

EU TO FIGHT THE ECONOMIC CRISIS WITH TOURISM



European tourism ministers agreed on a new policy that should boost the tourism industry in Europe. Supporting small companies and promotion of Europe in Russia, China and India are the main points of the policy.

The EU plans to boost tourism industry to fight the economical crisis. The European tourism ministers and Antonio Tajani, the European commissioner for tourism, agreed recently on a new strategy to support the industry, reported Traveller-online.at.

“The tourism sector is fundamental to get Europe out of the crisis,” said Mr. Tajani. For this reason the tourism ministers decided to boost the tourism sector and to create a new EU tourism policy.

Besides financial support of small tourism companies the policy also includes a plan to encourage Europeans and also people outside Europe to spend their vacations in the Old World. If successful the program should create a number of the much needed new jobs.

The primary focus of the new policy is placed on the promotion of the destinations in potential markets. These are particularly Russia, China and India. According to the EU commissioner Tajani, focusing on these countries should naturally lead to changes in visa policies to make it easier for tourists from these regions to visit Europe.

Spain, one of the world’s most popular destinations, has taken over the rotating EU presidency at the beginning of the year. This is also the reason why Spain intensively supports the idea of boosting the tourism sector.

“Today the tourism sector employs approximately 10 million people in Europe which makes it the third most important industry in general,” said the Spanish Minister of Industry and Tourism, Miguel Sebastián. The sector represents 12% of jobs and 10% of European GDP.

Europe is the number one tourist destination in the world (380 million international tourist arrivals, that is 42% of international arrivals in the world have been recorded in 2007). The continent is however also the favorite destination of Europeans since more than half of them spend their holidays in Europe. About a third of European holidaymakers head annually to three Mediterranean countries - Spain, France and Italy.

The EU ministers and Mr. Tajani agreed on rapid coordination of policies and measures in the European tourism sector. According to Mr. Sebastián however another task for the EU is to resolve the issues related to growing tourism, quality of environment, environmental sustainability and consumer protection rules across Europe.

According to a recent survey of the European Commission this year, 80% of Europeans surveyed want to go on holidays. In comparison, 65% have actually gone on holiday in 2009 and 67% in 2008. However, nearly half of those surveyed want to spend their holidays in their country, reported Econostrum.info.

This is especially true in the southern states (84% of Turks, 78% of Croats, or 62% of French). In contrast, the Scandinavians (between 84 and 89%) and the Dutch (84%) travel further from their borders more easily, mostly in search of sun and sea holidays.

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