

EP TOURISM TASK FORCE

WORK PROGRAMME

PRIORITIES FOR 2012/ 2013

In line with the objective of the EP Tourism Task Force and its working basis, the Report on Europe, the world's No 1 tourist destination – a new political framework for tourism in Europe (2010/2206(INI)), Committee on Transport and Tourism, in paragraph number 79, the following priorities are proposed for 2012 and 2013:

1) PROMOTING COOPERATION

As it was stressed in the report there is a lack of cooperation between the different institutional levels and organizations concerning the tourism policy. The EP Tourism Task Force could play an important role by supporting the increase of the levels of collaboration and cooperation among the different players. The involvement of the stakeholders is also a critical factor of success of the tourism policy as it provides a better knowledge of reality guaranteeing more efficient policies and a wider participation and commitment.

List of potential actions and timing:

The next actions will contribute not only to enhance the spirit of cooperation and give knowledge of what the EP Tourism Task Force is, but also to gather knowledge about the state of play and where the EP TTF can contribute at different levels.

- ✓ Meetings with the Commissioner responsible for tourism, Mr. Antonio Tajani (**November 2012**), and the rotating Presidency of the Council – **January 2013**.
- ✓ Meetings with DG ENTR and other DGs where tourism can play an important role (ex. DG AGRI, REGIO, EEAS, EMPL, EAC, RTD, MOVE and TAXUD) – **From October 2012**.
- ✓ Develop the EP Tourism Task Force meetings where different stakeholders from the same field of action can join and debate the different subjects included in this document. This can support a better coordination of efforts and the creation of synergies, an added value for the development of a better European Policy of Tourism. – **from October 2012 onwards on a regular basis**.
- ✓ Organization of an annual conference where it will be possible to communicate to a wider public the results of the EP Tourism Task Force and use the opportunity to bring the players (stakeholders, European organizations, member states) to debate issues that are critical to the success of an integrated view towards an European Policy in Tourism. – **first conference in May 2013**
- ✓ Joint Meetings on specific topics with MEPs from other parliamentary committees in order to make them aware of the transversal tourism matters. – **October 2012 onwards**

2) PROMOTING TOURISM FOR ALL

a) Accessibility

The tourists are requesting more accessibility at all levels and to keep the competitiveness of Europe it is necessary to develop policies focused on this issue. To deal with accessibility means to also guarantee the dissemination of an integrated view concerning the management of the destination. Accessibility does not only refer to destinations, but also to accommodation, information and transport. The main objective is to guarantee accessibility on a global perspective to everyone and to people with all sorts of special needs. This is not only a moral goal, but it also represents an investment to detect million of potential additional tourists through an improvement of the quality of services. In this respect, the EC

is developing an index of accessibility: this should be made of criteria of accessibility, which are modern and in line with the emergence of new and diverse needs. Due to its complexity a horizontal and vertical approach will be highly recommended in this regard.

b) Seasonality

Seasonality affects more than 96% of the destinations and brings many different problems at management level. There are destinations which can be attractive all year long developing tourism products out of the high season but also suffer by the existence of "normal" holiday flows, like the flows connected with school holidays. Seasonality can be also related with weather conditions, like the destinations linked with beach tourism, winter sports and other related tourism products.

Over the last 3 years, the EC tried to face the issue of seasonality with the preparatory action "Calypso" with positive results for European tourism. It is, therefore, crucial to work on new instruments in this respect which could disseminate the results and develop new programmes.

Many circumstances can create seasonality in a given destination and to properly deal with this complex issue, it is required an integrated and coherent view and the development of synergies and cooperation between the European Union institutions, Member States, and stakeholders at national, regional and destination level.

List of potential actions and timing:

- ✓ Drafting of an own-initiative report on tourism, accessibility and seasonality. – **October/ December 2012.**

3) SUSTAINING DIVERSIFICATION

a) Itineraries

The development of itineraries was mentioned as an important issue to increase the European identity through its culture and traditions. Highlighting the diversity and richness of culture in Europe and linking it through itineraries can contribute to its cohesion and it can contribute to support the mitigation of the negative impact of seasonality. Several itineraries have already been developed and implemented, notably in cooperation with the Council of Europe, contributing and sustaining diversification at destination level. There are examples like the route of Santiago de Compostela, of Via Francigena, Hansa Route, the Routes of El Legado Andalusi, of Eter Vitis, of the Phoenicians, of Saint Martin of Tours and of Wenzel and Vauban. But other routes are being established in subjects like industrial tourism, costal tourism or tourism peace heritage like the Places of Peace Route.

List of potential actions and timing:

- ✓ Evaluate the possibility to develop new itineraries. In order to complement this task, an accurate evaluation of the existing itineraries will be necessary. – **November 2012 onwards.**

b) Typologies

The richness of Europe must be used as its main factor of attraction and competitiveness. Europe as a destination must be in line with the trends of tourism and develop products to keep its position. Sustaining the diverse typologies like congress and business tourism, nature and rural tourism, coastal and maritime tourism, health tourism, sport tourism and industrial, among others, will support the diversification of products and will enrich the destinations' offers.

List of potential actions and timing:

- ✓ Evaluate proposals of new instruments to promote the different typologies of tourism. – **second half of 2013.**
- ✓ Organize a hearing on one of these typologies - **Second half of 2013**

4) ATTRACTING NEW FLOWS

a) Visa policy

This issue is of high importance to increase the flows coming from countries not belonging to the European Union like the BRIC Countries and for which is still necessary to have a visa to travel. Europe needs to attract these flows and will only succeed if the visa policy will take into consideration the tourism sector. Currently, the Visa system is not uniform in terms of procedures and emission timing. This situation generates excessive bureaucracy and different levels of competitiveness between Member States. It is therefore advisable, while respecting the EU's rights and duty to control entry across its own borders, for the European institutions and the Member States to develop, in the context of the common visa policy, a long-term strategy for more coordinated and simplified visa procedures,

List of potential actions and timing:

- ✓ Meeting with the services of the European External Action Service (EEAS) - **January 2012**
- ✓ Presentation of an oral question with debate in the Plenary Session – **end 2012**

b) Marketing strategies

Europe needs to develop strong and consolidated marketing strategies that could give answers to the tourism trends in terms of demand and effectively promote what the European tourism is, with its diversity and richness. For that reason, it is necessary to gather knowledge of the trends in the demand and how to reach it and how to develop more efficient tools to promote tourism.

List of potential actions and timing:

- ✓ Support the creation of the “European Brand”. With the support of the stakeholders develop a document with ideas and suggestions. This document could also have the vision of the stakeholders located at regional and local level and how they see and fit their business in a context of a “European Brand”. – **second half of 2013.**

5) INVESTING IN QUALITY

a) Label

Investing in quality is indeed another critical factor of success of Europe as a destination and for this reason the Report underlines a number of issues that must be taken into consideration. The duplication of labels must be also a preoccupation and coordination actions are advisable to guarantee added value for enterprises and consumers. The EC has launched, in the first half of the year, a public consultation for the European Tourism Quality Label with the objective of a wider stakeholder participation in the process and in view of a possible legislative proposal on this topic.

List of potential actions and timing:

- ✓ Meeting and debate with DG ENTR to understand the state of play of this action. – **November/ December 2012.**

b) Classification Systems

The classification systems, even if they use common terminology, do not use the same criteria and that creates misunderstanding and false expectations among the consumers. Long-haul tourists are often affected by the lack of harmonization and that affects their perception of the destination and of Europe, affecting negatively the destinations. A common strategy regarding this issue would bring an added value for the tourist, the destinations and for Europe as a destination.

List of potential actions and timing:

- ✓ Promotion of a hearing on the subject. – **2013.**

6) PROVIDING RESOURCES

To increase the efficiency and added value of a new European Tourism policy, it is necessary to provide financial resources in line with the proposed actions. Two types of resources must be considered:

a) Direct funds

The Programme for the Competitiveness of Enterprises and SMEs (COSME) 2014-2020 could play an important role in the field of tourism. Taking that evidence into consideration, actions of lobby must be urgently developed to involve other MEPs in this process and obtain their support as the European Parliament and the Council must agree to adopt the Commission's proposal. Other funds from DG ENTR and other DGs will be considered to be tackled in this priority.

List of potential actions and timing:

- ✓ Letter to be sent to all ITRE MEPs to call for support of provisions on financial support of tourism within COSME - **immediately.**
- ✓ **Meeting with MEPs, Member States and Council.** This is crucial to develop a coherent European policy in tourism and with added value for Members States, regions, destinations and stakeholders. The first step is to guarantee a correct integration of tourism in the COSME programme. But a particular attention must be also given to other programmes and funds that can provide support to projects and initiatives in the tourism field. – **from October 2012 onwards.**

b) Transversal policies and use of cohesion funds

The funds provided by the transversal policies and the cohesion funds will require the development of a strong and consolidated horizontal approach concerning the importance of tourism at European level and how this can contribute for its competitiveness and sustainable development.

In this priority, it is also important to mention the need of an integrated view with regards to the allocation of funds for professional training and research in tourism. The improvement of the professional skills supports the increase of quality of the services and for that reason, programmes based on the new trends and patterns of quality in tourism are needed. Another aspect which needs to be highlighted is the space planning policy, as a unique opportunity to link highly touristic areas with the hinterland and its touristic potential through structural funds and an efficient cooperation with local authorities.

List of potential actions and timing:

- ✓ Lobby actions to guarantee the inscription of tourism in the different regulations of the structural funds for 2014-2020. – **October 2012 onwards.**
- ✓ Drafting of an own-initiative report on tourism and financial tools - **2013**

CONCLUDING REMARKS

As the report clearly pointed out, there are several other themes and issues that would need to be tackled for the sustainable development of the tourism sector in Europe, among others:

- the issue of professional training
- ICT development
- adaptation to climate change measures, especially for mountainous areas and for coastal areas

However, due to timing reasons, these topics won't be treated as priorities for the purposes of this specific document. In particular, it is essential to wait for the outcomes of the working group developed by the EC with the stakeholders, aimed at creating the ICT Platform. That is why, to be feasible, realistic and produce visible results, the EP Tourism Task Force must start with a limited number of priorities.

MEP Carlo Fidanza - 9th October 2012