereas the Tourism Sustainability Group presented a report in February 2007 laying down guidelines that served as a basis for the Commission while drawing up the Agenda for a sustainable and competitive European tourism;

¹ OJ C 193 E, 17.8.2006, p. 325.

- F. whereas it has not been possible to develop a consistent cross-policy approach to tourism at EU level, resulting in drawbacks and the insufficient development of this sector as well as increasing the risk of Europe losing its market share in this sector;
- G. whereas the environmental and social dimension of tourism needs to be strongly emphasised in the interest of sustainability;
- H. whereas the situation in certain popular European tourist destinations is deteriorating and riotous and violent incidents sometimes occur in these destinations, which render them less attractive;
- I. whereas the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union in its new Article 176b gives the EU and in particular the European Parliament more competences in the field of tourism policy;
- J. whereas the important role which tourism can play in promoting the social inclusion and integration of the most disadvantaged population groups should be stressed;

Tourism and EU Visa policy

- 1. Stresses the importance to Europe of tourism, including tourism from third countries;
- 2. Highlights, in particular, the need to simplify visa application procedures on a reciprocal basis and to reduce the costs of tourist visas for entry into any Member State;
- 3. Highlights the possibility for concerned Member States to make use of Regulation (EC) No 1931/2006 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 20 December 2006 laying down rules on local border traffic at the external land borders of the Member States and amending the provisions of the Schengen Convention¹ as a new tool for facilitating tourism from bordering third countries;
- 4. Calls on the Member States that are party to the Schengen Agreement to establish common consular desks for the grant of visas to non-EU applicants, to ensure that these desks have the same working methods and apply the same visa criteria and to improve the reception given to visa applicants through, for example, the management of appointments, the way in which interviews are carried out and the time limit for processing applications, since this would lead to significant budgetary savings for the Member States;
- 5. Stresses the need to review, in the proposal to establish a Community Code on Visas², the number and type of documents that are requested from visa applicants;
- 6. Strongly recommends that there should be a presumption in EU visa policy in favour of issuing multiple-entry visas;
- 7. Points out that longer-term visas of at least one year's validity are needed by tour operators and transport companies so that they can hire the right personnel in order to

¹ OJ L 405, 30.12.2006, p. 1.

² Commission Proposal of 19 July 2006 for a Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council establishing a Community Code on Visas (COM(2006)0403).

meet the needs of their clients; insists on the need to maintain and enhance the delivery of visas for groups;

8. Calls on the Schengen Member States to simplify Schengen visa application procedures for tourists who have already been issued with visas for non-Schengen Member States or have already arrived in these countries, and calls on the non-Schengen Member States to do the same for holders of Schengen visas;
9. Recognises, however, that the simplification and harmonisation of visa application procedures and the general facilitation of entry into the EU for tourists from third countries have to be compatible with the security rules required in order to combat illegal immigration, terrorism, and organised crime, especially cross-border crime;

Statistics

10. Recalls that there is an absolute need for adequate, trustworthy, homogeneous and up-to-date information on tourism so that key strategic and management decisions can be taken in the public and private sector, and a need to develop adequate accompanying measures and orientations at EU level, in order to ensure that Europe remains the first destination in international terms and becomes competitive once again;
11. Calls for a review of Council Directive 95/57/EC of 23 November 1995 on the collection of statistical information in the field of tourism¹ so as to ensure better harmonisation of data collection by Member States, in relation to both the quantitative and qualitative aspects of the supply of data;
12. Welcomes the initiative to modernise the legal framework pertaining to tourism through a new Regulation to be implemented uniformly across the EU; points out that this reform should be carried out swiftly;
13. Calls on the Commission to seek possibilities for encouraging the Member States to implement Tourism Satellite Accounts (TSAs) since such instruments allow tourism to be accurately compared with other economic sectors and can contribute to a better understanding of the true size and value of the tourism industry;
14. Emphasises the need to increase awareness of the importance of tourism to economies and regional development; calls on the Member States to fully adopt TSAs and to update statistics on a yearly basis so as to ensure that timely and adequate data are available to support the complete and sound integration of tourism into economic and employment policies;
15. Urges the Commission to examine the need to collect statistical information and quality data in order to allow for an assessment of the impact of tourism on the economy, the environment and the quality of life of the inhabitants of popular tourist destinations;
16. Calls on the Commission to publish a report on the various national schemes in place for the protection of special natural and historic sites by means of specific town planning and building regulations and, where appropriate, to encourage best practice in these areas

¹ OJ L 291, 6.12.1995, p. 32.

through the publication of guidelines;

17. Calls on the Commission to draw up a harmonised scoreboard describing the condition of natural and historic sites, and in particular the impact of tourists on these sites, with a view to regulating the number of visits and ensuring that they are properly preserved and passed on to future generations;
18. Urges the Member States to promote regional planning which will help to prevent the emergence of undertakings geared to mass tourism which have a highly detrimental effect on the conservation of nature and of the cultural and historical heritage and which neither form part of nor involve local communities;

Harmonisation of quality standards for tourist accommodation in Europe

19. Notes the multiplicity of classification schemes in the Member States and considers that this situation, from the point of view of the consumer, has a negative impact on the industry's reliability and on transparency;
20. Notes that consumers regard the system of classification as an important instrument for choosing a hotel or other accommodation; therefore considers it important that accurate information on the meaning of the classification in the different countries be easily available to consumers and that it take their needs into close consideration;
21. Considers it advisable and possible to establish a common ground and common criteria for customers in order that they be able to make a choice, on the basis of clear and verifiable classification criteria, when they decide to travel abroad;
22. Notes, in this respect, that, given the great number of criteria in certain national and regional systems, the simplification of current standards would achieve the aim of clarifying and facilitating information for the consumer and would also ensure better levels of transparency with regard to tourist accommodation;
23. Calls on the European hospitality industry to:
 - continue its benchmarking of the key aspects of the various classification systems and pursue its efforts to bring these systems closer to one another, without disruption to existing systems, which would be to the detriment of consumers and of industry;
 - pursue its efforts to facilitate the understanding of the meaning of “stars” in the different Member States;
 - inform regularly the Community institutions of progress made;
24. Calls on local, regional and national authorities, whenever making a contribution to systems of classification, to support, within the framework of proper public/private partnerships, the current work of the European hospitality industry in relation to both the transparency and approximation, via benchmarking, of the existing classification systems;
25. Is aware that a common classification system at EU level would be very difficult to

achieve given the variety of hotel types and tourist accommodation as a result of local requirements, cultures and sensitivities, and in view of the very different structures of current classification plans;

26. Considers, however, that a set of guidelines based on common and uniform criteria for the entire EU could take into account the interests of the consumer, while respecting the environment and local characteristics;
27. Calls on the Commission, in cooperation with European hotel and catering organisations, such as HOTREC (Hotels, Restaurants and Cafés in Europe), and with the European consumer protection organisations, to establish a methodology for creating such minimum standards on safety and quality of accommodation services; stresses that such a methodology could include the introduction of an EC mark for accommodation that would encompass pan-European common criteria providing consumers with an assurance as to the minimum level of quality to be expected whatever Member State is visited;

Quality management schemes

28. Calls on the European hospitality industry to pursue its work in relation to the setting up of a European “umbrella” for quality management schemes and to inform regularly the Community institutions of progress made;
29. Encourages stakeholders from the European hospitality industry to further develop European standards with the aim of, inter alia, facilitating the transmission of information to the recipients and improving the quality of service provision; and calls on the Commission and the Member States to support their efforts where necessary;
30. Calls on local, regional and national authorities, whenever involved in quality schemes, to support, within the framework of proper public/private partnerships, the current work of the European hospitality industry in relation to a European “umbrella” for quality management schemes;
31. Welcomes the fact that environmental protection labels are on the increase, but considers that the multiplication of labels at local level can confuse tourists and affect transparency, prompting the need for better information for tourists and a consolidation of current labels, thus ensuring better international recognition;
32. Calls on the Commission, in cooperation with HOTREC, as the European catering trade association, to promote labelling processes regarding tourist accommodation carried out in the different Member States and to promote quality models that have proved effective elsewhere (for example the Qualmark in New Zealand) in order to improve visibility;
33. Calls on the Commission, the Member States and stakeholders to contribute to the enhancement of a sustainable labelling process based on economic, social, territorial, environmental and cultural criteria by showcasing best practice, transfer of best practice and encouraging initiatives by industry leaders;
34. Calls on the Commission and the Member States to promote the use of eco-labels for tourist facilities, sites and services;

Consumer protection

35. Is aware of the fact that tourists are increasingly booking their travel (transport, accommodation, etc.) directly using electronic means and avoiding intermediates- tour operators and travel agents- whose market share is diminishing (from 98% in 1997 to 60% in 2007) but who are still subject to legal regimes, such as Council Directive 90/314/EEC of 13 June 1990 on package travel, package holidays and package tours¹; stresses that this anomaly needs to be rectified by incorporating into Directive 90/314/EEC all websites that offer more than one service for sale, such as those offered by low-fare airlines and other actors in this market;
36. To this end welcomes the working document of the Commission of 26 July 2007 on the review of Directive 90/314/EEC which addresses the issues relating to the different regulatory regimes applicable to traditional tour operators and providers of dynamic packages over the Internet;
37. Stresses the increasing role of new technology in the tourist industry, particularly for the marketing of tourist products as well as for the enhancement of cultural goods and events;
38. Considers that the rapid development of the use of IT technologies for tourist services requires a consumers and personal data protection framework for electronic bookings, which might be based on a prior analysis of this market by the Commission; believes that such a framework should ensure that online consumer rights and personal data are protected and that consumers receive information that is true, not deceptive, up-to-date and unambiguous; therefore recommends, in the interests of consumer protection, the certification of sites that provide information and offer tourist services (reservation and payment) of an electronic nature;
39. Stresses the positive role played in this area by organisations working in the field of social tourism, whose activities should be encouraged and supported;
40. Welcomes the Commission proposal of 7 June 2007 for a Directive of the European Parliament and of the Council on the protection of consumers in respect of certain aspects of timeshare, long-term holiday products, resale and exchange (COM(2007)0303), aimed at extending the scope of the existing regulatory framework so as to include new long-term holiday products that have emerged on the market over the last years and certain transactions, such as resale and exchange, related to timeshare; considers that the proposal will enhance consumer protection in the tourism sector and create a level playing field protecting the honest timeshare industry from unfair competition;
41. Regrets the absence of a specific legal instrument covering the safety of services, which is crucial in the tourism sector and calls on the Commission and on the Member States to evaluate the possibility of addressing this issue in order to allay the concerns expressed by several of its Members;
42. Calls on the Commission, in order to inform tourists of the various regulations that apply in Member States other than their own country of residence, to conduct a European promotional campaign on road safety, drawing attention to new common control

¹ OJ L 158, 23.6.1990, p. 59.

measures;

43. Calls on the Commission to simplify procedures in relation to hazard analysis critical control points (HACCP) and to take into account the needs of small businesses, with particular regard to micro-businesses;

Health tourism

44. Stresses the importance of making use of all available Community programmes, including the Second Programme of Community Action in the Field of Health (2008-2013)¹, in order to promote health-related tourism;
45. Stresses that businesses in the insurance sector must play a greater role in supporting health-related tourism; in addition, emphasises that businesses in the insurance sector should be given support in finding solutions for trans-boundary cooperation in order to finance health-related tourism.
46. Considers, in view of the decline in health tourism, that there is a need for the adoption of a specific Community directive to define the recognition and use of hydro-thermal resorts and, more generally, the role of health tourism and thermal cures in connection with tourist facilities in the various Member States – apart from the health, social security and insurance aspects – by also making available sufficient financial resources to enable a strategically important sector of the Member States' economy to embark on a suitable development process, so as to significantly increase new direct and indirect employment;

Accessible tourism

47. Welcomes initiatives to coordinate at European level the information on accessible tourism that would allow tourists with reduced mobility and their families to find information on the accessibility of tourist destinations; calls on all Member States, tourism providers and national and local tourist organisations to join and/or to support this kind of initiative;
48. At the same time, calls on the Commission and the Member States to consider the feasibility of drawing up a charter of the rights and obligations of European tourists, in view of the riotous and violent incidents caused by European tourists in European tourist destinations, and also a European code of conduct for tourist businesses;
49. Calls on the Commission and the Member States to begin the process of setting up an "Access for all" EC label scheme that would guarantee core accessibility facilities for tourists with reduced mobility and would cover offers concerning, for example, accommodation, restaurants, leisure and natural sites, auditoriums, monuments, museums, etc.;
50. Stresses, furthermore, the need to protect, preserve and restore the European cultural heritage; and calls for more stringent management of such sites and of the conditions

¹ Decision No 1350/2007/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 23 October 2007 establishing a second programme of Community action in the field of health (2008-13) (OJ L 301, 20.11.2007, p. 3).

under which they are visited, and for greater efforts to improve access for people with disabilities, growing numbers of whom now travel for leisure purposes;

51. Calls on the Commission to draft a Communication with an action plan on the enhancement of an EC label "Access for all" based on the work it has already carried out, on experiences and best practices at national and local level and taking stock of what has been achieved at EU level in the transport field;
52. Notes that the accessibility of tourist destinations is a matter that also has to do with the transport services provided or available; calls, therefore, on the Commission, for the purposes of the new European tourism policy and of developing European transport policy, to take due account of the accessibility handicap affecting regions with specific natural or geographical characteristics, such as the outermost regions, island and mountain regions, and the sparsely populated northernmost regions;

Socially, economically and environmentally sustainable tourism

53. Points to the need for the new tourism policy to make European tourism sustainable in economic, social, territorial, environmental, and cultural terms; accordingly endorses the specific steps to be taken by the Commission to promote the economic and social sustainability of European tourism; and applauds the Commission for taking the initiative of drawing up the Agenda for a sustainable and competitive European tourism;
54. Welcomes the fact that the Commission calls for the promotion of sustainability in tourism, and stresses that social, economic and environmental sustainability is a fundamental prerequisite for the development and maintenance of any tourist activity;
55. Insists on the need to support and promote more sustainable and socially responsible practices in the tourist industry and to evaluate their effectiveness, so that the industry receives greater prominence in the renewed Lisbon Strategy;
56. Stresses that sustainably developed tourism must offer local economies (especially in disadvantaged regions) a long-term source of revenue, must help to promote stable employment with entitlements and must support other economic activities (both upstream and downstream), yet at the same time it must safeguard and enhance the cultural, historical, landscape and environmental heritage;
57. Welcomes the Commission's initiative in proposing the Agenda for a sustainable and competitive European tourism as a basis for tourism policy; calls on the Commission to provide the Member States with a guide making it possible to improve political coordination in the development of tourism at national, regional and local levels and enhance the sustainability of tourist activities;
58. Emphasises that threats to the environment, especially carbon dioxide emissions, require the tourism industry to be involved in the education of tourists regarding environmental issues when drawing up environmental policy;
59. Considers that tourism is partly responsible for the harm caused to the environment, which is related to the increasing amount of journeys made; stresses that representatives in the field of tourism should involve themselves in activities which concern issues

pertaining to environmental protection and their planning;

60. Calls on the Commission to cooperate with neighbouring countries (those to which the European Neighbourhood Policy applies and others in the eastern European and Mediterranean region) in the field of tourism and to support Low-Income and Middle-Income Developing countries further through EU foreign direct investment and joint ventures in the area of tourism, according to a sustainable tourism development strategy;

Passenger rights

61. Considers that a substantial set of rules exists at EU level for passenger rights in the field of air transport which promote accessibility and offer fair compensation in the event of a delay or cancellation but also in the event of an accident;
62. Stresses the point that it is currently endeavouring to ensure that substantial supplementary provisions are drawn up in order to consolidate such rights for rail and ship passengers so as to guarantee a harmonised scheme at EU level;
63. Calls on the Commission and the Member States to ensure the provision of information to passengers, and, in particular, the proper implementation of those passenger rights, and particularly of air passenger rights, and to ensure that easily accessible arbitration mechanisms are provided for by the Member States in situations where a defaulting operator fails to pay damages;
64. Calls on the Commission to reflect on an approach through which the EU could offer protection to passengers that have been left behind by a defaulting charter operator, intermediates or scheduled carriers as a result of bankruptcy or intentional abuse; suggests that an EU-wide blacklist of such operators be established, on the basis of criteria clearly defined by the Commission, following consultations with transport and/or tourism operators and consumer protection organisations;

Promotion of European tourist destinations

65. Welcomes the fact that the European Tourist Destinations Portal has been set up with the help of Commission funding; calls on the Commission to continue to help promote Europe as a tourist destination or a collection of attractive tourist destinations, for instance by introducing and publicising a 'Europe' label and organising arrangements and channels for gathering information on European tourist destinations and subsequently circulating it to those working in the tourism industry outside Europe;
66. Welcomes the implementation of a selection process for designating yearly outstanding European tourist destinations ('European destination of excellence'), as proposed in its abovementioned resolution; considers that those initiatives are valuable in that they make more visible the variety and wealth of European destinations; stresses the point that, wherever possible, the EU should promote those lesser known destinations, particularly in the new Member States;
67. Advocates, in view of the need to protect the quality of tourism in popular European tourist destinations, that this initiative be used to develop responsible and sustainable tourism in all tourist regions of the EU;

68. Calls on the Commission and the Member States, given that cross-border infrastructure is essential for the European tourism sector, to improve such infrastructures, including recreational (inland) waterways;
69. Calls upon the Commission to promote more vigorously Europe's transport and industrial heritage;
70. Encourages, therefore, initiatives seeking to enhance the European cultural heritage, such as the Council of Europe's Cultural Routes, and insists that their profile be raised; proposes, to that end, that support be given for the creation of a European Heritage label aimed at highlighting the European dimension of the EU's sites and monuments;
71. Stresses the urgency of protecting traditional culture, and in particular endangered folk arts, crafts, trades and knowledge, which are essential for the preservation of national identity and the attractiveness of rural areas for tourists;
72. Calls on the Commission to promote European destinations in those countries whose peak seasons coincide with the European low seasons and to look into the possibility of endorsing agreements, such as Memorandums of Understanding, with these third countries in order to develop tourist fluxes with an optimised seasonal spread;
73. Calls on the Commission to highlight the cultural dimension of European tourism by promoting European UNESCO world heritage sites as testimonies of European culture;
74. Urges the Commission to promote the cross-border memorial cycle route along the former Iron Curtain as an example of "gentle mobility" in tourism and as a symbol for the reunification of Europe;

Tourism development

75. Urges the Commission, the Member States, the regions, local authorities, and the tourism industry to coordinate the policies with a direct or indirect impact on tourism, cooperate more closely among themselves, and make better use of the European financial instruments available in the period from 2007 to 2013 with a view to developing European tourism, focusing on the competitiveness of the tourism industry and tourist destinations, the development of tourism enterprises, services, and facilities, job creation, mobility, and vocational training in the tourism sector, and economic diversification and the development of Europe's regions, in particular the less-favoured regions;
76. Calls on the Commission to draw up a report on the impact that actions and proposals in the area of other Community policies are likely to have on the tourist industry, in order that a holistic and integrated approach towards the sector can be taken and in order to avoid any fragmentation of the European tourism policy;
77. Invites all stakeholders to promote tourist destinations in accession countries but insists on the need to link any EU funding related to tourism to the promotion of high quality standards in the provision of tourist services;

78. Is aware of the benefit of coach holidays for tourists with lower incomes and for the development of tourism in regions which are not serviced by regional airports or railways; draws attention to the special situation of small and medium-sized coach companies vis-à-vis Regulation (EC) No 561/2006 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 15 March 2006 on the harmonisation of certain social legislation relating to road transport¹, particularly in relation to roundtrips; calls on the Commission to address this particular issue by examining possibilities of postponing the rest period after roundtrips (not exceeding 12 days);
79. Stresses that small and medium-sized enterprises should have greater involvement in tourism-related entrepreneurship and that possibilities for simplifying procedures to obtain financial support should be found; further stresses that EU sponsored training and best practice adoption courses should be introduced in regions, especially in the new Member States;
80. Suggests that the Commission study the possibility of a “Youth Transport Pass” for young Europeans receiving Erasmus, Leonardo or Comenius grants or carrying out voluntary civilian service in the EU, so as to make it easier for them to travel and familiarise themselves with their host country;
81. Stresses that, on the basis that the Leonardo da Vinci programme is one of a kind in the tourism sector of numerous countries, these opportunities should be developed and promoted; emphasises that this would lead to a vast improvement in the educational programme; highlights that, in addition to the implementation of the programme, research into results achieved should be carried out;

Miscellaneous

82. Draws attention once more, given the scale of forthcoming change in the demographic structure of the EU, to the need to implement a European tourist programme for retired people out of season, which would improve the quality of life of senior citizens in the EU, create employment and generate greater demand and growth in the European economy; believes that this could be called the Ulysses Programme;
83. Approves the Commission's plans to facilitate the cooperation of actors that foster the acquisition of knowledge, such as universities, research institutes and public and private observatories in the field of tourism, and to encourage mobility across Europe through the support of trans-national training and work placements and exchanges and through the development of training methods, materials and contents;
84. Calls on the Commission to request that an overall impact assessment be carried out in relation to the idea of staggering European holidays in terms of dates and on a regional basis;
85. Stresses the need for Community assistance for Member States whose tourist sector has been affected by natural disasters;

¹ OJ L 102, 11.4.2006, p. 1.

86. Stresses the importance of multilingualism in tourism policy and recommends that information be provided, in as many Member State languages as possible, on sites which can be visited;

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87. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council, the Commission and the governments and parliaments of the Member States.