

THE EUROPEAN UNION POLICIES IN THE FIELD OF TOURISM

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Abstract: *In the recent history of the EU, the community policies regarding tourism represented one of the priority issues, tourism becoming the third social-economic activity of the EU, generating 10% of EU's GDP.*

Both the Commission and the European Parliament play a major role in working out the common policies, and by the directives made in favour of quality, safety and durability of tourism, they are improved by the additional legislation of member countries, but also of the regional public administrations directly responsible with the standard of living of their citizens.

The development of tourism and of the European programs dedicated to it also comprise programs of financing the infrastructure, that are generating economic development at a territorial level. Stimulating the competitiveness in the touristic sector; promoting a durable tourism of high quality, enhancing the image and visibility of Europe, increasing the potential of policies and of the EU financial instruments, represent major objectives of the EU common policies in the field of tourism.

As a result of this strategic policy reality, Europe is the favourite touristic destination at world level. Unfortunately, for the financial exercise 2014-2020, tourism does not benefit from separate financing lines, while the EC proposes a new framework for coordination of actions in the field of tourism.

Key words: *tourism, EU, strategy, durability, development*

According to statistics, Europe as the major cradle of terrestrial civilization is the world's most popular touristic destination. Thus, tourism plays a major role in the development of several European regions. The durable tourism ensures the preserving and promoting of the European cultural and natural patrimony. The cohesion policy for the period of time 2014-2020 aims at massively mobilizing the resources from the member states tourism, so that it would substantially contribute to the regional development and to the creation of new work places.

Beginning with the '80s of the last century, the European Commission has acknowledged the important role of tourism in the European economy and got involved more and more in various actions together with the European Parliament, the Council, the Economic and Social Committee, and the Committee of Regions.

An important event in this respect was the setting up of the Committee for Tourism in 1986, the role of which was to facilitate the exchange of information, consultancy and cooperation in tourism (according to the Council Decision, from December 22-nd, 1986, 86/664/EEC regarding the establishing of a procedure for consultancy and cooperation in tourism). At present, this Committee is made up of the representatives of the 30 member states of the European Economic Area, meets several times a year and provides information on the measures taken at national level in the field of tourism.

The Decision of the Council of Ministers of declaring the year 1990 - "The European Year of Tourism" was made in the idea of emphasizing the role of tourism and, on the other hand, of working out a coherent policy (according to the Council Decision, from December 21-st, 1988, 89/46/EEC) and a plan of actions spanning on three years for supporting tourism (according to the Council Decision, of July 31-st 1992, 92/421/EEC).

After the Green Card on the role of the European Union in the field of tourism was issued, followed by a debate on the role of the EU in tourism, the European Commission proposed the running of a multi-annual program "Philoxenia, 1997-2000", that was, nevertheless, not accepted.. However, the activities of the Commission concerning tourism are now part of the process of developing the "Work force occupancy tourism".

Brief history

From the reunion of the European Council of June 21-st 1999 on „tourism and the work force”, The European Union has been paying an enhanced attention to the contribution that tourism brings in the field of labor force occupancy at European level.

In the presentation entitled „Working together for the future of European tourism" (COM(2001)0665), published in November 2001, the European Commission has put forward a framework of action and measures to stimulate the European tourism industry. The Council Resolution of May 21-st 2002 on the future of European tourism has confirmed the approach of the Commission and, having as a main goal Europe becoming the main touristic destination, has triggered an enhanced cooperation between the public and private actors from the European tourism industry. In this context, the Commission has subsequently taken measures and has initiated several actions. Among the direct results of this strategy, there can be mentioned as follows:

- α) the satellite accounts in the field of tourism (CST) on member state, finalized once with the presentation of the first European satellite account;
- β) the launching of an on-line portal of promoting Europe as a touristic destination;

- χ) organizing in 2002, of a European forum concerning tourism (in 2013 there was organized in Vilnius, Lithuania, the 12-th forum with the topic „Tourism, a force for economic growth, social change and welfare”).

Between February 2001-2014, the European Commission published 7 communiques regarding its political orientations in the field of the development of the tourism sector, such as:

- (COM(2007)0621), of October 19-th, 2007 - Agenda pentru un turism european durabil și competitiv [*Agenda for a durable and competitive European tourism*]-, presenting the durable development as a means of guaranteeing competitiveness of tourism in the long run and announcing actions for preparation over a three years' period of time;
- (COM(2010)0352), of June 30-th 2010 - Europa, destinația turistică favorită la nivel mondial – un nou cadru politic pentru turismul european [*Europe- the favorite touristic destination at world level- a new political framework for the European tourism*]-, analyzing the factors contributing to competitiveness in tourism and to the durable development of this sector, as well as the obstacles these aspects come up against;
- (COM(2012)0649), of 7 November 2012 - Aplicarea și dezvoltarea politicii comune în materie de vize în vederea stimulării creșterii economice în UE [*Applying and development of the common visa policy in view of stimulating the economic growth in the EU*]-, vizing the increase of the level of touristic fluxes from third countries by means of the common visa policy;
- (COM(2014)0086), of February 20-th, 2014 – A European strategy for stimulating the economic growth, and the creation of work places in the maritime and coastal tourism- vizing the promoting of a durable growth and competitiveness in the field of maritime and coastal tourism.

The tourist's rights and the issue of the consumers in tourism

As consumers, the tourists' interests focus particularly on their physical safety and on the economic and legislative aspects. Generally speaking, the tourists benefit from a wide range of measures meant to protect the consumers' interests on the whole, such as those falling within the General Directorate of the Commission for the protection of health and consumer protection.

Nobody wants that during his/her holiday to be compelled to think about his/her safety – which is an important aspect of the general quality of a service for the tourist. Many of the safety-related problems are to be found in the consumer protection legislation, such as, for example:

- the safety of the installations based on gas;

- the political agreement concluded with the Council at the end of 2000, concerning the improving of regulations vising the safety of products at the disposal of the consumers in hotels;
- The Council Recommendation regarding the safety system against fire/arson in the already existent hotels (86/666/EEC), where in the minimum requirements are set for a safety system, against fire in hotels.

Generally, the tourist's interests are identical to those of any consumer, while his/her interests are protected by the community legislation. There are, however, particular aspects in tourism where a special protection is required. More details concerning the legislation of the EU Member States are to be found in the “travel packages”, the “holiday packages”, and the “tour packages”:

- The Council Directive 90/314/EEC brings at the same level the regulations and norms referring to the “travel package”. The establishing of a minimum set of common standards for the consumer protection was aimed at, as well as the working out of general regulations on the content of the contract for the “travel package”. Also, the organizer of the respective package is asked to prove that s/he can reimburse the money and to repatriate the consumer in case of insolvency. For example, in a decision given on March 12-th, 2002, The European Court of Justice concluded that Article 5 of this Directive must be interpreted as follows: the consumer must have the right to compensation should he/she suffer an immaterial damage as a result of a lack of the respective service or improper fulfilment of it, included in the “holiday package”;
- The Directive 94/97/EC or the property on the time spent together, has as its main objective protecting the consumers as to particular aspects of the contracts. Thus, the right to use the property on the time used in common is purchased. Once with the rapid increase of this type of holiday arrangement, the abuses in this field have worriedly increased, too, fact which has determined the European Commission to set rules ensuring a basic consumer protection. The Directive 94/97/EC refers to information to be given to the buyer, the procedures for annulment or withdrawal from a contract of using the common time. Should there be required further information on the citizen's rights within the European Single Market area or given the situation whereby a a person attempts at exercising his/her own rights in the Single Market comes across obstacles within the national administration of a Member State that s/he renders unfounded, the respective citizen can resort to assistance free of charge.

Tourism represents, based on its importance, the third social-economic activity of the EU, generating over 10 % of the EU's GDP, thus enabling the occupying of approximately 12 % of the total work force. Therefore, tourism is an important sector both for the citizens, and for the EU industry, having a positive impact upon the economic growth and on the work force occupancy within the EU.

The Lisbon Treaty ascertained the importance of tourism, granting the EU competences for the supporting, coordination and completing the actions of the EU countries in this field. Defining and clarifying the EU competences in this field enables the establishing of a comprehensive framework of action. According to the Lisbon Treaty, the specific measures taken by the EU in the tourism sector would be: a) encouraging (supporting) the creation of a favorable environment for the development of enterprises in this sector; b) promoting the cooperation among EU countries, especially by the exchange of good practices.

In its classical acceptance (that of traditional provider of travel and touristic services), in the EU the tourism sector comprises 1.8 million enterprises, particularly small and medium enterprises (SMEs). Tourism is actually the third branch of the social-economic activities of the Union.

According to the statistics regarding the incoming of international tourists (both from third countries and within the EU), the European Union is the world's top touristic destination. Having in mind its economic importance, tourism is an integral part of the European economy. From a European perspective, the policy in the field of tourism also contributes to the accomplishing of the general political objectives in the field of work force occupancy and of the economic growth. Moreover, the importance of the environmental dimension of tourism shall increase in time, being already comprised within the durable, responsible or ethical tourism.

Special measures taken in the interest of travelers and/or tourists

Concretely, there have been taken measures meant to facilitate the crossing of borders and of protecting the health and safety, as well as of the material interests of tourists. Among these measures, one can mention particularly,

1. The Council Recommendation on the safety of the existent hotels against fires and arson (88/666/EEC), the Directive concerning the packages of services for travel, holidays and circuits (90/314/EEC) (currently under revising) and the Directive on the usufruct rights of goods on a limited duration by the consumers (2008/122/EC). These are completed by adopting a series of norms concerning the rights of passengers in all fields of transport (to be seen the factsheet [5.6.2](#)). Another example proving the connexion between the tourism sector and another field of EU competence devolved from the Directive

2006/7/EC of February 15 -th, 2006 on the management of the bathing water, that shall abrogate the Directive 76/160/EEC on December 31 -st 2014, in the interest of the groups vised or of the priority (urgent) subjects.

2. At the request of Parliament, the Commission has launched a series of initiatives made concrete (materialized) into five preparatory actions on current issues with specific objectives in what concerns the European tourism (to be seen below -the European Parliament Resolution of November 29th, 2007):

- „Eden“, focuses on promoting the touristic European touristic destinations of excellence, on the increase and less known, but which comply with the principles regarding durability. Financing the preparatory actions has expired (lapsed) in 2011, but the Commission has nevertheless continued to carry on and put into practice its initiative in the context of the framework-program competitiveness and innovation (CIP/EIP).
- „Calypso“, which vises the social tourism for the elderly persons, of the youth without possibilities, the families with special needs and the persons with reduced mobility. Its objective is that of offering to as many persons as possible the opportunity to travel, contributing at the same time to counteracting the seasonal lack of balances; similarly, the Commission has ensured the continuing of this action in the context of the framework-program for competitiveness and innovation.
- “The durable tourism”, which includes the route of the European Iron Curtain or the „Green Belt”, (6. 800 km, stretching from the Barents Sea to the Black Sea), the objective of which is promoting the transformation of the ex-Iron Curtain into a cross-border network of travel means for bike rides or rambling; this action was also continued within the framework-program for competitiveness and innovation.

3. „Cultural transnational touristic products”, an initiative focusing on the cultural and industrial tourism, vising the sustaining of cross-border projects for a durable (lasting) thematic tourism. „Tourism and accessibility for all”, has as its main goal facilitating the access of all to the touristic services chain, to the benefit of the disabled persons, of the senior travelers and of the persons facing temporary difficulties. The last two preparatory actions were launched in 2012, at the request of the European Parliament, for a three year period of time.

4. Moreover, the European Commission has launched several actions, such as, for example, in 2011, the pilot-initiative „50,000 tourists” which encourages the touristic fluxes between the EU and various third party countries outside the touristic season, starting with Latin America and Europe: on the one hand, this has encouraged the South-Americans to travel to Europe (between October 2012-March 2013) while, on the other hand, it has encouraged Europeans to travel to Latin America (between May-October 2013).

The regions represent the most important national institutions from a strategic point of view for the durable development of tourism and for promoting the competitiveness of the European destinations. The European Commission sustains the networking between the main European touristic regions. In July 2009, NECS Tour was created, a network open to the European touristic regions, with the aim of serving as a platform for the exchange of information and innovating solutions for a competitive and durable tourism. In what concerns the contribution brought by tourism to the regional development and the work force occupancy in the regions vised, the EU also has other financing sources: The European Fund for Rural Development (EFRD) – for the financing of durable projects in the field of tourism, the Interreg Program, The Cohesion Fund – for the financing of infrastructures in environment and transport, The European Social Fund (ESF) – for work force occupancy, the Leonardo da Vinci Program – for professional training, the European Access Fund to the Rural Development (EAFRD) – for the diversification of the rural economy, The European Productivity Fund (EPF) – for the reconversion within the ecologic tourism sector, The Framework-Program for Competitiveness and Innovation (CIP), as well as the Framework-Program for Research and Development (PCRD). Within this context, in the multi-annual 2014-2020 financial framework, the COSME program has taken again (resumed) the CIP program, whereas the initiative „Horizon 2020” has taken again (resumed) the program PCRD program.

In the context of the new financial perspectives and within the Program for Competitiveness in Enterprises and SMEs (COSME), the European Commission has, within the multi-annual financial framework 2014-2020, a global financing of 105.5 million Euros. The statistical data harmonized regarding tourism have been gathered within the Union since 1996. The EU Regulations no. 692 of July 6th 2011 has settled the common framework for the systematic development, producing and publishing of the European statistics referring to tourism, gathered in the member states. By the communiques issued in November 27th, 1996 (COM(1996)0547) and May 26th 1999 (COM(1999)0262), the Commission has announced and instituted a community action for the fighting of sexual tourism involving children, and was encouraged, according to the conclusions of the European Council of December 21st 1999, to further carry on this action .

The Role of the European Parliament

In December 1996, the European Parliament had already supported a community action regarding tourism, expressing its favorable notification for the first multi-annual program 1997-2000, „Philoxenia”, which was not adopted, however, because it did not get unanimity within the European

Council. In the Resolution of March 30th, 2000 regarding the applying of the measures of fighting the sexual tourism involving children, (COM(1999)0262), the European Parliament has requested the member states to adopt extra-territorial norms to make possible the investigation, pursuit and suing at court, as well as sanctioning of the persons who, during their stay abroad, have committed sexual abuses against children. On October 27th, 2011, Parliament has adopted a legislative Resolution referring to the draft directive on fighting the sexual abuse on children, of sexual exploitation of children and infantile pornography (P7 TA(2011)0468). Based on the 2011/92/EU Directive of December 13th, 2011, beginning with the month of December 2015, the sexual tourism involving children shall constitute an offence all over the European Union; particularly, article 21 stipulates the adopting of national measures for fighting or prohibiting the organizing of travels with the aim of committing such an offence.

Long before the entering into force of the Lisbon Treaty, Parliament has adopted a series of resolutions with regard to the orientations or the initiatives of the Commission in the field of tourism, the most remarkable being the Resolution of September 8-th, 2005 on the latest perspectives and challenges for the durable tourism in Europe, the Resolution of November 29-th, 2007 on the new EU policy in the field of tourism: consolidating the partnership for tourism in Europe and the Resolution of December 16 -th, 2008 referring to the impact of tourism in the coastal regions: aspects related to the regional development. The Parliament has thus approached the results of the policy regarding the visa problem in the field of tourism and has supported the promoting of the European touristic destinations. The Parliament has also suggested the creation of a label of the European patrimony and of a bike track all along the Iron Curtain countries and has encouraged the tourism sector to diversify its offer for services in order to fight the seasonal character of tourism.

Last but not least, Parliament has adopted, based on the report at its own initiative (the first since the entering into force of the Lisbon Treaty), the Resolution on Europe, the most favorite touristic destination at world level (P7 TA(2011)0407). Supporting the political strategy of the Commission, based on 21 actions, the Parliament has as a main goal the re-launching of a competitive, modern, high quality and durable tourism, and mostly accessible to all, based on Europe's multicultural dimension. The MPs underline the importance of measures adopted in other fields, which can have a decisive impact upon the tourism sector, and the work force occupancy, on taxation and consumer rights. They have already adopted, upon first reading, on March 12-th, 2014, the legislative resolution of consolidating the travelers' protection acquiring travel package services and of abolishing the 90/314/EEC Directive (P7 TA-PROV(2014)0222). The Text adopted shall serve as a basis for negotiations with the Council that shall be initiated after the European elections.

For all this, the European Council did not accept the Parliament's request of establishing - within the perspectives financial perspectives for 2014 - 2020 – of a specific program for the tourism sector. Also, in February 2014, instead of presenting a proposal of regulation for the creation of a European label for quality tourism, the Commission has chosen to propose the Council to adopt a recommendation referring to a series of non-compulsory European principles with regard to the quality of the touristic services (COM(2014)0085). These principles have the role of enhancing competitiveness of Europe with regard to the touristic destinations on the increase.

What is TRAN and what does it do?

The Transport and Tourism Commission of the European Parliament (TRAN) is the one that discusses at the beginning of each fall, the budget to be allocated by the European Union to the transport and tourism sector for the following year. Within the term of this commission from 2008-2013, vice-president of TRAN was Mrs. Adriana Țicău, who submitted several amendments to the commission with the aim of increasing the sums allocated for the transport infrastructure and for promoting tourism in the region of the Danube Basin. “Europe has exceptional touristic destinations, but many of these are less known, insufficiently even, especially in the states that have adhered to the EU after May 1st, 2004. We are of opinion that promoting the touristic destinations in the Member States, situated in the Danube Basin as European destinations of excellence is of particular importance given the touristic potential of the region.

TRAN has approved the amendment subjected to it as a recognition of the importance of this region for the EU and having in mind that the development of tourism is possible only in conditions of an efficient transport infrastructure. Thus, the construction of trans-European transport corridors must be accelerated and the road, rail and naval transport infrastructure in the South-East of Europe must be developed. In times of crisis we must make more investments in infra-structure, since the works in this sector lead to the creation of new work places.

TRAN is competent in matters related to the development of a common European policy regarding the rail, road and river transport, as well as the maritime and air transport. Also, the TRAN Commission has competences in the sector of tourism and postal services.

The Oscar for tourism

Following Sharm el Sheikh, Dubrovnik or Turku, Romania received the Golden Apple prize, which is the equivalent of Oscar for tourism, which is

granted to a destination or personality that has substantially contributed to the development of ¹. The trophy awarded by FIJET (Fédération Internationale des Journalistes et Ecrivains du Tourisme) marks a world premier, and in 2009 – the year of this award for our country - was the first time when it was awarded in the same year for three touristic destinations of the same country. ”The people are open, welcoming, which means, in fact, the very essence of the touristic activity. We, as an international organization of tourism journalists, have the role and mission to promote and encourage the tourism all over the world”, Tijani Haddad said, FIJET president.

The Danube Delta Biosphere Reservation, Mărginimea Sibiului - regarded by the Forbes magazine as „the most romantic ecotourism area in the world” and the Airline Company Blue Air – the company with the most dynamic development in Eastern Europe – have won for Romania three prestigious trophies. Mărginimea Sibiului is one of the centres of Romanian ethnography, place in which the local traditions rank high by its inhabitants. Getting close to being given the title of European cultural capital in 2007, Sibiu, favors the development of the touristic phenomenon in this area, made up of 18 villages, with its center in Săliște.

“I was absolutely delighted by Romania, first of all by the Romanians' kindness and hospitality, wherever I have been to. I'm afraid that the Belgians will never become as friendly as the Romanians”, Walter Roggeman, FIJET Belgium president said. FIJET was set up in 1954, being regarded as the oldest professional association of writers and travel journalists in the world. At present, the number of the members of the organization is over 800 persons coming from over 40 countries from all corners of the world. FIJET is an a-political federation and non-governmental, promoting destinations or personalities which contribute to the development of tourism at an international level. Romania has also been awarded the „Golden Apple” in 1975 by FIJET, for the Monastery Moldovița. The prize rests at present within the museum of the monastery.

Challenges and opportunities for the European tourism industry

The European tourism was confronted with a difficult economic situation as a result of the financial and economic crisis from 2008-2013, which has had a significant impact upon the demand for touristic services. This situation was aggravated by the interrupting of the air traffic triggered by the presence of the volcanic ashes clouds after the eruption of the Elyafjöll volcano

¹ Cristina Cauea, Evenimentul Zilei, *România a luat Oscarul pentru turism [Romania got the Oscar for Tourism]*, in Evenimentul zilei, September 2-nd 2009

in Iceland in 2010, that has generated an important number of tourist inputs cancelled, thus causing considerable losses to the air transport sector, and also to the hotel sector and other tourism related activities.

According to the economic strategy „Europe 2020”, the framework of actions in tourism at EU level is built around the following four main priorities:

1. Stimulating competitiveness in the touristic sector from Europe by:
 - a) Developing innovation in tourism, facilitating, for instance, the adapting of this sector and of its units to the evolution of the market in the field of information technology and communication, as well as in the field of innovation;
 - b) consolidating the professional competences within this sector by promoting the opportunities offered by various EU programs, such as Leonardo, or the Framework-Program for innovation and competitiveness, with the sub-programs „Erasmus for young entrepreneurs” and „E-qualifications for innovation”;
 - c) trying to overcome the seasonal character of the demand, facilitating, for example, voluntary touristic exchanges among the EU countries, particularly outside the peak season and for certain target-groups of the society, as well as encouraging the development of a voluntary mechanism of on-line exchange of information in view of a better coordination of the school holidays among the EU countries;
 - d) promoting the diversifying of the touristic offer, especially by a an enhanced focus on Europe's common patrimony and a better promoting of it, as well as by integrating the „natural” patrimony into the tourism strategies;
 - e) the contribution to a better coordination of the research activities related to tourism and to the consolidation of social-economic data regarding the tourism at European level.
2. Promoting the development of a durable, responsible and quality tourism by:
 - a) developing a system of indicators for the durable administration of destinations that might contribute to the development of a brand for promoting the durable tourism destinations;
 - b) organizing campaigns for raising awareness for a better informing of the European tourists regarding the destinations, inclusively their informing on transportation facilities and the relations with the local population;
 - c) developing a European brand for the quality of tourism, based upon the national experiences, in order to enhance the security and trust of the consumer;
 - d) facilitating the identification of risks related to the climatic changes =in order to better protect the European tourism against non-profitable investments and for exploring the possibilities of alternative touristic services;

- e) proposing a Charter (Guide-book) of durable and responsible tourism;
 - f) proposing a strategy for a durable coastal and maritime tourism;
 - g) instituting and/or consolidating cooperation among the EU and the emerging countries and the countries of the Mediterranean region with the aim of promoting the models of developing the durable and responsible
 - h) tourism and of the exchange of best practices in the field.
3. Consolidating the image and visibility of Europe as an ensemble of durable and quality touristic destinations, by:
- a) supporting the creation of a „European brand”, in close cooperation with the EU countries and as a completing of their promotional efforts in order to enable the European destinations to better distinguish themselves from other international touristic destinations;
 - b) promoting Europe as a durable and quality touristic destination by means of the web-site „visiteurope.com” and within the great international events or at the great tourism fairs or famous touristic Halls (Salons);
 - c) consolidating the EU participation to the international fora.
4. Increasing as much as possible the potential of the EU policies and financial instruments for the development of tourism by:
- a) a better integration and coordination of tourism with other EU policies, such as those in the field of transport, competition, internal market, of fiscality, consumer protection, the environment, of the work force occupancy and formation(training), regional and rural development policies, all these having a direct or indirect impact upon tourism;
 - b) promoting and mobilizing instruments and programs meant to ensure the community support for tourism.

Conclusions

According to statistics, Europe is the most favorite touristic destination at world level. In order to maintain Europe's position of leader, the European Commission encourages a new framework for the coordination of actions within the European Union, in view of increasing competitiveness and the capacity of durable development of the European tourism.

Since December 2009, tourism disposes of its own juridical analysis in combination with the transport. Still, this sector does not benefit from a separate financing line within the financial exercise (2014-2020).

According to the latest priorities of the European Union, established within the Strategy Europe 2020 and in order for Europe to remain further on the favorite touristic destination at world level, the European Commission puts forward a new framework of coordinating the actions in the field of tourism at European level in order to enhance competitiveness and its capacity for development.

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