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DRAFT OPINION

Tourism as a driving force for regional cooperation across the EU

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Deadline for tabling amendments:

3 p.m. (Brussels time) on Tuesday, 22 November 2016. Amendments must be submitted using the online tool for tabling amendments (available through the Members' Portal at <http://cor.europa.eu/members>).

Number of signatures required: 6

**Draft opinion of the European Committee of the Regions –
Tourism as a driving force for regional cooperation across the EU**

I. POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

THE EUROPEAN COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS

Multi-level governance

1. supports the EU's policy, **in keeping with the principle of subsidiarity and multi-level governance**, to maintain Europe's leading position as a tourist destination and to maximise this sector's contribution to growth and employment;
2. highlights the fact that, under Article 195 TFEU, tourism comes under the responsibility of the Member States. Regional and local authorities have a key role to play here. Given the importance of tourism for the internal market, **cooperation between Member States and the various levels of government** is necessary, as are common European principles, criteria and measures with European added value;
3. calls on the European Commission (EC) to revise the **2010 tourism strategy**, to launch an integrated EU tourism policy relating to all relevant EU policies and to propose a multi-annual work programme with clear goals, indicators and measures for tourism;
4. asks that a section on tourism be added to all **macro-regional strategies**¹. The EC is urged to draw up, together with the CoR, a catalogue of topics with possible tourism objectives for macro-regions;
5. Underlines that tourism is today one of the fastest growing economic sectors in Europe; a sector that drives global growth and development, creates millions of jobs, spurs exports and investment and transforms peoples' lives;
6. calls on **regions and cities** to subsequently devise strategies for tourism which are in line with European and macro-regional strategies, and also calls for **public-public** cooperation and **public-private partnerships** to develop, promote and implement new tourism infrastructure;
7. calls for **cross-sectoral local platforms** to link, strategically develop and market destinations, e.g. tourism and agriculture;
8. points out that tourism is one of the most important policy areas for European groupings of territorial cooperation (EGTCs). EGTCs are urged to facilitate transnational and inter-regional cooperation by means of **cross-border tourism strategies** (e.g. transport or marketing strategies), thus creating wealth, boosting employment and ensuring regions can offer more to

¹ COM(2009) 248, "European Union Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region" (EUSBSR); COM(2014) 357, "European Union Strategy for the Adriatic and Ionian Region"; COM(2010) 715, "European Union Strategy for Danube Region" (EUSDR); COM(2015) 366, "European Union Strategy for the Alpine Region" (EUSALP).

consumers. In so doing they should make use of all possible European funds (e.g. EFSI, ESIF, Interreg, Horizon 2020);

Tourism and infrastructure

9. calls for public and private **funds** to be used for long-term improvements to travel and tourist infrastructure² in outlying regions, mountainous regions, islands and coastal areas, which in many domains also provides services of general interest, so as to secure the **accessibility, supply and competitiveness of tourist regions**, and calls for
 - improvements to the system by which Eurostat collects and processes data on tourist flows (transit and destination-bound tourist traffic)
 - **capacity and destination management** to be supported, so as to deal with the immense transport-related and environmental pressures and the excessive burden on infrastructure in tourist regions at European level;
 - **financial incentives** to even out tourist flows and coordinate them across Europe³;
 - a **review of the EC White Paper** for a competitive, Europe-wide transport system, in particular to reduce transit traffic in sensitive regions (including urban population centres and mountainous regions) and to ensure a fully joined-up door-to-door travel chain, information about public transport and existing services, and measures to promote public transport, in particular rail travel (e.g. motorail services);
10. calls for issues related to combating terrorism, security and civil protection to be included in European, national and regional tourism strategies; in particular emergency communication and management in national, regional and local emergency plans and procedures;

Investment in the tourism sector

11. stresses that **investments** must be made in the competitiveness of European tourism. SMEs, in particular, need to make better use of the digital single market strategy and its stimulus packages (EFSI, ESI, EMFF, Interreg, URBACT, LIFE, Horizon, COSME, Creative Europe, Erasmus+, EaSI)⁴;
12. supports the call to introduce a **budget heading for promoting European tourism** into the annual EU budget to finance innovative cross-border projects, and also supports more consideration of **investments with relevance to tourism** in post-2020 EU regional policy. EU funding must ease the strain on SMEs and the bureaucratic burden that managing funding entails must be significantly reduced;

² Airports, inland waterways, harbours, public transport, shipping links, cycle tracks, road upgrades, broadband access, healthcare, etc.

³ "Green routes", management by means of toll charges at certain times of the day or week, discounted ferry crossings/tariffs for tourists taking public transport (especially trains).

⁴ "Guide on EU funding for the tourism sector 2014-2010".
<http://ec.europa.eu/DocsRoom/documents/18164/attachments/1/translations/en/renditions/pdf>.

13. calls on Member States to accelerate digitalisation in the tourism sector and in particular to develop high-speed broadband internet in outlying, sparsely populated and mountainous regions, as well as to set up expert forums on promoting best practices, in particular for SMEs;
14. regrets that SMEs' lack of knowledge means that they do not make sufficient use of the EFSI and supports the establishment of **regional investment platforms** under the EFSI to enable SMEs to have access to information and know-how, following the example of regional development (e.g. "theALPS"⁵). As part of the implementation of the "Invest and Connect" declaration⁶, adopted at the seventh European Summit of Regions and Cities in Bratislava, the CoR thus recommends to the EC and the EIB that they collectively set up a **Europe-wide investment platform** for tourism-related SMEs and jointly hold local tourism investment forums under the EFSI. Specifically, five pilot projects should be carried out in model regions by 2018 (rural/remote, mountainous, border, island/coastal regions, and cities);
15. calls on regions and EGTCs, together with the EFSI steering board and the EIB, to motivate banks in their regions to bring in **investment programmes** facilitating cross-border investment and making it easier for tourism-related SMEs to access EU funding and private sector funds (PPP models);
16. calls on the EC to support **cross-border small and micro-projects** as well as "**people-to-people**" projects, which make a major contribution to a sense of European identity, especially in border regions;
17. reiterates its call for the de minimis thresholds in the case of state aid for SGEIs, which often also benefit tourism-related, to be increased to EUR 1 million per case per three tax years. In regions whose economic and social stability depends substantially on tourism and where unemployment is high, these thresholds should also apply to public investment in tourism-related infrastructure, inasmuch as this is also regularly used by the local population. Recalls at the same time that the current General Block Exemption Regulation 651/2014 applicable until 31.12.2020 already covers aid for culture and heritage conservation and aid for sport and multifunctional recreational infrastructures;

Better regulation

18. draws attention to the difficulties sometimes faced by SMEs in **complying with the regulatory framework** and recommends that the Member States to avoid tightening EU legislation by means of national regulations (gold plating). Under REFIT, the CoR recommends that the EC should
 - simplify regulations for broadband service providers and move towards taking a market-based and technologically neutral approach;

⁵

<http://www.thealps.travel/en>.

⁶

COR-2016-02559-00-00-DECL-REF.

- review the disclosure and information requirements under the EU Consumer Rights Directive;
 - review the Working Time Directive in a way that is favourable to SMEs (in particular the possibility of flat-rate calculation of the inactive part of on-call time, providing for a reasonable period of 14 days for compensatory rest periods, and extending the period over which the time worked is calculated from 4 to 12 months);
 - review and, if appropriate, revise the Package Travel Directive; excessive bureaucracy should be avoided, as should legal uncertainty;
 - relax the information requirements under the EU Food Information Regulation (No 1169/2011) for the hospitality industry;
 - simplify the applicable rules relating to taking liquids onto flights⁷;
19. Calls for town centre regeneration strategies, when scoping future needs of investment in regeneration or infrastructure, to give careful consideration to the potential impact of such investments in terms of protecting or increasing local attractiveness for tourism activities;

Thematic tourism

20. proposes the **promotion of thematic tourism projects**⁸ in the sense of smart specialisation (smart regions/cities) so as to counteract mass tourism, and also suggests **introducing the title of "European Capital of Smart Tourism"**, to be awarded to up to three EU cities/regions per year by representatives of the tourism industry, the EC, the EP and the CoR. In so doing particular attention should be given to the promotion of tourism outside city centres and well established urban magnets so that urban nodes at peripheries of metropolitan areas or small and medium sized towns also benefit;
21. calls for **cultural, historical and religious tourism** to be supported, which contributes to employment, multicultural understanding and local, regional and rural development, and calls for tourist attractions to be linked so as to create European, national and local thematic trails;
22. emphasises that **rural tourism** provides a solution to issues of employment⁹, local development and the environment, and calls
- on rural regions to build on regional development strategies to develop **integrated and cross-border strategies** to expand rural tourism;
 - for support for **SME partnerships to provide a service** by means of a broad introduction of innovation coaches advising multiple companies, so as to attract urban guests;

⁷ Regulation (EU) No 185/2010 laying down detailed measures for the implementation of the common basic standards on aviation security.

⁸ Viticulture, gastronomy, rural life, religion, art, education, research, various popular sports, business and conference tourism, MICE (meetings, incentives, conventions and events), etc.

⁹ Safeguarding and creating jobs, supporting agricultural businesses, protecting the landscape, supporting rural arts and handicrafts, etc.

23. calls for the development of a European cultural label, the introduction of European culture days and the establishment of an EU cultural heritage prize¹⁰;

Climate change and sustainable development

24. recalls that tourism safeguards economic growth, incomes and employment in many regions. The CoR calls on the regions to consider **sustainability in their tourism strategies**¹¹ as to provide a holistic approach that anticipates and deals with increased environmental pressures as a result of tourism-related activities. EU cohesion policy should provide targeted support to the development of these strategies;
25. calls for a European legislative solution to the collaborative economy trend, which, in addition to positive effects, also carries risks such as a lack of social protection for workers, a lack of provisions in respect of the accommodation of guests, the transfer of risk from employers to employees and negative fiscal effects;
26. supports development of sustainable cultural tourism in cities which can be a vital catalyst for revenue generation for innovative practices in heritage conservation and management. Tourism in cities also stimulates innovation. Use of information , communication technologies and the smart city concept which not only creates a quality visitor experience but also improves the quality of life of the local population;
27. invites tourist regions, in the light of climate change, to diversify their **economic focus** – in particular, conditions in mountain and coastal regions are favourable for renewable energy production (water/wind, solar, geothermal, biomass power);
28. calls on the EC to support campaigns to raise awareness in the sector about sustainable management of natural resources (in terms of reducing water consumption, food waste and the use of detergents and hygiene products);

Labour market, education and research

29. calls for further EC and Member State measures to ensure **formal cross-border recognition of tourism qualifications**, as well as multi-faceted training to reduce seasonality. The recognition of qualifications must comply with a stringent standard¹²;
30. calls on the Commission, under the aegis of the EURES network with national employment agencies, to develop tourism-specific programmes for the **Europe-wide placement** of qualified workers in tourism-intensive regions;

¹⁰ European Parliament resolution of 8 September 2015 towards an integrated approach to cultural heritage for Europe 2014/2149(INI)

¹¹ e.g. diversified strategies of what to offer in terms of "wellness", culture, sport, non-seasonal products for year-round business, models to determine the climate impact of various types of holiday and holiday activities.

¹² COM (2016), "Mapping and performance check of the supply side of tourism education and training"; COM(2014) 86, "A European Strategy for more Growth and Jobs in Coastal and Maritime Tourism".

31. calls on local and regional authorities and employment agencies to set up qualification partnerships with the tourism industry so as to provide training in the context of lifelong learning, in order to develop quality (sustainability, support, safety, etc.) and marketing (digitalisation) in the tourism sector;
32. welcomes the adoption of the new Sustainable Development Goals¹³ (SDGs) by the United Nations General Assembly at its 70th Session and highlights that among the 17 SDGs tourism explicitly featured in Goals 8, 12 and 14 for its capacity to foster economic growth and decent work for all, promote sustainable consumption and production and advance conservation and sustainable development of aquatic resources;
33. proposes, in the context of the European education offensive, that
 - PPP-initiatives should be supported in order to spur the **professionalisation of the sector** by connecting training and practice¹⁴;
 - tourism-related **vocational schools, vocational colleges and universities** should be **linked** and the influence of Erasmus+ on the tourism sector should be evaluated;
 - a European tourism academy and a **Jean Monnet chair for European tourism research** should be established;
34. calls on the Member States, regions and cities to integrate migrants and asylum-seekers more rapidly into the labour market, and to make use of the language and specialist skills of migrants and develop them through courses;

Tourism and European citizenship

35. underlines that European citizens engaging in tourism in the EU are consumers protected by EU law and are able to move freely throughout the EU internal market and the Schengen area. Tourism therefore has a very important role to play in **forging a sense of European citizenship**. Therefore, incentives should be created to encourage European citizens to take more holidays in Europe. The CoR urges the EC and the Member States to reflect on the following ideas while respecting the principle of subsidiarity and applying multilevel governance:
 - offer EU citizens travelling in the EU reduced prices for public transport, museums, etc. by means of a free "**European Citizen Travel Card**", which Member States, regions and cities can volunteer to participate in; the card should be available on the CoR and EC websites, in all Europe Direct information centres, and from participating tourism associations, and be valid in conjunction with an ID or passport issued by an EU country;
 - create an **electronic European travel badge** (social media-compatible GPS "DiscoverYrope app");

¹³ <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/>.

¹⁴ Parliament Magazine, Issue 437, 27 June 2016, pp. 28-29; example: "Youth on the SPOT – Special Partnership of Tourism".

- bring in a "**European Traveller's Pass**" containing useful information for EU citizens engaging in tourism (consumer rights, healthcare, addresses of consulates outside Europe, emergency phone numbers, information on the "European Citizen Travel Card");
36. underlines that tourism makes an important contribution to promoting understanding between peoples and knowledge of different cultures;
37. proposes a **media prize ("tourism Oscar")**, awarded by the EC, EP and CoR, to recognise (print and audio-visual) documentation that transmits knowledge about the European cultural and natural heritage, as well as about regional and local tourist attractions in Europe, and contributes to a sense of European citizenship;

External dimension of tourism

38. emphasises the **role of the internal market** and the **Schengen area** for cross-border tourism and local markets. The CoR urgently appeals to the EU Member States to safeguard the border-free Schengen area;
39. welcomes the "visa package"¹⁵ adopted by the EC in April 2014 and stresses that **visa facilitation** is a crucial prerequisite for encouraging tourists (especially from BRIC countries) to visit Europe¹⁶. Security concerns must be carefully weighed up against the economic contribution made by tourism;

Promoting tourism

40. supports the idea of a "European Year of Tourism and Cultural Heritage";
41. calls for the **promotion of tourism in third countries** to be coordinated between the umbrella organisation for tourism advertising at national level and the European Travel Commission;
42. calls on the Commission to focus more closely on the interferences between tourism and migration/refugee flows, to study their cultural, economic and social impacts and, together with the CoR, to identify opportunities for the affected regions (labour market, etc.);
43. recommends that the European Commission
- should champion the **European brand (EU logo)** and the development of inter-regional and transnational brand positioning and European marketing platforms (EU marketing programmes, e.g. for the Alpine region or the Mediterranean) in order to promote Europe in distant markets, while reflecting the particular role of towns and regions and the diversity of their natural and cultural heritage¹⁷;

¹⁵ COM(2012) 649, "Implementation and development of the common visa policy to spur growth in the EU".

¹⁶ ETC (2015), "Improving the Visa Regimes of European Nations to Grow Tourism: A view from the European Travel Commission".

¹⁷ European Tourism Manifesto (2016), "Tourism for growth and jobs" (<http://www.tourismmanifesto.eu/>).

- should implement measures to encourage European citizens to take more holidays in Europe; a model for a **"European Citizen Travel Card"** should be considered providing the travellers with the general information to make their trips easier and safer and with the benefits of travelling inside Europe;
- should put an **"EU tourism roadshow"** and an **atlas of European cultural routes** on the www.visiteurope.com website¹⁸;
- should consider bringing in a **European classification and quality assurance system** to complement national/regional hotel classifications (e.g. star ratings);

Interinstitutional cooperation

44. calls on the EC to include the CoR in the annual European Tourism Forum;
45. calls for an annual discussion on tourism between the relevant EP and CoR committees and bodies;
46. calls on future EU Council presidencies to put topics relating to European tourism on the agenda and to involve representatives of the CoR;
47. calls on the UNWTO to support its initiative to develop European tourism.
48. calls for the promotion of responsible tourism policies and practices by governments and the private sector in line with the principles of the UNWTO Global Code of Ethics for Tourism, a comprehensive framework for the development of sustainable, responsible and universally accessible tourism that takes into account all its economic, social, cultural and environmental dimensions;
49. places a special emphasis on the social accountability of tourism, and calls upon European and non-European citizens to be informed and responsible tourists and travellers and to respect local customs and cultures;

Brussels,

¹⁸ COM(2014) 477, "Towards an integrated approach to cultural heritage for Europe".

II. PROCEDURE

Title	Tourism as a driving force for regional cooperation across the EU
Reference(s)	
Legal basis	Article 307(4) TFEU
Procedural basis	Own-initiative opinion
Date of Council/EP referral/Date of Commission letter	
Date of Bureau/President's decision	2 December 2015
Commission responsible	Commission for Natural Resources
Rapporteur	Hans-Peter Wagner (AT/EPP)
Analysis	4 March 2016
Discussed in commission	10 May 2016
Date adopted by commission	27 September 2016
Result of the vote in commission (majority, unanimity)	Majority
Date adopted in plenary	Scheduled for 7/8 December 2016
Previous Committee opinions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CDR 3637/2015, opinion on "Age-friendly tourism" • CDR 2645/2014, opinion on "European Strategy for Coastal and Maritime Tourism" • CDR 342/2010, opinion on "Europe, the world's No 1 tourist destination: a new political framework for tourism in Europe" • CDR 83/2009, opinion on "The correlation between the labour market and regional needs in the area of tourism" • CDR 397/2003, opinion on "Basic orientations for the sustainability of European tourism" • CDR 99/2002, opinion on the future of European tourism
Date of subsidiarity monitoring consultation	