



ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON TOURISM

BRUSSELS

2 December 2014, 9:00 to 17:00

DRAFT MINUTES

Chair of the meeting: Ms Francesca Tudini, Head of Tourism Policy Unit (morning session) and Mr Pedro Ortún, Director

Morning session

The chair, Ms. Tudini, welcomed the participants of the meeting and in particular new TAC representatives from several countries. Then, she introduced briefly new staff members in the units dealing with tourism and informed about the recent changes related to the new Commission (New Commissioner in charge of tourism: Ms. Elżbieta Bieńkowska) as well as to the upcoming reorganization and a new Directorate General: Internal Market, Industry, Entrepreneurship and SMEs (DG GROWTH) as from 1 January 2015.

1) Approval of the agenda

Approved with a remark that the order could be slightly changed depending on the time of arrival of the colleagues from other DGs (namely HOME and JUST).

2) Approval of the draft minutes of the meeting of 11 June 2014

Approved with no comments.

3) Questions & Answers on the implementation of the work programme 2014 and main actions to be continued under COSME 2015

The chair reminded that before the meeting TAC members received the informative fiches on the main actions currently being implemented by tourism team of DG ENTR, and asked point by point about possible questions of TAC members.

- a) EDEN – European Destinations of Excellence

France pointed out that delays with signing contracts are causing difficulties with budget planning. In addition, France asked for the possibility to receive tentative calendar of the planned calls for proposals.

EASME clarified that the agency is doing their best to speed up the process; however the IT system managing grants takes time to be operational. Nonetheless, applicants have the possibility to start the implementation of the project prior to the official signature of the grant agreements (which is foreseen in February 2015). The normal rule would be that the action, hence the eligibility of costs and activities, would start on the 1st day of the month following signature, i.e 1st March 2015. EASME is ready to accept a retroactive starting date to 1st December 2014, 1st January 2015 or 1st February 2015 but Coordinators willing to do so must send a request to the EDEN functional mailbox EASME-COSME-EDEN-CALL-2014@ec.europa.eu , indicating the date they would like the action to start (knowing it can only be the first day of a month) and the justification for that. Coordinators should wait for EASME written acknowledgement / approval before starting the implementation of the project and incur costs. Coordinators should also keep in mind that whenever the starting date, the project duration will not exceed 10 months and activities and costs generated during the period before the grant agreement is signed will be at their own risk.

Italy informed about the launch of the EDEN selection in January and the meeting already organised on the national criteria.

The chair informed TAC members that in 2015, the Commission/EASME services will publish possibly a joint call for proposals with three different strands (Sustainable/cultural transnational tourism products – Accessible tourism – Low seasons). Moreover, the Commission services are exploring possibilities to conduct a study which would assess the impact of some projects already co-financed in the past.

The chair also mentioned that the Commission will have a stand at EXPO Milano (28 September – 1 October).

- b) Sustainable transnational thematic tourism products

No questions.

- c) Promotion of European and transnational tourism products with special emphasis on cultural and industrial products

No questions.

- d) Cooperation with the Council of Europe

No questions.

- e) Diversification of tourism offer through synergies with creative and high-end industries

No questions.

- f) Low-medium season tourism initiative and e-Calypso

Austria asked if as according to the informative fiche the low-medium season tourism initiative will be part of the new strategy. The Commission services have clarified that it is one of the objectives (contributing to grow and jobs in low seasons) but the actions have to be still streamlined, reoriented according to the top priorities of the new Commission.

- g) Tourism and accessibility for all

No questions.

- h) ICT & Tourism initiative

No questions.

- i) EURES and skills in the tourism sector

No questions.

- j) European strategy for coastal and maritime tourism

No questions.

The Commission services informed about the event of 20 January 2014 and another one in March 2014.

- k) Visa package

The presentation by DG HOME representative has been made later during the meeting.

- l) Communication campaign to promote Europe in international markets

- a. + ad-hoc grant with ETC

Hungary asked for more details about the ad-hoc grants with ETC and activities supported.

The Commission services informed TAC members about the main activities already implemented under past grants. The first ad-hoc grant allowed ETC to widely consult public and private tourism stakeholders and set the basis for a renewed strategy to promote Europe abroad. The second grant was dedicated to the update and renewal of the visiteurope portal <http://www.visiteurope.com/en/> . A new grant will focus on different activities to promote the revamped portal (social media, participation in fairs, events etc.), including the integration of the gastronomy portal into the portal. The budget for the grant to be implemented in 2015 will amount, as for the past ad-hoc grants, to 1 Million EUR coming from Preparatory action. As of newt, year any further budget for cooperation with ETC would need to be earmarked in the COSME Programme and approved by the COSME Committee.

Finland asked if some assessment of the impact of the 2012-2013 communication campaign has been made. The Commission clarified that the contractor provided an evaluation of the impacts of the activities which showed that the most relevant in terms of impacts were social media activities, whereas the impacts of events were more difficult to assess.

m) Macro regions strategies and tourism

Croatia informed that in coordination with Albania they are coordinating the 4rd pillar - tourism - of the EUSAIR strategy. Austria asked about the involvement of the tourism team and the Commission also in the Alpine strategy. The chair confirmed that the Tourism Team is following both the Alpine Strategy and EUSAIR.

Poland pointed out the importance of the Baltic Sea Strategy and lack of specific financing for this strategy. The Commission services clarified that the Commission is involved in the macro regions with DG REGIO as a leading DG. The funds are potentially available especially under European Territorial Cooperation (e.g Interreg).

Hungary underlined the importance of regional cooperation in Carpathian region and its possible further strategy funding of the implementation.

n) European Tourism Indicator System (ETIS)

Greece asked about a list of destinations participating in the pilot testing phases of ETIS. The chair promised that the list will be circulated to TAC members and clarified that on the website, only the names of destinations which completed the first testing phase are currently available.

o) Virtual Tourism Observatory (+ Tourism Satellite Account), Eurobarometer, cooperation with OECD

The Commission services have made an introduction about the VTO platform <http://ec.europa.eu/enterprise/sectors/tourism/vto> and its sections as well as answered the questions from TAC members.

The following countries took the floor: Finland, France, Cyprus, Poland, Austria. The TAC members welcomed the VTO and asked mainly about: how the reports, studies are selected to VTO, if the VTO can include links to national observatories, data basis, as well as if further analysis will be made. Cyprus informed that it has developed the 1st stage of a national observatory on tourism and Poland informed about plans to develop a national observatory as well.

The Commission services clarified that they are open to cooperate with any other sources of data, some analysis will be made next year and included there.

Then, the Commission services gave feedback to the TAC members on the Tourism Satellite Account (TSA) survey. Up to the date of the meeting 11 Member States replied that they have TSA, 3 countries do not have any TSA. All respondents agreed that EU should support financially the TSA.

The possible budget for this initiative could be foreseen in 2016 COSME budget but it will depend on the decision of the COSME Committee and support of Member States.

Hungary and Cyprus took the floor with a postulate for a better coordination between MS for this objective to be possibly supported by the COSME Committee and plan of calls for proposals for several years in advance so the statistical offices could better plan

4) Tourism statistics - update by EUROSTAT on issues related to tourism statistics

The representative of the EUROSTAT has made a presentation which has been circulated to all TAC members after the meeting.

5) Visa package – update by the representative of DG HOME

The representative of DG HOME presented an update on the Council discussions in the framework of the Visa Working Party concerning the recast Visa Code. In general, so far Member States have shown a rather negative attitude to the proposed facilitations for legitimate travelers (tourists). In particular, Member States seem to be against providing 'automatic' facilitations for registered regular travellers.

Austria, Poland, Bulgaria, and France took the floor/ asked questions, also in relation to the Commission's strong encouragement to liaise with their colleagues dealing with visa, with a view to properly briefing them. Some Member States also inquired about the possibility of the EC calling a meeting involving different Ministries relevant for this file at EU level. The Chair said that it is a rather delicate matter, as at the end of the day internal coordination is the Member States' responsibility.

The exam of the Visa Package in the European Parliament has not started yet.

Additional Point added to the Agenda meeting

State of play of the Package Travel Directive revision

The representative of DG JUST provided an update on the discussions in the Council Working Group. He informed that possibly the Competitiveness Council of 4 December is to adopt the General Approach. The discussions continue under the Latvian Presidency in early second reading procedure. The European Parliament has already adopted its first reading report on 12 March 2014. The new appointed rapporteur under the new Parliament is Ms Birgit Collin-Langen (EPP-DE).

The following TAC members took the floor: France, Ireland, Hungary, and Poland. In general, TAC members expressed relative satisfaction with the discussions in the Council; however, some of them also expressed concerns about the speed of the talks and the possible burdens that Member States could encounter later on to implement the revised Directive.

The Commission services underlined that the triologue discussions under Latvian Presidency should allow to further improving the compromise text in the hope of reaching a good balance of interests.

6) Member States exchange of good practices:

All presentations have been circulated to TAC members after the meeting.

- a) Hungary - Széchenyi Recreation Card (SZRC) – an efficient tool for boosting domestic tourism in Hungary
- b) Poland – Polish National Tourism Organisation and EU funds 2007-2013
- c) Belgium – Tourism service quality in Wallonia - testimonial
- d) Slovenia - project "Stories and storytelling in Slovenian tourism: Identification and development of stories for the needs of designing and marketing of tourist products and destinations in Slovenia.
- e) Ireland – "The Gathering 2013" - A tourism initiative which sought to engage the Irish public and the Irish Diaspora through a series of Events and Festivals celebrating Irish culture, history and genealogy"

Afternoon session (chair: Mr. Pedro Ortun, Director)

7) Reports and planned initiatives of the Presidencies and of other TAC representatives:

a) Italian Presidency

Italy thanked the Commission for an interesting European Tourism Day of 1 December, informed about the European Tourism Forum organised end of October in Naples and underlined the need of consistent and coherent policy between tourism and culture. Italy informed also about their involvement in the EUSAIR and Alpine Macroregion Strategies as well as about the 2015 EXPO Milano where 20 mln visitors are expected. Italy also underlined the need to work jointly on the visa facilitation.

b) Latvian Presidency

Absent.

c) other TAC representatives

Luxembourg informed that the date of the 2015 European Tourism Forum should be confirmed in the next weeks.

8) Discussion with TAC members on the possible priorities for the future following the European Tourism Day of 1st December 2014.

The chair informed the TAC members about the new Commission and a New Commissioner Ms. Elżbieta Bieńkowska responsible for tourism within her portfolio/ DG of: Internal Market, Industry, Entrepreneurship and SMEs. He also mentioned that the Commission services are working on preparing a new initiative - set of actions/ priorities for EU tourism 2015-2020. The ideas from TAC members on the future priorities are also very welcome, and TAC members have been asked to send them in writing before the end of the year.

The chair clarified that the future priorities should mainly focus around the ones discussed at the 2014 European Tourism Day (ETD) (promotion of Europe, digitalisation, streamlining the regulatory framework, quality) as well as sustainability, seasonality and skills. *The TAC members have also received after the TAC meeting the results of the voting – first indicative reaction on the questions after the ETD panels.*

The following countries took the floor: Germany, Poland, Cyprus, France, Italy, Belgium, Austria, Lithuania, Hungary. Many of them congratulated the Commission on the interesting European Tourism Day of 1 December. The main priorities for the future of the EU tourism mentioned by the TAC representatives were:

Digitalisation, common promotion of Europe together with ETC, addressing seasonality, better governance, connectivity issues (islands), pan-european products, skills, streamlining the regulatory framework (through comparative approach),

research/data/indicators/ statistics, better coordination on visa/PTD/safety regulatory framework, quality, sustainable tourism, access to finance, innovating tourism and cluster promotion, cooperation.

The chair thanked for these ideas and clarified that the aim of the Commission services will be to propose a new set of actions (strategy) before the 2015 European Tourism Forum in Luxembourg. He underlined also the need that TAC members become more active in TAC meetings and suggested that some of the meetings in the future could be open to industry representative to allow the constructive dialog and cooperation.

9) Exchange of views on the possible actions for tourism under COSME 2016 - Discussion with TAC members on the priorities.

The chair informed TAC members that the Commission services are currently preparing the COSME draft budget proposal for 2016 and they would need to decide on the actions on tourism to propose for the approval of the COSME Committee. He introduced the main lines, priorities that the Commission will continue to support and some new possible changes as alternating the calls for proposals, to have less calls for proposals in the year. Therefore TAC members were invited to send their proposals, ideas by the end of the year.

The chair informed also the TAC members about two new preparatory actions approved by the European Parliament (Preparatory Action on Cultural tourism and UNESCO sites as well as the Preparatory Action World Bridge Tourism on encouraging tourism flows from China to Europe).

10) Member States Annual Reporting

This point was not discussed because of the time constraints.

Member States Annual Tourism Reports are the reports that the Member States are supposed to send to the Commission on annual basis. Concerning 2013 reports, the Commission has proposed a new template (which was elaborated with consultation of TAC members) and **received 20 reports from Member States so far**. All reports received are published on the Tourism website and also on the webpage of the Virtual Tourism Observatory (VTO).

The usual deadline for sending the reports is end of February in native language or end of April if in English year n+1. This year (because of the new template) the deadline was mid-May.

The Commission services thank the countries that have sent their report and encourage other to send them as soon as possible. Deadline for the 2014 Annual Reports is as usual till end of April 2015.

11) Any other business

When concluding the meeting, the chair announced that the next TAC meeting might take place most probably after Easter – end April / early May.

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 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 (GROW-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 (GROW-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 each time there are changes in the hierarchy of the national tourism administration (Minister, State Secretary, etc).