



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Action 13 of the Communication¹ “*Europe, the world's N°1 tourist destination – a new political framework for tourism in Europe*”, envisages the development of a **European Tourism Quality Label**, based on existing national experience, to increase consumer security and confidence in European tourism offer.

Preparatory works involving all relevant stakeholders started at the end of 2010. All parties agreed that the European Tourism Quality Label should take form of a **voluntary “umbrella” label** which assesses and recognises quality systems.

The Commission, on the basis of the work of an informal working group, outlined a consultation document, proposing 3 different operational options, with varying degrees of involvement of the national authorities:

- **Option 1: Full European Coordination:** all management tasks and the decision on the recognitions are at European level
- **Option 2: European Coordination with delegation to the National Boards:** certain administrative tasks and the pre-assessment are delegated to national governance bodies, but the decision remains at European level
- **Option 3: Assessment and Decision at National Level:** most management tasks as well as the decision are delegated to national governance bodies, while the EU-level governance body has a rather political role.

The consultation document also proposed other aspects of the concept, such as the scope of recognition, composition of the governance bodies, the principles, the criteria, the work of the auditors, etc.

At the beginning of September 2011 the Commission launched a targeted consultation to perceive the views of a wider circle of the public and private tourism stakeholders. The consultation was closed on 14 October 2011. 49 responses were received.

The analysis of the responses showed preference for **Option 1** – Full European Coordination, thanks to its simple administrative line and cutting of red tape. Another underlined advantage was that option 1 would allow recognition of all types of quality

¹ COM(2010) 352 final

systems regardless their national administration's willingness / capacity to participate in the initiative.

The broad majority of respondents agreed with the **ETQ Board's main tasks and composition** as presented in the consultation document and on the three-year rotation of its members. Support was also expressed for the ETQ Board being composed by two sub-committees where the decisions are taken under a "one man–one vote" regime.

The replies also showed a clear preference for **third-party auditors**, as the most appropriate way to ensure impartiality and independence even if it increases administrative and financial costs.

The large part of respondents agreed with the **"3C principles" approach**: Clarity, Credibility and Comparability. "Clarity" means transparency, open and available information, understandable and unambiguous rules, while "Credibility" lies in the independence, impartiality and professionalism of assessors. Comparability is the ETQ label's real European added value both for consumers and businesses.

The **list of criteria** proposed in the consultation document triggered various positions among the respondents. Some expressed their concern about the capacity of micro or no-employee businesses to comply with some of the criteria such as the establishment of a customer survey system, a training plan for employees and the requirement of providing information in minimum one relevant foreign language. Another circle of respondents, on the contrary, suggested that the criteria should be more detailed and further elaborated upon. However, a wide circle of the respondents thought that the criteria were adequate and appreciated the fact that the list is smart and short enough so it's not too difficult to comply with.

The majority of the respondents also thought that **all type of quality systems should be allowed to apply for ETQ label recognition**, to give equal opportunities to all existing systems to participate in an EU-wide initiative. The consultation document also generated a discussion on the concept of "proven record of market relevance" with various views presented pro-and contra the proposed text. However the majority of the respondents agreed that a 3-year long activity in the field of evaluation is a sufficient proof of market relevance.

The majority of the **Member States** declared that they had no official national quality systems but some of them had plans to implement one. However, very few of the Member States confirmed to have the ability to set up a National Board for administering the ETQ under options 2 or 3. On the other hand, many Member States have raised questions about the feasibility and success of the ETQ Label.

To conclude, the most preferred organisational combination was Option 1, Full European Coordination, with all types of quality systems to be recognised. However the large proportion of unanswered questions as well as those respondents who expressed their concerns and raised additional questions should not be overlooked.