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Committee on Regional Development

2006/2129(INI)

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OPINION

of the Committee on Regional Development

for the Committee on Transport and Tourism

on a renewed EU tourism policy: towards a stronger partnership for European
tourism
(2006/2129(INI))

Draftsman: Stavros Arnaoutakis

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SUGGESTIONS

The Committee on Regional Development calls on the Committee on Transport and Tourism, as the committee responsible, to incorporate the following suggestions in its motion for a resolution:

- having regard to the regulatory provisions governing the Structural Funds for the 2007-2013 period,
 - having regard to the Council Decision of 6 October 2006 on Community Strategic Guidelines for Cohesion Policy 2007-2013,
- A. whereas the ERDF regulation for the programming period 2007-2013 makes specific reference to the important role of tourism for sustainable, integrated regional and local development,
- B. whereas tourism is an intersectoral activity comprising a wide range of services and involving various professions, while the sector is mostly managed by family businesses and small and medium-sized enterprises,
1. Emphasizes the potential of the tourism sector for growth and employment, having a concrete impact on the economic, social and territorial cohesion of all Member States, while representing for some areas (in particular rural and declining areas, as well as outermost regions, islands and coastal areas, especially those depending upon fishing) the primary resource and having a direct influence on the growth of other sectors; underlines the contribution of the tourism sector in bringing the economies of those areas to the average level of Community development;
 2. Welcomes the fact that in its Communication, the Commission recognises the need to prepare a European Agenda 21 for tourism, and expressly calls for sustainability to be promoted in the tourism sector; emphasises that sustainability as well as better policy coordination at national, regional and local level are basic preconditions for an effective development of tourism activities, avoiding any excessive concentration of those activities;
 3. Strongly believes that natural, historic and cultural heritages linked with the preservation of the environment are essential for building Europe's competitive advantage in the field of tourism while guaranteeing sustainable development of European regions, cities, countryside and coastal areas;
 4. Considers that the Commission, together with the Member States and regions should encourage and financially support new forms of tourism (such as eco-tourism, agricultural tourism, social tourism, health tourism, and others) as means to create employment, to overcome the effects of seasonal tourism as well as to generate economic growth respecting the natural resources and cultural heritage of regions; considers it necessary to strengthen infrastructures and services provided for specific forms of tourism, providing adequate and sustainable transport links and integrating high-quality regional products into the development and marketing of tourism products and services;

5. Believes that the certification of quality for products and services, including shared classification criteria for accommodation and the highest possible degree of harmonization of job profiles, and on the other hand a diversification of the products and services offered are a prerequisite for the expansion of the sector; stresses in this context the importance of human capital and professionalism for all forms of tourism, but especially when care and medical competencies are required; strongly encourages Member States and regions to make use of the vocational training and lifelong learning opportunities offered by the European Social Fund and other EU and national instruments;
6. Believes that the success of the renewed EU tourism policy will depend on the level of response and the degree of active participation on the part of relevant stakeholders at all levels, as well as on their effectiveness in promoting sustainable tourism and in contributing actively to the creation of efficient thematic networks; calls on the Commission, Member States and regions to encourage and support the creation of networks and partnerships for the exchange of experience and best practices in the field of tourism, making sure to learn from past mistakes, so as to avoid similar failures in the future, and explore new fields of cooperation such as twinning and considering the possibility of establishing among others, based on existing Community initiatives and programmes, a specific training network for jobs in tourism which would be capable of interacting with the labour market as well as a knowledge network for sustainable tourism taking particular account of initiatives under the Local Agenda 21;
7. Underlines the role of SMEs (in particular, those starting up in tourism, offering new tourist products or engaged in activities in new tourist areas or sectors) for the economic development of the tourism sector; emphasizes the need to improve their access to information on how they can benefit from available European financial instruments (such as FP7, IST programmes, Community fund programmes, JEREMIE);
8. Underlines the importance of Public Private Partnerships (PPPs) as a funding instrument for the development of the tourism sector; calls on the Commission and the Member States to define more clearly the Community legal framework for PPPs; encourages regional and local authorities to support the development of projects involving both local and regional public funding and private funding and calls for devoting greater attention to the marketing and advertising of individual tourism products;
9. Emphasises the need to increase awareness of the importance of tourism to economies and regional development; calls on Member States to fully adopt Tourism Satellite Accounts (TSAs) and to update statistics on a yearly basis so as to ensure that timely and adequate data are available to support the complete and sound integration of tourism into economic and employment policies;
10. Considers that the development of a new, comprehensive and competitive tourism framework and policy requires an integrated approach and an efficient coordination of local, regional, national and Community measures which have a direct or indirect impact on tourism, observing the subsidiarity principle; calls on the Member States to improve infrastructures, to facilitate access to finance and to contribute to legislative and fiscal harmonisation at European level as a means towards a stable governance for the sector worldwide;

11. Calls once again upon the Commission to put forward proposals which would enable catering (and possibly other tourist services which are not yet eligible for such treatment) to be included on the list of activity sectors which are permanently entitled to a reduced VAT rate, so as to enable sustainable employment in those sectors to be developed, the occupations concerned to be modernised and European tourism to be better positioned vis-à-vis international competition;
12. Recalls that rest and leisure time are rights bestowed on all human beings as stated by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and underlines the need for providing suitable responses and better promotion and dissemination means in order to ensure that all citizens' categories (particularly families, the elderly and the disabled) may exercise such rights by benefiting from improved infrastructure and accommodation facilities as well as wider accessibility. To this regard, urges Member States, regional and local authorities to respect the accessibility requirement for disabled persons when spending EU Structural Funds;
13. Welcomes the fact that on 6 July 2006 the EU ratified the Protocol on Tourism to the Alpine Convention, the aim of which is to contribute, through specific measures and recommendations, to sustainable development of the Alpine region and to environmentally-friendly tourism which takes account both of the interests of the local population and of tourists; considers that this protocol should serve as a model for other regions;
14. Believes that the sustainable development of tourism relies on territorial strategies drawn up on the basis of strong partnerships involving public authorities and organised civil society; welcomes the Commission's call for dialogue and involvement of partners; recommends that, in promoting tourism initiatives, the Commission place particular emphasis on involving partners.

PROCEDURE

Title	A renewed EU tourism policy: towards a stronger partnership for European tourism
Procedure number	2006/2129(INI)
Committee responsible	TRAN
Opinion by Date announced in plenary	REGI 15.6.2006
Enhanced cooperation – date announced in plenary	
Drafts(wo)man Date appointed	Stavros Arnaoutakis 11.7.2006
Previous drafts(wo)man	
Discussed in committee	2.5.2007
Date adopted	26.6.2007
Result of final vote	+: 40 -: 1 0: 0
Members present for the final vote	Alfonso Andria, Stavros Arnaoutakis, Elspeth Attwooll, Jean Marie Beaupuy, Jana Bobošíková, Bernadette Bourzai, Wolfgang Bulfon, Antonio De Blasio, Bairbre de Brún, Gerardo Galeote, Iratxe García Pérez, Eugenijus Gentvilas, Marian Harkin, Filiz Hyusmenova, Gisela Kallenbach, Evgeni Kirilov, Miloš Koterec, Constanze Angela Krehl, Jamila Madeira, Mario Mantovani, Yiannakis Matsis, Miroslav Mikolášik, Lambert van Nistelrooij, Maria Petre, Markus Pieper, Elisabeth Schroedter, Grażyna Staniszewska, Catherine Stihler, Margie Sudre, Andrzej Jan Szejna, Kyriacos Triantaphyllides, Oldřich Vlasák, Vladimír Železný
Substitute(s) present for the final vote	Jan Březina, Brigitte Douay, Den Dover, Ovidiu Victor Ganț, Zita Pleštinská, Toomas Savi, László Surján, Nikolaos Vakalis
Substitute(s) under Rule 178(2) present for the final vote	
Comments (available in one language only)	...