



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

17 May 2017, Brussels

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

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

The proposed agenda was approved by the TAC members. The minutes from the TAC meeting of 30 November 2016 were approved without any comments.

2. Nature of the meeting

The meeting was non-public.

List of points discussed

3. EU Tourism policy main priorities - state of play and implementation of actions

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

a) Priority "Digitalisation" including information about workshops on the collaborative economy in the short-term accommodation rental sector

The Commission services informed TAC members about the series of workshops the Commission is organising (GROW F4 together with E1) on collaborative economy in short term tourism accommodation rental sector. The issues discussed at the first three workshops were: market access requirements, differentiation between peers and professionals and liability of platforms as intermediaries or services providers. The next workshops are planned for 15 June and 5 July 2017 and will focus on consumer protection and taxation and labour issues respectively.

Then, the Commission services informed TAC members about mid – term review of the Digital Internal Market Strategy and the informal consultation on digitalisation in the tourism sector. The consultation report was circulated to TAC members and the Commission is also preparing a set of webinars to support European tourism businesses in uptake of ICT and digitalisation related technologies.

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

Portugal asked a question about the development and update of the Tourism Business Portal.

The Commission services confirmed that the work on updating the Tourism Business Portal is ongoing.

The chair also highlighted that digitalisation and collaborative economy are important topics for tourism sector and numerous high level events are focusing on discussions on these matters.

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

- EU China Tourism Year (ECTY) 2018

The Commission services presented the state of play of the preparations for the 2018 EU – China Tourism Year, which is a very important initiative, included also on the agenda of EU-China Summit of 2nd June. During the Summit, the logo of the Year will be unveiled, which later could be used by Member States in the events/campaigns promoting the Year. The opening event will most probably be organised in Venice with some limitations as for the number of representatives per Member State. The Commission services informed TAC members about the preparation of the official website for the Year by the European Travel Commission which shall be ready in September and to which Member States can contribute by announcing information about planned events. The TAC members were invited to send to the Commission their propositions in this regard.

Germany asked about the role of different organisations and levels to be involved, so that they know how to involve national and regional players.

Denmark shared information about 2017 Denmark-China Tourism Year and the activities/events planned (e.g. Lighting Festival, Closing Ceremony in Copenhagen) underlining that they could serve as building-up to 2018 EU – China Tourism Year. They asked about the availability of any budget for which business organisations could apply.

Hungary welcomed the initiative, expressed their support and reminded about the cooperation already in place between China and 16 Central and Eastern European countries.

Ireland asked for clarification about the target audience of the website of the ECTY.

The Commission services clarified that the website of the ECTY will be used to give visibility to different national and regional events organised in Member States, apart the institutional ones organised by the Commission (opening/closing event) but will also include materials to use, logo, media kit etc.

The Commission services also replied that private stakeholders will be activated in B2B matchmaking events in the context of the service contract for internationalisation of SMEs and B2B matchmaking (following the Call for tender under COSME 2016 Work Programme 3.1 million EUR)).

The Commission is also financially contributing to the joint promotion platform that European Travel Commission is coordinating. European Travel Commission should soon develop governance model for the platform and clarify how the regions can be involved.

Spain made a remark about the choice of the date for the opening ceremony which is coinciding with the International Tourism Fair in Madrid in January 2018.

The Commission services clarified that the date was chosen close to the annual World Economic Forum meeting in Davos, to facilitate the high-level representation from China and EU Member States.

- 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 two service contracts, first signed as result of the call for tender under the Pilot Project "World Bridge Tourism" 2015 (750.000 EUR) and the second one as result of the call for tender under COSME 2016 Work Programme (3.1 million EUR).

The Commission services indicated that the final list of fairs for B2B matchmaking events will be sent to TAC members after approval of the inception report.

Portugal shared experience about B2B meeting at the Chinese Fair and drew attention to the quality of buyers on which depends number of partnerships signed.

Germany asked for clarification about the procedure for the economic operators to participate in B2B meetings.

The Commission services clarified that for the World Bridge Tourism the contractor (ETC and ETOA) used existing data bases, industry newspapers and channels for selecting businesses. Dissemination of information will be improved for next events.

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

TAC members received extensive information in the fiches about the results of the campaign implemented. No question was raised.

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

The Commission services gave a general overview of the state of play of this initiative and informed that it was verifying with the European Parliament (Commission CULT) whether it was possible to have a third year of financing for this Preparatory Action.

- European Destinations of Excellence (EDEN)

The Commission services gave an overview of the state of play of this initiative and EASME agency informed about the intention to use lump sums for the ad-hoc grants under 2017 budget. Therefore, the Commission asked to be informed in advance about the number of countries that want to participate in the next edition of selection of EDEN destinations.

France asked when TAC members will be informed about the amount of the possible grants. France informed also about some activities they implemented at own expense to promote EDEN – such as a guide promoting different EDEN destinations in France, but also in Europe.

Spain asked whether 50% co-financing is mandatory and Malta asked for clarification about the EDEN selection process.

The EASME representative clarified that the exact amount of the grant will be indicated in the terms of reference.

- Diversification of EU tourism offer - Call for proposals to support development and promotion of transnational tourism products linked to cultural heritage and using CCIs related technologies - COSME 2017 Work Programme (1.5 million EUR)

The Commission services informed about this new call for proposals about which the TAC members were already informed by email and in the information fiches.

Portugal expressed their interest in this call and Germany asked for clarification about the eligible consortium composition. The Commission clarified that, in line with the call terms of reference, the eligible consortium for a project proposal should gather partners from at least 4 countries and should include specific type of entities: i.e. public authority, SME, managing authority of a UNESCO site.

- European Capital of Tourism – new initiative proposed by the European Parliament (Preparatory Action)

The Commission services informed about this new initiative proposed by the European Parliament with budget of 2.5 M EUR allocated in the 2017 budget, which would allow the Commission to implement two selection cycles to award 2 European Capitals 2019 and 2 European Capitals of Tourism 2020. In each selection cycle it is foreseen also to attribute 4 European Tourism Awards for the best performing destinations in each of the contest categories: (1) accessibility, 2) sustainability, 3) use of digital tools and ICT, 4) cultural heritage and use of creative industries to enhance visitor experience.

The Commission services informed TAC members about the interest of the European Parliament and the Committee of the Regions in the initiative and ensured that it will keep Member States informed on the next steps.

France welcomed centralised approach proposed by the Commission for the organisation of the EU wide selection without adding burden on national administrations and suggested to take into account for eligible candidates not only big cities but also surrounding areas/regions or smaller cities.

Finland asked if the cities will be expected to develop a programme. The Commission services confirmed that it is planned to ask destinations which will be shortlisted to prepare a programme of European dimension to be implemented during the year when the city will hold the title. This programme will be presented by the applicant cities in front of the European Jury who will decide about the winners. The Commission will not support financially the winner destinations but will ensure some awareness raising activities.

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

The Commission gave an update about the implementation of the 2014 Communication

in close cooperation with DG MARE and in particular about the Staff Working document on Nautical Tourism recently published.

No question was raised.

- EU Macro-regional Strategies

Croatia informed about the workshop on the future of responsible and sustainable tourism in the framework of the EUSAIR strategy.

Hungary enquired whether there is any intention to prepare a macro-regional strategy on the Carpathians, similar to the EU Alpine Strategy.

The Commission services promised to verify this with DG REGIO.

c) Priority "Skills and training/workforce mobility"

The Commission services gave a comprehensive overview of the activities undertaken on skills and respective calls for proposals/tenders. The call for proposals under Erasmus+ with a budget of 4 M EUR is closed. The Commission received 3 proposals.

The call for tender under COSME with a budget of 800.000 EUR is open with the deadline for submission of offers on 12 June 2017.

Concerning the call for tender, Spain asked if the 6 countries for which the campaigns would be organised are already pre-selected.

Portugal asked about any calls planned for next year on skills in the tourism sector.

The Commission services clarified that the countries will be proposed in the submitted offers, the offer of best quality will win. The chair added that no new call on skills is foreseen in 2018, as the implementation of the awarded projects/contracts in 2017 will be ongoing.

d) 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 in all EU languages and is available on-line.

- Virtual Tourism Observatory, cooperation with UNWTO

The Commission services updated the TAC members about the cooperation with UNWTO and informed about the event organised under the ad-hoc grant with the Commission: 3rd International Congress on Ethics and Tourism on 27-28 April 2017 in Krakow, Poland.

Then the Commission services informed TAC members about the workshop planned for autumn aiming at improving collection of statistics from Member States and strengthening the capacity of national statistical experts. It will be organised back to back to TAC meeting and European Tourism Day (most probably on 29 and 30 November 2017) to ensure participation from all Member States representatives.

No question was raised.

- Cooperation with OECD

The Commission services updated TAC members with information on the cooperation with OECD and the activities covered under the currently implemented grant agreement.

No question was raised.

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.

No question was raised.

Then, the EASME agency presented:

- 1) The COSME data hub: <https://ec.europa.eu/easme/en/cosme-data-hub> which provides data on the beneficiaries of COSME funds.
- 2) Examples of successful tourism projects implemented with COSME grants. Presentation was circulated to TAC members after the meeting.

4. Information and exchange of views on the proposed tourism actions under COSME 2018

The Chair informed TAC members about the meeting of the COSME Committee to be held on 30 May and preparation of the COSME 2018 Work Programme. The Chair listed and explained all tourism actions proposed under COSME 2018 work programme following the information fiche that TAC members received prior to the meeting.

Croatia and Hungary remarked that in the proposed programme for 2018, cooperation with UNWTO is missing, as well as pursuing works on the development of Tourism Satellite Accounts, which is considered important.

The Chair clarified that the current ad-hoc grant with UNWTO is continuing and will cover also 2018.

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.

First of all, the Maltese Presidency of the EU informed TAC members about:

- the negotiation mandate the European Commission has obtained for the UNWTO Draft Convention on the protection of tourists and the rights and obligations of tourism service providers (DG JUST in the lead);
- the High-level Conference to take place on 25-26 May in Malta with presence of the Commissioner Bieńkowska and Secretary General of UNWTO Mr Taleb Rifai. The conference should focus on the topic of enhancing EU tourism competitiveness through new products and should debate about digital agenda and collaborative economy, skills, maritime tourism and connectivity.

Estonia informed about plans to organise the 2017 European Tourism Forum in Tallinn during the Estonian Presidency of the EU on 18-19 October.

Bulgaria informed TAC members about a new government in place and plans to organise one event during the Bulgarian Presidency of the EU in February 2018 during a tourism fair in Bulgaria. The event would possibly focus on digitalisation and culture in developing tourism.

Austria informed about the intention to host European Tourism Forum 2018 on 1-2 October 2018 (TBC).

Lithuania informed about its candidacy to the Executive Council of the UNWTO and invited Member States with right to vote to support this candidature. It highlighted its involvement in promoting sustainable tourism and cooperation with UNWTO in the framework of UN International Year of Sustainable Tourism for Development.

Italy informed about the works on improvement of taxes for collaborative economy and adoption of the major strategic plan for tourism 2017-2022.

Finland also shared that in their national plans; tourism has gained a more prominent role and received some additional funding.

Serbia informed about the conference to be organised in cooperation with UNWTO on Sustainable Tourism Development in Danube region which will take place on 29-30 June in Belgrade (Serbia) and will gather key policy makers.

6. PRESENTATION BY DG ENVIRONMENT (DG ENV) ABOUT NEW CRITERIA FOR THE EU ECOLABEL SERVICE GROUP "TOURISM ACCOMMODATION"

The presentation on the EU Ecolabel made by DG ENV representatives was circulated to TAC members after the meeting.

Belgium shared the information that they are supporting Green Key certification scheme and asked to clarify the differences between the two schemes.

The Commission clarified that while the first one is a private scheme; the EU Ecolabel is based on the EU regulation and is quite strict when it comes to the criteria.

Spain asked if there are national contact points for the EU Ecolabel (in particular in Spain), what the estimated costs for hotels to apply are and if the EU is providing financial support for hotels wanting to comply with the EU Ecolabel.

DG ENV representatives replied that in every region there is a specific body as a contact point (usually the Ministry for Environment) and admitted that there are some costs that hotels need to cover in order to adapt to and fulfil the criteria, but as reported by enterprises on average, after 8 years, the investment is paying back. The Commission services clarified also that there is no direct funding for EU Ecolabel as such, but that there are numerous EU funds that can be used for the purpose of environmental protection, energy efficiency, circular economy etc. All possible funding opportunities are mentioned in the guide on EU funding for tourism sector available online.

7. Tourism and security, economic impact of the terrorists attacks in the EU Member States

The Commission services gave a brief update on this subject and informed TAC members about preparation of the new research contract in order to develop a toolkit for Member States.

The updated presentation was circulated to TAC members after the meeting.

8. Update on the visa file

The Commission services made an update on the visa file and informed TAC members about the state of play on the "visa reciprocity" file, making reference to the European Parliament Resolution of 2nd March 2017.

On the visa code, no significant progress was made.

Concerning ETIAS (proposal of the Commission for a REGULATION OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND OF THE COUNCIL establishing a European Travel Information and Authorisation System (ETIAS))², the European Parliament designated a rapporteur for the first reading. The Commission services will keep TAC members informed about the major steps.

9. Member States Annual Reporting

The Commission services thanked all Member States who sent already the Annual Tourism Reports for 2016. The Commission has received all together 7 reports for 2016 so far.

The usual deadlines for sending the annual reports: end of April (year n+1) was reminded. The Commission services would be grateful to receive reports from remaining Member States till the end of May. All reports received will be then published on the webpage of the Virtual Tourism Observatory (VTO).

10. Any other business

The Commission services informed TAC members also that the UNWTO is working towards transforming the Global Code of Ethics for Tourism into a Convention on Tourism Ethics which would be binding in nature for those countries who ratify it.

France also shared its view on the experience with the draft Convention on the protection of tourists the UNWTO is working on and about challenging time frame imposed.

1) Conclusions/recommendations/opinions

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

² https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/sites/homeaffairs/files/what-we-do/policies/european-agenda-security/legislative-documents/docs/20161116/proposal_etias_en.pdf

2) 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.

3) 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 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.).

11. Next meeting

The next TAC meeting could take place on 27 November 2017 (TBC) back to back to European Tourism Day on 28 November. TAC members will be informed as soon as the meeting room is confirmed.

12. List of participants

N/A (Member States)