COMMUNICATION FROM THE COMMISSION TO THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT, THE COUNCIL, THE EUROPEAN ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COMMITTEE AND THE COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS

A European Strategy for more Growth and Jobs in Coastal and Maritime Tourism

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1. INTRODUCTION

In 2012, there were 534 million tourist arrivals in Europe, which is 17 million more than in 2011 and 52 % of all international arrivals worldwide. Revenue generated by inbound tourism reached €356 billion, which is 43% of the world total.[1] In 2013, the number of nights spent in tourist accommodation establishments in the EU28 reached a peak of 2.6 billion nights, up by 1.6% from 2012[2]. Tourism is clearly an important economic activity, especially in many maritime and coastal regions. However, the changing world economy is affecting the sector, causing significant changes in tourist behaviour and markets of origin.

In its 2010 Communication[3], the Commission announced a strategy for sustainable coastal and maritime tourism[4]. The European Parliament, the Council, the Committee of the Regions and the European Economic and Social Committee welcomed this proposal and emphasised the need for joint action. A public consultation held in 2012 has given a strong basis for a specific EU initiative[5].

Furthermore, the Blue Growth Communication of 2012[6] listed coastal and maritime tourism as one of five focus areas for delivering sustainable growth and jobs in the blue economy. The European Parliament's 2013 report on Blue Growth[7] welcomed this European framework and recommended a series of actions to boost the sector and support the development of sustainable tourism in coastal destinations.

The tourism sector is growing and the challenge is to exploit its potential in a way that sustainably produces economic benefits. This Communication proposes joint responses to the multiple challenges, with a view to capitalise on Europe's strengths and enabling it to substantially contribute to the Europe 2020 objectives for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth.

2. A SECTOR WITH GROWTH AND JOB POTENTIAL

Europe is a maritime continent with a coastline stretching from the Arctic to the Mediterranean and from the Atlantic to the Black Sea. Its sea basins and coastal regions provide a unique source of natural and cultural wealth. Coastal and maritime tourism is the

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[1]   UNWTO Annual Report 2012
       http://dtxtq4w60xqpw.cloudfront.net/sites/all/files/pdf/annual_report_2012.pdf
[2]   EUROSTAT database (2013)
[3]   COM (2010) 352 final
[4]   including sea- and beach-based tourism, cruise and yachting / boating and connected inland activities
[5]   http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/maritimeaffairs_fisheries/consultations/tourism/index_en.htm
[6]   COM (2012)494
[7]   A7-0209/2013- 2012/2297 (INI))

largest maritime activity in Europe and closely linked to many other parts of the economy. It employs almost 3.2 million people, generating a total of €183 billion in gross value added[8] and representing over one third of the maritime economy. More than four out of nine nights spent in accommodation establishments in the EU are spent in coastal areas[9]. In 2012 cruise tourism alone generated a direct turnover of €15.5 billion and employed 330,000 people; European ports had 29.3 million passenger visits, a 75% over 2006[10]. Half of European coastal tourism's jobs and value added are located in the Mediterranean, but the Atlantic, Baltic and Black Sea regions have significant shares too.

Attracting more than one third of all tourism business in Europe, coastal areas are important for growth and jobs, in particular for young people, since 45% of tourism workers are between 16 and 35 years old[11]. However, many of the small- and medium-sized enterprises that make up the sector struggle with a variety of challenges and cannot adequately exploit this potential alone. It is therefore essential to address the cross-border challenges at EU level and promote cooperation and best practice sharing, including by promoting strategic trans-regional and trans-national partnerships. A joint European framework is needed to add value to actions at all levels and to help overcome the difficulties.

3.   CHALLENGES AND A NEW FRAMEWORK FOR COASTAL AND MARITIME TOURISM IN EUROPE

This chapter focuses on the challenges to be addressed and proposes a strategy to enhance the sector's sustainability and competitiveness, to be implemented by the Commission, Member States, regional and local authorities, private operators and other stakeholders.

3.1.   Stimulate performance and competitiveness

Improving knowledge

Any economic assessment of the sector is hampered by the lack and poor comparability of data, both at local, sea basin and European level. Despite some progress in recent years[12], there is a need to identify and address the data gaps to improve planning and destination management. Specific indicators are needed to improve coherence and comparability of coastal and maritime tourism statistics across Europe and beyond.

Addressing demand volatility

Tourism demand[13] fluctuates greatly due to changing economic, financial and political situations. Average expenditure per night has been decreasing since the mid-2000s, and a

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8   Study in support of policy measures for maritime and coastal tourism at EU level (hereafter referred as" CMT study"), ECORYS, 2013
     http://ec.europa.eu/maritimeaffairs/documentation/studies/documents/study-maritime-and-coastal-tourism_en.pdf

9   Coastal areas include municipalities bordering the sea or having half of their territory within 10km from the coastline.
     EUROSTAT database (2012) – Nights spent at tourist accommodation establishments by coastal and non-coastal area - http://appsso.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/nui/show.do?dataset=tour_occ_ninatc).

10   Cruise Lines International Association "The Cruise Industry", 2013 edition
     http://www.senato.it/application/xmanager/projects/leg17/attachments/documento_evento_procedura_commissione/files/000/000/ 632/Documentazione_Clia_Europe.pdf

11   EUROSTAT database (2012) - Employed persons by age groups (NACE Rev. 2)-
     http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/portal/page/portal/statistics/search_database#

12   Regulation (EU) N°692/2011 of the European Parliament and of the Council concerning the European statistics on tourism

13   measured as the number of local and international arrivals

further 9% decrease in annual expenditure is expected between 2011 and 2020. This trend affects coastal economies in particular as they are mainly made up of SMEs and micro enterprises[14]. Moreover, a decrease in transport costs has increased competition between European coasts and low-cost destinations worldwide, adding to the volatility of demand. Local destinations are losing their comparative advantage and often struggle to attract both traditional and new demand emerging globally. Seasonality is an additional challenge: most of the potential socio-economic gains are concentrated in the summer months, with many local businesses closed the rest of the year. Specific strategies drawing on innovative and attractive policies and products must therefore be put forward to capture the potential of tourists who can travel in low season.

The sector could adapt to demographic change and develop its offer to attract the growing number of elderly people[15]. Non-European visitors taking low-season holidays also offer considerable potential, and the Commission recently revised the Visa Code and proposed to simplify procedures for non- European travellers[16]. In addition, coastal and maritime tourism concerns should be addressed in the on-going "Senior" and "Accessibility"[17] initiatives and in the "European Destinations of Excellence"[18]. Communication and promotion initiatives targeting specific non-European countries could also be developed..

Overcoming sector fragmentation

Due to the continuing economic crisis most tourism SMEs have limited or no access to credit for investments and innovation[19]. Moreover, coastal regions often struggle to create and fully capture economic benefits generated by cruise tourism, though pressures to invest in port infrastructures and to preserve the environment is increasing.

This is partly because businesses across EU sea basins do not sufficiently use synergies, which causes fragmentation and limited economic gain. Sharing best practice between Member States, regions and stakeholders is essential. Cooperation among research institutes, museums, tourism companies and other stakeholders should be promoted to develop innovative and sustainable products that respond to visitors' expectations.

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[14]   CMT study

[15]   128 million of EU inhabitants are aged between 55 and 80
EUROSTAT database (2012) -Population on 1 January by five years age groups and sex-
http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/portal/page/portal/statistics/search_database#

[16]   COM(2012) 629

[17]   These initiatives promote partnerships between public and private sectors enabling certain key groups such as the young or the elderly, people with reduced mobility and low income families to travel, particularly during the low season.

[18]   http://ec.europa.eu/enterprise/sectors/tourism/eden/index_en.htm

[19]   CMT study

> The Commission will:
>
> 1. Strive to close gaps in tourism data availability, in particular coastal and maritime.
>
> 2. Develop a coastal and maritime focus, where appropriate, in EU tourism initiatives, including in promotional and communication campaigns.
>
> 3. Promote a pan-European dialogue between cruise operators, ports and coastal tourism stakeholders.
>
> 4. Support the development of trans-national and interregional partnerships, networks[20], clusters and smart specialisation strategies.

> The Commission invites Member States, regional and local authorities and the tourism industry at large to:
>
> - Engage and actively participate in creating networks, clusters and smart specialisation strategies.
>
> - Develop more targeted packages for specific markets, such as for seniors or people with disabilities.

3.2. Promoting skills and innovation

Investing in people is a condition for sustainable and competitive growth, but the sector is not attracting enough skilled personnel. This is mainly due to job seasonality and the lack of career progression opportunities. Education and training should be used to match the supply of skills with the demand of the labour market. The Commission has several initiatives that support this: There will be a 'blue jobs' section in the EURES Portal, which provides information for jobseekers and employers[21]; a map of skills and training needs in the tourism services is planned for spring 2014 and will enable common frameworks for the sector, linked to the European Qualifications Framework and the European Credit System for Vocational Education and Training[22].

Better targeted training policies through mainstreaming of sector needs into EU programmes aim at providing well qualified, service oriented, multilingual human capital. The new Erasmus+ programme will support transnational strategic partnerships among education, training and youth institutions and organisations. New sector specific curricula and innovative forms of vocational teaching and training will benefit the sector, which is invited to engage and cooperate with higher education institutions through "Knowledge Alliances".

In the area of leisure boating, Member States require different competences for yacht skippers, which limits cross-border development and affects the nautical job market. Moreover, obligations for qualifications and safety equipment vary considerably between Member States, thus limiting mobility and market access. Competitiveness of small coastal and maritime tourism enterprises in an increasingly global market could be improved by making maximum use of information technology. Existing tools such as ICT and the Tourism

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[20]   E.g. the Enterprise Europe Network
       A study on the perspectives for clustering in the Mediterranean has been launched in autumn 2013
[21]   https://ec.europa.eu/eures/
[22]   http://ec.europa.eu/education/lifelong-learning-policy/ecvet_en.htm

business portal[23] could enhance visibility, promote innovation and support repositioning of businesses.

The Commission will:

5. Assess the need for EU action on qualification requirements for professional yacht skippers and recreational boating[24].

6. Assess the need for EU action on provisions for nautical tourism safety equipment.

7. Stimulate innovative management schemes through the ICT[25] and the Tourism business portal.

The Commission invites Member States and regional and local authorities to:

- Encourage internet connectivity and promote electronic marketing tools.

- Promote translation services for maps, leaflets and logistics information.

The Commission invites the industry to:

- Actively participate in activities promoting skills and training.

- Invest in quality control initiatives for tourism products and staff.

- Create and promote open online courses to upgrade or re-orient skills in the coastal and maritime field.

3.3. Strengthening sustainability

Addressing environmental pressures

Tourism depends on a healthy environment and the sustainable use of natural capital, but activities are often concentrated in already densely populated areas, leading to vast increases in water demand, more waste and emissions from air, road and sea transport at peak periods, more risks of soil sealing and biodiversity degradation (from infrastructure developments), eutrophication and other pressures. Scarcely populated and pristine areas can be affected too. In addition, the impacts of climate change exacerbate pressures on these areas and could reshape tourism's geographical and seasonal distribution.

The EU's Natura 2000 network protects vulnerable coastal and marine habitats which, if managed well, can provide significant recreational opportunities and contribute to sustainable growth and employment. EU legislation such as the Water Framework and Marine Strategy Framework Directives require Member States to ensure good status of coastal and marine waters, a pre-requisite for tourism to prosper. Integrated Coastal Management and Maritime

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[23] http://ec.europa.eu/enterprise/sectors/tourism/ict/index_en.htm

[24] The training of seafarers for passenger ships under the Convention on Standards training, certification and watch keeping for seafarers does not apply to skippers.

[25] Concrete available ICT tools include, for example, the Virtual Tourism observatory (http://ec.europa.eu/enterprise/sectors/tourism/vto/index_en.htm); Tourism Link Platform (http://www.tourismlink.eu/tourism-link/); eCalypso Platform (http://www.ecalypso.eu/steep/public/index.jsf)

Spatial Planning help ensure sustainable and Green Infrastructure[26] development through smart planning and cooperation between government, public and private partners[27]. The 'Wales Coast Path', a 1,400 km stretch of Welsh coastline visited by 2.82 million tourists in 2012 and generating £ 32 million in one year[28], is a good example. Eco-tourism[29] is a good opportunity to develop products that attract eco-conscious travellers, ranging from serving local products to environmentally-friendly business models and practices.

The sector is well placed to measure and monitor its own sustainability performance through initiatives such as the EU Eco-label or the Travelife certification system[30]. Environmental management systems are renowned for reducing waste streams, improving operational efficiency and saving money[31]. Specific indicators for the tourism sector already exist under the European Eco-Management and Audit Scheme (EMAS)[32], and others could be developed under the pilot European Tourism Indicator System[33].

Two recent Commission legislative proposals[34] tackle emission from recreational watercraft. Furthermore, vessels using shore-side electricity when in port could substantially reduce fuel consumption, noise and air emissions. To date however, only a small number of European ports have invested in this technology; provision of electricity and integration in smart energy grids should be further explored and promoted.

The Commission will:

8. Promote ecotourism, using the European Eco-Management and Audit Scheme and EU Ecolabel indicators and encourage linking to other sustainability actions.

9. Promote implementation of the Protocol to the Barcelona Convention on Integrated Coastal Management and the relevant Council Recommendation, and promote Maritime Spatial Planning and Green Infrastructure, to ensure the sustainable development of EU coastal areas.

10. Promote strategies on waste prevention, management and marine litter to support sustainable coastal and maritime tourism.

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[26] Green Infrastructure addresses spatial structures of natural/semi-natural areas http://ec.europa.eu/environment/nature/ecosystems/

[27] COM(2013)133 final

[28] http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-wales-25096911

[29] http://www.ecotourism.org/book/ecotourism-definition

[30] http://ec.europa.eu/environment/ecolabel/index_en.htm http://www.travelife.org/Hotels/home.asp?p=1

[31] A study on hotels in Spain (Cornell Hospitality Quarterly, August 2012) showed that those using Environmental Management Systems are more profitable

[32] http://ec.europa.eu/environment/emas/about/index_en.htm

[33] http://ec.europa.eu/enterprise/sectors/tourism/sustainable-tourism/indicators/index_en.htm. It is a tool to measure and monitor the sustainable tourism performance of destinations

[34] COM(2011) 456final and COM(2013) 18final

> The Commission invites Member States, regions, industry and other stakeholders to:
>
> - Implement the Integrated Coastal Management Recommendation and Protocol.
>
> - Develop guidelines on minimising impacts on biodiversity and enhancing benefits of recreation and tourism in protected areas.
>
> - Develop climate change adaptation in coastal areas.
>
> - Improve resource efficiency, waste and pollution prevention and management in tourist areas and by operators.
>
> - Promote Eco-Management and Audit Scheme and implement Best Environmental Management Practices and Green Infrastructure approaches.
>
> - Promote the use of shore-side electricity and provision of port facilities.
>
> - Promote water efficiency measures included in the Water Blueprint[35].
>
> The Commission invites the industry and other stakeholders to:
>
> - Develop and promote ecotourism and other sustainable tourism products.
>
> - Implement water efficiency measures included in the Water Blueprint.
>
> - Actively participate in projects that reduce waste, emissions, marine litter, natural resource use and in water and waste recovery / recycling.

Promoting an innovative, sustainable and high-quality offer

Changing demand requires attractive and sustainable products that provide unique and customised experiences. Yet, potentially interesting sites or items are often not presented and promoted attractively or not well linked with other coastal tourism offers. The sector should develop new products promoting attractiveness and accessibility of coastal and marine archaeology, maritime heritage, underwater tourism, eno-gastronomic activities etc. A good example is the 'Odyssea project'[36] which valorises the economic potential of coastal tourism, maritime cultural routes and innovative yachting activities through a network of innovative coastal facilities and ancient maritime routes.

Growing public interest in water-based sports, such as recreational fishing, boating, wind surfing and diving, creates potential and can help address seasonality because these activities do not depend on peak seasons. The growing trend in leisure boating requires that marinas are safe and accessible but problems persist because of a lack of berths and appropriate services for people with reduced mobility. Initiatives such as the 'nautical tourism network'[37] or the 'Sail West project'[38] which aims at creating a marine leisure centre of excellence linking maritime counties of Ireland, Northern Ireland and the west of Scotland could inspire further networking in the nautical sector.

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[35] Water Blueprint aims at integration of water policy into other policies http://ec.europa.eu/environment/water/blueprint/

[36] www.odyssea.eu

[37] www.nautical-tourism.eu.

[38] http://malinwaters.com/about ; funded by INTERREG IV A, it provides financial support to a number of development project in ports

Quality of service is an essential source of competitive distinction. It is therefore important to ensure that tourists can rely on high-quality services across the EU and that this quality is consistently assessed. A recent proposal on European Tourism Quality principles aims to increase consumer security and confidence in tourism services[39].

Insularity and remoteness – seeing opportunities in geographical constraints

Islands and other remote destinations have an additional handicap in terms of accessibility and depend largely on boat services. This poses problems of transport costs, seasonality and connectivity with the main land and/or surrounding locations, which affects the attractiveness for visitors and tourism workers. Knowledge of problems is often insufficient to design adequate solutions. However, these locations should be developed because they offer job possibilities in areas where other economic activity is often scarce.

The Commission will:

11. Encourage the diversification and integration of coastal and inland attractors, including through transnational thematic itineraries like cultural, religious or ancient trade routes[40].

12. Contract a study on how to improve island connectivity and design innovative tourism strategies for (remote) islands.

13. Contract a study to identify innovative practices for marina development.

The Commission invites Member State, regional and local authorities and industry to:

- Develop cultural heritage based tourism, underwater archaeological parks (based on work done by UNESCO), and nature and health tourism in coastal destinations.

- Use national and regional strategies to ensure the coherence of tourism offers and better accessibility of islands and remote locations.

- Develop innovative practices for regenerating and re-using existing maritime infrastructure.

The Commission invites the industry to:

- Develop a specific network of maritime tourism stakeholders including tour operators.

3.4. Maximise available EU funding

EU financial framework 2014-2020 and other EU instruments finance project planning and implementation giving impetus to the sector's sustainable development. Member States and regions are invited to set up multi-annual national and/or regional strategies to develop sustainable coastal and maritime tourism and ensure coherence with their Partnership Agreements and Operational Programmes.

European Structural and Investment Funds (ESIF)

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[39]   COM (2014) …. final

[40]   E.g. in the Joint Management Agreement between the Council of Europe and the Commission, promoting cultural and religious routes

The European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) can co-finance sustainable tourism investments under various thematic objectives linked to research and innovation, access to and use of ICT, entrepreneurship, SME growth and competitiveness, energy efficiency and renewable energy use, adaptation to climate change, development of cultural and natural heritage or employment and labour mobility. Infrastructure investment is limited to small-scale cultural and sustainable tourism. Under the European Territorial Cooperation goal, the ERDF can promote the exchange of good practice, transnational networks and clustering, joint strategies for sustainable tourism, culture and cross-border trade.

Various new EU funds can also benefit coastal and maritime tourism through multi-sectoral projects focusing on innovation, for example under integrated urban development (in the European Regional Development Fund), under sustainable development of fisheries dependent areas (in the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund) and under rural development (in the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development). Such projects may include funding from the European Social Fund to support job creation, professional adaptation, training and capacity building.

Research, innovation and competitiveness

Horizon 2020 is the financial instrument to implement the EU's research and innovation strategy for 2014-2020. Blue Growth has been identified as one of the focus areas; specific support is planned for SMEs that want to develop and use innovative solutions, including in coastal and maritime tourism.

The COSME framework programme 2014-2020, aims to enhance SME competitiveness. Its main objectives for tourism are to increase demand (particularly during low season), diversify offer and products, enhance quality, sustainability, accessibility, skills and innovation, improve the socio-economic knowledge of the sector and promote Europe as a set of unique, sustainable and high-quality destinations.

Education, training and culture

The Creative Europe programme (2014-2020) offers possible synergies with cultural and nature tourism, including on coastal and maritime heritage. The Erasmus+ programme (2014-2020) could benefit the sector in terms of employability, new sector curricula and innovative forms of vocational teaching and training.

Environment, climate change and other funding

LIFE+ funding will be re-launched in 2014 and is expected to support the objectives of the EU Biodiversity Strategy. It has substantial scope to finance innovative projects affecting coastal and marine tourism, including support for resource efficiency. The Proposal for the 7th EU Environment Action Programme to 2020 and the EU climate change adaptation and mitigation objectives focus on infrastructure sectors like energy and transport, but also on specific aspects linked to coastal and maritime tourism. In addition, the European Investment Bank provides SMEs with financing for investments in tourism and/or in convergence regions.

> The Commission will:
>
> 14. Develop an online guide with an overview of the main funding opportunities available for the sector (particularly SMEs).

> The Commission invites Member States and regions to:
>
> - Develop and implement national / regional strategies on coastal and maritime tourism and projects to be included in the Operational Programmes.
>
> - Seek cross-border cooperation on the above strategies and exchange of best practice
>
> - Make efficient and effective use of the available funds.

4. MAINSTREAMING EU POLICIES AFFECTING COASTAL AND MARITIME TOURISM

Most European policies and economic activities directly or indirectly influence coastal and maritime tourism, which can be a driver for economic growth.

Therefore, the Commission will ensure that coastal and maritime tourism is included in other EU policies like IT connectivity, sustainable transport, safety issues and freedom of movement for workers. Cross-cutting policy aspects such as environmental protection, regional development, training, consumer protection and climate change mitigation and adaptation policies will also be considered.

In addition, macro-regional strategies for the Baltic, Atlantic and Adriatic-Ionian promote a strong tourism economy and co-ordinate regional, EU and non-EU resources for everyone's benefit. Links with the European Neighbourhood Policy, the Black Sea Synergy, the Strategy for the Danube Region and the Northern Dimension Policy will be explored in the future.

5. CONCLUSION

Coastal and maritime tourism needs an ambitious policy framework. The Commission, Member States, regional and local authorities, industry and other stakeholders must take targeted action in coherence with EU policies that have an impact on this sector.

The Commission will regularly monitor this process to ensure that actions are implemented. It will then report to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions and will assess the results.