



## STATEMENT

# ARTHUR OBERASCHER, PRESIDENT, EUROPEAN TRAVEL COMMISSION

Press Conference, Tuesday, 21 March 2006

## EUROPEAN TOURISM MINISTERS' CONFERENCE

Vice President Verheugen,  
Minister Bartenstein,

As president of the European Travel Commission, the ETC, I am greatly honoured to be here with you today as we take a very important step for European tourism:

The launch of Europe's new internet travel portal, [visiteurope.com](http://visiteurope.com).

We, the European Travel Commission, participated actively in the portal's development and we will, starting today, market, operate and promote the portal around the world for the European Commission.

ETC bundles the expertise of 34 powerful national tourism brands. But even more important: we at the ETC see ourselves as advocate of the 425 million guests who visit Europe every year.

And that is why, ladies and gentlemen, the ETC focuses on three strategic pillars.

These three pillars aim to

- Secure Europe's share of the global tourism market and thereby assure the continued success of Europe's tourism industry.
- Promote European tourism's information and service orientation in line with the European Union's Lisbon Strategy.

These three pillars of the European Travel Commission's work are:

- e-marketing
- Market and cultural intelligence
- Operational excellence

During the past two years, we at the ETC have concentrated our efforts on twin projects of strategic importance:

- The first was the development of "Brand Europe" to market Europe as a whole, and
- The second was co-operating in the development of [visiteurope.com](http://visiteurope.com).

During the course of these two years, ETC has integrated and co-ordinated almost every European country into this process **by the highest common denominator**, with a single aim:

Presenting Europe as a whole to 425 million guests.

I called them twin projects because the one-development of a brand for "Destination Europe"- is inconceivable without the other-electronic marketing. In both respects, the launch of visiteurope.com today opens up an entirely new dimension in co-operation for European tourism.

That is why I would like to say just a few words about the strategic importance of the new portal for Europe's tourism industry.

- We know that in the United States today more travel dollars are spent on-line than off-line.
- We know too, that in Canada 74 percent of holidaymakers use the web as their primary source of vacation planning information. And we know that 62 percent of Canadians who take a summer vacation in Europe book on-line.

E-marketing and e-commerce have recorded growth rates and enjoy an acceptance in the tourism business as in no other. This is not just a trend. It is nothing less than a paradigm change that has transformed the entire branch. In fact, this paradigm change has the potential to re-configure tourism's business model.

Tourism is dominated by small and medium-sized enterprises that cannot exploit economies of scale. In this environment, information technology has developed into a motor of growth of unprecedented dynamism. And for a product like travel that is so information-intensive, IT offers tremendous possibilities as a customer-focused marketing tool.

A portal of the size and complexity of visiteurope.com has to be seen from two points of view:

First, what value added does visiteurope.com generate for Europe's destinations?

And second, what value added does it bring the 425 million guests who visit Europe every year.

**I would like first to talk about our guests.**

Here we can identify three principal trends:

First:

In the information age with its surfeit of stimuli, orientation is becoming an increasingly rare commodity.

Second:

Globalisation places demands on our cultural intelligence. This means we have to take one approach in addressing the Middle East market, a different approach for the United States, and yet another in Asian markets like China.

Third:

Just as there is no one universally valid approach to different cultures, so too there no longer exist social

groups whose demands can be satisfied with just one product.

No other medium can respond to these challenges as effectively as the internet.

And no other medium can, against the backdrop I just described, deliver better and more efficiently individualised pan-European products.

That is, ladies and gentlemen, the great opportunity for visiteurope.com because it will feature the following:

- A personalised, inter-cultural approach. To put it simply: a portal with localised versions for major markets and in languages like Russian, Chinese, Japanese or Portuguese, that are so important for the continued competitiveness of European tourism.
- Tools to help visitors design a European experience that reflects their interests and preferences.

In short, visiteurope.com has the enormous potential to offer our guests the vacation they want, or to put it another way: **“a vacation with hosts, who think like me”**.

And that, for the first time, for thirty-four European destinations on a single platform.

**Now, let me turn to the benefits visiteurope.com will bring the other major group of stakeholders, Europe's destinations; visiteurope.com will offer them:**

- The possibility of marketing trans-border products like the Danube that include several European countries, as well as special-interest themes, such as architecture or palaces all over Europe. (Visiteurope.com through its networking of attractions and products thus promotes the regional and interregional clusters that are so important for tourism).
- A reporting tool that makes it possible to assess marketing investment, and allows flexible marketing responses to changing conditions.

But the real value-added of visiteurope.com is the integration for the first time of all of Europe's destinations.

**This networking multiplies the portal's possibilities and opens up new perspectives.**

**In short, starting today, visiteurope.com will raise co-operation between Europe's destinations to an entirely new level.**

That is an important step for European tourism. And an important step for a united Europe.

Thank you.



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