



MADRID 14TH AND 15TH APRIL 2010

Throughout their whole mandate, the Spanish Presidency has considered Tourism policy as a priority. In this respect, on the 14th and 15th April 2010 the European Tourism Stakeholders Conference and an informal Ministers meeting on tourism took place in Madrid. During the conference, NECSTouR was represented by its President, the Tuscany Region, and several NECSTouR Members participated to this event, such as Flanders, the German speaking community of Belgium, Cornwall, Catalunya, Cité de la Culture et du Tourisme Durable, ISNART...

14.04.2010: EUROPEAN TOURISM STAKEHOLDER CONFERENCE

The conference began with the intervention of Commission Vice President Antonio Tajani that underlined his strong will of creating a new tourism framework, including the European Agenda for a Sustainable and Competitive Tourism. There after the participants separated in three different panels, each one focused on specific tourism issues but with a common goal on outlining some recommendations:

Panel 1: Innovation and competitiveness in tourism

The participants had to answer several questions on which new part can the European Commission play in the field of innovation and competitiveness, what kind of partnership could be initiated by the European countries and Regions, and how public and private actions can stimulate innovation and entrepreneurship.

The panellists questioned what actions can be undertaken, in a context of crisis and strong competition, to strengthen competitiveness of European tourism (guarantying quality and fair price but also developing innovation and creativity in concepts and products).

Competitiveness is related to four major challenges: seasonality (regulation of affluence), innovation (creating demand for innovation), financial support (especially for SMEs) and new technologies (facilitation of exchanges within professional networks).

On the basis of the identified issues, several concrete proposals were made:

- Promote the precursory role of tourism in order to develop a new vision of economy, replacing “profit” with “value”
- Creation of a European Tourism Observatory
- Innovating financial supports on the European scale
- Supporting innovation, research and development initiatives (such as NECSTouR or ERA-NET.ERNEST project)

The panellists concluded by highlighting, among other things, the importance of exchanges of good practices through a European platform.



Panel 2: Sustainable and Socially Responsible Tourism

The participants had to answer several questions on how the tourism industry could implement sound sustainable strategies whilst retaining competitiveness, and which role the European Commission can play to create such an environment. The panel was also asked to question the attitude of European tourists when travelling to other destinations.

A number of specific issues were identified which affect the success of a strategic approach marrying sustainability and social responsibility with competitiveness. This issues concerns three areas: Focus, Evidence and Communication. Therefore they identified the real danger of fragmentation in Europe, and an ineffective communication within the industry and with consumers was seen as holding back progress and preventing the spread of awareness and support for sustainable tourism that is needed.

In light of these issues, the participants outlined some recommendations for tourism authorities:

- Enhance partnership working at all levels between EU Member State, Regions and local destinations.
- Increase bold planning, (following the example of the Chinese tourism authority).
- Creation of positive incentives, not penalties, in order to encourage enterprises to embrace sustainability.
- Elaborate convincing commercial arguments, in order to be able to show that improved environmental management can help businesses to reduce costs.
- Ensure a robust measurement of the impacts in order to strengthen the commercial argument.
- Enhance the exchange of data and knowledge that is helpful in planning sustainable and competitive strategies.
- Elaborate creative products that should form part of sustainable and competitive strategies.
- Work on an active awareness-raising amongst consumers, because no sustainable and competitive tourism is achievable without a consumer response.

In order to create a favourable environment to implement these recommendations, the panellist identified 7 actions for the European Commission:

1. Help overcome fragmentation.
2. Continue to support networks.
3. Illustrate and promote practical solutions.
4. Assist in measurement and exchange of exchange of knowledge.
5. Provide funding for positive initiatives.
6. Continue to work on social tourism.
7. Communicate the good work done.



Panel 3: Reinforcing the tourism Image of Europe

The panellist were confronted with questions on how to enhance the perception of Europe as an attractive destination of choice, both by its own citizens and by travellers from the world's emerging markets which will be drivers of global tourism growth in the coming years. One of the issues was identified as recurrent: Some destinations are not aware of their lagging behind competition and it is the role of the European and national authorities to encourage their development to retain the attractiveness of all EU-Regions as attractive tourism destinations.

The participants elaborated several recommendations and conclusions on the panel's topic:

- Necessity of geographical target groups: Future marketing of the European Union must be both on long haul and domestic market.
- Necessity of market segmentation, with a focus on attracting first time travellers for the long haul market and on developing existing market by revitalizing destinations for the intra European market.
- Increasing tourism products development, with a pan European concept, such as the culture routes.
- Promoting the marketing of Europe as a “value for money” destination and developing a focused “branding Europe” campaign, through viral campaign tools toward EU-citizens and overseas visitors.
- Launching political actions: Facilitate the access to European destination (e.g. simplified visa procedures), make funding of national and/or regional tourism product improvement programmes available, and include financial encouragements to those regions that commit to continuous development of their tourism products and especially those regions that involve all their stakeholders (private and public) as much as possible in tourism development.
- Educate better tourism industry employees in order to attract third market visitors.

To conclude, the panellists underlined the fact that EU and national politicians must embrace tourism and acknowledge that tourism is a “real (export) industry” which the future of the EU is built on.



Network of European Regions for
a Sustainable and Competitive Tourism

NECSTouR

15.04.2010: INFORMAL MINISTERIAL MEETING ON TOURISM

At the Informal Meeting of Ministers, the 'Madrid Declaration' project on the future framework of European tourism has been presented and discussed among the different EU Ministers. In this declaration, the member states declared their commitment:

- To take part in the implementation of the new consolidated EU tourism policy framework, to be established in light of the Lisbon Treaty, subject to the principle of subsidiarity.
- To promote responsible and ethical tourism and, especially, social, environmental, cultural and economic sustainability of tourism.
- To raise awareness to the importance of knowledge and innovation in tourism, the strengthening of the use of new technologies by the public and private tourism actors, the encouraging of networking and the exchange of best practices, as tools for the competitiveness of European tourism.
- To support measures and initiatives encouraging the lengthening of the high season in tourism, thus contributing to reduce seasonality and to maintain tourist employment in off-season.

These commitments will be the base of the new European tourism policy.