

COMMISSION OF THE EUROPEAN COMMUNITIES

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COMMISSION WORKING PAPER ON PRIORITY ACTION TO BE TAKEN IN THE TOURISM SECTOR

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In January 1986, the Commission submitted to the Council a communication on Community action in the tourism sector. It set out the Commission's main aims in this field: facilitation and promotion of tourism in the Community, improved information and protection for tourists, improved knowledge of the sector, better working conditions, more effective use of the Community Funds and better seasonal and geographical distribution of tourism.

The Commission also put before the Commission proposals on the setting up of a consultation and coordination procedure in the tourism field, a resolution on improved seasonal and geographic distribution of tourism and a recommendation on standardized information in hotels. All these proposals were approved by the Council in December 1986. In its communication of January 1986, the Commission also promised proposals aimed at harmonizing the laws of the Member States on package holidays and harmonizing tourism statistics. These and another proposal on conducting a Community survey on holidays will be looked at by the Ministers for Tourism at their first formal Council meeting on 14 December 1988.

Since 1986, thanks mainly to support from the European Parliament, there has been a budget heading concerned with the tourism sector, which has made it possible for the Commission to carry out studies and surveys on the tourist industry and tourist policy in the Member States of the Community, the use of computers in the sector, Europeans' holidays, rural tourism, social tourism, nautical tourism and other topics of interest to all the Member States. In collaboration with the European Tourism Commission, to which are affiliated the national tourist offices of 23 Western European countries, the Commission has also conducted campaigns to promote European tourism in the United States and is preparing to follow this up with campaigns in Japan and Canada. It is also preparing a campaign to promote out-of-season tourism in the Community countries.

As was established at the large-scale conference on "Tourism: Horizon 1992" organized by the Commission, these actions are wholeheartedly supported by both public and private operators in the travel/tourism sector, who are eager for major Community involvement in the sector. This wide consensus on Community action was likewise confirmed at the informal meetings of Ministers for Tourism in Glücksburg on 6 May 1988 and Rhodes on 3 September of the same year.

As for the European Parliament, it has always looked favourably on the Commission's activities in this field and in its resolution of 22 January 1988¹ called for a whole series of actions relating to the facilitation, promotion, and financing of tourism in the Community, proposing in particular that 1990 be proclaimed "European Tourism Year". The Commission took note of Parliament's request and has put before the Council an action programme on the organization of such a year, which will make it possible to lay stress on the integrating role of tourism as a factor for improving mutual acquaintance among Community citizens with 1992 in mind and on the wish for cooperation on the part of the public and private operators in the sector, so as to promote the European idea and address joint problems such as improving the seasonal and geographic distribution of tourism.

In the Commission's view, the time has come to render Community tourism better equipped to make those advances which completion of the internal market and increased world competition require of it.

To this end the Commission has included in this document the various operations which it regards as being of a priority nature and which it is submitting for an initial discussion at the Council meeting (Ministers for Tourism) scheduled for 14 December 1988. At the appropriate time they will be the subject of formal proposals relating to the sector.

The operations, which aim mainly at fostering the image of European tourism among the citizens of the Member States and of non-Community countries, at preparing the SMEs in this sector to face up to the single market and at addressing the crucial problem of a better seasonal and geographic distribution of tourism, have been assembled under two headings: (a) operations which required coordination between the Member States and the Commission without Community regulation and which could, if appropriate, be a matter for in-depth cooperation between the Community and EFTA; (b) operations which require a Community decision adopted by the Council on a proposal from the Commission.

Of course these two kinds of actions only complete measures concerning the sector of tourism already under hand or envisaged in the framework of other Community policies such as transports, coordination of structural funds, environment and the completion of the internal market.

¹ OJ C 49, 22.2.1988.

A. ACTIONS TO BE TAKEN THROUGH CLOSE COOPERATION BETWEEN THE MEMBER STATES OF THE COMMUNITY

In the Commission's view and in the light of the suggestions put forward both by the European Parliament and the various professions of the tourism sector, in particular at the Tourism; Horizon 1992 conference, the search for improved performance on the part of the Community tourist industry requires that we take the following actions, the effectiveness of which depends on close cooperation between the Member States and the Community:

- I.1. The promotion of Europe's image as a tourist destination by means of coordinated advertising and public relations campaigns in non-Community countries.
- I.2. A coordinated presence of the Member States at international tourism exhibitions and similar events.
- I.3. Coordinated advertising campaigns aimed at persuading Member States nationals to take their holidays out of season.
- I.4. The cofinancing of pilot projects aimed at reducing seasonal concentration and promoting off-season regional tourism.
- I. 5. The cofinancing of pilot projects aimed at facilitating travel by young, elderly and disabled people.
- I.6. Support for the establishment and promotion of transnational historical and cultural itineraries encouraging, in particular, the discovery of less wellknown tourist resorts.
- I.7. Appropriate follow-up concerning the provision of services by travel couriers and tourist guides to the degree expected from the Court of Justice.
- I.8. Encouraging approximation of the curricula of catering and tourism schools and exchanging students and trainees.
- I.9. Coordinating research on tourism so as to avoid duplication of effort and improve the dissemination of its findings among all interested parties in the Member States.

B. ACTIONS REQUIRING COMMUNITY REGULATION

- II.1. The drawing up of standard contracts governing relations between operators in the tourism/travel sector, on the one hand, and relations between those operators and their customers, on the other.
- II.2 Extension to other fields than hotel accommodation standardized information on such tourist facilities as camping and caravan sites, youth hostels, yachting holidays, etc.
- II. 3 Protect of unaccompanied minors travelling and staying abroad.
- II.4. Regulations aimed at avoiding overbooking of transport and accommodation and seat-only reservations on charter flights.

The Commission proposes to devote particular attention to two major problems concerning Community tourism: tourist protection and seasonal and geographic concentration.

As regards the first, it is not simply a matter of informing and protecting tourists as "tourism consumers", but also as travellers in and visitors to other countries of the Community. To this end, the Commission, which has already submitted its proposal for a Directive on package holidays and a Recommendation on fire safety in hotels, intends to continue its activities in this field by a proposal for a "tourist's vademecum" on the basis of a study carried out in all the Member States, the conclusions of which will be available in the near future.

As regards the second, the Commission takes the view that the Resolution on an improved seasonal and geographic distribution of tourism¹ constitutes a valuable initial step towards drawing the attention of the Member States to this major problem, though it is not enough to solve it. The Commission is proposing, especially as part of European Tourism Year in 1990, a whole series of operations likely to encourage off-season tourism. The core of the problem is the structure of school and industrial holidays. The Commission will examine this in the light of the findings of studies undertaken at Community level and of pilot experiments carried out in various Member States.

¹OJ C 340, 31.12.1986.