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*Committee on Transport and Tourism*

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# **DRAFT REPORT**

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 Europe<sup>1</sup>,
  - having regard to the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union, 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 (A8-0000/2015),
- A. whereas measures undertaken at EU level under Article 195 of the Lisbon Treaty must complement the action of the Member States in the tourism sector, excluding any harmonisation of the laws;
- B. whereas tourism is a key sector of the European economy, which generates over 10 % of the EU’s GDP if sectors linked to tourism are taken into account;
- C. whereas forecasts see numbers of international tourists arriving in the EU increasing by 140 million each year until 2025;
- D. whereas the tourism industry in Europe faces a number of new challenges, among them the digitalisation of distribution channels and the new sharing economy sector;
- E. whereas the actions set out by the 2010 Communication foster the ambitious objective of maintaining Europe’s dominant position as a tourist destination in the world; whereas promoting Europe with its own tourism destination promotion and brand strategy serves as an important tool for strengthening Europe’s image and profile;
- F. whereas sustainable tourism that is in harmony with nature and landscape and relies on resource efficiency and climate protection brings lasting results in regional growth, accommodates the increasing quality demands of travellers and helps companies to compete;
- G. whereas the sharing economy represents a fundamental shift caused by new technology,

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<sup>1</sup> OJ C 56 E, 26.2.2013, p.41.

and many of the sharing economy companies are part of the travel service economy;

#### ***The Commission's action framework***

1. Calls on the Commission to report back to Parliament on the implementation of its actions set out in its 2010 communication and the use of budget allocation under the structural funds and the relevant EU programmes, in particular the COSME programme in the form of a factual review which includes a critical assessment of the efficiency of the actions concerning the promotion of tourism in Europe;
2. Calls on the Commission to assess the impact that other EU policies have on tourism and to report back to Parliament;
3. Expects the Commission to present detailed implementing measures on the new set of common actions in the context of the next European Tourism Forum;
4. Takes note that the Commission has reduced its staffing in the field of tourism dramatically and regards this decision to be inappropriate in the light of the importance attached to tourism as an essential factor of 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;

#### ***Branding/joint promotion of Europe as a tourism destination***

5. Strongly encourages the Commission, in cooperation with the European Travel Commission (ETC), to further contribute to the joint promotion of Europe as the world's top tourist destination under the umbrella of a common European approach and positioning;
6. Calls in particular for the creation of a 'Brand Destination Europe' with the aim of complementing and enhancing the promotional activities of Member States, national tourism organisations and the European tourism industry for the benefit of the visibility of European tourism destinations at national, regional and local level;
7. Recognises, however, that a clear definition and the potential of a Brand Destination Europe has to be further developed; recommends the setting up of a Brand manual, which should specify agreed promotion modalities; calls on the Member States to cooperate constructively in order to achieve this objective;

#### ***Pan-European and transnational tourism products***

8. Takes the view that public and private stakeholders should strengthen their efforts to develop new transnational European products, while taking full account of macro-regional strategies;
9. Calls on the Commission and the members of the ETC to support the existing mandate of the ETC for the purpose of assisting in the development and promotion of targeted transnational and pan-European tourism products, inter alia by means of an advanced Visiteurope.com portal;

10. Believes furthermore that targeted tourist products which offer a specific tourism experience are more promising in helping to overcome seasonality in Europe than tourism products targeting specific age groups (e.g. seniors and young people); calls on the Commission, therefore, to review the objectives for action under the COSME programme;

### ***Quality***

11. Is convinced that a transition must be made in European tourism from a model of quantitative growth to a qualitative model that points to steady and sustainable development, and that there is, in fact, a need to build a tourist industry that allows more qualified jobs to be created;
12. Takes the view that quality standards are important as a means of levelling the playing field for operators and increasing transparency for the consumer; calls on all stakeholders to take further the discussion of how the EU can promote quality standards of services in tourism;
13. Underlines the fact that high-quality tourism services are guaranteed if combined with decent work conditions and that the disregard for, and weakening of, social achievements in the sector are counterproductive;

### ***Sustainable and responsible tourism***

14. Calls on the Commission to continue promoting sustainable tourism in cooperation with the ETC by establishing a European network, developing new specific products and setting up a Europe-wide web platform that brings together information on products and destinations in one database with access through the Visiteurope.com portal;
15. Urges the Commission to finalise the European Charter for Sustainable and Responsible Tourism and to continue giving financial support to important initiatives and networks such as EDEN (European Destinations of Excellence);
16. Stresses the importance of ensuring the development of sustainable, responsible tourism where the concept of the ‘smart destination’ should be central to destination development, combining the aspects of sustainability, experiential tourism and appropriate use of natural resources, together with the new technologies;
17. Emphasises that natural heritage and biodiversity protection are a precious capital for the tourism sector, and therefore supports the Member States and the regional authorities in promoting eco-tourism and respecting EU environmental legislation when deciding on and executing infrastructure projects;
18. Considers that sensitive regions such as islands, coasts and mountains often depend strongly on tourism business and are the first affected by climate change; is therefore convinced that climate protection should be more strongly integrated into European, national and regional tourism and transport policies;
19. Calls on the responsible authorities and operators to make a stronger effort to promote the European cycling networks, such as the Iron Curtain Trail, in combination with all cross-

border rail services, including high-speed and night trains;

20. Stresses that accessibility in tourism is an integral part of its sustainability and that the ‘tourism for all’ principle needs to be the reference for any national, regional, local or European tourism-related action;

### ***Sharing economy***

21. Emphasises that the current legislation is predicated upon the ownership-based economy and less suited to governing the sharing economy, and that local governments have started to investigate platforms and are trying to regulate their effects;
22. Underlines that the reaction to the rise of the ‘sharing economy’ needs to be measured and appropriate, in particular on the part of public authorities in the area of tax and regulation;
23. Stresses that the activities of providers need to be correctly categorised in order to distinguish clearly between informal, ad-hoc sharing and professional services, where appropriate regulations apply;
24. Takes the view that consumers using sites must be correctly informed and not misled, and that companies need to take the necessary steps to protect consumers and hosts with regard to safety and security;
25. Emphasises that the technology companies acting as facilitators need to inform their providers about their obligations and how to remain fully compliant with local laws;
26. Calls on the Commission to undertake a research study measuring the economic impact of the sharing economy and its implications for the tourism industry, consumers, technology companies and public authorities; calls on the Commission to inform Parliament accordingly;

### ***Digitalisation***

27. Calls on the Commission to define jointly with industry a roadmap of initiatives to encourage travel and tourism companies to adopt and use digital tools more efficiently;
28. Is aware of the fact that SMEs in the tourism sector face considerable difficulties in adapting to the fast-changing market conditions; notes that new IT tools such as the Tourism-IT business support portal and the TourismLink platform will help them take advantage of the digital opportunities;
29. Calls on the Commission to foster collaboration between public and private travel and tourism stakeholders in order to facilitate the researching and adoption of digital solutions by European companies; highlights in particular the need for better coordination between tourist boards, tour operators, the hospitality sector and digital businesses;
30. Calls on the Commission to undertake a research study on the evolution of the digital travel marketplace with a view to identifying policies to ensure a level playing field for travel companies and protecting consumers by providing for transparency and neutrality

when they search for, plan and book travel products and services;

31. Calls on the Commission to refocus funds and programmes in order to better support digitisation of European tourism companies;
32. 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;
33. Calls on the Member States to identify and support EU-wide initiatives that foster the use of the digital infrastructure (such as the elimination of roaming charges and access to Wi-Fi) and interoperability among different platforms;
34. Urges the Member States to consider the development of access to high-speed broadband a priority for remote and mountainous areas;
35. Is worried that many of the economic benefits of online distribution are not reaped in Europe; takes the view that European governments should do more to empower entrepreneurship and, in particular, technology-oriented solutions in Europe;
36. 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 utmost 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.