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on new challenges and concepts for the promotion of tourism in Europe
(2014/2241(INI))

Committee on Transport and Tourism

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MOTION FOR A EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT RESOLUTION

on new challenges and concepts for the promotion of tourism in Europe (2014/2241(INI))

The European Parliament,

- having regard to the Commission communication entitled ‘Europe, the world’s No 1 tourist destination – a new political framework for tourism in Europe’ (COM(2010)0352),
 - having regard to its resolution of 27 September 2011 on Europe, the world’s No 1 tourist destination – a new political framework for tourism in Europe¹,
 - having regard to the Commission communication entitled ‘A European Strategy for more Growth and Jobs in Coastal and Maritime Tourism’ (COM(2014)0086),
 - having regard to the Commission Green Paper entitled ‘Safety of Tourism Accommodation Services’ (COM(2014)0464),
 - having regard to the Commission communication entitled ‘Better regulation for better results – An EU agenda’ (COM(2015)0215),
 - having regard to its resolution of 25 October 2011 on mobility and inclusion of people with disabilities and the European Disability Strategy 2010-2020²,
 - having regard to the Council resolution of 6 May 2003 on accessibility of cultural infrastructure and cultural activities for people with disabilities³,
 - having regard to the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU), and in particular Article 195 thereof,
 - having regard to Rule 52 of its Rules of Procedure,
 - having regard to the report of the Committee on Transport and Tourism and the opinions of the Committee on the Internal Market and Consumer Protection and the Committee on Culture and Education (A8-0258/2015),
- A. whereas measures taken at EU level under Article 195 TFEU must complement the action of the Member States in the tourism sector, excluding any harmonisation of the laws;
- B. whereas tourism is a key potential growth area of the European economy, which generates over 10 % of the EU’s GDP if sectors linked to tourism are taken into account; whereas tourism is also a driver of substantial employment, as it directly

¹ OJ C 56 E, 26.2.2013, p.41.

² OJ C 131 E, 8.5.2013, p. 9.

³ OJ C 134, 7.6.2003, p. 7.

employs 13 million workers and consequently accounts for at least 12 % of jobs in the EU;

- C. whereas Europe is the world's number one tourist destination, with a market share of 52 %; whereas statistics show that the majority of trips abroad by EU residents continue to be to destinations within the EU, and whereas the number of international tourists arriving in the EU is forecast to increase by 140 million each year until 2025;
- D. whereas tourism represents a major socio-economic activity in the EU, with a wide-ranging impact on economic growth, employment and social development, and whereas it could therefore be instrumental in addressing the current economic and employment crisis;
- E. whereas coastal and maritime tourism is the largest maritime activity in Europe, and whereas it represents more than a third of the maritime economy, directly affecting many other sectors of the EU economy and employing 3.2 million people, most between the ages of 16 and 35; whereas it should also be noted that this sector has been a lever for growth and job creation, particularly in the Atlantic and Mediterranean regions;
- F. whereas tourism policy priorities contribute to at least three priorities of the Juncker Commission, namely sustainable growth and jobs, the connected digital single market, and a deeper and fairer internal market;
- G. whereas the actions announced in the 2010 Commission communication entitled 'Europe, the world's No 1 tourist destination' foster the ambitious objective of maintaining Europe's dominant position in the world as a tourist destination;
- H. whereas there is no dedicated line for tourism in the EU budget, and whereas actions in this field come under various funds, pilot projects and preparatory actions;
- I. whereas the tourism industry in Europe faces a number of new challenges, among them the digitisation of distribution channels, the development of the new sharing economy sector, increasing competition from emerging, less expensive third-market destinations, changing consumer behaviour, the transition to an experience economy, the demand for quality client service, the need to attract and retain skilled staff, demographic changes, and seasonality;
- J. whereas tourism policymakers can address challenges such as demographic changes and seasonality in tourism by developing products and services which cater for the specific needs of the increasing number of seniors able to travel during the low season;
- K. whereas SMEs in the tourism sector face considerable difficulties as a result of a heavy regulatory burden;
- L. whereas promoting Europe through its own tourism destination promotion and brand strategy serves as an important tool for strengthening its image, profile and competitiveness as a set of sustainable and high-quality tourist destinations, enables European destinations to distinguish themselves from other international destinations and helps to attract international tourists, particularly from emerging third markets;

- M. whereas conflicts near EU borders, for instance in Ukraine and in the Middle East, together with terrorist threats, have a negative impact on the tourism sector and thus require counter-measures at both national and European level;
- N. whereas sustainable, accessible and responsible tourism which is in harmony with nature and landscape and with urban destinations, and which relies on resource efficiency, sustainable mobility and climate protection, helps to preserve the local environment, in particular in mountain and coastal regions and islands, and to bring lasting results in terms of regional growth, accommodates the increasing quality demands of travellers and helps companies to compete;
- O. whereas European cultural tourism plays an important role in promoting Europe's rich cultural diversity, strengthens European identity and promotes cross-cultural exchanges and multicultural understanding;
- P. whereas regions play a fundamental role in the development and implementation of tourism-related policies at the regional level;
- Q. whereas the sharing economy represents a shift towards new business models as a result of rapidly changing new technology, and whereas many of the players in the sharing economy are part of the travel service economy;
- R. whereas, although information is scattered and it is consequently difficult to draw solid conclusions, it is most likely that the economic impact of the sharing economy has a positive effect on economic growth and welfare;
- S. whereas offering services of a high standard and protecting consumer rights should be the highest priority for all those providing tourism-related services, including in the sector involving the sharing and use of the latest internet technologies;
- T. whereas travel and tourism is one of the sectors most affected by digitisation, and whereas this opens up a number of opportunities for travel companies not only in Europe but also globally;

The Commission's action framework

1. Calls on the Commission to report back to Parliament on the implementation of the actions set out in its aforementioned 2010 communication and the use of budget allocations under the Structural Funds and the relevant EU programmes, in particular the Competitiveness and Innovation Framework Programme (CIP) and the Competitiveness of Enterprises and Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises (COSME) programme, and the respective pilot projects and preparatory actions, in the form of a factual review including an assessment of the effectiveness of actions to promote tourism and to consolidate the competitiveness of the EU tourism sector;
2. Expects the Commission to ensure that the future allocation of resources from the various promotional funds for the creation of a favourable environment for companies in the EU tourism sector remains possible;

3. Strongly encourages the Commission to examine the possibility of creating a section within the next multiannual financial framework that is dedicated exclusively to tourism, on the grounds that tourism should be better recognised as an individual economic activity in terms of budget and actions, instead of being financed from the budgets of other policy areas;
4. Recalls that the European Structural and Investment Funds (ESIF) are still the largest source of external financing for activities intended to stimulate the tourism sector in certain Member States; urges the Commission, therefore, to ensure greater transparency in the way in which structural funds are used by local administrations;
5. Calls on the Commission, the Member States, regions and the authorities responsible for tourism, together with companies, in particular SMEs, to make the fullest possible use of the new funding opportunities under the European Fund for Strategic Investments, especially through national and regional investment banks, in order to give a qualitative leap to EU action in support of tourism;
6. Urges the Commission to encourage the development of tourism-related pilot scenarios under the Horizon 2020 programme;
7. Calls on the Commission to translate the funding support guide into the EU's 24 official languages in order to facilitate access to information on funding possibilities, in particular for SMEs, given that access to finance is one of the barriers faced in this sector;
8. Calls on the Commission to appoint independent experts to assess the impact of other EU policies on tourism and analyse real and potential threats to tourism as a result of conflicts in the EU's neighbouring countries and regions, and to report back to Parliament with proposals for measures to enhance the positive impact on tourism and reduce the negative impact;
9. Expects the Commission to present an overview of up-to-date data on the basis of the new Regulation on Tourism Statistics;
10. Notes that further effort is needed to develop an integrated approach to tourism, ensuring that the interests and needs of this sector are taken into account when formulating and implementing other EU policies (e.g. transport, rural policy);
11. Calls on the Commission to present a new strategy for EU tourism to replace or update the 2010 communication;
12. Expects the Commission to present detailed implementing measures for the new set of common actions in the context of the next European Tourism Forum;
13. Strongly recommends that the Commission transfer sufficient human resources to its tourism policy, given the importance of tourism as an essential factor for economic growth and jobs in Europe; criticises the fact that the subject of tourism is not listed visibly enough on the new DG GROW website; also recommends making this website multilingual;

14. Emphasises the importance of coordination among Commission services and departments;
15. Urges the Commission to consider reducing the disproportionate regulatory burden, which has a negative impact on the competitiveness of SMEs in the tourism sector; calls on the Commission and the Member States to reduce, and not add to, the existing regulatory burden;
16. Reminds the Commission that tourism is a key sector of the European economy, and that it is consequently necessary to improve considerably the coordination between Member States, regional and local authorities and financial institutions and to create synergy between the public and private tourism sectors; calls on the Commission to engage in finding a mechanism for effective coordination and cooperation in the sector;
17. Considers that, within the framework of cooperation and good neighbourliness, the EU should develop cooperation actions for the development of tourism in third countries with a view to enabling balanced development of their economies, which will also help to ease tensions in the area of neighbourly relations and to enhance the attractiveness of the region and the flow of incoming tourism;
18. Considers that designating a European Year of Tourism would help to promote the diversity of European tourism and raise the profile of the various stakeholders active in the tourism sector; calls on the Commission to consider such an initiative;
19. Calls on the Commission to submit an analysis of the advantages and disadvantages of setting up a European Agency for Tourism;

Branding/joint promotion of Europe as a tourist destination

20. Strongly encourages the Commission, in cooperation with the European Travel Commission (ETC), which brings together the national tourism organisations, to continue and deepen the promotion of Europe as the world's top tourist destination under the umbrella of a common European approach; calls in particular for the implementation of the long-term strategy launched by the Commission and the ETC in February 2014, 'Destination Europe 2020', which includes a set of marketing, branding and promotion actions for Europe as a tourist destination;
21. Calls in particular for the creation of a 'Destination(s) Europe' brand with the aim of complementing and enhancing the promotional activities of tourism organisations operating at the national, regional, cross-border and local levels, and of the European tourism industry, for the benefit of the visibility and competitiveness of European tourist destinations, especially in long-haul markets; stresses that the 'Destination(s) Europe' brand needs an inclusive approach which generates advantages for both established and less-known European destinations while preserving the inherent diversity of different European regions inasmuch as they make a living from their own territorial brand, and that it must fully respect the competences of the Member States in accordance with Article 195 TFEU;
22. Recognises that common objectives need to be clearly defined and the potential and

added value of a 'Destination(s) Europe' brand analysed, in accordance with the needs and specific requirements expressed by the Member States; takes the view that, in order to achieve these results, further in-depth consultations need to be conducted with the industry, tourism organisations and regional and local authorities; recommends the setting-up of a brand manual, which should specify agreed promotion modalities;

23. Recommends giving consideration to how the private sector can become involved in the 'Destination(s) Europe' brand's marketing strategy, and how it can contribute financially to the development and goals of the strategy; stresses the importance of public-private partnerships and consequently suggests developing a Special Public-Private Partnership of Tourism (SPOT) programme; calls on the Member States to involve their respective regional and local authorities in this process, and to cooperate constructively with the industry in order to achieve those objectives;
24. Calls for the enhancement of the 'Destination(s) Europe' brand as the most family-, child- and generation-friendly holiday region in the world;
25. Views it as essential that one of the key elements of the 'Destination Europe' brand be the security of tourists; calls, therefore, on the authorities of the Member States, in close cooperation with the Commission, to implement strategies (including tourist information campaigns) with the objective of giving tourists the safest possible experience in European tourist destinations;
26. Stresses the need to increase political awareness of the fact that promoting Europe in third countries serves as a marketing tool with the objective of increasing the number of inbound tourists, and thereby helps to bring economic benefit not only to less-known destinations and countries experiencing economic difficulties, but also to the EU as a whole; considers that a strict visa policy is a barrier to inbound tourism from third countries; welcomes the measures put forward by the Commission in 2014 with a view to issuing new tourist visas and facilitating the movement of tourists through the Schengen area; encourages the Council, to this end, to reach a rapid agreement with Parliament so that the EU can benefit from a greater influx of tourists from certain third countries with a high potential interest in visiting the EU;
27. Recalls that the EU should start investing in order to be ready to tap the potential of third countries with a large population and emerging economies, particularly the BRIC countries, where the number of outbound tourists is rising; points out the need for initiatives aimed at promoting tourism and for greater flexibility and consistency in respect of tourist visa arrangements and border crossings; stresses that the promotion of a larger number of Visa Tourism platforms, coupled with a cautious approach to the simplification of the Visa Code, is an important component in increasing the number of tourists from outside Europe and raising the visibility of European tourist destinations; highlights the potential of touring visas for groups of tourists who had already been in the country, and the importance of implementing more visa waiver agreements in order to make optimum use of international tourist arrivals; considers it advisable, with due respect for the Member States' right and duty to control entry across their 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 better-coordinated and simplified visa

procedures;

Pan-European and transnational tourism products

28. Takes the view that public and private stakeholders should strengthen their efforts to develop new transnational European tourism products, while taking full account of the role of macro-regional strategies in their development; notes that macro-regions such as the Adriatic-Ionian macro-region offer distinctive natural, cultural and historical bases for the development of such products; calls on public and private stakeholders in the EU's Baltic, Danube, Adriatic-Ionian and Alpine macro-regional strategies to devise, each in their own area, joint strategies for the development of tourism;
29. Encourages international cooperation in the creation of transnational thematic itineraries (at the level of a larger number of European countries) in order to amplify experiential elements that motivate visits to certain destinations (defined at the state level), increase the mobility of holidaymakers, achieve higher average spending and broaden the promotional platform (in particular as regards visitors from 'long-haul' inbound markets);
30. Highlights the increase in international competition with the emergence of destinations outside Europe; considers it essential, therefore, to foster greater cooperation between European destinations through tourism clusters and networks at the local, regional, national and transnational levels and within maritime basins;
31. Recognises the importance of transnational tourism products in promoting territorial cohesion; is convinced, therefore, that initiatives implemented within institutionalised cooperation frameworks should be supported through adequate incentives;
32. Calls on the Member States to promote new tourism routes by regenerating disused areas, streets, railways, deserted paths and outdated routes;
33. Calls on the Commission and the members of the ETC to support its existing mandate to assist in the development and promotion of targeted transnational and pan-European tourism products and services, together with coastal and maritime tourism, by means of an advanced, improved and fully accessible Visiteurope.com portal; calls on the Commission to ensure that the Visiteurope.com portal can also be accessed on all common mobile and portable terminals via a specially programmed application (app);
34. Calls on the Commission, furthermore, to boost its cooperation with the Council of Europe, the ETC and the UN World Tourism Organisation, together with other international partners, in order to strengthen efforts to develop new transnational and pan-European tourism products;
35. Stresses, while taking into account the fact that today's consumers tend to seek a tourism experience rather than a mere destination, that a successful marketing strategy to promote European tourism products needs to correspond to the needs of different travel segments and markets in third countries;
36. Highlights the need for travel agents and tour operators to promote the 112 European

emergency number on relevant websites and e-tickets, and in our main tourist destinations;

37. Welcomes the Calypso social tourism initiative, which allows seniors, young people, people on lower incomes and people with disabilities to go on holidays outside the high season; stresses that this initiative has the potential to overcome the problem of seasonality, particularly in less well-known destinations;
38. Believes, however, that in order to combat seasonality in Europe there needs to be a stronger focus on developing targeted tourism products which offer travellers a specific tourism experience and correspond to their specific needs; calls on the Commission, therefore, to encourage and support the Member States and the tourism industry in creating more diversified and targeted products around specific themes such as the rural, cultural and industrial heritage, history, religion, health, spa and wellness experiences, sport, wine and food, music and art as forms of alternative tourism which help to bring added value to the area in question by diversifying its economy and making employment less seasonal; encourages the Member States, to this end, to make appropriate use of EU funds, and calls on the Commission to extend the objectives for action under the COSME programme accordingly; considers that sport, music and arts festivals have strong potential to mobilise tourists from Europe and abroad;
39. Emphasises that Europe's diversity and multiculturalism offer great potential for the development of themed tourism, and allow the coordinated promotion of alternative and sustainable tourism and cultural exchanges; encourages initiatives to connect tourist attractions to one another in order to establish thematic tourism products and trails on a European, national, regional and local scale, exploiting the complementarity and specificities of the various European tourist attractions so as to provide the best possible experience for tourists;
40. Stresses the need to promote and highlight Europe's rich cultural heritage, using the UNESCO World Heritage List as a unique selling proposition but also including sites that may be less widely known or not easily reachable, especially given that cultural tourism accounts for about 40 % of European tourism and thereby contributes significantly to economic growth, employment, social innovation and local, regional, urban and rural development, while reducing the impact of seasonality; also stresses, in this context, the key role played by sponsorship in maintaining Europe's heritage and helping Member States bear the cost burden;
41. Stresses that the promotion of cultural events at various levels could contribute to the attractiveness of tourist destinations, and therefore suggests looking at the possibility of creating a Europe-wide calendar of events, to be posted at the VisitEurope.com portal, in order to improve tourist information services;
42. Calls on national tourism organisations to lend adequate web visibility to initiatives and awards highlighting the European heritage, and to foster related promotional initiatives and activities (such as the European Heritage label and the European Cultural Routes);
43. Reiterates the importance of protecting and preserving the cultural heritage against the possible harmful effects of structural changes caused by tourism activities, and against

the risks posed by mass tourism, especially during the high season; gives priority to the quality of the work performed rather than its cost; stresses, in this context, the role that patronage can play in helping to conserve the European heritage and compensating for the decline in public budgets allocated for this purpose;

44. Asks the Commission and the Member States to implement the action to protect endangered monuments and sites in Europe in order to safeguard and promote the cultural heritage and thereby encourage cultural tourism;
45. Stresses the important role played by European cultural tourism in furthering personal development and knowledge, especially among young people, promoting Europe's rich national and local cultural diversity and heritage, contributing to intercultural learning, providing an opportunity for networking, strengthening European identity and expressing European values;
46. Stresses the potential of cultural tourism for poverty alleviation; calls, in this connection, for the fostering of Member States' creative industries and of rural tourism in order to promote Europe's extraordinary cultural wealth and to fight poverty and unemployment;
47. Stresses that the joint acquisition of travel passes and tickets should be simplified as a form of support for cultural campaigns;
48. Stresses that Europe's breadth of languages – official, co-official, minority and lesser-known – form the bedrock of its cultural heritage and are themselves key to sustainable and responsible tourism;
49. Notes the opportunities offered by significant historical events and sites, such as the Sites of Conscience, to address contemporary challenges through sensitive interpretation and education programmes; encourages the use of cultural heritage and tourism to foster intercultural dialogue and bring the people of Europe closer together;
50. Stresses the potential of sport tourism, which could in future become one of the most dynamic sectors in the developing European travel industry, and calls for the introduction of specific policies to promote and support its development; recalls the important place of sporting activities in making Europe's regions attractive to tourists; highlights the opportunities arising from travel by athletes and spectators in the run-up to sports events and during those events, which can attract tourists to even the most remote areas; emphasises that the potential of sport tourism is not yet sufficiently exploited;

Quality

51. Is convinced that European tourism must make a transition from a model of quantitative growth to a qualitative model leading to steady and sustainable development, and that there is, in fact, a need to build a tourism industry that allows the creation of more qualified jobs which are properly remunerated; believes that the economic diversification of tourism in rural and coastal areas offers opportunities for new and sustainable employment;

52. Acknowledges the difference in standards of service quality in the tourism sector, and takes the view that quality standards are important as a means of levelling the playing field for operators and increasing transparency for the consumer, thereby helping to strengthen the confidence of all parties; calls on all stakeholders to take further the discussion of how the EU can promote agreed quality standards for tourism services;
53. Calls on the Commission to launch a European tourism quality brand to reward rigorous efforts by tourism professionals in supporting the quality of tourism services based on the highest respect for the cultural and natural heritage, improving the quality of tourism jobs, enhancing accessibility for all and promoting the cultural traditions of local communities;
54. Calls on the Commission to boost collaboration between Member States in order to improve product quality by protecting the 'made in' brand;
55. Calls on the Commission and the Member States to collaborate with tourism associations, and together to define a common European system for the classification of tourism infrastructure (hotels, restaurants, etc.); considers that the Hotelstars Union initiative aimed at gradually harmonising accommodation classification systems across Europe should be further promoted, thus allowing a better comparison of the accommodation offer in Europe and contributing to common service quality criteria;
56. Believes that maintaining safety standards in tourism services in the EU is an essential ingredient of good quality; welcomes, therefore, the Commission Green Paper entitled 'Safety of Tourism Accommodation Services'; notes the submissions from many consumer groups, fire safety organisations and tourism sector organisations supporting action at EU level on tourism safety; calls on the Commission, therefore, to come forward with proposals for minimum standards for tourism safety in the EU, in particular in the area of fire safety and carbon monoxide safety in holiday accommodation; stresses the need for systematic collection of data on accommodation safety;
57. Underlines the fact that high-quality tourism services are guaranteed if combined with appropriate training and decent work conditions, and that disregard for, and the weakening of, the required skills and social achievements in the sector are counterproductive;
58. Takes the view that investing in training and education is an essential element in providing quality services in a sector that employs mostly young people, typically aged between 16 and 35; strongly encourages the Commission to work with private entities and other public bodies to create low-season training and internship programmes in order to make the sector more attractive and less seasonal; considers that such training should emphasise higher qualifications and soft skills development, leading to improved job prospects across the sector; calls on the Commission, therefore, to support the tourism sector's efforts to upgrade employers' and employees' skills and competences in order to anticipate future trends and skills needs; takes the view that statistics on employment in the tourism sector should be improved;
59. Calls on the Commission, in this connection, to support the tourism industry by

eliminating skills gaps and boosting the market relevance of vocational education and training; suggests that the Commission issue and distribute a guide on best practice and available training opportunities in the EU, thereby enabling a higher degree of professionalism and greater voluntary mobility among professionals within the EU;

60. Underlines the importance of improving the mutual recognition by Member States of professional qualifications in the tourism industry in order to enable workers to identify the best possible career prospects, thereby fostering their mobility;
61. Welcomes mobility tools, and cooperation projects such as Knowledge Alliances and Sector-Skills Alliances under Erasmus+ and Erasmus for Young Entrepreneurs, as efficient means for tourism workers involved in education and training at all levels to exchange best practices, improve their language skills and obtain practical knowledge of cultural tourism; is concerned, however, at the lack of interest among young people in pursuing careers in certain tourism sectors; stresses the advantages of a ‘dual-education’ system in the tourism sector and the importance of combining learning with hands-on work experience, thereby improving both theoretical knowledge and practical skills; calls on the Member States and on local and regional authorities to take full advantage of the opportunities offered by the European Social Fund and by other EU, national and regional funds to promote vocational training;
62. Calls on the Member States to invest in high-quality training for tourist guides and to encourage a multilingual approach in order to better promote sites of interest to foreign tourists; further calls on the Commission and the Member States to define European quality standards for tourist guides, ensuring compliance with minimum training requirements;
63. Calls on the Commission to carry out a study on the impact on Europe’s competitiveness as a destination of taxes and levies raised on tourism products and services at local, regional, national and European level; calls on the Member States to recognise the importance of reducing VAT rates on travel and tourism services in order to help develop local economies and sustain growth and jobs, as well as helping Europe to remain competitive on the global market;

Unlocking the potential of coastal and marine tourism

64. Recognises the importance for coastal and island areas of the European Strategy for more Growth and Jobs in Coastal and Maritime Tourism (in line with the Blue Growth strategy and the Europe 2020 strategy), which presents a set of common responses to the many challenges they face;
65. Strongly encourages the Commission to present an action plan to accompany the 14 actions described in the aforementioned coastal and maritime tourism strategy, with concrete goals and timetables, and to report to Parliament on the progress made on those actions;
66. Calls on the Commission to conduct an annual seminar, with the participation of the coastal and marine Member States and the respective regions, with the aim of promoting a pan-European dialogue and facilitating the sharing of best practices and the

implementation of a long-term strategy;

67. Recalls the importance of connectivity and accessibility, and notes that they differ between high and low season in the outermost regions and islands, which depend largely on sea and air transport; also emphasises the importance of creating regional plans that promote mobility within destinations; asks the Commission that Action 12 of the aforementioned coastal and maritime tourism strategy also take into account the efficiency of State aid in coastal and maritime regions;
68. Strongly encourages the Commission, together with Member States and stakeholders in the nautical and maritime tourism sector, to assess the need to create intelligent and innovative strategies as a solution for combating seasonality that is adapted to both the high- and low-season periods and takes account of various target groups; calls on stakeholders to make efforts to create experiences, products and complementary services that are integrated with local products, particularly in connection with maritime heritage and culture, water sports, recreational sailing, observation of marine life and nature, sun and beach-related activities, artisanal fishing, food and health;
69. Highlights the importance of cruise tourism for the growth of the tourism sector in Europe; calls on the Commission, therefore, together with the Member States, to assess the resources required and existing port and nautical infrastructure, and to standardise the sorting of waste and recycling, in order to create innovative planning actions for these areas by developing the concept of the smart port city;
70. Stresses that joint planning and joint action are just as necessary for the acceptance of tourism by the population as they are for its sustainable development;

Sustainable, responsible and social tourism

71. Calls on the Commission to continue to promote sustainable, responsible and eco-friendly tourism in cooperation with strategic partners such as the ETC and other stakeholders by developing new specific products and promoting existing ones, and suggests setting up a Europe-wide, fully accessible web platform that brings together existing information on certified products, new forms of tourism, destinations and routes, and on specific services such as transportation means and tourism guides, in one database with access through the Visiteurope.com portal;
72. Believes that increased (co-)funding must be earmarked for sustainable tourism projects under the COSME programme;
73. Urges the Commission to finalise the European Charter for Sustainable and Responsible Tourism and to continue to give financial support to important initiatives and networks such as EDEN (European Destinations of Excellence) and European cultural trails;
74. Encourages the national tourism organisations, on the basis of standards proposed by the Commission, to set up a specific unique portal at national level on sustainable and responsible tourism in order to allow customers to make an informed choice among targeted national and transnational products and destinations;

75. Stresses the importance of ensuring the development of sustainable, responsible and accessible tourism, in which the concept of the ‘smart destination’ should be central to destination development, and which should combine the aspects of sustainability, experiential tourism and appropriate use of natural resources, together with the new technologies, including the aspects of physical and information communication accessibility; is convinced that information networks on soft tourism projects offer good opportunities to support SMEs, local sustainable development, sustainable jobs and stable economies;
76. Calls on the Commission to carry out a study on sustainability certificates for soft tourism services, including an analysis of voluntary instruments indicating which instruments have been successful;
77. Calls for the promotion and further development of child- and family-friendly options in the tourism sector, for example through the creation of a European family-friendly tourism seal;
78. Emphasises the importance of promoting programmes to allow outdated hotel facilities to be regenerated in accordance with eco-sustainable tourism criteria;
79. Emphasises the crucial role played by European tourism in the regeneration of rural and urban areas with a view to achieving sustainable local and regional development;
80. Calls for the development of sustainable tourism services in those regions which, despite having great cultural and tourism potential, have suffered damage to their image as a result of a greater focus on, and the development of, other sectors, including the industrial sector;
81. Highlights the importance of an awareness that tourism should not have a negative impact on residents’ daily lives; considers that, on the contrary, the resident population should be positively integrated with, and able to participate in, the tourism phenomenon;
82. Emphasises that the natural and cultural heritage and biodiversity protection constitute a precious capital for the tourism sector, and therefore supports the Member States and regional authorities and tourism businesses in promoting eco-tourism and complying with EU environmental legislation when deciding on and executing infrastructure projects; calls on the Member States to integrate natural heritage initiatives into their national and regional tourism strategies;
83. Stresses the importance of sustainable and responsible tourism for the protection and promotion of the regional natural and cultural heritage; is convinced, therefore, that regional tourism products and short stays should be supported and promoted through appropriate measures;
84. Calls on the Commission and the Member States to develop networks of green routes incorporating rural and wooded areas and minor natural sites, by integrating existing transport infrastructure networks with new eco-sustainable solutions;
85. Emphasises that sustainable fishing tourism can make an important contribution to the

economy of rural areas in Europe; stresses that this form of tourism can only continue to exist if endangered fish species are managed more sustainably in Europe's inland waters;

86. Notes that agro-tourism is one of the most basic forms of alternative tourism in the EU and calls on the Commission, in cooperation with the Member States, to support actions designed to provide incentives to further develop the infrastructure and accessibility of this sector;
87. Calls on the Commission to further promote local areas and specialities by encouraging the showcasing, and ensuring the protection, of local products such as agricultural and non-agricultural protected geographical indications (PGIs);
88. Considers that sensitive regions such as islands, coasts and mountains, and in particular remote and outermost regions, often depend strongly on tourism business and are the first to be affected by climate change; is convinced, therefore, that climate protection should be a priority and be more strongly integrated into European, national and regional tourism and transport policies, including through a focus on energy efficiency, renewable energy, sustainable transport and waste management; calls on the Commission to make an impact assessment of how climate change affects tourism in these sensitive regions – economically, environmentally and socially – and of the influence it will have in the future;
89. Underlines the need to promote the tourism potential of remote rural, island, coastal and mountain areas, encourages the development of sustainable maritime and marine tourism in the EU, and calls on the Member States to develop sustainable infrastructure and improve cross-border connectivity as a means of enhancing their appeal and accessibility;
90. Highlights the fact that islands have their own problems, especially in terms of connections between smaller islands and the mainland, and calls on the Commission to propose measures to boost investment in that area;
91. Considers the introduction of voluntary 'environmental checks' with the aim of improving environmental quality in the tourism industry to be a useful contribution on the part of the industry, and recommends that companies displaying particular commitment be recognised;
92. Calls on the authorities and operators responsible at national, regional and local level to make a stronger effort to promote non-vehicular networks such as European bridleways, walking routes, pilgrimage routes and cycle tracks, in combination with all cross-border rail services, including high-speed and night trains; recalls that transport interoperability with other modes should also always be explored; recommends eliminating increased fares on border stretches, which are one of the barriers to the more widespread use of railways by tourists in border areas;
93. Recognises that sustainable urban tourism is a fast-growing business and that mobility and transport policy in touristic city centres should be efficient and sustainable and lead to win-win situations for both the visitors and the visited;

94. Supports the development of integrated multimodal forms of transport for tourists through the creation of tickets enabling different transportation means to be used according to differing requirements; emphasises that progress in integrated ticketing services would be a strong incentive to cross-border tourism;
95. Emphasises that electric vehicles offer an increasingly attractive solution for both rural and urban tourism in terms of the new, flexible mobility, and that this mobility option should be offered increasingly in holiday resorts;
96. Stresses the importance of facilitating the use of public transport by bicycle users;
97. Strongly encourages the Commission to assess the possibility of making the European Tourism Indicators System (ETIS) an EU instrument to help tourism destinations to control, manage, evaluate and improve their performance in terms of sustainability;
98. Calls on the Member States to pass on positive experiences of sustainable tourism management in the context of international cooperation abroad;
99. Takes the view that full accessibility and affordability in tourism are an integral part of the sector's sustainability; affirms that the 'tourism for all' principle allows and empowers people, particularly those with specific needs (such as people with disabilities or reduced mobility, young people, the elderly, low-income families, and families with children), to enjoy their rights as citizens, and that it consequently needs to be the reference for any national, regional, local or European tourism-related action; calls on the Member States to place particular emphasis on the use of new technologies when developing tourism concepts for senior citizens and people with specific disabilities;
100. Recommends that the Member States develop a Europe-wide uniform and transparent identification system for accessible options and establish corresponding internet platforms; calls on the Commission to submit suggestions along these lines;
101. Recommends that the Member States introduce the establishment of accessibility as an eligibility criterion for the tourism industry in the context of economic development programmes;
102. Stresses that consumer trust in companies providing services in the tourism sector also relies on companies making available to consumers simple, effective and quick alternative means of resolving consumer disputes, and on companies protecting consumers' personal and financial data;
103. Takes the view that, in order to make European tourism accessible, airlines must put an end to the distorted and frequently widespread practice of allocating more space to business class than to economy class;
104. Stresses the contribution of civil society in promoting new forms of tourism through social networks, voluntary organisations, cultural and sports associations, citizens' action groups, and organisations representing young people, women and expatriate communities;

105. Calls for greater recognition of the vital role played by the voluntary sector in developing and supporting the tourism sector through cultural volunteering;
106. Urges the Commission and the Member States to pay attention to and support the potential of the social economy to develop sustainable and responsible tourism;
107. Considers that tourism has important social value for young people, wage earners and retired people, and calls on the Member States to use EU funds for the development of health-related and recreational tourism;
108. Stresses that the continuing immigration crisis in Europe particularly affects coastal areas, where tourism is an important element of residents' income; calls on the Commission to draft a report on the impact that the uncontrolled influx of immigrants into the EU is having on the tourism sector;

Sharing economy

109. Welcomes the opportunities brought by the sharing economy for start-ups and innovative companies in the tourism sector; acknowledges the complementarity of these services with other tourism offers as regards their location and the people they target;
110. Recalls that the sharing economy, or collaborative consumption, is a new socio-economic model that has taken off thanks to the technological revolution, with the internet connecting people through online platforms on which transactions involving goods and services can be conducted securely and transparently;
111. Emphasises that the current legislation is not suited to the sharing economy, and that for this reason local and national governments have started to analyse such online platforms and are trying to regulate their effects, often applying disproportionate measures which are somewhat disparate within the Union; urges the Commission, together with the Member States, to analyse the best possible initiatives to be taken at European, national, regional and local level; recommends that consideration be given to establishing an appropriate regulatory framework within the overarching EU digital single market strategy;
112. Stresses that the response to the rise of the 'sharing economy' must first be analysed before regulatory measures are taken; considers, however, that any action on the part of public authorities needs to be proportional and flexible in order to enable a regulatory framework that secures a level playing field for companies, and in particular a supportive positive business environment for SMEs and for innovation in the industry; considers, furthermore, that for the sake of consumer protection the security, safety and health regulations applicable to the traditional tourism sector should also apply to tourism services provided on a commercial basis within the sharing economy;
113. Stresses that providers' activities need to be categorised correctly in order to distinguish clearly between ad hoc or permanent sharing and professional business services, to which appropriate regulations should apply;
114. Emphasises also that platforms need to be fully accessible and that consumers using

such sites must be correctly informed and not misled, and the privacy of their data protected; underlines the importance of a viable and transparent system of reviews, and of ensuring that consumers are not penalised by service providers for leaving negative reviews;

- 115. Emphasises that the technology companies acting as intermediaries need to inform providers of their obligations, particularly as regards the protection of consumer rights, and to provide reliable and accessible information about all fees and hidden costs associated with conducting business, and about how to remain fully compliant with local laws, particularly as regards tax law and the observance of norms pertaining to consumer safety and the working conditions of those providing tourism services;
- 116. Calls on the Commission to assess the economic and social impact of the sharing economy and its implications for the tourism industry, consumers, technology companies and public authorities, and to report back to Parliament on the outcome of the initiatives it has undertaken so far, including the work of the task force set up by DG GROW;

Digitisation

- 117. Calls on the Commission to define jointly with industry and tourism associations a smart roadmap of initiatives focusing on the wider scope of innovation (process, ICT, research) and on the required skills, in order to encourage travel and tourism companies to adopt digital tools and use them more efficiently; takes the view that the Commission could make a concentrated effort to disseminate best practices in this area;
- 118. Welcomes the Commission's Digital Tourism Platform and its objectives of (i) boosting the innovation capacity and digitisation of tourism-related SMEs for the purpose of activating the tourism sector, and (ii) generating proposals as to how to adapt and shape sustainable, competitive and consumer-focused policies aimed at further developing the tourism sector; encourages the use of innovative technologies, the sharing of best practices and the deepening of cooperation at regional level with a view to making Europe's tourism sector more attractive and competitive; considers that the promotion of e-learning and the increased uptake of digital technologies would further advance this goal;
- 119. Is aware that SMEs (most of which are micro-enterprises) and start-ups in the tourism sector face considerable difficulties in promoting their services abroad and in adapting to the fast-changing market conditions; notes that new IT tools such as the Tourism Business Portal developed by the Commission, together with webinars, can help them take advantage of digital opportunities; stresses that making the Tourism Business Portal available in all the languages of the Member States would further promote the territorial benefits of these actions; encourages the taking of similar initiatives at the local, regional and national levels;
- 120. Calls on the Commission to continue to foster collaboration between public and private travel and tourism stakeholders in order to facilitate research on, and the adoption of, digital solutions by European companies; highlights, in particular, the need for better coordination between public tourism administrations at the national, regional and local

levels, tour operators, the hospitality sector and digital businesses;

121. Calls on the Commission to assist the sector in constructing tools which will make it possible to monitor visitors' destinations, build up their profile and trace their mobility, so as to identify their interests and develop appropriate products, and to create tools offering à la carte destinations or the monitoring of networks in order to ascertain the opinions of our visitors;
122. Expects the Commission to present a comprehensive report encompassing an assessment of the current state of play as regards digitisation in the EU tourism market, with a view to identifying and addressing challenges and opportunities for the various public and private players at national, regional and local level; considers that such a report should include appropriate recommendations in order to ensure fair competition and a level playing field for all actors and to protect consumers by providing for transparency, neutrality and accessibility;
123. Notes the increase in the online booking of tourism services directly by the user and the risks which this may carry for consumers, who are often unaware of their rights and of the applicable legislation; requests that the Commission pursue in detail any abuses which may arise in this area, in particular involving combined purchases from various service providers (flight tickets and car hire, for example), and to adapt and develop these new ways of booking services at the time of the next review of the Package Travel Directive;
124. Welcomes the recent conclusion of the trilogue negotiations on a revised Package Travel Directive; calls for its timely and effective transposition and application with a view to transforming the sector and protecting consumers in the digital environment;
125. Calls on the Commission to refocus funds and programmes in order to better support the digitisation of European tourism companies;
126. Calls on the Commission to ensure that service providers are given fair and equal access to relevant data by travel and transport operators in order to facilitate the deployment of digital multimodal information and ticketing services; notes the importance of intelligent transport systems (ITS) in providing accurate, real-time traffic and travel data for the development of integrated mobility services that would benefit European tourism development;
127. Calls on the Member States to identify and support EU-wide initiatives that foster the use of digital infrastructure and interoperability among different platforms; calls on the Member States, in this context, to provide free wi-fi in tourism areas and to abolish roaming charges by 15 June 2017, as decided, and also geo-blocking;
128. Calls on the Member States and local authorities to ensure that all stations and arrival, departure and transfer platforms are equipped with information offices incorporating trained staff able to provide information on key destinations, transportation means and tourism facilities, together with multilingual digital information systems offering free and unlimited access to wi-fi networks that can also be used by people with disabilities;

129. Stresses that travellers still face differing prices, terms and conditions when booking accommodation or means of transport online; welcomes, therefore, the Commission communication entitled ‘A Digital Single Market Strategy for Europe’; calls on the Commission to adopt a comprehensive proposal to end the unjustified geo-blocking of access to goods, services and the best available rate on the basis of geographical location or country of residence;
130. Urges the Member States to encourage access to high-speed broadband as a priority for remote and outermost tourism areas such as islands and coastal, mountain and rural areas in order to enhance the growth of tourism businesses and to reduce the digital gap in the EU;
131. Calls on the Member States and the players involved to develop effective means to counter the skills shortage in all parts of the tourism industry, in particular in the area of digitisation;
132. Is worried that many of the economic benefits of online distribution are not being reaped in Europe; takes the view that European governments should do more to empower entrepreneurship and, in particular, technology-oriented solutions in Europe;
133. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council and the Commission.

EXPLANATORY STATEMENT

With the entry into force of the Lisbon Treaty, the importance of tourism is recognised. Article 195 of the EU Treaty offers the possibility to take European or multinational actions while respecting the principle of subsidiarity and the competence of the Member States. The Treaty does not allow any harmonisation of national legislation in the field of tourism, a fact which has been demonstrated when the Commission tried to propose a first legislative proposal regarding tourism quality principles.

The Commission Communication of 2010

The Commission has given new impetus to tourism policy with a main initiative undertaken in 2010, the Communication 'Europe, the world's No 1 tourist destination a new political framework for tourism in Europe' which has set out a new consolidated policy framework and an action plan for tourism. With 21 actions, the Commission set itself a very ambitious objective against the background of a desirable contribution to growth and employment in Europe.

It is difficult for Parliament to judge the efficiency of the actions taken. Regrettably, the Commission services stopped the regular update of its implementing rolling plan in May 2013. Your Rapporteur, therefore, asks the Commission to deliver a comprehensive implementation report on actions taken, including the use of financial resources. Furthermore, we ask for an assessment of the impact that other EU policies have on tourism.

Challenges for tourism as an economic factor

Even though forecasts are positive regarding the increase of tourists visiting the EU in the coming years, we need to be vigilant regarding the share of international visitors as Europe finds itself under increasing pressure from other international destinations, in particular from newly emerging, less expensive destinations.

In addition, a number of further challenges require that the tourism industry in Europe adapts quickly in order to retain its level of competitiveness. Tourism, as the whole economy, is affected by demographic changes and growing youth unemployment. Furthermore, the tourism industry faces changes in the consumer behaviour, an increased demand for high quality client services and, on top, businesses need to adapt to the digitalisation era as over 95% of travellers go online to plan their travel, and sharing economy providers are increasing.

In January 2015, the Commission has presented a new set of (eight) common actions which she intends to outline more in detail later this year, most probably at the EU Forum on Tourism in September.

However, the latest internal organisational changes in the Commission are alarming. The

Commission has reduced its staff responsible for tourism policy drastically. This decision is far from being coherent with the importance of the sector and the Commission's ambitions set out in January this year.

Joint Promotion of Europe

The tourism industry is facing increasing global competition, with emerging, less expensive countries attracting international tourists. Faced with this competition, Europe must play on its comparative advantages, in particular the diversity of its countryside and extraordinary cultural wealth.

In response, the Commission has proposed in 2010 the Branding Europe initiative to which Parliament reacted positively with in its resolution adopted on 27 September 2011.

The Rapporteur takes the view that the Commission should continue ensuring its best support to the joint promotion of Europe on third markets adding European and/or transnational value to the existing national tourist promotion efforts. The cooperation with the European Travel Commission (ETC), which acts as main partner of the Commission for the promotion of Europe in long-haul markets, resulted in 2012-2013 in the first international tourism communication campaign 'Europe, whenever you're ready' and the setting up of the Visiteurope.com destination portal. The Commission attested a large social media impact.

Furthermore, there are plans to create a genuine common communication strategy to identify Europe as a unique destination and to create a unique European portal introducing the single national websites. The Commission calls this initiative Brand Destination Europe. The concept, however, is contested by several Member States' National Tourist Organisations. Main questions are: What is the evidence for a Brand Destination Europe? Do diversity and a common brand sit well together? Your Rapporteur takes the view that more reflection is needed in order to make it happen. A Brand manual should define clear modalities, in order to avoid competition among European destinations. National and regional authorities and the industry need to be involved and work together as partners.

Pan-European and transnational tourism products

Pan-European and transnational tourism products are of outmost importance for strengthening a common European profile. According to the ETC and based on an extensive market research, potential visitors to Europe are drawn to Europe by the amount of experiences they can have rather than the number of countries they can visit. Pan-European themes that stand out in this context are Cultural Routes, heritage, gastronomy, shopping tourism, active and adventure tourism, health and wellbeing tourism, education, religious tourism etc.

Sustainable and responsible tourism

When supplying tourism services, the industry must take into account constraints linked to climate change, the scarcity of water resources, pressure on biodiversity and the risks to the cultural heritage posed by mass tourism. In this regard, it is essential to encourage

initiatives which promote responsible management of resources. Although there are a number of tools available at EU level to facilitate sound environmental management, the Commission comments that the response from tourism businesses across Europe to concerns about sustainability has varied widely.

The Commission has launched the system of indicators for sustainable management of tourist destinations (ETIS) in 2013. The Commission should be encouraged to continue working in this direction.

The European Destination of Excellence (EDEN) network and award is another example of initiatives which is worth highlighting as it raises visibility of alternative tourist destinations, off the beaten track. The initiative needs continued financial support.

A project which seems to be stuck in the process of finalisation is the European Charter for Sustainable and Responsible Tourism. We hope that the Commission will bring this project to haven.

Accessibility

According to a Eurobarometer survey on rail passenger satisfaction, in 2013, 15% of Europeans do not use the train because of bad accessibility of platforms and lack of information. The implementation of EU legislation which offers passengers basic rights when travelling by air, train, ship and bus, relies heavily on the active involvement of all parties concerned and consumers need to get better information on how to benefit from the rules.

Accessibility is integral part of responsible tourism with a special focus on passengers with reduced mobility, but not only. Better accessibility will eventually increase the comfort for all passengers. New technologies offer considerable progress as proven for ex. by new concepts of navigation systems for people with reduced mobility.

Sharing Economy

In the beginning of 2015, almost 500 tourism related sharing economy platforms were listed on a global website. Many of the well-known sharing economy companies are part of the travel service economy (11% travel (and accommodation), 50% transport, 39% leisure).

The sharing economy has been criticised for creating an uneven economic playing field with the contemporary economy. Issues are in taxes, licensing & certification, safety, liability, types of legal form. Critics come from politicians and regulators and local governments start to regulate their effects.

In order to tackle the issue, it is important to recognise and differentiate between the different types of activity arising from this. There are economic activities which are those of a business and they must therefore fall in line with their obligations as a registered business and any revenue should be considered income and therefore taxable. There are others, which were founded on the principal of 'sharing' without generating any profit

from the activity.

The negative impact is naturally being felt by those that have been disrupted directly by what they view as unfair competition. However, the positive impact has been far greater because of the much richer choice being offered to consumers.

In addition, there are socioeconomic benefits which go beyond those of the traditional tourism industry, such as the more authentic nature of the service and the contact with local people. Positive for ex.: When large-scale events push 'traditional' accommodation to full capacity, accommodation services provide extensions to the official bed stock.

The sharing economy has grown very fast and is valued at about \$26 billion. Though this is an impressive number, in the context of the global economy it is only 0.035%. As the most valuable sharing economy enterprises are tourism related, a comparison with the tourism economy is relevant and shows about 1% sharing economy value. However, the economic impact of the sharing economy is difficult to measure.

The power of digitalisation

The level of awareness, accessibility and use of services in the field of information and communication technologies differs substantially by the various operators concerned. Main barriers in digital adoption, especially by tourism SMEs, seem to be related to the lack of implementation (financial resources, lack of qualification of staff, organisation), limited cooperation within the industry and lack of good interoperability amongst IT systems. More targeted measures therefore need to be taken. Positive: The development of the new IT tools Tourism-IT business support portal and TourismLink platform, as both are particularly designed to support small tourism business. SMEs find here necessary information for their business processes and facilitated access to tourism packages across Europe.

Facilitating the availability and access to a modern digital infrastructure becomes an important pillar to stimulate the interaction between consumers/travellers and travel and tourism companies in Europe through multiple digital devices (laptop, smartphone, tablet). A number of initiatives are being undertaken in this regard. But more needs to be done. The Commission in conjunction with Member States should identify those digital initiatives that have a higher positive impact on the European tourism sector and define policies to support their implementation.

With the increasing number of companies operating through the Internet and the emergence of new 'pure digital' enterprises, the level of competition among companies and the influence of these players in the travellers' search, planning and booking process grow. EU public stakeholders must monitor the evolution of the digital travel environment in order to ensure a level playing field amongst incumbent and new player as well as to ensure neutrality and transparency in the information provided to the consumer.

Currently, travellers and tourists are not given access to digital solutions that enable them to plan, book and pay their multimodal door to door trips. The provision of seamless digital multimodal information and ticketing services would, however, foster the mobility

of travellers and tourists within Europe. Access to relevant data provided by travel and transport operators and fostering open data policy would be the prerequisite for facilitating the implementation of digital multimodal information and ticketing services.

The Commission and Member States should continue to work jointly with tourism enterprises and trade industry in three main lines of action: Assessment of how digitalisation affect travel and tourism companies, define policies and initiatives to tackle existing and future digital challenges and support implementation of sustainable actions to ensure the competitiveness of enterprises in this play.

4.9.2015

OPINION OF THE COMMITTEE ON THE INTERNAL MARKET AND CONSUMER PROTECTION

for the Committee on Transport and Tourism

on new challenges and concepts for the promotion of tourism in Europe
(2014/2241(INI))

Rapporteur: Maria Grapini

SUGGESTIONS

The Committee on the Internal Market and Consumer Protection calls on the Committee on Transport and Tourism, as the committee responsible, to incorporate the following suggestions into its motion for a resolution:

1. Acknowledges the importance of the tourism sector for the EU and its internal market, and stresses its potential as a driver of socio-economic growth, job creation – particularly for young people – and new business opportunities; urges the Commission, in light of the above, to adopt an integrated approach when developing policies which have an impact on the tourism sector; acknowledges the importance of tourism in achieving the objectives of the Europe 2020 strategy, in particular with regard to poverty eradication and job creation;
2. Draws attention to the crucial role played by the digital revolution in the tourism industry; calls on the Commission to ensure that all tourism sectors and businesses, and in particular SMEs, make the best use of the new technologies offered by the internet in order to expand their electronic commerce in the internal market and move towards higher-value digitised products and processes, and at the same time to ensure that citizens and consumers enjoy fair and affordable access to high-quality, safe services;
3. Stresses that, in order to differentiate the European tourism product from that of other countries and continents, it is very important to develop new forms of thematic tourism which can operate on the basis of transnational and even transregional cooperation; believes that, as well as making it possible to redefine the entire European tourism offer, the systematic promotion of thematic tourism products may be vital in combating the effects of seasonality;
4. Recalls that the EU should start investing in order to be ready to tap the potential of third

countries with a large population and emerging economies, particularly the BRIC countries, where the number of outbound tourists is rising; points out the need for initiatives aimed at promoting tourism and for greater flexibility and consistency in respect of tourist visa arrangements and border crossings; stresses that the promotion of a larger number of Visa Tourism platforms, coupled with a cautious approach to the simplification of the Visa Code, is an important component in increasing the number of tourists from outside Europe and raising the visibility of European tourist destinations; highlights the potential of touring visas for groups of tourists who had already been in the country, and the importance of implementing more visa waiver agreements in order to make optimum use of international tourist arrivals; considers it advisable, with due respect for the Member States' right and duty to control entry across their 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 better-coordinated and simplified visa procedures;

5. Notes the role of the European Travel Commission (ETC) and its members in promoting Europe as a tourist destination; asks the Commission to engage further with the ETC and the wider World Tourism Organisation towards joint measures on tourism in Europe;
6. Welcomes the Commission's Digital Tourism Platform and its objectives of (i) boosting the innovation capacity and digitisation of tourism-related SMEs for the purpose of activating the tourism sector, and (ii) generating proposals as to how to adapt and shape sustainable, competitive and consumer-focused policies aimed at further developing the tourism sector; encourages the use of innovative technologies, the sharing of best practices and the deepening of cooperation at regional level with a view to making Europe's tourism sector more attractive and competitive; considers that the promotion of e-learning and the increased uptake of digital technologies would further advance this goal;
7. Stresses the need to better promote the concepts of tourism, sports tourism, adventure tourism, educational tourism, rural tourism and creative tourism; emphasises the need to pay particular attention to rural tourism as a driver of the sustainable growth of rural areas, thereby creating more jobs and opportunities in remote regions;
8. Supports the Commission's concept of promoting sustainable 'Tourism for All';
9. Recalls that the role of consumers now goes beyond research with a view to purchasing travel and other connected services and obtaining a range of information about a destination, and has come to encompass the areas of criticism/opinion and advertising; notes that the digital experience is consequently becoming increasingly significant;
10. Stresses that Europe must retain its position as the world's number one tourist destination; welcomes the organisation of events and communication campaigns that promote Europe as a tourist destination, in particular in third-country markets, and calls on all stakeholders jointly to promote Europe not only as a tourist destination but also as a destination of excellence that offers a range of national destinations, cultures and tourism services, without distorting competition between them;
11. Acknowledges that the tourism sector is dominated by small and medium-sized enterprises, together with a large number of micro-enterprises; takes the view, in this connection, that efforts to introduce better regulation, to reduce the administrative burden

and to promote the competitiveness of European enterprises should be continued, not only within the sector itself but also as part of all EU policies affecting the tourism sector;

12. Welcomes the ECC-Net: Travel application recently produced by the European Consumer Centres Network;
13. Calls on the Commission to explore the possibility of creating a European Tourism Calendar to coordinate information from all the Member States about European tourist destinations, in all the EU's official languages, with a view to improving consumer information services and helping consumers to find guidance and details about events, locations and festivals, among other things;
14. Notes the importance of European tourism adapting to the digital market and the need to develop new digital tools and information sources for potential tourists to Europe; recommends the creation of a user-friendly, interoperable mobile application containing interactive travel maps, guides and other relevant information about EU travel destinations, which could help to promote Europe as a tourist destination and to increase the amount and quality of information available to consumers; stresses that the costs incurred in creating and maintaining this application should be kept to a minimum; acknowledges the opportunities and potential offered by the digitisation of services and products in the tourism sector; stresses the importance of creating a fully functioning internal market for these services and products, which should be inclusive of all actors, not least SMEs and consumers, and afford them legal certainty;
15. Stresses that tourism service providers should bear in mind the needs of people with disabilities and/or reduced mobility, in particular as regards accessibility, in order to enable people with motor or sensory disabilities or food intolerances, and elderly people, to benefit fully from the European tourism offer, by promoting measures designed to adapt pre-existing facilities and train staff; considers it advisable to promote innovative programmes, mechanisms and products at European level in order to facilitate independent access for people with mobility difficulties; stresses the importance of making tourism information accessible to tourists with disabilities; asks all tourism boards and accommodation providers to take account of accessibility, including web accessibility, when updating websites or other sources of information;
16. Stresses the need for the Member States to adopt a more coordinated approach in order to facilitate administrative and more regionally based cooperation in tourism-related policy areas such as innovation, transport, service quality, the visa regime, the environment, consumer protection, communication and international card payments, taking into account the specific challenges faced by SMEs in the tourism sector, and to facilitate compliance in light of the rise of the sharing economy, while respecting the principle of subsidiarity; notes that the Member States' differing regulatory frameworks directly affect tourism companies and may have a distorting effect on the market;
17. Considers it necessary to support increased competitiveness in those areas whose tourism potential has been insufficiently tapped, by means of fair promotion and with the support of local SMEs operating in the tourism industry;
18. Asks for improved mutual recognition by the Member States of professional qualifications

in the tourism industry, in order to allow those already working in the sector and those planning to do so to find the best job opportunities, and to foster mobility within the industry; believes that this would help to tackle the problems of the seasonal nature of work in this sector, on the one hand, and undeclared work, on the other;

19. Reaffirms the importance of developing a more efficient transport network that provides links to peripheral tourist areas;
20. Recalls the importance of the sharing economy in promoting tourism, and of its contribution to increasing the number of tourists to numerous destinations; stresses that this should not be regarded as unfair competition; emphasises the role of the sharing economy in the tourism sector and calls for a suitable regulatory framework that supports growth and innovation while protecting consumer interests; stresses that user safety and security, together with the quality of the services provided, must be ensured;
21. Recalls the need to develop competitive transport and tourism infrastructure;
22. Stresses the importance of a sustainable and responsible European tourism sector that promotes the competitiveness of its companies; highlights the constant rise in the number of travellers, and calls for the development of more sustainable and energy-efficient forms of transport and accommodation with a view to creating environmentally, socially and economically sustainable destinations, bearing in mind that environmental sustainability also encompasses the preservation of local cultures and traditions, the preservation and enhancement of the heritage, the fostering of best practices, and efforts to seek a form of tourism that satisfies and benefits both those who travel and the local community at the destination; urges the Commission to accelerate the implementation of the Nearly Zero Energy Hotels (neZEH) initiative aimed at making hotels self-sustaining and energy-efficient;
23. Stresses the need to design a strategy for increasing medium-/low-season accommodation sales which includes the rural tourism sector and aims to address seasonality; highlights the importance of focusing the marketing of tourism products/services on quality, thereby building loyalty among visitors and positioning our tourism sector within a highly competitive market;
24. Stresses the need for better, more accessible EU financing of infrastructure projects, especially as regards utility services, which face an enormous increase in consumption during the tourist season, in order to benefit both tourists and the local population;
25. Encourages sustainable urban planning with a view to preserving the cultural heritage of European tourist destinations;
26. Underlines the importance of improving the mutual recognition by Member States of professional qualifications in the tourism industry, in order to enable the industry's workers to identify the best possible career prospects, thereby fostering their mobility;
27. Considers that providers of tourism services must ensure that the information given to consumers regarding such services is accurate and comprehensible, and that consumers are not misled or misinformed; stresses that this information should be legible and written

in comprehensible terms, and that providers should not apply practices or contractual conditions that discriminate against consumers or create mistrust within the EU internal market, in particular in the area of online purchases; considers that communication networks should be developed in order to improve business opportunities in the regions and to enhance consumer protection;

28. Stresses that consumer trust in companies providing services in the tourism sector also relies on companies making available to consumers simple, effective and quick alternative means of resolving consumer disputes, and on companies protecting consumers' personal and financial data;
29. Welcomes the recent conclusion of the trilogue negotiations on a revised Package Travel Directive; calls for its timely and effective transposition and application with a view to transforming the sector and protecting consumers in the digital environment;
30. Highlights the need for travel agents and tour operators to promote the 112 European emergency number on relevant websites and e-tickets, and at our main tourist destinations;
31. Considers that it would be advisable to examine ways of supporting SMEs and sole proprietorships in the tourism sector through funding mechanisms designed to strengthen their liquidity at a reasonable cost, to provide incentives to invest in the development of the infrastructure and services they need, and to cut the red tape surrounding their development;
32. Considers that the European hotel industry's initiative aimed at gradually harmonising accommodation classification systems across Europe should be further promoted, thus allowing a better comparison of the accommodation on offer in Europe and contributing to common quality services criteria;
33. Stresses that travellers still face differing prices, terms and conditions when booking accommodation or means of transport online; welcomes, therefore, the Commission communication entitled 'A Digital Single Market Strategy for Europe'; calls on the Commission to adopt a comprehensive proposal to end the unjustified geo-blocking of access to goods, services and the best available rate on the basis of geographical location or country of residence;
34. Believes that the coordinated promotion of integrated electronic ticket sales systems for various means of transport would simplify travel and remove obstacles to the completion of the internal market.

RESULT OF FINAL VOTE IN COMMITTEE

Date adopted	3.9.2015
Result of final vote	+: 32 -: 1 0: 2
Members present for the final vote	Dita Charanzová, Carlos Coelho, Anna Maria Corazza Bildt, Daniel Dalton, Nicola Danti, Dennis de Jong, Pascal Durand, Vicky Ford, Ildikó Gáll-Pelcz, Evelyne Gebhardt, Maria Grapini, Sergio Gutiérrez Prieto, Robert Jarosław Iwaszkiewicz, Liisa Jaakonsaari, Antonio López-Istúriz White, Margot Parker, Eva Paunova, Jiří Pospíšil, Robert Rochefort, Virginie Rozière, Christel Schaldemose, Andreas Schwab, Igor Šoltes, Catherine Stihler, Mylène Troszczynski, Mihai Țurcanu, Anneleen Van Bossuyt
Substitutes present for the final vote	Lucy Anderson, Birgit Collin-Langen, Kaja Kallas, Jens Nilsson, Adam Szejnfeld, Marc Tarabella, Lambert van Nistelrooij
Substitutes under Rule 200(2) present for the final vote	Andrey Novakov

20.7.2015

OPINION OF THE COMMITTEE ON CULTURE AND EDUCATION

for the Committee on Transport and Tourism

on New challenges and concepts for the promotion of Tourism in Europe
(2014/2241(INI))

Rapporteur: Luigi Morgano

SUGGESTIONS

The Committee on Culture and Education calls on the Committee on Transport and Tourism, as the committee responsible, to incorporate the following suggestions into its motion for a resolution:

1. Notes that tourism is one of the world's largest industries and that Europe is one of the world's major cultural tourism destinations; underlines that tourism is rapidly changing and the tourism industry is constantly subject to evolution, and that, therefore, Europe and the Member States need to continuously protect and promote what is truly indigenous by revealing special features and characteristics of natural, cultural and historical heritage;
2. Stresses the important role that European cultural tourism plays in furthering personal development and knowledge, promoting Europe's rich national and local cultural diversity and heritage, contributing to intercultural learning, providing an opportunity for networking, strengthening European identity, and expressing European values;
3. Underlines the importance of fostering close collaboration between culture and tourism; recognises that European cultural tourism has an important contribution to policymaking, is an essential part of many national and regional economies, and is a key driver of sustainable social and economic development at local and regional level, and of regeneration of rural and urban areas, in particular in the current economic and employment crisis; recalls also the role of European traditional and industrial know-how in raising the profile of local areas and jobs;
4. Reiterates that tourism should be based on strategies that protect and strengthen both natural and cultural diversity and preserve and promote local cultures, popular traditions, heritage and environment, and that safeguarding tangible and intangible cultural heritage should be among our top priorities;

5. Emphasises the potential of cultural tourism, agrotourism and ecotourism in rural, island and coastal areas; stresses, to this end, the importance of ensuring intermodal connectivity, as a means of enhancing the appeal of such remote tourist destinations;
6. Underlines that Europe's diversity and multiculturalism offer great potential for the development of thematic tourism, and stresses the importance of connecting tourist attractions in order to establish thematic tourist trails on a European, national and local scale; believes that the systematic promotion of thematic tourism (oenological, gastronomic, rural, religious, artistic, educational, exploratory, etc), possibly involving cross-border or interregional cooperation, can redefine European tourism and play an important role in combating the negative effects of mass tourism; calls, therefore, for the promotion of environmentally sustainable cultural tourism, and for measures to withstand the impact of seasonality;
7. Highlights that Europe's breadth of languages – official, co-official, minority and lesser-known – forms the bedrock of its cultural heritage and that this offers additional opportunities in terms of tourism on all levels;
8. Draws attention to the essential role played by both formal and informal cultural education in generating demand for high-quality, sustainable and inclusive tourism, in its religious, educational, sport-related, exploratory, gastronomic, agricultural and ecological aspects; stresses the need to invest in high-quality training in order to have a better equipped workforce;
9. Calls for better use to be made of the opportunities provided by digitisation and innovation for the interpretation of cultural heritage and for a more effective and attractive promotion of European cultural tourism, in order to familiarise the largest possible number of people with Europe's cultural and tourist heritage, while preserving traditional forms of promoting culture; stresses that the development of a fully functioning digital single market, together with the extension and consolidation of digital platforms for cultural resources and archives and a proactive use of social media, has the potential of modernising and developing the tourism industry in order to better promote and support all tourism services and providers;
10. Points out that the promotion of cultural tourism should take into account not only the top tourist destinations, but also smaller and lesser-known sites not included in the usual tourist routes;
11. Believes that better use of innovative products and services in the tourism sector could significantly help tourism companies, especially SMEs, and make them more sustainable; stresses the need to foster innovation and technological development in micro-enterprises and SMEs, and points to the major opportunities existing for the development of thematic/alternative forms of tourism through use of the internet and new communications technologies;
12. Reiterates the need for a well-trained, informed, motivated and committed labour force; stresses that more awareness of history and culture on the part of people working in the industry is essential for the further promotion of the historical and cultural heritage of tourism destinations;

13. Recalls that investing in human capital is essential for the quality of tourism services and is a precondition for sustainable and competitive growth; stresses the importance of providing better-targeted training policies in order to ensure the presence of well-qualified, service-oriented, multilingual personnel;
14. Highlights the importance of improving accessibility to cultural heritage sites and cultural education, taking into account, in particular, the specific needs of people with disabilities when constructing, renovating or extending tourist attractions; notes that, in this context, innovative projects, tools and products to facilitate autonomous access for persons with impaired mobility should be promoted at European level; bears in mind that information and booking technologies should be easily accessible for those persons; underlines the enormous progress made thanks to the application and use of new digital technologies for giving universal access to paintings, buildings, and cultural sites; suggests to the Commission and the Member States that they examine different possibilities of launching projects and funds to enable the younger population and – in the context of demographic change – older persons, as well as people with special needs, low-income families and other vulnerable citizens, to visit the Member States' cultural destinations;
15. Points out that encouraging young people's involvement in European cultural tourism has an extremely positive impact on their education and personal development;
16. Points out that Europe's cultural heritage, in its artistic, linguistic, religious, historical and geographical aspects, makes it one of the leading tourist destinations in the world, and that cultural tourism is essential for boosting growth, social development, cohesion and high-quality employment; points out that the tourist sector generates about 2.9 % of EU GDP, accounts for some 1.8 million businesses, primarily SMEs, and employs approximately 3.3 % of the EU workforce, and that many of these non-offshorable jobs are linked directly or indirectly to cultural tourism;
17. Emphasises that, in order to maintain current tourist volumes and attract new tourists, Europe's cultural and natural heritage, including its intact nature and landscapes, needs to be conserved and promoted; stresses that the right balance needs to be struck between expanding the tourism sector and protecting cultural heritage, having in mind the restoration, conservation and protection of archaeological and historic sites and monuments; urges the Commission, therefore, to adopt the European charter for a sustainable and responsible tourism, including the social responsibility principle, for the benefit of visitors and host populations;
18. Underlines the importance of a Council decision on adopting the 'European tourism quality principles' recommendation, in order to help tourism service providers promote the quality of their services and strengthen consumer confidence;
19. Supports the promotion of local and regional initiatives such as European crossborder cycle routes, in combination with a sustainable transport strategy that includes rail networks, the ACCR (Association des Centres culturels de rencontre), the European Capitals of Culture and the DestiNet Portals network, taking into account best practices and examples of sustainable tourism in Europe;
20. Supports the development of non-motorised travel routes (for walking, horse-riding or

cycling) that can facilitate sustainable tourism and create opportunities to discover the diversity of Europe's regions;

21. Stresses the importance of maintaining and preserving Europe's cultural and historical heritage in order to prevent its deterioration, assigning priority to the quality of the work performed rather than its cost; stresses, in this context, the role that patronage can play in contributing to the conservation of the European heritage and compensating for the decline in the public budgets allocated for this purpose;
22. Calls on the Commission to launch a European Tourism Quality Brand to reward rigorous efforts by tourism professionals in supporting the quality of tourism services based on the highest respect for cultural and natural heritage, improving the quality of tourism jobs, enhancing accessibility for all, and promoting the cultural traditions of local communities;
23. Points out that cultural tourism in different regions helps diversify traditional economic activities and creates employment, thereby avoiding depopulation and the abandonment and deterioration of many valuable cultural sites, and preventing traditions and customs from dying out;
24. Points out that host communities and local populations should be involved in different policies for the identification, promotion, protection, conservation, management, presentation and interpretation of their heritage resources, cultural practices and contemporary cultural expressions, in the context of tourism;
25. Is convinced that school tourism should be experienced as one of the most meaningful non-formal learning activities related to the school curriculum and not as exclusively a leisure activity, and that it should be grounded in the values of 'responsible tourism';
26. Stresses the potential of cultural tourism for poverty alleviation; calls, in this regard, for the fostering of Member States' creative industries and rural tourism in order to promote Europe's extraordinary cultural wealth and fight poverty and unemployment;
27. Asks the Commission to bolster existing European measures and programmes, including the European Fund for Strategic Investments, as well as national and cross-border programmes on cultural tourism and cultural heritage that have proved effective, such as the European Capitals of Culture, the European Heritage Days, the European Cultural Routes, the European Heritage Label, the Creative Europe programme and the digital platform Europeana; calls on the Commission, moreover, to look into the feasibility of introducing a 'European cultural card' which would offer reduced entrance charges for tourist attractions and cultural sites such as museums, monuments, archaeological sites, libraries and theatres, following the example of the UNESCO-endorsed ISIC (International Student Identity Card);
28. Recommends the establishment of a European Year of Cultural Heritage, preferably in 2018, along with adequate support to cultural events and arts, film and music festivals; stresses, moreover, that promoting at EU level initiatives such as the European Capital of Sport and the European Youth Capital, and creating a European calendar of events to improve tourism information services, may offer significant added value in the promotion of European cultural tourism and in maintaining and reinforcing Europe as the leading

tourist destination in the world;

29. Encourages Member States to work together with regional and local authorities in order to maximise the value of tourism and its contribution to jobs and growth, and to integrate the tourism industry within local development strategies;
30. Stresses the potential of sport tourism, which could in future become one of the most dynamic sectors in the developing European travel industry, and calls for the introduction of specific policies to promote and support its development; recalls the important place of sporting activities in making Europe's regions attractive to tourists; highlights the opportunities arising from travel by athletes and spectators in the run-up to sports events and during those events, which could attract tourists to even the most remote areas; emphasises that the potential of sport tourism is not yet sufficiently exploited;
31. Notes the opportunities offered by significant historical events and sites, such as the Sites of Conscience, to address contemporary challenges through sensitive interpretation and educational programmes; encourages the use of cultural heritage and tourism in order to foster intercultural dialogue and bring the people of Europe closer together;
32. Stresses the contribution of civil society in promoting new forms of tourism, through social networks, voluntary organisations, cultural and sports associations, citizens' action groups, and organisations representing young people, women and expatriate communities;
33. Calls for greater recognition of the vital role played by the voluntary sector in developing and supporting the tourism sector through cultural volunteering;
34. Asks the Commission and the Member States to implement the action to protect endangered monuments and sites in Europe in order to safeguard and promote cultural heritage and therefore encourage cultural tourism;
35. Highlights the importance of shaping and promoting sustainable and inclusive forms of tourism which interplay with the social, cultural and economic fabric of touristic sites, ensure the development of creative and environment-friendly entrepreneurship, human capital and skills development, and bring, together with financial benefits, social and cultural value to the local communities;
36. Stresses the importance of policies aimed at funding, preserving, maintaining and restoring cultural heritage sites;
37. Draws attention to the importance of preventing cultural discrimination against religious and ethnic minorities;
38. Welcomes mobility tools, as well as cooperation projects such as 'Knowledge Alliances' and 'Sector-Skills Alliances' under Erasmus+ and Erasmus for Young Entrepreneurs, as efficient means for tourism workers involved in education and training at all levels to exchange best practices, improve language skills and obtain practical knowledge of cultural tourism; is concerned, however, at the lack of interest among young people in pursuing careers in certain tourism sectors; stresses the advantages of a 'dual education' system in the tourism sector and the importance of combining learning with hands-on

work experience, thereby improving both theoretical knowledge and practical skills; calls on the Member States, and on local and regional authorities, to take full advantage of the opportunities offered by the ESF and by other EU, national and regional funds to promote vocational training.

RESULT OF FINAL VOTE IN COMMITTEE

Date adopted	14.7.2015
Result of final vote	+: 22 -: 1 0: 5
Members present for the final vote	Isabella Adinolfi, Dominique Bilde, Silvia Costa, Damian Drăghici, Angel Dzhabazki, Jill Evans, Giorgos Grammatikakis, Petra Kammerevert, Rikke Karlsson, Andrew Lewer, Svetoslav Hristov Malinov, Curzio Maltese, Fernando Maura Barandiarán, Luigi Morgano, Momchil Nekov, Michaela Šojdrová, Helga Trüpel, Sabine Verheyen, Bogdan Brunon Wenta, Theodoros Zagorakis, Bogdan Andrzej Zdrojewski, Milan Zver, Krystyna Lybacka
Substitutes present for the final vote	György Hölvényi, Ilhan Kyuchyuk, Ernest Maragall, Martina Michels, Marlene Mizzi
Substitutes under Rule 200(2) present for the final vote	Tim Aker

RESULT OF FINAL VOTE IN COMMITTEE

Date adopted	15.9.2015
Result of final vote	+: 42 -: 4 0: 1
Members present for the final vote	Lucy Anderson, Marie-Christine Arnautu, Georges Bach, Izaskun Bilbao Barandica, Deirdre Clune, Michael Cramer, Luis de Grandes Pascual, Andor Deli, Karima Delli, Isabella De Monte, Ismail Ertug, Jacqueline Foster, Dieter-Lebrecht Koch, Stelios Kouloglou, Merja Kyllönen, Miltiadis Kyrkos, Bogusław Liberadzki, Peter Lundgren, Marian-Jean Marinescu, Georg Mayer, Cláudia Monteiro de Aguiar, Renaud Muselier, Jens Nilsson, Markus Pieper, Salvatore Domenico Pogliese, Gabriele Preuß, Christine Revault D'Allonnes Bonnefoy, Dominique Riquet, Massimiliano Salini, David-Maria Sassoli, Claudia Schmidt, Claudia Tapardel, István Ujhelyi, Wim van de Camp, Janusz Zemke, Roberts Zīle, Kosma Złotowski, Elżbieta Katarzyna Łukacijewska
Substitutes present for the final vote	Rosa D'Amato, Daniel Dalton, Werner Kuhn, Jozo Radoš, Olga Sehnalová, Ruža Tomašić, Matthijs van Miltenburg
Substitutes under Rule 200(2) present for the final vote	Diane James, Julia Reda