



European Economic and Social Committee

INT/279
Tourism and culture

Brussels, 15 March 2006

OPINION
of the
European Economic and Social Committee
on
Tourism and culture: two forces for growth
(own-initiative opinion)

On 14 July 2005 the European Economic and Social Committee decided to draw up an own-initiative opinion, under Rule 29(2) of its Rules of Procedure, on

Tourism and culture: two forces for growth.

The Section for the Single Market, Production and Consumption, which was responsible for preparing the Committee's work on the subject, adopted its opinion on 21 February 2006. The rapporteur was Mr Pesci.

At its 425th plenary session, held on 15-16 March 2006 (meeting of 15 March), the European Economic and Social Committee adopted the following opinion by 135 votes to one with three abstentions.

*

* *

1. Introduction

- 1.1 Tourism contributes substantially to the EU's economy, accounting for 5.5% of GDP (with this figure varying from 3% to 8% according to the Member State) thanks to the activity of over two million businesses employing approximately nine million people. Tourism is also a powerful driving force for other sectors of the economy, including industry (particularly fashion-related sectors), transport, agrifood, trade and other types of services.
- 1.2 Over 80% of European tourism is generated by individuals and families, while the rest is business tourism derived from companies. European families dedicate about an eighth of their personal expenditure to tourism-related consumption.
- 1.3 Europe is still the most popular tourist destination in the world. Indeed, flows of tourists to the European Union are constantly increasing from Russia, China and India, where economic development is rapidly giving more of the population access to this kind of consumption.
- 1.4 Despite these initial encouraging facts, strong competition from new emerging economies affects the European tourism sector more and more each year. The aim of this own-initiative opinion is to draw the European institutions' attention to the boost which culture can give tourism in Europe, and to call on them to promote and protect Europe's cultural heritage. Unlike other industrial sectors, this heritage cannot be relocated or reproduced, and it could thus be a trump card in the face of competition from other areas of the world.
- 1.5 As part of the process of drawing up this opinion, a number of meetings were held with the heads of the various Commission directorates-general concerned with the issue of tourism and culture and with European Parliament representatives. In addition, a public hearing was held on 18 November 2005 at Paestum, one of the most evocative archaeological sites in Italy, in

which many representatives of public institutions, international organisations (UNESCO), cultural associations and private tourist companies took part. The hearing was held in conjunction with the "Eighth Mediterranean archaeological tourism fair", making it possible for representatives from countries on the southern side of the Mediterranean to participate as well.

2. **New impetus for the Lisbon Agenda**

2.1 The March 2005 European summit called upon the Commission, the Council and the Member States to relaunch the Lisbon Strategy for growth and employment and to take an active part in the attainment of its objectives: tourism and culture can clearly make a substantial contribution to both growth and employment. Indeed, as regards growth, tourism looks set to be one of the fastest developing economic sectors in the coming years: an average annual growth rate of 3.1% is expected between 2006 and 2015. In terms of employment, too, tourism is an industry which is well placed to make a significant contribution to combating unemployment. As the industry employs a large number of women, it can also help in the achievement of the Lisbon Strategy objective of raising the number of women in employment¹. Although European tourism is expected to double over the next 25 years, its growth rate is lower than the world average, and, in particular, lower than the growth rates of some regions of emerging countries. Appropriate initiatives are necessary from all the institutions if the EU's tourism sector is to expand still further and be restored as the fastest-growing tourism sector in the world.

3. **Cultural tourism**

3.1 One of the fastest growing areas of the tourism sector is cultural tourism – tourism connected with art and nature, art heritage cities and areas with a particularly high concentration of historical assets and local traditions. This opinion aims not to address all culture-related issues but to assess the potential contribution of culture to tourism.

3.2 In this specific segment of the tourism sector, the European Union is particularly fortunate in that it has a greater concentration of cultural assets than any other area in the world. Indeed, 300 of the 812 UNESCO World Heritage sites of cultural and natural heritage recorded in 137 countries are located in the 25 EU Member States. The figure rises to 331² if the four candidate countries (Bulgaria, Croatia, Romania and Turkey) are taken into account. The second European Cultural Tourism Network annual conference revealed the very significant

¹ According to ECTN (European Cultural Tourism Network) data, cultural tourism brings direct benefits for three areas defined by the Lisbon Strategy: Area 8 – more jobs; Area 9 – labour force; and Area 10 – education. The ECTN, which was set up in 2003 to promote cooperation between the various sectors of cultural tourism, is a project cofinanced by the European Union.

² This is the distribution of UNESCO (United Nations agency responsible for culture) sites among the 25 EU Member States: Austria 8, Belgium 10, Cyprus 3, Denmark 4, Estonia 2, Finland 6, France 30, Germany 31, Greece 16, Ireland 2, Italy 42 (including the two Vatican City sites), Latvia 2, Lithuania 4, Luxembourg 1, Malta 3, Netherlands 7, Poland 12, Portugal 13, United Kingdom 26, Czech Republic 12, Slovakia 5, Slovenia 1, Spain 38, Sweden 14, Hungary 8.

fact that the flow of visitors to Europe from China and India is entirely due to the interest that people from those countries have in European cultural and architectural heritage. The EU and the Member States must therefore invest in preserving their wealth of cultural heritage and promoting cultural tourism.

- 3.3 Economic benefits aside, cultural tourism also has a key role to play in developing social and civil values and in fostering European integration and the dialogue between peoples and cultures. The development of the European identity hinges on a deeper knowledge of the countries, cultural traditions and "differences" which make up the rich European tapestry. Today, as Europe faces something of an identity crisis, promoting European cultural values could convey optimism and confidence as regards the Union's future³.
- 3.4 Furthermore, particularly at this difficult time for multiculturalism, the EU must undertake to foster cultural and religious dialogue with other peoples, including by promoting cultural tourism. The EU's decision to make 2008 the *European Year of Intercultural Dialogue* is therefore particularly timely.
- 3.5 Developing cultural tourism, highlighting the historical and social context of European art heritage and enhancing environmental heritage will give tourists from all countries a genuine understanding of Europe's cultural history.

4. **The European institutions' current undertakings**

- 4.1 The European Union has for some time been active in the area of tourism and protecting and promoting cultural heritage, although it has never been able to finance tourist activities directly for lack of a legal basis. Now, at last, a legal basis has been provided for in the draft of the new Constitutional Treaty, although, regrettably, the Constitutional Treaty has yet to be ratified. The approach hitherto adopted by the EU with a view to maximising the potential of tourism has essentially been horizontal: sometimes the Structural Funds have been used to promote tourism and sometimes it has benefited from the knock-on effect of projects relating to other sectors, such as the environment or research. Although this may seem positive, the fact that it is difficult for DG Enterprise and Industry (tourism unit) to achieve effective coordination with the other directorates-general that are directly or indirectly concerned with tourism, is in danger of nullifying any beneficial effects of the various European initiatives for the sector.
- 4.2 With regard to the Structural Funds, in the period 2000-2006 the EU allocated approximately EUR 7 billion to projects directly or indirectly linked to the tourism sector and some EUR 2 billion to cultural projects (Interreg III, Leader+ and Urban programmes). A total

³ Europa Nostra (the Pan-European Federation for Cultural Heritage, engaged in enhancing and safeguarding Europe's cultural heritage, bringing together 40 European countries and over 200 associations involved in safeguarding and enhancing cultural heritage) believes that European cultural heritage is a key element in developing and promoting the European identity and European citizenship.

EUR 9 billion of funding was thus earmarked for tourism and culture, but it may not be properly exploited because the level of coordination in managing these two respective sectors financed by the Structural Funds leaves something to be desired.

- 4.3 Particularly successful EU initiatives to promote cultural heritage include the European Capitals of Culture (ECCs) project. A recent study⁴ commissioned by DG Culture states that this programme has led in the year of the event to an average increase of 12% in tourism in cities awarded the title of European Capital of Culture and in the following year to tourist flows which were still higher than the average for the years preceding the event. According to the same study, the growth potential generated by the event is still high but is worth exploiting more. To this end, DG Culture has drawn up a new proposal advocating the future adoption of new, clearer criteria for selecting the candidate cities, encouraging competition and emulation between them, stressing the need for cultural programmes to have a European dimension and be sustainable and, lastly, promoting the dissemination of good practice in the management of cultural events. The proposal also calls for the EU's contribution to the European Capital of Culture, currently set at EUR 500 000, to be trebled.
- 4.4 In early December 2005, the EP Committee on Budgetary Control, in line with the objective of promoting the potential of tourism and culture as much as possible, approved for the first time the appropriation of EUR 1 billion for the development of a project promoting *European destinations of excellence*.
- 4.5 For its part, the Commission's DG Enterprise and Industry has set up a Tourism Sustainability Group (TSG), which includes experts representing the institutions and different categories of operators, with the task of drafting proposals to the Commission for achieving sustainable tourism as a step towards drawing up an Agenda 21 for European tourism by 2007. The EESC agrees with the Commission and the European Parliament that sustainable tourism is the only form of tourism that should be promoted, and that alone.
- 4.6 Moreover, at the fourth European Tourism Forum, held in Malta on 20 October 2005, Commissioner Günter Verheugen announced the launch in early 2006 of a European tourism portal, which will provide access to the websites of national tourist organisations in order to promote European tourist destinations to the rest of the world more effectively.
- 4.7 Lastly, the Commission's DG Enterprise has just launched a study on *The impact of cultural and sporting events on tourism-oriented SMEs*, while DG Culture has launched a study on the cultural economy in Europe.

⁴ Palmer/Rae Associates, International Cultural Advisors, "European Cities and Capitals of Culture", study prepared for the European Commission, August 2004.

5. **The work of the Economic and Social Committee**

5.1 Aware of the importance of the tourism sector for Europe, the European Economic and Social Committee has, for some time, been active in tourism-related areas such as tourism policy in the enlarged EU, tourism and socio-economic recovery of areas in decline, tourism and cooperation between the public and private sectors, tourism and sport, etc.⁵

5.2 Together with the two papers referred to in point 4.7 and the opinions referred to in point 5.1, this opinion seeks to contribute to the formulation of future tourism policy guidelines at European level.

6. **Raising the public's cultural awareness**

6.1 The promotion of cultural values should primarily target the people living in an area, who must become more aware of the wealth of local historical, art and environmental heritage⁶. Indeed, once familiar with local heritage, they can play a valuable role in preserving and promoting their area, supporting the work of the public authorities.

6.2 To encourage widespread cultural awareness, programmes need to be introduced in schools which inform young people about local historical, art and environmental heritage, together with initiatives which give young people a leading role in exploiting it⁷.

7. **The segments of cultural tourism**

7.1 If cultural tourism is to be promoted effectively and appeal even to the "*culturally indifferent tourist*", the various segments need to be analysed and developed, and trends and opportunities for further development identified. The main segments of cultural tourism are: art heritage, exhibitions, shows and other events, food and wine and rural tourism, film tourism and cultural theme parks.

7.2 **Art heritage**

7.2.1 The most traditional segment of cultural tourism is "physical" art heritage, consisting of historic city-centres, museums and archaeological sites. The priority for this segment is to

⁵ The tourism-related subjects addressed by the EESC include: *Tourism policy in the enlarged EU*, *The contribution of tourism to the socio-economic recovery of areas in decline*, and *Tourism policy and cooperation between the public and private sectors* (rapporteur: Mr Mendoza Castro); and *Tourism and sport: the future challenges for Europe* (rapporteur: Mr Pesci).

⁶ The initiative of the municipality of Antwerp in Belgium, which gives all Antwerp's residents free entry to the city's museums, is worth noting.

⁷ In Italy, for instance, a number of interesting initiatives have developed in this field: each year in early spring, the Fondo Ambiente Italiano promotes the opening of monuments which are little-known or usually closed to the public, and asks local schoolchildren to become "tour guides for a day" and take visitors on guided tours of them.

encourage greater integration between the management of cultural assets and the management of tourist facilities so as to encourage tourists to "exploit" this heritage. The approach must be one of integrated "cultural tourism" facilities, to encourage the integrated management of combined arts-and-environment facilities, even where these are owned by different public authorities or private individuals, or to promote opening-hours and pricing policies which make the sites as accessible as possible and generate more revenue so that management costs can be covered. Moreover, cultural heritage needs to be "brought to life", for instance by mounting temporary exhibitions in museums, palaces or castles of historic interest, with particular focus on the promotion of contemporary art.

7.2.2 There have been interesting schemes such as, for example, the "tourist passes" introduced by a number of European cities which combine transport services and access to museums and archaeological sites.

7.2.3 "Cultural districts" are particularly suited to smaller centres of art heritage, which integrate tourist and cultural services in regions made up of a number of similar districts, combine public and private funding, and are promoted as a single entity. Moreover, the EESC believes that it would be beneficial for regional tourist organisations to work together to develop and create cultural districts, including across borders.

7.2.4 Moreover, "networks"⁸ or itineraries of cultural sites should be set up in different countries, such as networks of castles or palaces of historic interest, archaeological sites (such as the Magna Grecia network of cities)⁹ or networks of particular types of museums, including "enterprise museums", or trans-European itineraries¹⁰ such as the Via Francigena. These networks and itineraries should be identifiable by means of a single mark and be properly signposted, and their components should be promoted together. The reception facilities provided should also be the same, where possible.

7.3 Exhibitions, shows and other events

7.3.1 Another major segment of cultural tourism is events: exhibitions, concerts, festivals and other special events. Over the past 10 to 15 years, cultural events have become powerful driving-

8 An interesting example is the Network of fortified towns. The county of Kent (United Kingdom), the Nord-Pas de Calais department (France) and the province of Western Flanders (Belgium) have linked 17 places of historic interest together in a network, thereby promoting the rich shared heritage of the area.

9 As proposed at the public hearing at Paestum on 18 November 2005 by a number of regional councillors responsible for tourism in the Campania Region and Greece.

10 There are many extremely interesting examples, including:

- the European Route of Brick Gothic, a project which spans seven countries (Sweden, Denmark, Germany, Poland, Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia), 26 cities and two regions;
- the European Route of Jewish Heritage, a programme awarded the "Major Cultural Route of the Council of Europe" diploma by the Council of Europe (5 December 2005).

forces in promoting tourism. Increasing numbers of fans, particularly young people, travel to visit major exhibitions, to attend concerts and festivals and to take part in special events such as the "White Nights" which are becoming popular in many cities such as Paris, Versailles, Brussels, Rome, Vienna and Warsaw.

- 7.3.2 To enhance this segment, infrastructure needs to be created or adapted to provide sites suitable for exhibitions and festivals; planning is also necessary in the field of advertising and information campaigns. The European Union could facilitate the creation of a single calendar of cultural events, promote cooperation between different countries and cultural institutions and, lastly, encourage initiatives in countries which have less experience and fewer traditions in this field, particularly the ten new Member States.

7.4 **Food and wine customs and rural tourism**

- 7.4.1 A third major segment of cultural tourism is linked to food and wine customs in the different countries: this is a segment of "material culture" which has become increasingly significant in recent years and has generated a genuine cultural and economic movement promoting typical local products¹¹.

- 7.4.2 Here, too, the creation needs to be encouraged of "food and wine itineraries" that include art and cultural attractions, promoting an integrated package of cultural visits, food- and wine-tastings and experiences of rural life, thus combining the history of art with an experience of typical food and wine traditions from a particular region or area.

- 7.4.3 The European Union could promote a European guide to food and wine itineraries and rural tourism, focusing in particular on cross-border itineraries which combine the traditions of two or three countries: this would help to highlight the common roots underlying many traditions and "differences".

7.5 **Film tourism**

- 7.5.1 A fourth segment of cultural tourism which is emerging as a substantial source of tourist flows is linked to film and television-serial productions. Many regions are seeing the number of tourists increasing as more and more people visit sets and places which have played host to successful films and TV productions. Thus, for instance, Alnwick Castle in Northumberland (North of England), which was the setting for the films based on J. K. Rowling's Harry Potter novels, created a tourist flow of EUR 13 million per year almost overnight, making it one of

¹¹ Initiatives to promote typical products include the international "Slow Food" association, founded by Carlo Petrini, which currently has 83,000 members, offices in Italy, Germany, Switzerland, the United States, France, Japan and the United Kingdom and local groups in 122 different countries. Slow Food opposes the standardisation of taste, defends the need for consumer information and protects cultural identities linked to food and gastronomic traditions. Among the most distinctive European tourist routes promoting typical products are the Malt Whisky Trail in Scotland, which is the only trail in the world entirely devoted to malt whisky, the Trappist beer route in Belgium and the Netherlands, and the oyster routes in Brittany.

the top tourist destinations in the UK. The same thing happened in Italy at Agliè Castle in Piedmont, where the television serial *Elisa di Rivombrosa* was filmed: the average number of visitors per week to the castle increased from 100 to 3 500. Moreover, the effect of fame even applies to films which are still at the production stage: the small city of Lincoln in England where the film *The Da Vinci Code*, based on the best-seller of the same name by Dan Brown, is being shot has already attracted large numbers of tourists, while tour agencies have sprung up in Paris running tours solely of the places described in Brown's novel.

- 7.5.2 According to a survey carried out in August 2005 in the UK, 27% of adults and at least 45% of young adults between the ages of 16 and 24 are influenced when deciding where to go on holiday by films they have seen in the cinema or on television. That is why VisitBritain, a body promoting British tourism, follows film productions very closely and publishes very detailed movie maps on its website showing all the places where new productions are being filmed, how to get there and the tourist facilities available.

7.6 Cultural theme parks

- 7.6.1 A fifth segment of cultural tourism could be linked to the creation of historical and art theme parks which supplement visits to museums, historic city-centres and archaeological sites. The parks, which could be built near famous tourist attractions, should be an auxiliary facility to help visitors understand properly the history in which they are being "immersed"¹². Similar parks could be built in major European cultural districts¹³ and the EU could encourage the building of this "info-tainment" (information and entertainment) infrastructure, which could be an additional attraction for tourists.

8. Use of new technology

- 8.1 New information and communication technology has many contributions to make to the exploitation of cultural heritage for tourism purposes: creation of websites and satellite and digital television channels, use of audio and video clips for latest-generation mobile phones, reconstructions of monuments and sites of historical and artistic interest using virtual reality techniques¹⁴.

¹² The Malta Experience is an interesting example: an hour-long film relates the history of the island from its very beginning and the story of the peoples who have inhabited it, giving even the youngest visitors a proper understanding of the history surrounding them.

¹³ For example, a virtual park on ancient Pompeii could be built near the archaeological site of Pompeii, representing daily life in Roman times and maybe reconstructing the eruption of Vesuvius which destroyed the town. A similar park could also be built in Waterloo (Belgium), to give tourists a better understanding of how one of the most famous battles in history was fought.

¹⁴ During the seminar on Cultural tourism: a challenge for European integration, organised by the Luxembourg Presidency in April 2005, a number of interesting examples were given of the application of new technologies, including the use of palm-top computers to provide a constant flow of information on the area a visitor is passing through (this was in relation to pilgrims travelling along the Via Francigena).

- 8.2 New technologies could be applied in this particular area to encourage sustainable tourism and protect the most popular art heritage sites which are in danger of being damaged by mass tourism: information technology could provide new ways of scheduling, monitoring and sorting tourist flows, and environmental factors (such as humidity in museum rooms) which can damage works of art could be controlled automatically. In addition, the use of on-line-booking and visit-by-appointment systems could encourage people to visit sites which can only accommodate a small group of tourists at a time.
- 8.3 Lastly, modern technology has a valuable contribution to make in helping to create structures and systems that overcome architectural barriers, which are all too often an insurmountable obstacle for the less agile. This must not be overlooked.
- 8.4 The European Union, which stated in its Seventh Framework Programme for Research and Innovation that the results of research could be used to benefit the tourism sector and encourage access to cultural heritage, could facilitate the practical implementation of initiatives of this kind, maybe drawing up a list of available technologies and a map of best practices at Community level which could provide useful information for operators in the various countries.
- 8.5 The use of technology is essential to promote cultural tourist destinations both within and outside the EU. Here, too, the initiatives under way in the different countries should be recorded. The European Union could, moreover, supplement the European tourism portal with a satellite TV channel promoting tourism in Europe to countries outside Europe.

9. **Governance of cultural heritage and staff training**

- 9.1 An effective system of exploitation of cultural heritage for tourism purposes raises the issue of governance of cultural assets. Some of these are public property (state or local authority), while others belong to religious or non-profit organisations or are privately owned. The situation is particularly sensitive in a number of new Member States, where the forced nationalisation of previous decades has created uncertainty as regards property rights and caused a considerable drop in the level of conservation of much cultural heritage.
- 9.2 Models of governance should therefore be adopted which, while respecting the current ownership structures of artistic and cultural heritage and providing the greatest possible protection and preservation guarantees, allow coordinated management of integrated cultural tourist facilities and encourage sharing of public and private investment, including by means of appropriate tax incentives.
- 9.3 The European Union could carry out a survey of systems of governance in the different European countries to assess their effectiveness and encourage dissemination thereof in other countries, or it could propose innovative tax and other systems fostering public-private cooperation in management.

9.4 Linked to governance is the issue of training: staff working in cultural heritage sites now, in addition to knowledge of art history, have to have management and marketing skills and be able to use new technologies, and those who have direct contact with tourists such as hoteliers, shopkeepers, public services staff etc., as well as having language skills, should be trained in "*savoir faire*" and to respect cultural differences among tourists. Here, too, the European Union could record the most cutting-edge training expertise in the sector in order to facilitate exchanges of expertise, benchmarking and the dissemination of best practices, with a view to encouraging high-quality tourism.

10. **Integration of cultural tourism and other tourism segments**

10.1 Effective management of cultural tourism can benefit other tourism segments too, such as seaside and mountain tourism and even business tourism and tourism for the older public.

10.2 The presence of art itineraries, exhibitions, concerts, festivals or venues for food- and wine-tasting could encourage tourists to select particular European destinations and could help these resorts to cope with competition from tourist destinations in developing countries, which, while more competitive in terms of natural resources and prices, cannot match the cultural attractions offered by their European counterparts.

10.3 Similarly, where business tourism is concerned, the opportunity to combine a business trip with cultural tourism may lead to the trip being extended by a few days (perhaps to include a weekend) or even becoming a family vacation in which a spouse or children are included.

10.4 Given that life expectancy is now much higher than in the past, cultural tourism meets the needs of an "older" public which is choosing to spend an increasing amount of its leisure time learning about and familiarising itself with new cultures. This also ties in with the need to promote tourism during low-season periods of the year.

10.5 There is no doubt that the European Union can also act as a driving force in this endeavour to promote the integration of cultural tourism and the other tourism segments.

11. **Conclusions and proposals**

11.1 Given that culture can help to boost the development of tourism, especially since, as well as being a driving force for other sectors of the economy, tourism has a significant contribution to make to the achievement of the Lisbon Strategy goals of *growth* and *employment*, the main aim of this own-initiative opinion is, as stated above, to provide the European institutions with additional tools for promoting the sector, which is still dynamic but faces stiff competition from countries outside Europe.

11.2 **Information and integrated advertising campaigns**

11.2.1 If European cultural tourism is to be exploited effectively, more effective information and integrated advertising campaigns publicising Europe and European destinations are needed; at the same time, best practices need to be facilitated in the areas of protection, exploitation, governance and training. The European tourism portal will doubtless be very useful here, particularly if:

- Member States' tourist bodies do actually input effective, practical, regularly updated information into the portal in a uniform manner;
- it includes accurate information on, and advertising of, networks and itineraries of cultural tourism destinations within Member States and across Europe;
- it can also be used by operators in the sector as well to keep abreast of best practices in the field of management of cultural tourism systems and governance of cultural heritage and to keep in touch with new initiatives and events and up-to-date training for staff;
- it incorporates information input at European level, such as a European calendar of cultural events and exhibitions and a guide to food and wine circuits and rural tourism;
- coordination and synergy between the European tourism portal and the culture portal is ensured.

11.3 **Using competitions and reward systems to promote best practice**

11.3.1 The European Union could use competitions and reward schemes in its programmes in order to promote best practices in the management of cultural tourism services, particularly in the European Capitals of Culture programme¹⁵ and the future European destinations of excellence programme. The EU could also provide advice for cities and regions which decide to apply for these two programmes, and grant them more substantial funding than at present and maybe fast-track Structural Funds appropriations for them. At national level, it would be worth encouraging healthy competition between the cities and cultural tourism destinations applying to take part in the two programmes by applying criteria defined at European level: governance systems, cooperation between public and private sectors, integration of tourist and cultural services, advertising and information campaigns publicising events, etc. for European Capitals of Culture; and sustainability, extension of the tourist season, decongestion, governance systems, cooperation between public and private sectors, integration of services, etc. for European Destinations of Excellence.

11.4 **Fostering intercultural dialogue**

11.4.1 Fostering intercultural dialogue, both within the EU (particularly with a view to the future accession of the four candidate countries) and between the EU and other areas of the world, must be a priority in cultural tourism programmes too. In this perspective, as has already been

¹⁵ Until 2005 the programme was based on intergovernmental agreements.

stressed, the decision to make 2008 the European Year of Intercultural Dialogue is extremely timely. Nevertheless, even before 2008 it would be useful to launch a series of projects targeting schools, for example, by extending international exchange programmes such as Erasmus to secondary school pupils and encouraging twinning between classes from different countries. Specific projects fostering intercultural dialogue could also be introduced for older people. Thus, 2008 would be a show-case year for current initiatives and could spawn further initiatives.

11.5 **Creating a European tourism agency**

11.5.1 Since the EU has no direct operational tourism instruments due to the regrettable lack of a legal basis, it could usefully take action to enhance coordination in the area of management, to promote current and future projects for the sector. The EESC would advocate the creation, as soon as possible and with due regard for the subsidiarity principle, of a European tourism agency which could act as a European tourism monitoring centre and provide the Community and the Member States with reliable and comparable data on tourism. This has already been proposed in the earlier own-initiative opinion on Tourism and sport: the future challenges for Europe.

11.6 **Encouraging policy coordination of cultural tourism activities**

11.6.1 The EESC welcomes the proposals made by Commissioner Günter Verheugen at the Fourth European Tourism Forum in Malta and by the recent European Parliament resolution¹⁶ to entrust DG Enterprise and Industry with the task of coordinating the various Community initiatives affecting the tourism sector.

11.7 The EESC has called this opinion the *Paestum Declaration*, recalling the public hearing held last November at that fascinating Italian archaeological site.

Brussels, 15 March 2006

The President
of the
European Economic and Social Committee

The Secretary-General
of the
European Economic and Social Committee

Anne-Marie Sigmund

Patrick Venturini

¹⁶ European Parliament resolution on new prospects and new challenges for sustainable European tourism.