



European Economic and Social Committee
The President

Nicosia, 25 November 2012

European Tourism Forum
Organised by the Cyprus Presidency, in partnership with the EC

Staffan Nilsson's intervention

Seul le texte prononcé fait foi
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Check Against Delivery

Dear Vice-President, dear Antonio, dear Minister, dear Chairman, Ladies and gentlemen,

It is a great honour to address you today on behalf of the European Economic and Social Committee. It is a real pleasure also to meet with you Antonio, and Mr Minister in this in the historic and charming city of Nicosia. Let me also congratulate the Cyprus presidency and the European Commission for having organised this event that our Committee has always strongly supported.

In our recent opinion on European tourism, we point out the European Tourism Forum as a place where the different stakeholders in the industry could come together to improve and distribute information on sustainable and competitive tourism.



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And this comes very timely as we need to focus on all Growth creations potential sectors in the EU. Tourism is a key sector and plays a vital role in achieving the objectives of growth and employment.

Let me just introduce The European Economic and Social Committee. It is a consultative body of the European Union. Our purpose is to deliver opinions on the proposals made by other European institutions (the Council, Parliament and the Commission). The Committee can also exercise its right of initiative to draw up opinions on issues that it believes to be a priority. One recent such issue has been the tourism sector.

The value of the opinions drawn up by our Committee lies in the very composition of this Committee. 344 members represent the twenty-seven countries of the Union, forming three groups: employers, employees and all the other interest groups. This latter means for example small and medium-sized enterprises, farmers, consumer associations, the liberal professions, ecologists, etc.

The process of delivering opinions requires the capacity for dialogue and consensus in order to reach common positions, sometimes from vastly different viewpoints. In fact, the Committee could be seen as a kind of laboratory, in which prototypes are tested before entering mass-production. Being able to get together in one room the opinions of this cross-section of civil society represent a valuable tool for those who have the task of legislating for 500 million Europeans.

The importance of the Committee's work in the field of tourism is illustrated by a number of opinions dealing for example with Social Tourism, Sustainable and competitive tourism or Innovation in Tourism. The Committee has always stressed that **like any other human activity, tourism must be managed and must respect nature and people.**

About the issues which will be discussed during these two days. I shall mention a few points which the Committee has highlighted in its opinions.

Tourism spans the public and private sectors. These two sectors can work harmoniously together for the common good but we need more involvement of the private sector to promote Europe in third countries. Public-private



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cooperation is an increasingly important aspect of positive action in the tourism sector.

The Committee believes the setting up of a European Tourism Agency would **bring together efforts to make real progress towards a pan-European tourism policy** that takes into account the diversity and plurality of Europe as a tourist destination.

We believe that a **European gateway should be set up in all the EU languages**. Visitors could post their comments or impressions there and it would ensure better evaluation and promotion to attract tourists more effectively.

The EU-wide projects such as CALYPSO have demonstrated the usefulness of cooperation between the European institutions and other levels of government, the social partners and players in the sector, with positive social and economic effects. We should remain committed to this type of initiative, in particular from the budgetary point of view.

The EU needs a communication strategy to cultivate a positive image of Europe and its tourism industry. It has to promote and publicise the European level of security in travel, lodging, citizens' rights, medical and hospital care, as well as the legal framework.

To attract more tourists from Asia, or all BRICS, we need to encourage cooperation at international level and above all in markets that are important for the EU. Simplifying the single European visa-issuing process so as to attract more visitors from countries outside the Schengen area could be discussed. Tourists must be able to move between EU countries and regulations and directives must be simplified to this end.

I hope that the discussions that will take place at this European Tourism Forum and the interesting ideas emerging will help the decision makers to improve the promotion of Europe as a number one tourist destination in the world.

Dear friends, thank you very much for inviting me and for being kind enough to listen to my observations. I must reiterate our Committee's desire and commitment to work together on boosting European tourism.



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Thank you very much.



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