



Procedure file

Basic information		
INI - Own-initiative procedure	2006/2129(INI)	Procedure completed
Tourism policy: towards a stronger partnership for Europe, Lisbon strategy		
Subject 4.50 Tourism		

Key players				
European Parliament	Committee responsible	Rapporteur	Appointed	
	TRAN Transport and Tourism		02/05/2006	
		ALDE COSTA Paolo		
	Committee for opinion	Rapporteur for opinion	Appointed	
	EMPL Employment and Social Affairs	The committee decided not to give an opinion.		
	ENVI Environment, Public Health and Food Safety	The committee decided not to give an opinion.		
	REGI Regional Development		11/07/2006	
		PSE ARNAOUTAKIS Stavros		
	CULT Culture and Education		18/12/2006	
		PPE-DE DESCAMPS Marie-Hélène		
Council of the European Union	Council configuration	Meeting	Date	
	Competitiveness (Internal Market, Industry, Research and Space)	2751	25/09/2006	
European Commission	Commission DG	Commissioner		
	Internal Market, Industry, Entrepreneurship and SMEs	VERHEUGEN Günter		

Key events			
17/03/2006	Non-legislative basic document published	COM(2006)0134	Summary
15/06/2006	Committee referral announced in Parliament		
25/09/2006	Resolution/conclusions adopted by Council		Summary
09/10/2007	Vote in committee		Summary
17/10/2007	Committee report tabled for plenary	A6-0399/2007	
28/11/2007	Debate in Parliament		
29/11/2007	Results of vote in Parliament		
29/11/2007	Decision by Parliament	T6-0575/2007	Summary
29/11/2007	End of procedure in Parliament		

Technical information	
Procedure reference	2006/2129(INI)
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Committee dossier	TRAN/6/37561

Documentation gateway					
Non-legislative basic document		COM(2006)0134	17/03/2006	EC	Summary
Committee opinion	CULT	PE384.290	22/03/2007	EP	
Committee draft report		PE382.419	12/06/2007	EP	
Committee opinion	REGI	PE388.409	03/07/2007	EP	
Amendments tabled in committee		PE392.033	18/09/2007	EP	
Committee report tabled for plenary, single reading		A6-0399/2007	17/10/2007	EP	
Text adopted by Parliament, single reading		T6-0575/2007	29/11/2007	EP	Summary
Commission response to text adopted in plenary		SP(2007)6527	18/12/2007	EC	
Commission response to text adopted in plenary		SP(2008)0413/2	05/02/2008	EC	

Tourism policy: towards a stronger partnership for Europe, Lisbon strategy

PURPOSE: the presentation of a Commission document on a renewed EU Tourism Policy.

CONTENT: on February 2005, the Commission proposed a new start for the Lisbon Strategy focusing the European Union's efforts on two principal tasks ? delivering stronger, lasting growth and more and better jobs.

To recall, European tourism creates more than 4% of the Community's GDP, with about 2 million enterprises employing about 4% of the total labour force. When the links to other sectors are taken into account, tourism contributes around 11% to GDP, employing more than 12% of the labour force ? equivalent to 24 million jobs. The challenges European tourism is faced with require a cohesive policy response at EU level. This policy must be focused on clear and realistic goals, commonly shared by decision-makers, employers and employees, as well as by local populations. It should make the best use of available resources and take advantage of all possible synergies. It must build on the whole range of actions already carried out and must clearly offer added value to the national and regional policies and measures. Therefore any European tourism policy should be complementary to policies carried out in Member States.

Towards a renewed European tourism policy: the main aim of this policy will be to improve the competitiveness of the European tourism industry and create more and better jobs through the sustainable growth of tourism in Europe and globally.

In this context, the Commission considers that the most appropriate instruments for the implementation of this policy are co-ordination within the Commission and within national authorities, co-operation between the different stakeholders, and the establishment of specific supporting actions.

The main areas on which the policy will focus are:

1) Mainstreaming measures affecting tourism: given the large number of policies affecting tourism, it is necessary to actively promote better regulation, both at national and European level. The Commission proposes to improve and extend the use of impact assessment (IA) for new proposals. This integrated approach ensures that tourism will be fully taken into account in all IA work for proposals likely to affect the sector. It also proposes screening pending legislative proposals and simplifying existing European legislation. This will include legislation such as the Package Travel Directive and the Timeshare Directive; the latter is regarded as a priority. The Commission will continue to consult regularly with stakeholders on how the simplification programme should be further developed over the coming years. Each year, the initiatives that may affect tourism, included in the Commission Work Programme, will be identified in order to make sure that their impact on the sector's competitiveness will be taken into account at an early stage.

Tourism has benefited greatly from the financial support offered by the various European financial instruments. In the period 2007-2013, the Structural Funds and other EU Programmes, will financially support the development of tourism businesses, services and infrastructure. The

ERDF shall support more sustainable patterns of tourism. Environment and transport infrastructures, both of utmost importance for tourism, are also financed by the Cohesion Fund. Tourism development, given its employment creation potential, is an important domain of the European Social Fund's (ESF) intervention. The European Fisheries Fund (EFF) also supports schemes for retraining in occupations, besides sea fishing, which may relate to tourism. Research which will be supported under the proposed 7th EC Framework Programme for Research, Technological Development and Demonstration activities may result in benefits for the tourism sector as for example, research on information and communication technologies, satellite applications, cultural heritage and land use.

2) Promoting tourism sustainability: the elaboration and implementation of a European Agenda 21 for tourism is a long-term process. Further to this work the Commission plans specific actions promoting the economic and social sustainability of the European tourism such as:

- to identify national and international measures to support tourism-related SMEs and set up a good practice exchange process;
- to evaluate the economic impact of better accessibility in the tourism sector on macroeconomic growth and employment, business opportunities for SMEs, the quality of services and competitiveness;
- facilitating the exchange of 'tourism for all' good practice;
- publishing a handbook on 'How to set up Learning Areas in the Tourism sector' in order to support the upgrading of skills in the tourism sector with the involvement of all Stakeholders;
- studying employment trends in coastal and sea-related tourism sectors;
- developing official statistics and commissioning e-Business Watch studies to assess future implications and impact of e-business on the tourism industry;
- continuation of its initiatives and collaboration with the Member States, the industry and the World Tourism Organisation in order to combat the sexual exploitation of children, especially when such crimes are committed by tourists.

Improving the understanding of European tourism: decision-makers at public and private level need harmonised, more detailed statistics, made available in a timely manner. The Council Directive 95/57/EC on the collection of statistical information in the field of tourism will be updated in order to take the evolution of tourism in Europe and the needs of its users into account. It will be substantially improved in matters such as timeliness and punctuality, relevance, and comparability.

Supporting the promotion of European destinations: to contribute to the marketing of Europe as a set of attractive tourist destinations, the Commission financed the creation of the European Tourist Destinations Portal. It will include practical information about Europe, such as travel planning (transportation, weather and calendar) or recommendations on 'where to go?' and 'what to do?' and links towards national web sites. The operational phase will start on March 2006 and the Portal will be managed by the European Travel Commission.

Improving the visibility of tourism: the Commission, in partnership with the national public administrations and industry stakeholders, will continue enhancing the visibility and understanding of European tourism since often, due to its complexity, it is viewed only in its narrow definition rather than as a phenomenon which affects many parts of the economic and social fabric.

To conclude, in this report, the Commission presents what and how it intends to do in the area of tourism within the current EU legal framework in order to better exploit the growth and job potential of the sector in a sustainable way. It also highlights the way the various stakeholders can be involved in the Community actions. The renewed policy addresses all principal aspects of European policy making and allows the constructive collaboration of everyone concerned. Its degree of success depends of the response and active involvement of all stakeholders.

Tourism policy: towards a stronger partnership for Europe, Lisbon strategy

The Council adopted a conclusion which underlines that that tourism is an activity which can play an important role in the attainment of the goals of the Growth and Jobs Strategy.

It takes the view that cooperation and partnership amongst all involved public and private stakeholders at European, national, regional and local level is needed for the sustainable development of European tourism.

The Commission, the Member States, the European tourism industry and other stakeholders of the tourism sector to:

- work together to strengthen the political awareness on tourism issues and to organise common initiatives which highlight the importance of tourism for jobs, growth and sustainable development and allow the exchange of expertise and best practice;
- continue and further their collaboration especially on issues related to sustainability in view of the presentation by the Commission, in 2007, of a proposal for a European Agenda 21 for Tourism.

The Commission is invited - through an active role in policy-coordination - to:

- maintain and implement its commitment to actively promote Better Regulation and to make sure that the impact of its policy initiatives on the sector's competitiveness and sustainability is identified at an early stage;
- identify and analyse initiatives that may affect tourism at an early stage and to inform the Tourism Advisory Committee on a regular basis of such initiatives;
- continue and enforce the interactive process by consulting with and informing the tourism stakeholders on issues and initiatives that may affect tourism;
- inform the Member States (and in particular the Tourism Advisory Committee) and tourism stakeholders on the possibilities of funding specific tourism-related projects through European financial instruments on a regular basis.

The Council invites the Member States to:

- actively exchange information on good practices and measures promoting economic, social and environmental sustainability in tourism ;
- undertake regular Better Regulation exercises, at all levels, aiming to improve the regulatory environment for tourism;
- promote the use of European financial instruments for tourism-related projects;

- pay special attention to the upgrading of relevant skills through training and education, and encourage the industry to do likewise.

The European Tourism industry and other stakeholders of the tourism sector are invited to:

- collaborate with each other and with the public sector to promote the competitiveness and sustainability of European tourism and improve the satisfaction of the tourists;
- proactively inform the policy makers, at all levels, of regulatory and policy measures that would help to better take into account the, often complex, interests of the various tourism related sectors;
- actively participate in impact assessment procedures;
- make best use of available European financial instruments for tourism-related projects.

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The Committee on Transport and Tourism adopted the own-initiative report drawn up by Paolo COSTA (ALDE, IT) on a renewed EU tourism policy: towards a stronger partnership for European Tourism.

Tourism and EU Visa policy: the report stresses the importance to Europe of tourism, including tourism from third countries. It highlights in particular the need to simplify visa application procedures on a reciprocal basis and to reduce the costs of tourist visas for entry into any Member State. Member States, that are party to the Schengen agreement, are called upon to establish common consular desks for the grant of visas to non-EU applicants, to ensure that these desks have the same working methods and apply the same visa criteria and to improve the reception given to visa applicants through, for example, the management of appointments, the way in which interviews are carried out and the time limit for processing applications, since this would lead to significant budgetary savings for the Member States.

The committee stresses the need to review, in the Community Code on Visas, the number and type of documents that are requested from visa applicants. It strongly recommends that there should be a presumption in all EU visa policies in favour of issuing multiple-entry visas.

It points out that longer-term visas of at least one year's validity are needed by tour operators and transport companies so that they can hire the right personnel to meet the needs of their clients. It insists on the need to maintain and enhance the delivery of visas for groups. The Schengen Member States are called upon to simplify Schengen visa application procedures for tourists who have already been issued with visas for non-Schengen EU countries or have already arrived in these countries. The report calls on the non-Schengen EU countries to do the same for holders of Schengen visas.

MEPs recognises, however, that the simplification and harmonisation of visa application procedures and the general facilitation of access to Europe for tourists from third countries have to be compatible with the security rules required in order to combat illegal immigration, terrorism, and organised crime, especially cross-border crime.

Statistics: the report recalls that there is an absolute need for adequate, trustworthy, homogeneous and up-to-date information on tourism so that key strategic and management decisions can be taken in the public and private sector, and a need to develop adequate accompanying measures and orientations at EU level, in order to ensure that Europe remains the first destination in international terms and becomes competitive once again.

The committee requests a review of Council Directive 95/57/EC on the collection of statistical information in the field of tourism so as to ensure better harmonisation of data collection by Member States, in relation to both the quantitative and qualitative aspects of the supply of data. The Commission is called upon to: i) seek possibilities for implementing in the Member States Tourism Satellite Accounts (TSAs) since such measurements allow tourism to be accurately compared with other economic sectors and can contribute to a better understanding of the true size and value of the tourism industry; ii) examine the need to collect statistical information and quality data in order to allow for an assessment of the impact of tourism on the economy, the environment and the quality of life of the inhabitants of popular tourist destinations; iii) publish a report on the various national schemes in place for the protection of special natural and historic sites by means of specific town planning and building regulations and, where appropriate, to encourage best practice in these areas through the publication of guidelines; iv) draw up a harmonised scoreboard describing the condition of natural and historic sites, and in particular the impact of tourists on these sites, with a view to regulating the number of visits and ensuring that they are properly conserved and passed on to future generations.

Harmonisation of quality standards for tourist accommodation in Europe: the report notes that it is important that accurate information on the meaning of the classification in the different countries be easily available to consumers and that it take their needs into close consideration. A common ground and common criteria for customers should be established in order that they be able to make a choice, on the basis of clear and verifiable classification criteria, when they decide to travel abroad. The European hospitality industry is asked to pursue its efforts to facilitate the understanding of the meaning of 'stars' in the different Member States.

Given that a common classification system at EU level would be very difficult to achieve given the variety of hotel types and tourist accommodation due to local requirements, cultures and sensitivities, and in view of the very different structures of current classification plans, MEPs consider that a set of guidelines based on common and uniform criteria for the entire EU could take into account the interests of the consumer, while respecting the environment and local characteristics.

The Commission, in cooperation with European hotel and catering organisations, such as HOTREC (Hotels, Restaurants and Cafes in Europe), and with the European consumer protection organisations, is requested to establish a methodology for creating such minimum standards on safety and quality of accommodation services. The report stresses that such a methodology could include the introduction of an EC mark for accommodation that would encompass pan-European common criteria providing consumers with an assurance as to the minimum level of quality to be expected whatever EU country is visited.

Quality management schemes: the report calls on the European hospitality industry to pursue its work in relation to the setting up of a European 'umbrella' for quality management schemes and to inform regularly the Community institutions of progress made. It welcomes the fact that environmental protection labels are on the increase, but considers that the multiplication of labels at local level can cause confusion for tourists and affect transparency, prompting the need for better information for tourists and a consolidation of current labels for better international recognition. MEPs call on the Commission, in cooperation with HOTREC as the European catering trade association, to promote labelling processes regarding tourist accommodation undertaken in the different Member States and to promote quality models that have

proved effective elsewhere (for example the Qualmark in New Zealand) in order to improve visibility. The Commission and the Member States are called upon to: i) contribute to the enhancement of a sustainable labelling process based on environmental and social criteria by showcasing best practice, transfer of best practice and encouraging initiatives by industry leaders; ii) promote the use of eco-labels for tourist facilities, sites and services.

Consumer protection: the committee is aware of the fact that more and more tourists are booking their travel (transport, accommodation, etc.) directly using electronic means and avoiding intermediaries- tour operators and travel agents who are still subject to legal regimes (Council Directive 90/314/EEC). It stresses that this anomaly needs to be rectified by incorporating into Directive 90/314/EEC all websites that offer more than one service for sale, such as those offered by low-fare airlines and other actors in this market. MEPs consider that this fast development of the use of IT technologies for tourist services requires a consumers and personal data protection framework for electronic bookings, which might be based on a prior analysis of this market by the Commission. They recommend, in the interests of consumer protection, the certification of sites that provide information and offer tourist services (reservation and payment) of an electronic nature. The committee welcomes the legislative measure on the protection of consumers in respect of certain aspects of timeshare, long-term holiday products, resale and exchange. On the other hand, it regrets the absence of a specific legal instrument covering the safety of services, which is crucial in the tourism sector and calls on the Commission and on the Member States to evaluate the possibility of tackling this issue in order to address the concerns expressed by several Members of Parliament. The Commission is called on to conduct a European promotional campaign on road safety. It should also simplify procedures for hazard analysis critical control points (HACCP) and to take account of the needs of small businesses, with particular regard to micro-businesses.

Health tourism: MEPs stress the importance of using all available Community programmes, including the Second Programme of Community Action in the Field of Health, in order to promote health-related tourism. They consider that there is a need for the adoption of a specific Community directive to define the recognition and use of hydrothermal resorts and, more generally, the role of health tourism and thermal cures in connection with tourist facilities in the various Member States ? apart from the health, social security and insurance aspects ? by also making available sufficient financial resources to enable a strategically important sector of the Member States? economy to embark on a suitable development process, so as to significantly increase new direct and indirect employment.

Accessible tourism: the report welcomes initiatives to coordinate at European level the information on accessible tourism that would allow tourists with reduced mobility and their families to find information about the accessibility of tourist destinations. MEPs also call on the Commission and the Member States to initialise an "Access for all " EC label that would guarantee core accessibility facilities for tourists with reduced mobility and would cover offers such as accommodation, restaurants, leisure and natural sites, auditoriums, monuments, museums, etc. The committee notes that the accessibility of tourist destinations is a matter that also has to do with the transport services provided or available. It calls, therefore, on the Commission, for the purposes of the new European tourism policy and of developing European transport policy, to take due account of the accessibility handicap affecting regions with specific natural or geographical characteristics, such as the outermost regions, island and mountain regions, and the sparsely populated northernmost regions.

Socially, economically and environmentally sustainable tourism: the committee points to the need for the new tourism policy to make European tourism sustainable in economic, social, territorial, environmental, and cultural terms. It emphasises that threats to the environment, especially carbon dioxide emissions, require the tourism industry to be involved in the education of tourists regarding environmental issues when drawing up environmental policy. The Commission and the Member States are called upon to ensure the provision of information to passengers, and, in particular, the proper implementation of those passenger rights, and particularly of air passenger rights, and to ensure that easily accessible arbitration mechanisms are provided for by the Member States in situations where a defaulting operator fails to pay damages. The Commission is also called upon to reflect on an approach through which the EU could offer protection to passengers that have been left behind by a defaulting charter operator, intermediaries or scheduled carriers as a result of bankruptcy or intentional abuse. The report suggests that an EU-wide blacklist of such operators be established, on the basis of criteria clearly defined by the Commission, following consultations with transport and/or tourism operators and consumer protection organisations.

Promotion of European tourist destinations: the committee welcomes the fact that the European Tourist Destinations Portal has been set up with the aid of Commission funding and calls on the Commission to continue to help promote Europe as a tourist destination or a collection of attractive tourist destinations, for instance by introducing and publicising a "Europe" label and organising arrangements and channels for gathering information on European tourist destinations and subsequently circulating it to those working in the tourism industry outside Europe.

The Commission is also called upon to:

- improve cross-border infrastructures, including recreational (inland) waterways;
- promote more vigorously Europe's transport and industrial heritage;
- promote European destinations in those countries whose peak seasons coincide with the European low seasons and to look into the possibility of endorsing agreements, such as Memorandums of Understanding, with these third countries in order to develop tourist fluxes with an optimised seasonal spread;
- highlight the cultural dimension of European tourism by promoting European UNESCO world heritage sites as testimonies of European culture;
- promote the cross-border memorial cycle route along the former Iron Curtain as an example of "gentle mobility" in tourism and as a symbol for the reunification of Europe.

Tourism development: the report urges the Commission, the Member States, the regions, local authorities, and the tourism industry to coordinate the policies with a direct or indirect impact on tourism, cooperate more closely among themselves, and make better use of the European financial instruments available in the period from 2007 to 2013 with a view to developing European tourism, focusing on the competitiveness of the tourism industry and tourist destinations, the development of tourism enterprises, services, and facilities, job creation, mobility, and vocational training in the tourism sector, and economic diversification and the development of Europe's regions, in particular the less-favoured regions.

Miscellaneous: the report highlights the scale of forthcoming change in the demographic structure of the EU and the need to implement a European tourist programme for retired people out of season, which would improve the quality of life of senior citizens in the EU, create employment and generate greater demand and growth in the European economy. It believes that this could be called the Ulysses Programme.

The European Parliament adopted a resolution based on the own-initiative report drafted by Paolo COSTA (ALDE, IT) on the Communication from the Commission entitled "A renewed EU Tourism Policy: Towards a stronger partnership for European Tourism". The report was adopted by 536 votes in favour to 58 against with 22 abstentions.

Tourism and EU Visa policy: the report stressed the importance to Europe of tourism, and highlighted the need to simplify visa application procedures on a reciprocal basis and to reduce the costs of tourist visas for entry into any Member State. Those Member States that are party to the Schengen agreement were called upon to establish common consular desks for the grant of visas to non-EU applicants, to ensure that these desks have the same working methods and apply the same visa criteria. They should also improve the reception given to visa applicants, for example, through the management of appointments, the way in which interviews are carried out and the time limit for processing applications. This would lead to significant budgetary savings for the Member States. Parliament felt that there should be a review, in the Community Code on Visas, of the number of documents that are requested from visa applicants. It strongly recommended that there should be a presumption in all EU visa policies in favour of issuing multiple-entry visas.

The Schengen Member States were called upon to simplify Schengen visa application procedures for tourists who had already been issued with visas for non-Schengen EU countries or had already arrived in these countries. The non-Schengen EU countries should do the same for holders of Schengen visas.

MEPs recognised, however, that the harmonisation of visa application procedures and the general facilitation of access to Europe for tourists from third countries had to be compatible with the security rules required in order to combat illegal immigration, terrorism, and organised crime.

Statistics: the report recalled that there was an absolute need for adequate information on tourism so that key decisions could be taken, in order to ensure that Europe remained the first destination in international terms and became competitive once again. Parliament requested a review of Council Directive 95/57/EC on the collection of statistical information in the field of tourism so as to ensure better harmonisation of data collection by Member States. The Commission was called upon to: i) seek possibilities for implementing in the Member States Tourism Satellite Accounts (TSAs) since such measurements allowed tourism to be accurately compared with other economic sectors and can contribute to a better understanding of the true size and value of the tourism industry; ii) examine the need to collect statistical information and quality data in order to allow for an assessment of the impact of tourism on the economy, the environment and the quality of life of the inhabitants of popular tourist destinations; iii) publish a report on the various national schemes in place for the protection of special natural and historic sites by means of specific town planning and building regulations and, where appropriate, to encourage best practice in these areas through the publication of guidelines; iv) draw up a harmonised scoreboard describing the condition of natural and historic sites, and in particular the impact of tourists on these sites, with a view to regulating the number of visits and ensuring that they are properly conserved and passed on to future generations.

Harmonisation of quality standards for tourist accommodation in Europe: Parliament noted the multiplicity of classification schemes in the Member States. This has a negative impact on the industry's reliability and on transparency. Consumers regarded the system of classification as an important instrument for choosing accommodation. Parliament therefore considered it important that accurate information on the meaning of the classification in the different countries be easily available. It was possible to establish a common ground and common criteria for customers in order that they might be able to make a choice when they travel abroad. The European hospitality industry was asked, inter alia, to pursue its efforts to facilitate the understanding of the meaning of 'stars' in the different Member States. Whilst a common classification system at EU level would be very difficult to achieve given the variety of hotel types and tourist accommodation, and in view of the very different structures of current classification plans, MEPs considered nevertheless, that a set of guidelines based on common and uniform criteria for the entire EU could take into account the interests of the consumer, while respecting the environment and local characteristics. The Commission was requested to establish a methodology for creating such minimum standards on safety and quality of accommodation services. Such a methodology could include the introduction of an EC mark for accommodation that would encompass pan-European common criteria providing consumers with an assurance as to the minimum level of quality to be expected whatever Member State was visited.

Quality management schemes: the report called on the European hospitality industry to pursue its work in relation to the setting up of a European 'umbrella' for quality management schemes. It welcomed the fact that environmental protection labels were on the increase, but considered that the multiplication of labels at local level could cause confusion for tourists, prompting the need for a consolidation of current labels for better international recognition. MEPs called on the Commission, in cooperation with HOTREC as the European catering trade association, to promote labelling processes regarding tourist accommodation undertaken in Member States and to promote quality models that had proved effective elsewhere (for example the Qualmark in New Zealand). The Commission and Member States were called upon to: i) contribute to the enhancement of a sustainable labelling process based on environmental and social criteria by showcasing best practice, transfer of best practice and encouraging initiatives by industry leaders; ii) promote the use of eco-labels for tourist facilities, sites and services.

Consumer protection: Parliament pointed out that increasing numbers of tourists were booking their travel directly using electronic means and avoiding intermediaries- tour operators and travel agents- who were still subject to legal regimes (Council Directive 90/314/EEC). This anomaly needed to be rectified by incorporating into Directive 90/314/EEC all websites that offered more than one service for sale, such as those offered by low-fare airlines and other actors in this market. The fast development of the use of IT technologies for tourist services required a personal data protection framework for electronic bookings, which might be based on a prior analysis of this market by the Commission. Parliament recommended the certification of sites that provided information and offer tourist services (reservation and payment) of an electronic nature. It regretted the absence of a specific legal instrument covering the safety of services, and called on the Commission and on the Member States to evaluate the possibility of tackling this issue. The Commission was asked to conduct a European promotional campaign on road safety. It should also simplify procedures for hazard analysis critical control points (HACCP) and take account of the needs of small businesses.

Health tourism: MEPs stressed the importance of using all available Community programmes, including the Second Programme of Community Action in the Field of Health, in order to promote health-related tourism. Businesses in the insurance sector must be given support in finding solutions for trans-boundary cooperation in order to finance health-related tourism. In view of the decline of health tourism, Parliament felt that a specific Community directive was needed to define the recognition of hydrothermal resorts and, more generally, the role of health tourism and thermal cures in connection with tourist facilities in the various Member States, by also making available sufficient financial resources to enable a strategically important sector of the Member States' economy to embark on a suitable development process, so as to increase new direct and indirect employment.

Accessible tourism: the report welcomed initiatives to coordinate at European level the information on accessible tourism that would allow tourists with reduced mobility to find information about the accessibility of tourist destinations. Parliament called for an "Access for all" EC label that would guarantee core accessibility facilities for tourists with reduced mobility and would cover offers such as accommodation,

restaurants, leisure and natural sites, auditoriums, monuments, museums, etc. The accessibility of tourist destinations was also an issue involving transport services. It called on the Commission to take due account of the accessibility handicap affecting regions with specific natural or geographical characteristics, such as the outermost regions, island and mountain regions, and the sparsely populated northernmost regions.

Socially, economically and environmentally sustainable tourism: the new tourism policy must make European tourism sustainable in economic, social, territorial, environmental, and cultural terms. Parliament stressed that sustainably developed tourism must offer local economies (especially in disadvantaged regions) a long-term source of revenue, must help to promote stable employment with entitlements and must support other economic activities (both upstream and downstream), yet at the same time it must safeguard and enhance the cultural, historical, landscape and environmental heritage. Threats to the environment, especially carbon dioxide emissions, required the tourism industry to be involved in the education of tourists regarding environmental issues.

The Commission and the Member States are called upon to ensure the provision of information to passengers, and to ensure that easily accessible arbitration mechanisms were provided for by the Member States in situations where a defaulting operator fails to pay damages. The Commission was asked to reflect on an approach through which the EU could offer protection to passengers that have been left behind by a defaulting charter operator, intermediaries or scheduled carriers as a result of bankruptcy or intentional abuse. An EU-wide blacklist of such operators might be established following consultations with transport and/or tourism operators and consumer protection organisations.

Promotion of European tourist destinations: Parliament welcomed the fact that the European Tourist Destinations Portal had been set up with the aid of Commission funding. It called on the Commission to continue to help promote Europe as a tourist destination, for instance by introducing a 'Europe' label and organising channels for gathering information on European tourist destinations.

The Commission was also called upon to:

- improve cross-border infrastructures, including recreational (inland) waterways;
- promote more vigorously Europe's transport and industrial heritage;
- promote European destinations in those countries whose peak seasons coincide with the European low seasons and to look into the possibility of endorsing agreements, such as Memorandums of Understanding, with these third countries in order to develop tourist fluxes with an optimised seasonal spread;
- highlight the cultural dimension of European tourism by promoting European UNESCO world heritage sites as testimonies of European culture;
- promote the cross-border memorial cycle route along the former Iron Curtain as an example of 'gentle mobility' in tourism and as a symbol for the reunification of Europe.

Tourism development: all players must coordinate the policies with a direct or indirect impact on tourism, cooperate more closely among themselves, and make better use of the European financial instruments available in the period from 2007 to 2013 with a view to developing European tourism. SME's should have greater involvement in tourism-related entrepreneurship and possibilities for simplifying procedures to obtain financial support should be found.

Miscellaneous: the report highlighted the need to implement a European tourist programme for retired people out of season, which would improve the quality of life of senior citizens in the EU, create employment and generate greater demand and growth in the European economy. It believes that this could be called the Ulysses Programme.