



THE EUROPEAN TRAVEL AGENTS'  
AND TOUR OPERATORS' ASSOCIATIONS

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## TOWARDS JOINT PROMOTION OF EUROPE AS A TOURIST DESTINATION

Berlin, 4 March 2015, 15h00 – 18h30

### OUTLINE OF PRESENTATION

Dear Ladies and Gentlemen,  
Dear colleagues,  
Mr. Chairman,

Thank you for inviting ECTAA to this workshop.

Very briefly, ECTAA regroups the national associations of travel agents and tour operators in 30 European countries, roughly representing some 70.000 enterprises.

Europe is still number 1 destination in terms of international tourist arrivals, but it is losing market share to other regions of the world. So there is an undisputed need to act.

When you ask our Members about the idea of joint promotion of Europe as a tourist destination, you will get a very mixed response. Their reactions often mirror the views of their national tourism boards. Well-established destination do not necessarily see the need to collaborate, while smaller but emerging destinations would benefit from shared resources and knowledge and rely on other European destinations as they do not have direct air connectivity.

We must recognize that tourists from a number of long-haul markets come to **visit 'Europe'**. They don't visit a city or a country, they typically buy a **European itinerary**. This is in particular true for first-time visitors. They want to enjoy a European experience, which englobes different places, cultures, arts, etc. For that very reason, joint promotion of Europe as a destination makes sense.

#### **But for such an initiative to go forward, some key elements would need to be in place:**

##### **1. Respect for the principle of subsidiarity**

The global tourism industry is saturated with enticing destinations. And while tourism demand is growing, there is a lot of competition between destinations. And that applies for destinations within Europe as well.

Tourism is the competence of the Member States. And we must respect that.

Any initiative at supra-national level must be **complementary** to the national, regional and local efforts.

## 2. Stakeholder engagement and buy-in

For such an initiative to be successful, we need buy-in from all stakeholders. Today we do not have a full stakeholder engagement, certainly not from our Members.

At Member States' level the buy-in is not complete. The European Travel Commission, which is the organization promoting Europe as a tourist destination in third countries, represents 33 European National Tourism Organisations but **does not cover two very important inbound markets**, notably the UK and France, as well as the Netherlands.

## 3. Private-public partnership

The public-private sector is competitive, which is why a PP model is probably going to be the most effective one.

However, we do not want to see the initiative funded by new taxes imposed by governments on tourism services or by raising fees from the introduction of a European electronic travel authorization. This defeats the very purpose of the initiative, which is to attract more visitors to Europe.

## 4. Complementary actions

It is all very good to promote Europe in third country source markets, but we also need to ensure that we can offer a product that is **attractive, affordable and accessible**. This means that in parallel to the marketing and promotion activities, we need to work on the following:

- Visa waiver expansion and visa facilitation agreements;
- Visa application and processing improvement - see Commission proposal for the review of the Schengen visa code;
- Good functioning of the Internal Market for tourism services – free movement of services, a competitive package travel Directive (consumer protection legislation) and a competitive air transport industry, a sustainable and competitive tourism policy, etc.
- A competitive fiscal environment, avoiding the proliferation of national, regional and local taxes on tourism products. What about exploring the possibility of granting VAT refunds on tourism services to non-EU visitors as it already exists for goods purchased in the EU?

## Conclusion

To conclude, there may be merit in looking at promoting Europe jointly as a tourist destination in typically long-haul markets, where Europe is already today seen as a commercial product and where a joint initiative could reduce costs and generate more sales.

However, today we do not yet have buy-in from all Member States and industry – at least what I hear from our Members. For that reason we recommend to carry out a study with figures demonstrating the benefits for all stakeholders involved.

Thank you for your attention.

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