



COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORT AND TOURISM

THE CHAIRMAN

17 April 2013

**For the attention of the EU Heritage Tourism Conference  
25 April 2013, Dublin**

**Position Paper addressed by the EP Tourism Task Force**

The Tourism Task Force of the Committee on Transport and Tourism of the European Parliament has the pleasure to address this Position Paper to the EU Tourism Conference and hopes that it will provide a valuable input to the Conference's deliberations.

The Tourism Task Force has been created in 2012 when Parliament committed itself in the context of its Resolution of 27 September 2011<sup>1</sup> on the Commission's Communication on *Europe, the world's No 1 tourist destination – a new political framework for tourism in Europe*<sup>2</sup> to set up a technical task force specifically for tourism in order to follow closely the implementation of actions proposed by the Commission and of Parliament proposals.

In the same Resolution, Parliament dealt with the subject of **heritage tourism**, be it **industrial or cultural heritage tourism** as well as **rural tourism**, present forms of diversified tourism which may counterbalance the distortions to which undifferentiated mass tourism might lead. After all, heritage tourism contributes to promoting diversity and authenticity of the European regions and of Europe as a Brand.

In its Resolution, Parliament takes the view that, given the history of the European continent, the Commission should promote more vigorously Europe's **industrial heritage**, whose potential has not been sufficiently recognised, and emphasises that the development of Europe's industrial heritage, as a major area of cultural interest, could also benefit secondary destinations and contribute to achieving a more sustainable, diversified and evenly spread tourism sector in Europe, through the preservation, transformation and rehabilitation of the industrial sites.

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<sup>1</sup> P7\_TA(2012)0371

<sup>2</sup> COM(2010)352 final

With regard to **rural tourism**, Parliament considers that this sector improves the quality of life, brings economic and income-source diversity to rural areas, creates jobs, prevents depopulation and establishes a direct link with the promotion of traditional, ecological and natural food products. Rural tourism can help to extend the tourist seasons and to redistribute tourism activities between areas of high tourism concentration and areas with strong but insufficiently exploited tourism potential.

A study commissioned in 2012 by the Committee on Transport and Tourism on **industrial heritage and agri/rural tourism** in Europe also outlines the value of these tourism sectors in economic, environmental and socio-cultural terms. It suggests ways in which industrial heritage and rural tourism could be expanded, made more viable and sustainable, and deliver greater benefits for their local communities and for Europe's economy and its natural and cultural heritage as a whole.<sup>3</sup>

The study comes to the conclusion that both sectors suffer from fragmentation, little cooperation or coordination. They are both often situated in poorer regions, or in regions which are undergoing structural change. However, both sectors could be better linked into regional development and restructuring actions. Generally both sectors have access to only limited funding, and their potential value is often not realised. Their tourism skills vary. In general, both sectors are typically weak on market knowledge and on marketing techniques. Strengthening market knowledge, increasing skills, improving governance, partnerships and networking, and creating innovative ways forward are all seen as keys to success.

The **Intangible Cultural Heritage** (ICH), safeguarded and promoted by the UNESCO, encompasses not only preserved monuments and objects, but also inherited living expressions and traditions in the domains of handicrafts and visual arts, gastronomy and culinary practices, social practices, rituals and festive events, music and the performing arts, oral traditions and expressions.

A study of the UNWTO on Tourism and Intangible Cultural Heritage rightly attested that fostering this living heritage for tourism purposes can provide new employment opportunities, help alleviate poverty, curb rural flight migration among the young and marginally employed, and nurture a sense of pride amongst community members. Furthermore, it offers a powerful incentive for preserving and enhancing the cultural heritage itself since the revenue cultural tourism generates can be channelled back into initiatives to aid the cultural heritage's long-term survival.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/committees/de/tran/home.html>

<sup>4</sup> <http://pub.unwto.org/epages/Store.sf/?ObjectPath=/Shops/Infoshop>

## **Positions:**

In order to make action of the EU tourism policy effective and visible, *a cooperative and innovative approach which offers a European added value* is needed.

Stresses therefore:

- The need for close cooperation between the EU, international, national, regional and local authorities on the one hand and between the institutions as a whole and stakeholders in the sector on the other, with a view to addressing cross-cutting tourism-related issues;
- The need to ensure better integration of tourism into the various EU policies and to better coordinate the various policies concerned;
- The importance of micro-, small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), which both contribute to innovation and stability in the sector and guarantee the quality and which need actions based on proximity and adapted to their size and geographical location;
- The need to actively support the maintenance of traditional industrial skills and to give help to those organisations who are trying to train young people in those skills;
- The importance of continuing efforts to increase the visibility, quality, competitiveness and diversification of the European tourism industry and the need for the development of joint European marketing activities and combined tourism products;
- The need for investing in innovation and ICT, in skills and professional development and in the quality of tourist services as vital factors for an increasing competitiveness of tourism enterprises;
- The need for the tourism businesses of comparable, high-quality statistical data for purposes of long-term planning of supply and demand structures;
- The importance of fully exploiting the tourism potential in order to overcome the seasonality of heritage tourism;
- The need for an enhanced socio-economic knowledge basis at European level on tourism-related issues;
- The need for adequate EU budgetary resources for tourism in the short as well as in the long term;

- The importance of encouraging programmes for restoring, preserving and protecting sites of cultural, historical or environmental interest;
- The need to take all appropriate measures to safeguard Europe's heritage and assets for future generations, also by promoting 'European routes'.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Brian Simpson". The signature is written in dark ink and includes a long horizontal flourish at the end.

Brian Simpson