



EUROPEAN COMMISSION

Directorate-General for Internal Market, Industry, Entrepreneurship and SME's

Innovation and Advanced Manufacturing

Tourism, Emerging and Creative Industries

MINUTES

Meeting of the Tourism Advisory Committee (TAC)¹

30 November 2016, Brussels

Chair of the meeting: European Commission, GROW F4, Head of Unit

1. Approval of the agenda and of the minutes of previous meeting

The proposed agenda was approved by the TAC members, with the suggestion from Austria to include a point on geo-blocking². The minutes from the TAC meeting of 17 May 2016 were approved without any comments.

2. Nature of the meeting

The meeting was non-public.

3. List of points discussed

3) EU TOURISM POLICY MAIN PRIORITIES - STATE OF PLAY AND IMPLEMENTATION OF ACTIONS

The TAC members received detailed information fiches on the main actions implemented by the Commission (GROW.F4) under the four main tourism priorities prior to the meeting. The Commission services introduced each point included in the fiches and answered TAC members' questions.

Priority "Digitalisation" including Collaborative economy

The Commission services (GROW F4) informed TAC members about the informal consultation on digitalisation in the tourism sector conducted and preparation of the informal consultation report. Then, the representatives of GROW E1 unit made a presentation on the European Agenda for collaborative economy³. After the adoption of

¹ Published in the Register of Commission Expert Groups and Other Similar Entities, code number (X01351)

² REGULATION OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND OF THE COUNCIL on addressing geo-blocking and other forms of discrimination based on customers' nationality, place of residence or place of establishment within the internal market and amending Regulation (EC) No 2006/2004 and Directive 2009/22/EC <https://ec.europa.eu/digital-single-market/en/news/proposal-regulation-geo-blocking>

³ <http://ec.europa.eu/DocsRoom/documents/16881/attachments/2/translations>

the Communication in June 2016, the Competitiveness Council discussed this issue. It is important to have a structured dialogue with Member States to understand better different situations and laws applied.

No question was raised by TAC members.

Austria raised the issue of the proposal regulation on geo-blocking which is discussed at present at the Council. Austria considered the proposal as premature because there was no clarity about the concrete impacts it can have on SMEs.

Priority "Promotion of Europe as a tourist destination" including diversification of tourism products and internationalisation of tourism businesses

The Chair presented the idea of the Joint Public-Private Promotion Partnership model to be led by European Travel Commission (ETC) with involvement of Member States, regions and industry (on a voluntary basis) and supported by the European Commission.

He stressed that the Commission shall play a coordinating role between public-private stakeholders to promote Europe as a tourist destination in third markets. He highlighted the economies of scale that such promotion could bring instead of each region/stakeholder individually promoting itself in third markets. The funds the Commission is earmarking for this activity shall be complemented by the funds put in by the regions and industry. These funds shall contribute to developing new promotional activities, in particular activities during the 2018 EU-China Year and European Year of Cultural Heritage.

No question was raised about the informative fiche on **ad-hoc grants with the ETC**.

- EU China Tourism Year (EUCTY) 2018

The Commission services gave a very comprehensive overview of the preparation and planned activities for the EUCTY scheduled for 2018. *The presentation has been circulated to TAC members after the meeting.*

Finland informed other TAC members about its successful cooperation with China, and its willingness to be involved and participate in the EUCTY activities. The Finish representative expressed the view that the EUCTY would boost Finland's national efforts. Lithuania pointed out to the example of Baltic Connecting and insisted on including Lithuania also as a possible destination to be possibly of interest for Chinese tourists.

Hungary informed other TAC members about its experience in coordination of the cooperation of the Central and Eastern European Countries with China.

Austria confirmed that there is a lot of interest from their National Tourism Organisation to participate in this action.

Malta announced its plans to organise a conference under the Maltese Presidency on 24 May together with UNWTO on how to attract Chinese tourists to Mediterranean.

- Supporting tourism related businesses to find international business partners in target markets

TAC members received information in the fiches about the state of play of Call for tender under the Pilot Project "World Bridge Tourism" 2015 (750.000 EUR) and Call for tender under COSME 2016 Work Programme (3.1 million EUR).

No specific question was raised.

Chair: European Commission, GROW F4, Deputy Head of Unit

- Integrated Information and Communication Tourism Campaign to stimulate tourists' demand for travelling within and to Europe 2015-2016

The Commission services informed TAC members about the main activities of the campaign and some interim results available and impacts the campaign achieved so far. Finland asked clarification if the results will be available also country by country and about the dissemination channels used.

The Commission services promised to further investigate with its contractor if the results by countries will be possible to obtain and enumerated main dissemination channels used (such as: press announcements, stakeholders engagement, dissemination to TAC members and main European associations, networks and industry, national tourism organisations through ETC, as well as media relations, online advertisement and wide coverage on different social media).

- European Destinations of Excellence (EDEN)

The Commission services gave an overview of the state of play of this initiative.

Hungary made a proposal to consider health and wellness tourism as a theme for next EDEN selection.

France asked about the timing for the signature of the grant agreements.

The Commission services clarified that finalisation of the grant agreements can be expected in January 2017.

- Cultural tourism - cooperation with UNESCO: Ad-hoc grant "Transnational European tourism products related to culture" under Preparatory Action 2015

The Commission services gave an overview of the state of play of this initiative.

Portugal asked about how NTOs could participate in the design of the routes. Commission services clarified that Portugal is on the map with their UNESCO sites, and the sites are welcome to develop transnational products.

- Cultural tourism - cooperation with the Council of Europe: Ad-hoc grant under COSME 2015

The Commission services gave an overview of the state of play of this initiative.

No question was raised.

- European Capital of Tourism – new initiative proposed by the European Parliament (preparatory action) *pending approval from the Council and the final vote of the EP on the 2017 EU budget foreseen in December.*

The Commission services informed about this new initiative proposed by the European Parliament with the budget of 2.5 M EUR allocated in 2017.

France asked a clarification about the selection process and categories proposed. The Commission services clarified that one EU wide selection is planned in order not to create additional burden on national administrations and thus all applicants would be assessed in all categories together. The selection would result in awarding 1 or 2 titles of the European Capital of Tourism and four European Tourism Awards (for best scored applications in each category). The Commission services promised to send for information of TAC members more elaborated implementation scheme after the consultation with the representatives of the EP at the origin of this initiative.

- Implementation of the 2014 Commission Communication on a European strategy for more growth and jobs in coastal and maritime tourism

The Commission services informed about the call for proposals for EU grants launched under the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund - Nautical Routes for Europe <https://ec.europa.eu/easme/en/call-proposals-nautical-routes-europe>

No question was raised.

- EU Macro-regional Strategies

No question was raised.

Priority "Improving business environment and facilitating access to finance"

- Guide on EU funding 2014-2020 for the Tourism

The Commission services informed TAC members that the Guide on EU funding has been translated and published in FR, DE, IT, ES, and PL so far, besides EN. Commission translation services are working on remaining translations, which will be published when available.

- Cooperation with OECD

No question was raised.

- Virtual Tourism Observatory, cooperation with UNWTO

The Commission services informed about the event to be organised by UNWTO under the EC ad-hoc grant: 3rd International Congress on Ethics and Tourism planned to take place in Poland end of April 2017.

No question was raised.

Priority "Skills and training/workforce mobility"

The Commission services gave a comprehensive overview of the activities undertaken on skills and calls for proposals/tenders planned. *The presentation has been circulated to TAC members after the meeting.*

Portugal took the floor highlighting the important role of skills for tourism and the importance of EU actions in this area.

4) INFORMATION AND EXCHANGE OF VIEWS ON THE PROPOSED TOURISM ACTIONS UNDER COSME 2017

The Chair reported to TAC members about the meeting of the COSME Committee which was held on 14 June 2016, where Member States voted in favour of the COSME 2017 work programme proposal. Then the Chair explained all tourism actions proposed under COSME 2017 work programme following the information fiche that TAC members received prior to the meeting.

France asked if there will be open calls for proposals where organisations could submit projects proposals. The Chair confirmed that the call for proposals for 1.5 M EUR will be devoted to support transnational partnerships developing and promoting tourism products in the field of tourism and cultural creative industries.

Following the request from several TAC members, the Chair gave the floor to Germany who presented their position regarding public financing of tourism organisations in the light of the revised General Block Exemption Regulation (GBER) for state aid.

Germany informed of the letter it sent to the Commissioner Vestager.

Germany explained that in their case tourism organisations rely on public funding for destination marketing as destination marketing is not of interest of individual companies. These public funds must however comply with state aid rules and current GBER.

France raised the issue of promotion activities in tourism that could possibly be recognised as not economic-activities and requested advice where this information could be found.

The Chair informed that DG GROW is in contact with DG COMP. COMP as responsible DG for this issue will reply in writing to the letter received from Germany.

Lunch break 13:00-14:30

5) REPORTS AND PLANNED INITIATIVES OF PRESENT AND FUTURE PRESIDENCIES AND OF OTHER TAC REPRESENTATIVES

The Chair gave the floor to TAC members asking them to report on planned initiatives and events, including those organised in the framework of 2017 UN International Year of Sustainable Tourism for Development.

First of all, the Slovakian Presidency of the EU thanked for cooperation and participation at the European Tourism Forum in Bratislava on 11 October 2016. It also informed about the ETC Board meeting held on 23 and 24 November.

Malta introduced the priorities of the Maltese Presidency (the first half of 2017). Among the priorities for the tourism sector the following were mentioned: tourism competitiveness and digital transformation in line with development of digital single market, raising awareness of sustainable tourism, security, connectivity and maritime tourism. The Maltese TAC member informed also about a high-level event to be organised on 24-26 May in Malta on the main challenges for the tourism sector as well as the conference of 24 May organised together with UNWTO on how to attract Chinese tourists to the Mediterranean.

Estonia informed about plans to organise the 2017 European Tourism Forum in Estonia in the second half of the year during the Estonian Presidency.

Lithuania informed about its involvement in promoting sustainable tourism and the cooperation with UNWTO in the framework of UN International Year of Sustainable Tourism for Development. It also informed about the workshop it organised in November on sustainable tourism and EU funding and thanked the Commission services for participation.

Portugal informed about launching of a sustainable tourism monitoring system involving regional tourism observatories as part of UNWTO observatory. It will aim at contributing to promote Portugal as sustainable and accessible destination.

Spain informed about a new government in place and a New Minister for Digital Agenda and Tourism.

Then the Chair made an information point on state of play of the Commission negotiation mandate for the UNWTO Draft Convention on the protection of tourists and the rights and obligations of tourism service providers. DG JUST as the DG in charge of the Travel Package Directive follows this issue and started the procedure for the Commission mandate to negotiate this Convention with UNWTO.

France made a comment on quite tight calendar UNWTO is imposing on that, taking into account that text is still not mature enough and the Commission mandate to negotiate is not yet ready.

6) TOURISM AND SECURITY, ECONOMIC IMPACT OF THE TERRORISTS ATTACKS IN THE EU MEMBER STATES

The Commission services gave a presentation of findings on this subject which was circulated to TAC members afterwards.

7) PRESENTATION ON TOURISM STATISTICS - UPDATE BY EUROSTAT

EUROSTAT made a presentation on the latest statistics in tourism which was circulated to TAC members after the meeting.

Malta asked a question about the cooperation between EUROSTAT and mobile phones companies. EUROSTAT explained that in its work on big data it uses the data stored by telecom provider which indicate localisation of mobile phones.

Portugal congratulated EUROSTAT on the work done and informed that they are exploring Wi-Fi data and asked if any guidelines for member states exist in this field.

EUROSTAT clarified that they are closely cooperating with a network of national statistical offices and mentioned that sustainable cooperation with telecom operators can be challenging due to the costs often requested. France asked clarification about the data related to preferences of senior tourists. DG EUROSTAT explained that statistics show that older travellers spent less but they stay longer at visited destination thanks to more time available.

8) UPDATE ON THE VISA FILE

The Commission services made an update on the visa file and informed about the proposal of the Commission for a REGULATION OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND OF THE COUNCIL establishing a European Travel Information and Authorisation System (ETIAS)⁴. DG HOME is in charge of this proposal. DG GROW was approached by industry representatives who called for minimising of negative impacts the implementation of such a system could have for the tourism sector. The Commission services mentioned also that the system could become also an opportunity to raise funding for promotion of Europe (taking as example US case of Branding Europe and its funding model).

Hungary admitted that it would be useful if ETC and NTOs could have some funds out of ETIAS system for tourism promotion. It also asked about the feasibility study and impact assessment done.

The Commission services pointed out to some elements of the proposal which could be of particular importance for the tourism industry, mainly to: the degree of liability of businesses (carriers will need to check valid travel authorisation prior to boarding) and awareness-raising campaigns to inform travellers about new requirements.

France asked for the calendar of next steps. The Commission services informed that the European Parliament will start the first reading and TAC members will be kept information about the major steps.

⁴ https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/sites/homeaffairs/files/what-we-do/policies/european-agenda-security/legislative-documents/docs/20161116/proposal_etias_en.pdf

9) MEMBER STATES ANNUAL REPORTING

The Commission services thanked all Member States who sent the Annual Tourism Reports in 2016. The Commission has received all together 21 reports for 2015.

They reminded also about the usual deadlines for sending the annual reports for 2016: end of April (year n+1). All reports received are published on the webpage of the Virtual Tourism Observatory (VTO).

10) ANY OTHER BUSINESS

The Chair informed TAC members that concerning the Digitalisation priority, the Commission wishes to develop some principles for collaborative economy in tourism accommodation sector and will organise some ad-hoc workshops in 2017 to which TAC members will be invited.

4. Conclusions/recommendations/opinions

No specific conclusions/recommendations/opinions other than reported under the point 3 above.

5. Next steps

The Commission services will keep TAC members regularly informed about implementation of EU actions in the tourism sector and developments in other EU policies with major impact on the sector.

TAC members are invited to share with the Commission services any relevant information on the initiatives undertaken related to their tourism policies, events organised etc.

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 [**GROW-TOURISM-TAC@ec.europa.eu**](mailto: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), 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, Emerging and Creative Industries Unit, in order to keep files up to date:

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

6. Next meeting

The next TAC meeting could take place on 17 May 2017 (TBC). TAC members will be informed as soon as the meeting room is confirmed.

7. List of participants

(see separate document)