

# PODCAST ON TOURISM IN THE EU

Voice 1: Sarah

Voice 2: Brian

JINGLE to open intro to podcast

VOICE 2

You're listening to the European Parliamentary Research Service podcast on policy responses to the major challenges for EU tourism.

VOICE 1

The European Commission wants Europe to be the world's number 1 tourist destination, but increasing challenges and lack of competence in this field make it difficult for the EU to act...

VOICE 2

... So, what tools does the EU have to help develop a modern and sustainable tourism industry? Join us on this trip through the present and future of EU tourism!

**END OF INTRO JINGLE**

VOICE 1

Taking a gondola ride down the Grand Canal in Venice, climbing to the top of the Eiffel Tower in Paris, swimming in pristine waters in Croatia... every year, millions of tourists from around the world succumb to Europe's natural, historical and cultural charms.

VOICE 2

According to Eurostat, in 2014, holidaymakers spent 2.7 billion nights in tourist accommodation in the EU! And tourists not only sleep in hotels and bed and breakfasts... they also eat in restaurants, visit museums, use public transport... so they contribute to generating over 5% of EU GDP and create close to 10 million jobs!

#### VOICE 1

This is why tourism has become the third largest economic sector in the EU! But it is facing increasing challenges.... For instance, sustainability.

#### VOICE 2

Many European cities, such as Amsterdam and Barcelona, have become victims of their own success... as mass tourism often leads to noise pollution, increased CO2 emissions, damage to natural resources, and encourages unsustainable urban planning...

#### VOICE 1

Economic, political and natural events can also have a big impact on tourism. After the terrorist attacks in Paris, many tourists cancelled their trips to the French capital and speculation around the crisis in Greece curbed tourist arrivals in the summer of 2012.

#### VOICE 2

At the same time, Europe's southern countries seem to be profiting from the political upheaval in the Arab World, at least in terms of tourism...

#### VOICE 1

But competition is getting tougher! With more and more countries globally eager to open their doors to tourism, Europe will need to be creative and find new ways to keep on seducing travellers... for instance, by developing eco-tourism, promoting tailored tourism for seniors, LGBT friendly-tourism, or special programmes for "singles"....

#### VOICE 2

Incoherent and stringent visa policies are another obstacle to tourism... in 2012, the EU is estimated to have lost a potential over 6 and a half million travellers from China, India, Russia, Saudi Arabia and Ukraine, due to problems with their visa applications.

VOICE 1

Mass tourism also poses challenges at the local and regional level, in terms of waste collection, the protection of public spaces and natural beauty or the availability of human capital – a workforce available to answer the demands of this often seasonal industry.

VOICE 2

So, what can the EU do in the face of these multiple challenges? Let's have a look!

### **SHORT MUSIC JINGLE**

VOICE 1

Even if tourism remains essentially a national issue for the Member States, there is some room for EU action... In 2010, the Commission came up with a strategy to create a new framework for tourism in Europe and make it the world's number 1 destination.

VOICE 2

And a European Strategy for more Growth and Jobs in Coastal and Maritime Tourism followed in 2014!

VOICE 1

The Commission's communication focused on 4 main priorities: stimulating European tourism sector competitiveness, promoting the development of sustainable, responsible and high-quality tourism and consolidating this image, and maximising the potential of EU financial policies for developing tourism.

VOICE 2

The EU funds and supports many pan-European and transnational tourism products, such as EuroVelo, and various itineraries and trails linked to cultural, sustainable and accessible tourism.

#### VOICE 1

It promotes European Destinations of Excellence and designates European capitals of culture to attract new tourists. But there are many other EU policies which directly affect tourism... such as consumer protection and ensuring traveller's rights.

#### VOICE 2

Passengers travelling in the EU benefit from minimum standards of protection across all modes of transport, and people with reduced mobility are also entitled to a certain level of assistance while travelling in the EU.

#### VOICE 1

And from June onwards, mobile phone roaming costs will be abolished and all European travellers will be able to roam like at home!

#### VOICE 2

Visa arrangements, security and safety provisions for passengers, health coverage and rules on travelling with pets also have a direct impact on tourism... So, there's a lot the EU can do to help tourists feel safe and comfortable when they come visit us!

#### VOICE 1

But how can the EU best use funding from the Member States to address the many challenges facing the tourism sector???? Let's have a look at the financial instruments available...

#### **SHORT MUSIC JINGLE**

#### VOICE 2

Although there is no specific funding line for tourism, there are a number of funding opportunities for projects related to tourism which can be explored through existing Structural and Investment Funds and other sources...

#### VOICE 1

The European Regional Development Fund, for example, can be used to support tourism-related research and small-scale sustainable tourism infrastructure, amongst other activities...

#### VOICE 2

The Cohesion Fund, which focuses on transport and environmental infrastructure, can also support the development of trans-European transport networks, to make it easier for tourists to travel.

#### VOICE 1

Funds from the Agriculture Fund for Rural Development can also help farmers to diversify their activities and engage in sustainable and responsible tourist activities, which can help to boost their income.

#### VOICE 2

And so, we could talk about many other funds! The European Social Fund, the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund, the LIFE and Creative Europe programmes, and the European Fund for Strategic Investments... It's all in a special guide on EU funding for the tourism sector!

#### VOICE 1

So, what's the view of the Parliament?

#### VOICE 2

When the Commission revealed its plans to develop a new policy framework for tourism in Europe, the Parliament asked for a number of additional measures... such as a long-term strategy for more coordinated and simplified visa procedures, and a harmonised classification system for hotels and other tourist accommodation in the EU.

#### VOICE 1

The Parliament's Committee on Transport and Tourism has also suggested to the Commission that a separate budget within the next Multiannual Financial Framework could be dedicated exclusively to tourism.

#### VOICE 2

In the Parliament's view, it's also time for a new Commission strategy on tourism! A strategy to promote sustainable, responsible and eco-friendly tourism...

#### VOICE 1

The Committee of the Regions shares similar ideas and has called on the Commission to make senior tourism central to the Digital Agenda for Europe, and to consider declaring a European Year of Tourism to help promote the diversity of European tourism. But despite all these calls, the Commission has yet to show much enthusiasm...

#### VOICE 2

Although Europe's natural, cultural, architectural and historical gems continue to attract hordes of tourists, other destinations are rapidly moving up the ladder...

#### VOICE 1

...so, it may be time to stop taking our popularity for granted and turn the many challenges into an opportunity to build a modern and sustainable tourism industry for Europe!

#### VOICE 2

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