

Tourism: Keeping Europe the World's Top Destination



The European Commission has just adopted a Communication on tourism that aims to keep Europe the world's top tourist destination. In particular, the Communication suggests a new consolidated policy framework for the future of the European tourism and a series of initiatives at European level to be implemented in close cooperation with representatives of the public and private tourism sector..

The new EU Tourism policy framework will mainly concentrate around four pillars: improving the competitiveness of the tourism sector in Europe, promoting the continuous sustainable development of EU tourism, enhancing Europe's image as home to sustainable and high quality destinations and maximising the potential of EU policies and financial instruments for the development of European tourism.

1. Improving the competitiveness of the tourism sector in Europe

Innovation needs to be boosted

- In order to adapt the sector and its enterprises to new trends in consumer behaviour and overcome fixed patterns in the sector, the European Commission proposes a joint "ICT tourism platform" among major tourism stakeholders (travel agencies, hotels, etc...).
- In the preparation of its future communication on e-commerce in the internal market, which will evaluate the implementation of the Directive on electronic commerce, the Commission will explore possibilities of better enhancing the integration of the EU tourism sector in this context.

Improve professional skills

- Professional skills improvements as well as greater mobility in the tourism sector are encouraged and will be addressed, in line with the EU 2020 flagship initiative "An agenda for new skills and jobs", especially through different EU programmes such as Leonardo or the Competitiveness and Innovation Framework Programme with its measures on "Erasmus for Young Entrepreneurs" or "E-skills Innovation".

Solutions to extend the tourism season

- A voluntary information exchange mechanism at European level could help to better coordinate school holidays among the Member States, without prejudice to their cultural traditions.
- Develop a voluntary European tourism exchange programme that facilitates travelling for the young, elderly, families with economic difficulties and disabled people. The CALYPSO initiative, which was a first step in this direction, enables off-season tourism to be further developed, particularly in regions where tourism is well developed but highly seasonal.

Diversification of the tourism offer

- With a view to boost intra EU Tourism, the diversification of the tourism offer should be further

enhanced, especially by a better and more targeted promotion and visibility at European level for thematic tourism products: cultural itineraries or touristic cycling routes, thermal, eno-gastronomic, historic, sportive or religious tourism, agro-tourism or tourism promoting the industrial and economic heritage of a region (visits to enterprises) are only a few examples.

- A better integration of “natural” heritage in tourism strategies at European level will be encouraged.

Improving the tourism socio-economic knowledge to develop better coordination of European research

- In the short term, the Commission will develop a pilot project aiming at creating a network including all national and regional research institutes as well as national tourist offices.
- A virtual European Tourism Observatory could provide, in the medium term, a network for coordination of tourism research at European level as well as for enhanced further analysis of tourism realities and trends and act as a repository of EU-wide information about new developments in the tourism industry.
- In the context of its yearly communication “Consumer markets scoreboard”, the Commission will continue monitoring consumer outcomes in the single market and ensure an appropriate measuring of European consumers' satisfaction related to different tourism services (e.g. transport, renting, accommodation, trips, holidays and fixed-rate tours).

2. Promoting sustainable, responsible and qualitative tourism

- Facilitate best practice exchanges among the networks of competitive and sustainable regions and destinations (such as EDEN and NECSTouR) with a view to encouraging sustainable management on the basis of a system of indicators. Elaborate a label on the basis of sustainable management indicators to promote tourist destinations respecting environmental, social and economic criteria.
- Organisation of awareness campaigns to promote responsible attitudes of European tourists.
- Develop, on the basis of existing national experiences, a "Quality Tourism" label in order to increase security and confidence of consumers in the tourism product and reward achievements in raising the quality of the services provided by European enterprises and destinations.
- Propose a Charter establishing criteria for a sustainable and responsible tourism on the basis of which a European prize will be awarded to tourist enterprises and destinations.
- Facilitate a better identification of the risks linked to climate change by the European tourism industry in order to avoid unsuccessful investments and to explore opportunities to develop alternative tourist offers.
- Propose a strategy for a sustainable coastal and maritime tourism.
- Establish or strengthen the cooperation between the European Union, the main emerging countries (China, Russia, India, Brazil) and the Mediterranean countries, to promote sustainable and responsible tourism development and the exchange of best practices.

3. Enhancing Europe's image as home to sustainable and high quality destinations

- The creation and promotion of a "European brand", in close cooperation with the Member States,

will help to better stand out from other international destinations.

- Improved cooperation with national organisations and the European tourism industry to promote European tourism products via the portal visiteurope.com
- Better promotion of European tourism at major events, such as cultural or sport events.
- Strengthen the participation of the European Union in the framework of international organisations, such as the World Tourism Organisation (WTO), OECD, T20 and Euro-Med.

4. Maximising the potential of EU policies and financial instruments for the development of European tourism

Tourism is interlinked with other policies and developments. For this reason, the Commission will work on the integration and coordination of policies impacting on tourism, such as passengers' rights, consumer protection and internal market, to give only a few examples, and maximise their potential for the development of European tourism.

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