



## Committee of the Regions

NAT-V-041

**108th plenary session, 6, 7 and 8 October 2014**

### OPINION

#### European Strategy for Coastal and Maritime Tourism

##### THE COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS:

- underlines the need to underpin the EU's strategy goals with adequate funding opportunities provided within the new financial framework and to fully respect the subsidiarity principle;
- stresses the need for European coastal and maritime regions to develop local strategies aimed at promoting distinctive local features, thus increasing their visibility as tourist destinations based on their uniqueness;
- stresses that islands, outermost regions and other remote locations are highly dependent on air transport, ferry and boat connections and calls upon the Commission to properly consider their specific features;
- maintains that coastal and maritime tourism must benefit local coastal communities and thus argues for specific measures promoting local hiring, the sourcing of local products and developing local food systems; considers that such a commitment to act locally will improve the efficiency of coastal and maritime tourism offers, reinforce local employment and generate jobs in sustainable farming, fishing and services, thus also helping to achieve the EU's goals concerning social and territorial cohesion and rural development;
- calls upon the Commission to facilitate labour mobility in the tourism sector through Erasmus Plus and to set up an exchange and training programme for coastal and maritime regions, particularly for young people and in the low season, to enhance vocational training opportunities, sharing of best practice examples and to foster entrepreneurship among this workforce.

Rapporteur

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Reference document

Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions: European Strategy for more Growth and Jobs in Coastal and Maritime Tourism – COM(2014) 86 final

**Opinion of the Committee of the Regions  
European Strategy for Coastal and Maritime Tourism**

**I. POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS**

**THE COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS**

1. welcomes the first European strategy on coastal and maritime tourism and the recognition of the importance of a clear and sustainable framework to boost growth and create jobs, in particular amongst young people;
2. calls on the Commission to also turn its attention, in the future, to the situation of tourism in other regions with specific natural features, such as mountainous or sparsely populated regions, and draw up specific strategies for them;
3. underlines the role of local and regional authorities in planning and implementing tourism policy; welcomes the mainstreaming of coastal and maritime tourism into other relevant EU policies such as IT connectivity, transport, the environment, safety and consumer protection and labour mobility;
4. welcomes the European Commission's recognition of the specific nature of islands and other remote destinations as regards accessibility, transport costs, seasonality and connectivity and their impact on tourism and the economy;
5. considers it necessary, in order to implement this strategy, to define and broaden the scope of activities which can be characterised as "coastal and maritime tourism," understanding these to include not only sea and beach-based tourism, cruise and yachting, boating and connected inland activities<sup>1</sup>, but also sea-related activities and sports, such as diving, the observation of wild animals, and wave and wind activities, and activities associated with cultural tourism: discovery of heritage and gastronomy, attending cultural events and learning about different types and methods of fishing;
6. underlines the need to underpin the EU's strategy goals with adequate funding opportunities provided within the new financial framework and to fully respect the subsidiarity principle, thus developing this strategy in cooperation with and involving coordination between the EU institutions, Member States, regions and stakeholders;
7. stresses the need to recognise that tourism, in coastal and maritime regions, has the capacity to boost awareness of the need to attain environmental and cultural sustainability, to add value to and preserve Europe's maritime heritage and encourage behaviour patterns (responsible and participatory tourism) to achieve these goals;

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<sup>1</sup>

See COM(2014) 86, footnote 4.

8. underlines the increasing pressure on natural resources arising from multiple economic uses and activities developed along the European coasts and pleads that sea-basin strategies address urgently issues related to these activities, namely energy efficiency, use of renewable energies, waste collection, storage and treatment, the loss of biodiversity, the destruction of natural habitats, coastal degradation and soil erosion, protection of potential drinking water and treatment of waste water; considers that these challenges exceed the competence of any individual region or state and that a coordinated, sea basin-wide action, coupled with the necessary funding and an effective sharing of best practices, is necessary;
9. reiterates that the effects of climate change need to be taken into due account, and as far as possible prevented, through the protection and recovery of natural areas as well as by incorporating tourism into the Integrated Coastal Zone Management scheme;
10. recognises the role of European organisations and initiatives (e.g. Blue Flag Status, Quality Coast Award, European Blue Growth Strategy) in the promotion of European tourism quality principles such as environmental protection, sustainable tourism, education and awareness-raising among European coastal and maritime regions, and strongly urges the Commission to establish a dialogue with the institutions that promote them in order to widen their impact and encourage regions to voluntarily support such initiatives;
11. believes that the EU strategy for Blue Growth coupled with innovation presents an important opportunity to boost the local and regional economy and create jobs, which can be expected to also make the coastal regions more attractive for tourists. Proposals on innovation and Blue Growth, can be found in the CoR opinion COR-2014-02645-00-00;

*On performance and competitiveness*

12. highlights that, although coastal and maritime tourism have been more profitable in the last decade than tourism in general, average expenditure per night and the average length of stay have decreased; considers therefore that it is of the utmost importance to counter this trend and strive to increase expenditure and the duration of stays in coastal and maritime areas through innovative, fit-for-purpose measures while addressing the problems of seasonality;
13. stresses the need for European coastal and maritime regions to develop local strategies aimed at preserving, adding value to and promoting distinctive local features, thus increasing their visibility as tourist destinations based on their uniqueness;
14. observes that demand is increasing for niche tourism, such as that in the health, medical, sports, adventure, wildlife, nature, eco-gastronomy, cultural and luxury sectors, all of which present a potential for growth, economic development and job creation;

15. stresses the need to develop the range of integrated tourism offers, involving different stakeholders from local communities and fostering job creation in the regions; notes the potential for link-ups between traditional activities in European coastal and maritime regions (e.g. agriculture and fisheries, local crops, wine-making, heritage and local traditions and customs) in order to develop new tourism products, as well as link-ups involving activities which make tourism less seasonal, such as sea sports and/or sports which take place in foreshore areas;
16. encourages the Commission to collate examples of good practice and publish a study on the reconversion of mass tourism destinations, and on examples of stable and integrated tourism projects in coastal and maritime regions; urges the Commission to foster a debate on the outcomes of such a study with a pan-European conference bringing together Member States, regions and stakeholders;
17. points out that seasonality often affects coastal and maritime tourism more than other destinations which benefit from a more balanced arrival pattern; emphasises, therefore, that these regions need more assistance in diversifying their tourism flows, and encourages the local business community to promote and use creatively their local heritage and service provision so as to offer a broader range of products and services extending beyond the local level, regardless of weather conditions;

*On improving knowledge to increase competitiveness*

18. supports the use of IT and innovation tools as a means to enhance the visibility of coastal and maritime regions and requests that the Commission enhance the Tourism section of the European Atlas of the Seas so as to boost awareness of coastal and maritime regions, their values and their attractiveness for both tourists and other regions;

*On labour force, skills and innovation*

19. recognises the challenges that the tourism sector faces in order to foster sustainable jobs, increase the salaries offered and attract skilled individuals;
20. calls upon the Commission to facilitate labour mobility in the tourism sector through Erasmus Plus and to set up an exchange and training programme for coastal and maritime regions, aimed particularly at young people, in the low season to enhance vocational training opportunities as well as the sharing of examples of best practices and foster entrepreneurship among this workforce;
21. supports the development of clusters among tourism SMEs as a way to provide complementary and quality tourism services (e.g. accommodation, transportation, recreation services), and thus a more diverse and complete range of tourism offers; recommends that

regional and local authorities promote such clusters among local businesses by setting up meeting forums and involving public and private tourism stakeholders in these forums, providing joint platforms which preserve the identity, integration and image of the destination; while, at the same time, providing for types of tax exemption and/or incentives for SMEs that form clusters and promote projects;

22. agrees with the need to recognise SMEs which support the promotion of sustainable tourism in such areas as environmental and food security, water and waste management and the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions;
23. states that the licensing procedures and qualifications required for recreational boat operators differ widely between Member States and is concerned that this may hamper the development of the sector; suggests a mutual recognition of recreational navigation certificates and requirements for skippers as a solution and calls upon the Commission to look into this question. This recommendation to standardise training and skills can be extended to staff working in marinas, with different training and legal and employment cover depending on the Member State;
24. considers, however, that the added value of open online courses to upgrade or re-orient skills in the coastal and maritime field cannot neglect the practice component of certification;

*On strengthening sustainability and accessibility*

25. reiterates that coastal zones are among the areas most vulnerable to climate change and natural hazards and that the impact of such phenomena are far reaching and may adversely affect the lives and livelihoods of coastal and maritime communities, particularly on islands; is thus in favour of an integrated coastal management scheme, promoting sustainable development in coastal zones by means of an approach which respects the limits of natural resources and ecosystems;  
stresses the particular case of islands and the outermost regions, where the limitations of the existing areas and the overlap between economic activities in coastal areas require greater assistance from EU funding to prevent such risks, which can hinder economic activities. In particular, such assistance should be secured for drawing up and implementing a strategy for integrated coastal management;
26. recommends, in order to guarantee the sustainability of maritime and coastal tourism in protected areas (e.g. walking trails) involving wild animals (e.g. birds, marine mammals, sharks), that codes of conduct be adopted and published in order to promote animal welfare, tourist security and an environmental balance;
27. stresses the need, in order to achieve the full potential of eco-tourism, to identify clearly as preferential venues for sustainable tourism activities (e.g. diving, the observation of wild

animals, walking trails) maritime and coastal protected areas such as those of Natura 2000 or OSPAR sites;

28. notes that, in 2020, over one-fifth of Europeans will be over 65 and thus encourages the Commission to pursue its work on the "Senior Tourism" strand, in particular by supporting barrier-free tourism;
29. welcomes the Commission's revision of the Visa Code and its initiatives targeting third-country nationals to draw them to Europe for holidays, including to European coastal and maritime destinations;

*On maximising available EU funding*

30. welcomes the Commission's intention to publish a guide on EU funding for tourism while stressing the need to publicise it more widely and make it known among coastal and maritime regions;
31. during the current phase of negotiations for the operational programmes, calls upon the European Commission, in keeping with the subsidiarity principle, to accept the regions' investment priorities as eligible, particularly those such as investment in and development of infrastructure, especially the restoration and re-use of historical sites (civil and industrial architectural heritage), for recreational boating or maritime tourism activities, which have a leverage effect on the strategy for coastal and maritime tourism;
32. calls for effective, coordinated use of all available resources, including European Investment Bank loans and guarantees for small and medium-sized businesses, for promoting maritime and coastal tourism to be ensured for the 2014-2020 period, particularly in the context of the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF), the Horizon 2020 programme and the COSME, Creative Europe and LIFE + programmes;

*On connectivity*

33. stresses that islands, outermost regions and other remote locations are highly dependent on air transport, and maritime connections, which are in turn dependent on tourists; tourism operators point out that they have to close their business once transport services cease, and transport operators point out that their services cease because tourism operators close their businesses: there is thus a need to promote policies to break this cycle; expresses its concern that the current economic crisis and high tourism seasonality further compound the problem. At the same time, given that 90% of goods and products which are subsequently used in the island tourism industry are transported by sea and that, in reality, freightage is profitable in one direction only, aid policies should be promoted which seek to remedy this imbalance;

34. in this connection, calls upon the Commission to properly consider the specific features of islands, which are almost exclusively dependent on air transport, not only to improve the accessibility of tourists, but also for the economic activities on which their development depends and that can, in turn, benefit the tourism sector. (For example, the CO<sub>2</sub> emissions tax on the aviation industry cannot be increased without taking other types of measures in island regions, given that air transport in these regions is a captive market.); such factors should be particularly considered in discussions concerning the Single European Sky and the Guidelines on State Aid to airports and airlines, and by allowing ERDF financing of investments in airport infrastructures.

Similarly, ferry connections to the mainland and to other islands should be promoted for islands situated near a coast;

35. likewise asks, with regard to the outermost regions, that the unique constraints which are their hallmark (namely their distance and isolation from the rest of European territory) be taken into account when devising and implementing European policies which contribute to their connections with the outside, by adapting these policies to their particular situation;
36. deplores the fact that many coastal regions are not well connected with their hinterland and neighbouring regions and countries; calls for a strategic reflection on inter-modal connectivity between transport hubs (i.e. airports, train stations, ports), as well as with neighbouring countries, enabling passengers to get in and around different sea basins with greater ease;

*On local communities, their heritage, identity and cuisine*

37. maintains that coastal and maritime tourism must benefit local coastal communities and thus argues for specific measures promoting local hiring, the sourcing of local products and developing local food systems; considers that such a commitment to act locally will improve the efficiency of coastal and maritime tourism offers, reinforce local employment and generate jobs in sustainable farming, fishing and services, thus also helping to achieve the EU's goals concerning social and territorial cohesion and rural development;
38. observes that the local maritime heritage is not sufficiently promoted in many European coastal areas; stresses the need to make the protection of the maritime and coastal heritage compatible with commercial or economic developments such as cable or pipe laying, oil and gas prospecting and recovery, the mining of coal or minerals, sand or gravel extraction and waste and spoil disposal; considers that sunken wrecks, underwater ruins, historic ships and port facilities, traditional fishery trade and traditions and other related trades (associated with traditional shipyards, net making, preserving foodstuffs, etc.) must be a highlight of local tourist attractions;

- 39. underlines the untapped potential of fishing tourism (pesca-tourism) and considers that it may offer significant benefits to coastal communities, making fishing activities profitable, preserving local fishing traditions and diversifying local income sources;
- 40. agrees that, in cases where fleets use selective and traditional methods of fishing, the investments necessary to promote fishing tourism should be backed and considered by the EU as a complementary activity to commercial fishing, promoting additional revenues for fishing communities; calls on countries and regions, together with the fishing and tourism industries and other stakeholders, to overcome any legal and administrative obstacles there might be in order to develop fishing tourism;
- 41. calls upon the Commission to enhance its collaboration with the Council of Europe and to improve communication about and the promotion of the new and existing cultural routes along the European coast;
- 42. supports the creation of a Federation of Coastal and Maritime Regions' Tourist Offices or Agencies serving as a platform for cooperation and exchanges between professional bodies of coastal and maritime regions as well as helping the development and implementation of cooperation programmes aiming at the promotion of these regions;

*On the cruise sector*

- 43. encourages local and regional authorities to engage in a constructive dialogue with the cruise industry to ensure the local supply of goods for these ships and to try to capture a larger part of passenger expenditure by creating more attractive reception areas at or near the cruise terminal with shops, bars, restaurants and local tourist agents able to offer hassle-free trips, designed with sustainability criteria in mind, to nearby attractions;
- 44. considers that the public authorities may help local business operators to better promote and market their deals, making sure that information about local attractions is available in different languages and that travellers' safety and comfort are assured. The process of supplying the ships and organising the product at the destination is tied to the work of shipping agents with whom the local and regional authorities must cooperate in order to promote use of the product and local complementary activities;
- 45. observes that large cruise ships bring significant crowds to any destination which may create a challenge for transportation to all disembarking tourists; welcomes the development of integrated transport planning and design projects to meet the needs of travellers coming en masse without disrupting local populations;

*On marinas and nautical sports*

46. recognises the growing popularity of nautical sports and activities and welcomes the fact that they are often designed and delivered by small local companies; is of the opinion that European common standards in this area would boost consumers' confidence and improve safety;
47. calls upon the Commission to assess the need for a common framework for marina infrastructure development; invites the Commission, given the 4 500 or so recreation boat harbours in Europe and the growing popularity of yachting, to promote a study on common standards which addresses, in particular, issues concerning accessibility for people with reduced mobility, safety standards or the carrying capacity of leisure ports;
48. calls upon local and regional authorities hosting marinas to develop strategies together with local stakeholders and tourism operators in order to better connect their harbours to the region as a whole, thus encouraging leisure sailors to explore the land behind the port and discover its heritage, promoting specifically nautical and maritime tourism through nautical clubs, marinas and nautical resorts, for example.

Brussels, 7 October 2014

The President  
of the Committee of the Regions

Michel Lebrun

The Secretary-General  
of the Committee of the Regions

Jiří Buriánek

## II. PROCEDURE

<b>Title</b>	European Strategy for Coastal and Maritime Tourism
<b>References</b>	COM(2014) 86 final
<b>Legal basis</b>	Article 307(1) TFEU
<b>Procedural basis</b>	Optional referral
<b>Date of Council/EP referral/Date of Commission letter</b>	Catherine Day letter 8 May 2013
<b>Date of Bureau/President's decision</b>	13 March 2014
<b>Commission responsible</b>	Commission for Natural Resources
<b>Rapporteur</b>	Vasco Ilídio Alves Cordeiro (PT/PES)
<b>Analysis</b>	April 2014
<b>Discussed in commission</b>	5 June 2014
<b>Date adopted by commission</b>	5 June 2014
<b>Result of the vote in commission</b>	Majority
<b>Date adopted in plenary</b>	7 October 2014
<b>Previous Committee opinions</b>	<p><a href="#">CDR 342/2010</a> Opinion on Europe, the world's no 1 tourist destination: a new political framework for tourism in Europe</p> <p><a href="#">CDR 83/2009</a> on the correlation between the labour market and regional needs in the area of tourism</p> <p><a href="#">CDR 397/2003</a> Opinion on the basic orientations for the sustainability of European tourism</p> <p><a href="#">CDR 99/2002</a> Opinion on the future of European tourism</p>
<b>Date of subsidiarity monitoring consultation</b>	n/a