

Discussion document: A new framework for the tourism policy in the EU A response from the NECSTouR network

General context

NECSTouR, network of European tourism Region for a competitive and sustainable tourism, expresses its general appreciation for the discussion document, which is a good starting point for the debate phase arising from the provisions of the Lisbon Treaty. We believe that the Communication from the Commission '*Agenda for a sustainable and competitive European tourism*'¹ should be quoted in the preamble since the Agenda stimulated many Regions, institutions and European universities to work together towards the actual implementation of the principles of the agenda which, for the first time, foresaw to tackle at the same time the twofold policy for a *sustainability* and *competitiveness* of the European tourist offer.

We agree on the need for the European Commission to intervene, with appropriate and coherent instruments (including financial instruments), respecting the subsidiarity and proportionality principles, as foreseen by the Lisbon Treaty, and with the objective to build a European dimension and a European identity for its touristic offer. A reinforcement of the role and resources of the Union so to reflect the economic weight of tourism in Europe would therefore be very much appreciated.

The three main objectives

In preamble of these objectives, which NECSTouR generally welcomes in terms of contents, we wish to underline the importance to

- Promote coordinating mechanisms of existing transversal European policies (transports, water, health, agriculture, fisheries, environment, infrastructures,...) and establish a strong tourism policy with a true incentive role of the European Commission
- Ensure a good and centralised visibility of the European funds dedicated to tourism
- Develop, in cooperation with the Members States, a set of shared and coherent operational targets (number of labelled enterprises for destination sustainable Europe, number of visitors made aware of principles of environmental and cultural preservation, number of protected areas implementing the European charter of sustainable tourism in protected areas...) in order to ensure the achievement of the strategic orientations set by the European Union

With respect to point II – Objectives – we suggest to include in the text the important role of tourism for the valorisation and protection of the European distinctive identities and their worldwide promotion, as a double key factor for the sustainability tourism policies and to enhance product differentiation and the attractiveness of Europe destinations as a whole in the worldwide market. In this context, it is also important to recognize and to give value to the great cultural or thematic itineraries of European interest. In addition, the well being of tourists should be an objective as important as the competitiveness of European tourism.

Moreover we propose to improve the second objective as follows:

"Stimulate the strengthening of quality of the European tourist destinations by means of the promotion of innovative models of integrated and sustainable tourism."

This proposal derives from the awareness that the European tourist offer can only be competitive if the general principles contained in the documents of the Commission and of the European Parliament find a concrete application at the local level, i.e., in the tourist destinations. The experience of NECSTouR confirms that it is very important to involve local institutions.

Taking into account that tourism is mainly multi-sector based, only the direct involvement of local administrations by means of adequate models and advice & support tools allows creating an environment that is favourable to reach the first of the three desired goals: stimulate competitiveness of the tourism industry and of the many enterprises involved.

To this end, we would like to underline the importance of a direct involvement of European regions: they are the main point of reference and link between the European dimension and the local dimension, i.e. between the level where policies take shape and the level where the principles and models for sustainable

¹ COM(2007) 621 of October 19th, 2007

development of tourism are actually put into practice. It is even more important to take into consideration the involvement of the regions if we consider that:

- The majority of the enterprises of the tourism sector are SMEs.
- It is not possible to develop sustainable tourism without involving the resident population.
- The diversity of European tourism is ensured by the variety of the Regions

Fields of activity

We agree with the structure of Chapter III – Fields of activity, since the contents are consistent with the foreground of general principles and objectives.

Nevertheless we propose to add the following actions:

- Integrate sustainable tourism within the 2020 strategy.
- Promote the creation of an innovative tourist offer strongly characterized by European identity, also by means of great cultural or thematic itineraries of European interest; this offer will respect and valorise the specificities of the tourist destinations and their tangible and intangible heritage.
- Promote the “Europe” trademark both in third countries, especially in the emerging countries, and within the European Union countries;
- Encourage processes improving the quality of work of employees in the various sectors connected with tourism, improving the quality of life of destinations’ residents and the Social Responsibility of tourism business.
- Promote network policies and processes of aggregation of the players of the tourist sector, supporting the implementation of the principles of sustainability and competitiveness of the European tourist offer.
- Enhance European tourism activity as a territorial balance strategy, in particular for the damaged communities in terms of agriculture, fisheries, or industrial reconversion and restructuring policy to income diversification.
- Support the development and promotion of a sustainable tourism with European protected areas and use existing tools such as the European Charter for sustainable tourism in protected areas
- Measure sustainability by means of indicators easy to use and simple to understand, capable to supply the local authorities with the knowledge sets useful for the programming of tourist development.
- Improve the statistic knowledge on the impact of tourism, in particular at the NUTS 2 level.
- Support research from airlines constructors in order to deliver more efficient and less polluting technologies and encourage more active CO2 compensation schemes throughout Europe

Declaration of interest in participating to the important process of the creation of a new frame work for EU tourism policy

NECSTouR expresses its sharing and appreciation of the intense work done so far by DG Enterprise, and generally agrees on the contents of the discussion document. In this note we briefly anticipate a few proposals and formally express our interest in continuing to take active part in the consultations, particularly as far as the definition of a new framework for the European tourism policies for a sustainable and competitive tourism is concerned.

We are ready to offer our experience and expertise and contribute to a more detailed debate on the different issues contained in the discussion document, in view of the forthcoming important appointments scheduled on the 14th and 15th of April in Madrid.

We regret not to have had sufficient time to organise a longer consultation of our regional and intraregional tourism stakeholders and we wish that the NECSTouR network will be directly and actively involved in the further process of development of the Communication on the new framework for a European tourism policy.

NECSTouR

Network of European tourism Region for a competitive and sustainable tourism

Following the “Agenda for a Sustainable and Competitive European Tourism” (COM (2007) 0621 – 19-10-2007) the Regions of Tuscany, Catalunya and Provence-Alpes-Côte d’Azur decided to set-up a regional network to improve the competitiveness and sustainability of tourism in Europe. Together with other European regions and public and private stakeholders they elaborated a Memorandum of Understanding, engaging them in a joint effort towards the realisation of the European agenda. In July 2009, NECSTouR, network of European tourism Region for a competitive and sustainable tourism was officially created.

NECSTouR is a network driven by Regions. They represent the most strategic institutional level for programming, orienting and sustaining tourism development processes on three fundamental levels: member states, regions and destinations. In this respect, regions:

- are able to steer national governments towards policies which both promote sustainable Development of tourism and encourage competitiveness of the European offer;
- Play a fundamental role in local development programming. In many countries state laws devolve self governing powers to the regions or the prerogative to issue legislation in the field of tourism. All Regions play a central role concerning programming, distribution and management of structural funds;
- Play a crucial role in regulating, programming and supporting local authorities.

Beside regions, public and private organisation operating in the field of tourism at regional, national, European or international level can play an active part in NECSTouR. They bring in expertise and knowledge, they can represent user needs and contribute to policy developments, they can find partners and new operating markets for their business and services, they can study the tourism sector and identify trends.

NECSTouR objectives are:

- To develop and strengthen a framework for the coordination of national and regional development and research programmes in the field of sustainable tourism.
- To share and promote various forms of coordination of project activities already underway at regional level which can be made more efficient by an exchange of information and the implementation of joint activities.
- To become the first interlocutor of the EU to shape the new tourism policy in the framework of the Lisbon treaty.

NECSTouR activities

The network pays particular attention to the three pillars of social dialogue, monitoring/evaluation and competitiveness in order to develop a model able to guarantee a continuous comparison on issues related to sustainable and competitive tourism, as follows:

NECSTouR has also identified five themes covering the major aspect of regional tourism:

- Social and Environmental Responsibility
- Quality of Life of Resident
- Deseasonalisation
- Cultural Heritage
- Transport and Mobility

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