



ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON TOURISM

BRUSSELS

9 July 2013, 10:00 to 17:00

DRAFT MINUTES

Chair of the meeting: Mr. Pedro Ortún, Director

Morning session

The chair welcomed the participants of the meeting, in particular the representative of Croatia, a new EU Member State as of 1 July 2013, and informed about new staff in the units dealing with tourism.

Approval of the agenda

Approved

- 1) Approval of the draft minutes of the meeting of 5 December 2012 including the comments received from Cyprus.**

Approved

- 2) Update on the implementation of the Communication on Tourism COM(2010) 352**

The Commission services gave an overview of the following main activities. TAC members had received detailed informative fiches one week prior to the meeting and were invited to ask questions.

a) Promoting diversification of tourism products and services, integration of Europe's cultural and natural heritage into tourism strategies

- Calls for proposals on transnational thematic tourism products,
- Cooperation with the Council of Europe,
- European Destinations of Excellence EDEN;

The following TAC members took the floor: Austria, Croatia and Hungary on calls for proposals on transnational thematic tourism products. The questions concerned the requirement of the call on sustainable transnational thematic tourism products to include

in the project consortium a partner being a Ministry at national level or a National Tourism Organisation (NTO). The countries taking floor were of opinion that a simple support letter from the Ministry would be enough (instead of involving the Ministry as a partner).

The Commission services explained the reasons for this criterion and indicated that projects which not have managed to have the Ministry in the consortium have still the possibility to apply for other call on cultural and industrial heritage products.

Numerous countries took the floor on EDEN, indicating their preference as for the theme of the next new edition (EDEN VII). The votes have been distributed in the following order (as for the first option): Tourism and local gastronomy - 10, Tourism and history – 3 and Family tourism – 2. Some countries reported on their successful implementation of the EDEN VI edition on Accessible Tourism (e.g. Italy, San Marino, Latvia, and Czech Republic). In addition, Slovenia suggested using the full name of the initiative not only the acronym EDEN for communication activities.

b) Stimulate competitiveness of the tourism sector

- ICT tourism initiative,
- Improving professional skills,
- Virtual Tourism Observatory (VTO); Eurobarometer,

Austria asked several questions on the implementation of the initiative e.g how the pilot projects have been selected, about the technological innovation, what the Commission will do with the gathered information. Hungary asked about the link between two platforms: ICT-Tourism business support portal and Calypso platform.

The Commission services explained that the main objective of the ICT-Tourism business support portal is to provide interoperability of existing systems. The countries participating in the pilot phase were volunteers and ready to participate. The Commission invited Members States to provide input by replying to the questionnaire available via the link provided in the informative fiche.

On the skills issue, Croatia took the floor with the advice that the contractor which will be selected within the call for tenders for mapping of the supply side of education and performing performance checks of education offer for tourism sector should contact not only Ministries of Employment or Education but also Ministries in charge of Tourism of the Members States.

On the VTO, the Commission services informed that the feasibility study has been carried out and it is foreseen that the VTO will be hosted on the Europe website. The first working prototype foreseen to be available on line at the end of this year.

c) Encouraging an extension of the tourist season

- Calypso,
- Senior initiative,
- Low season tourist exchanges with third countries (50.000 tourists initiative)

Hungary asked two questions. The first one about the links between two platforms – e Calypso platform and the ICT-Tourism business support portal, on which the Commission replied that there is coordination between the two platforms to reduce the resources and use the available technologies. The second question concerned the call for proposals currently published on “Facilitating transnational low season tourism exchanges in Europe encouraging senior citizens to travel” on the possibility of developing a booking system for offers for seniors in the project proposals. The Commission services replied that as far as the action is in line with the objectives of the call and follow the requirements describes in the call text it could be possible.

d) Promoting the development of sustainable, responsible and high-quality tourism

- European Tourism Indicator System (ETIS) for sustainable management at destination level,
- Communication on challenges and opportunities concerning coastal and marine tourism in the EU,
- Charter for a sustainable and responsible tourism,
- Accessible Tourism;

Austria and Italy informed about the actions they have undertook to disseminate the information about the ETIS and asked if they could be informed about the names of destinations involved in the first testing phase of the system. The Commission services replied that the list of destinations involved, when ready, could be circulated for information to TAC members and that it is planned to give some visibility to destinations involved in testing ETIS, possibly by publishing the names of the destinations on the Europe website after the testing on condition they provide the Commission with detailed feedback on testing.

Portugal asked when the translation of the ETIS toolkit into other languages will be available. The Commission services replied that the translations to other EU languages are in process and should be available as soon as possible, at least before the second testing phase starts.

On the coastal and maritime tourism file, Croatia asked if the Tourism unit is following the works on the EU Macro Region Strategy on Adriatic and Ionian Sea Basin.

The Chair replied that as far as possible the Tourism team is following the different initiatives concerning EU Macro Region Strategies, including this one.

On the Charter, the Netherlands asked if the Charter takes into account the UNWTO Code of Ethics and Belgium asked if the Charter’s format will be to be signed. The Commission confirmed that it has taken inspiration from the Code of Ethics and the Charter is in line with it. Different options could still be considered but taking into account other current priorities it is planned rather to opt for the Charter in the form of informal document/ publication which could be published on the Europa website.

On the Accessible Tourism Preparatory action, the Commission services informed TAC members about the DG Justice competition on Access City Award and following the question from Austria confirmed that the emphasis of the 2013 call for proposals on “accessible tourism itineraries” will be on national packages.

e) International cooperation and initiatives enhancing the visibility of Europe as a set of diverse, sustainable and high-quality destinations.

- Cooperation with ETC,
- Communication campaign to promote Europe in international markets.

The Commission services informed about different communication activities implemented so far within the communication campaign “Ready for Europe” and gave and update on the cooperation with the ETC.

Italy took the floor informing about its cooperation with ETC and San Marino mentioned the EXPO Milan 2015 as an element for tourism policy and opportunity enhance the tourism flows to Europe. Croatia informed about the international event it plans to organise on 23-24 October 2013 together with UNWTO and ETC on using e-marketing tools to promote destinations and Europe.

f) Information points.

- **European Tourism Day 2013**

The date for the European Tourism Day will be confirmed as soon as possible depending on the availability of VP Tajani.

- **European Tourism Forum 2013**

In addition to the documents sent to TAC members before the meeting the TAC member from Lithuania gave the presentation on the ETF to be organised under the EU Lithuanian Presidency. The registration for the ETF should be open soon and TAC members were invited to suggest topic for an Informal Ministerial meeting which possibly will be also organised at the ETF’s occasion.

4) Visa policy

The Commission services informed on the important achievement of DG ENTR, confirmed by the 2012 Commission Communication on visa, which states that any change in the legislation on the visa policy should take into account the economic dimension. The TAC members were also informed that the Commission is working to propose the revision of the visa code by the end of the year. In the meantime, waiting for the adoption, the Commission can play role in the facilitating of exchange of good practices on the visa code and policy implementation. DG ENTR is also conducting with help of an external contractor, a study on the economic impact of short stay visa facilitation on the tourism industry and the overall economies of the European Member States being part of the Schengen area.

Italy informed about their support for simplification of visa procedures and France informed about OECD handbook on good practices on visa in the Member States.

Afternoon session

5) Revision of the Package Travel Directive (PTD) – update and discussion

The Commission services (DG JUST) gave presentation on the new proposal adopted during the day on the revision of the Package Travel Directive. The presentation was sent to TAC members after the meeting. The revision of the 1999 Directive has been proposed due to the significant changes in the tourism market including the development of online tools and dynamic packages.

The following countries took the floor: France, the Netherlands, Estonia, Belgium, Spain and Hungary. The questions concerned the actors (retailer or organiser of travel) on whom the liability will be imposed, type of platforms which will fall under the revised Directive, some Court Cases and costs which the current PT Directive impose already on Member States, the involvement of stakeholders in the revision of the Directive, cooperation between the Commission and the UNWTO Working Group on the Revision of Travel package Directive.

The Commission services clarified that the revised Directive imposes the liability on the organiser of travel, the platforms which will fall under the new PTD are these which allow booking of several services and paying in one go. Numerous stakeholders were involved in works on the revision of the Directive during the extended consultation process since 2007 and the Commission will continue the dialog to gain their support. The aim is to adopt the Revised Directive by the Council and the EP under the current mandate of the Commission and EP but delays are possible. Final shape of the Directive will depend on the Council and the EP. Transposition period of 18 months after the adoption has been foreseen.

6) European Tourism Quality Label (ETQL)

The Chair informed that there is no political decision yet on the final form in which the proposal for the European Tourism Quality Label (ETQL) will be adopted by the Commission. The Commission services hope that the adoption could be possible in September /October. Impact Assessment report on the initiative is available.

Spain took the floor underling the efforts Spain has put into quality evaluation and the importance that the quality systems managed in Spain are in line, could be recognised by the ETQL. The Chair underlined that the aim of the ETQL would be to recognise existing quality schemes in the Member States and not to replace them.

7) Budget for tourism in the MFF 2014-2020 - Programme for the Competitiveness and SMEs (COSME) - 2014 Work Programme

The Chair informed about an agreement of the three institutions on COSME and final adoption is expected in autumn. The Commission services informed also about the EIP meeting held in June where a draft proposal for 2014 Work Programme (tourism related budget) was presented. The decision on the 2014 Work Programme should be taken by the new COSME Committee on 17 October.

The following countries took the floor: Austria, Croatia and Belgium. All of them expressed the opinion that TAC should be a platform where the budget on tourism

actions is discussed more in detail. Moreover, Austria pointed out that it would be more effective to have fewer measures but with bigger budget attribution.

The Chair underlined that TAC members are always welcome to send their comments on the proposed actions, however the decision on the final shape of the 2014 Work programme and financed actions will be taken by the COSME Committee. The proposal for 2014 Working Programme was elaborated after the exchange of views with TAC on the priorities for tourism actions under COSME. TAC members were encouraged to always send to the Commission their comments, even suggestions already for 2015.

8) Reports and planned initiatives of the Presidencies and of other TAC representatives

- **Irish Presidency.** Irish TAC member informed about the successful event on cultural tourism under the Irish Presidency and positive feedback received.
- **Lithuanian Presidency.** Lithuanian Presidency did not have other communicates in addition to the information provided on ETF and Informal Ministerial meeting.
- **Other TAC representatives.**

Polish TAC member suggested the theme of Macro Regions Initiatives for consideration for the Ministerial Meeting. It was underlined that different such initiatives are in place (EU Macro Region Strategy for Baltic Sea) or are in the process to be elaborated (Marco Region for Carpathian area) but the appropriate funding and political support for this kind of initiatives is still not sufficient. Polish TAC member informed about the plans to organise following meetings aiming at strengthening the cooperation in the Carpathian area: meeting between Poland and Ukraine in October 2013 and the Forum for Innovation in Tourism in May 2014 in Rzeszow (PL).

Greek TAC members informed about plans to organise High level Conference on Tourism in May 2014 on which more details will be provided on the occasion of next TAC meetings.

9) The "Best Practice exchange" project

The Commission services presented the state of play of this project and gave some more detailed information about the objectives of the dedicated meeting on the Exchange of Best Practice project organised the day after.

10) Member States Annual Reporting: discussion on the new template

The Commission services distributed the informative fiche and a proposal for a new template for the Member States Annual tourism reports during the meeting. It was clarified that the Commission service would like to suggest a new template for the 2013 reports (the reports to be sent in 2014) as to make them as useful as possible also in

view of the implementation of the actions related to the 2010 Communication, and in particular the one of the European Virtual Observatory.

For 2012, the Commission has received 15 reports from Member States (Austria, Bulgaria, Croatia, Czech Rep., Finland France, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Lithuania, Poland, Slovak Republic, Slovenia and Spain) and a report from Turkey (in total 16). All reports received since 2008 are on the Tourism Unit website: http://ec.europa.eu/enterprise/sectors/tourism/documents/annual-reports/index_en.htm.

Usual deadline is end of February in native language or end of April if in English year n+1.

The TAC members were invited to send their comments/ suggestions concerning the new template proposal by 16 September 2013.

Austria and France pointed out that more links should be established between the OECD countries profiles which the countries prepare anyway every 2 years.

11) Any other business

TAC member from Germany who took the floor under this point informed that Germany is not participating in EDEN initiative due to the administrative burden it could cause for German administration.

The chair mentioned that the implementation rolling plan of the Commission's 2010 Communication on Tourism is published on the tourism pages of the Europa website and will be updated before the European Tourism Forum 2013.

Finally, the chair informed that the next TAC meeting might take place before the end of the year.

Organisational issue concerning TAC members' mailing list.

The Commission reminded the request to update the TAC members list (the Commission should have a maximum of 2 persons per country as direct TAC members contacts + in addition if necessary max. 1 contact - the MS representation to the EU). TAC members were invited to update the TAC members list when signing the attendance list at the meeting. In case this was not done, TAC members are kindly requested to send the information to the Commission (entr-tourism-tac@ec.europa.eu) with an update of contact persons -TAC members- providing contact details as specified below:

The members of the TAC are requested to inform the Commission (entr-tourism-tac@ec.europa.eu, subject: TAC members) each time a representative is replaced or a contact detail is modified, by using this format:

Full Name:

Service/Function:

Postal address:

Telephone number:

Fax Number:

E-mail:

General request of the Tourism Policy Unit in order to keep files up to date:

The members of the TAC are kindly requested to inform the Commission (entr-tourism-policy@ec.europa.eu) each time there are changes in the hierarchy of the national tourism administration (Minister, State Secretary, etc).