

PEDRO ORTUN

CONCLUDING REMARKS, EUROPEAN TOURISM FORUM 2009

A. Introductory Remarks

1. We are approaching the end of nearly three very intensive working days on EU tourism issues. On my part, I am very happy personally with the outcome of these events, as also indicated in the Closing Remarks of the EDEN Awards Ceremony, and hope you will join me in congratulating all involved in view of the very well organised meetings both in terms of content and logistics. Everyone should be aware that this has involved hundreds of man work days in my Directorate – both within the Tourism Unit and in my central Financial Team, in cooperation with the Communication Unit of DG ENTR.

2. My only two regrets relate to HOTREC President Kent Nyström's health incident – to whom I augur a quick recovery – and to the lack of responsibility of whoever registered as participant and did not turn up. Thankfully, we had over 400 participants today, but other 200 still did not make an appearance even though they confirmed recently their registration. Certain expenses could have in this regard been avoided, particularly relating to catering.

B. Presentations at the Forum

3. Content-wise, I believe John Kester and Isabelle de Voldere delivered very good presentations by setting the scene, identifying key challenges and proposing recommendations. The panel presentations and discussions were also interesting and showed the strong interest of stakeholders – not only the panelists - in the four panel themes.

4. I was also extremely pleased with Vice President Verheugen's pro-active and well elaborated message during his last keynote speech to these annual European Tourism Fora. His intervention outlined well the policy and practical initiatives undertaken by the European Commission in recent years under his stewardship and highlighted the better legal and operational framework that the future Lisbon Treaty will provide to the EU Tourism public and private stakeholders.

5. The attached Final Summary Report will be, in this regard, an important document deserving deeper reflection both by the European Commission and by the European stakeholders involved in the tourism sector.

C. The possible Way Forward

6. It is not easy to elaborate upon future initiatives within the current context, where the new political and institutional framework at EU level is still not completed. We have already a new European Parliament and the confirmed Commission's President, but the whole Commission is still to be nominated and the Lisbon Treaty has to enter, hopefully, soonest into force.

7. Such important changes can have a considerable impact on tourism initiatives at European level. I would like to mention three particular aspects concerning the Lisbon Treaty that affect tourism:

- a) A legal (and hopefully political) recognition of tourism as an area of EU policy, whilst continuing to respect the principle of subsidiarity;
- b) Harmonisation of national tourism legislations will not be possible;
- c) Voting will take place by co-decision and qualified majority, not anymore by unanimity.

8. We should seek to take profit of this stronger political/legal framework by aiming to consolidate and improve all together, in particular:

- a) the concrete and practical initiatives like EDEN, Calypso and the Iron Curtain Trail that we have already launched;
- b) the new initiatives that we should put in place. For instance, today's Forum has indicated to us, through the Ecorys/Idea Consult Study, a set of six well identified challenges leading on to five specific set of recommendations.
- c) the ones we should abandon if we are not provided with the appropriate human and budgetary resources.

9. We would appreciate the reactions and feedback of stakeholders, if possible, before 6th November 2009 - concerning ideas for the future tourism priorities for EU action. You should preferably elaborate on commitments that you yourself – or the stakeholder you are representing – could take, whilst highlighting which proposed actions in your opinion should be lead by the European Commission, Industry and/or Member States.

10. We don't know yet what line of action the future Commissioner responsible for Tourism will take, as he/she is still not known, but I can elaborate upon what we are going to propose in relation to the forthcoming hearings/discussions with the European Parliament:

- a) We intend updating, completing and streamlining the report we shared with you in our discussion document of last February, giving importance to four main areas of actions, namely:
 - improving the socio-economic knowledge basis of the EU Tourism, through surveys, studies and improved statistical basis, in close cooperation with ETC and UNWTO;
 - improving the promotion of Europe in our main third countries markets (US, Japan, BRIC countries) as well as within the EU;
 - promoting sustainable tourism within local and regional destinations, with responsible EU Tourism companies and organisations and through responsible European tourists;
 - facilitating the best possible EU legal framework for the EU Tourism, as well as the best possible access of the EU financial instruments to all public and private EU Tourism stakeholders.
- b) We will also provide the new Commissioner with the possible options which should consolidate the existing budgetary means (the three Preparatory Actions, adopted jointly by the European Parliament and the Council, and the CIP/EIP programme), in view of the most efficient financing of the EU-led Tourism initiatives that will be continued and/or put in place from 2010 onwards.
- c) We will, finally, suggest some options to ensure, within the Commission itself and with the most relevant Directorates-General, a higher priority for Tourism-related issues and a more efficient internal coordination.

11. Finally, I would like to thank you all again for your active participation in these two intensive days of European Tourism and I hope to see you again in the forthcoming months to explain to you, in more concrete terms, the updated EU Tourism Policy framework for the forthcoming years.