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**Tourism**

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## CONSULTATION DOCUMENT

### Basic orientations for the sustainability of European tourism

#### Invitation to comment

This document is intended for consultation of all interested parties in preparation of a Commission Communication on "Basic orientations for the sustainability of European tourism", foreseen to be adopted in November 2003.

Comments are welcome from any legal or private person with relevant experience and/or interest in the sustainability of European tourism and/or in specific issues in relation to it. The invitation to comment is expressly also addressed to any substructure of legal persons, and to any person representing a legal person or any of its substructures, or involved in it. Comments are equally welcome whether they originate from the public or the private sector, from administrations, industry, destinations, individual entities, civil society or other knowledgeable or interested groups, from within the tourism sector or beyond.

Feel free to answer only on issues relevant to you.

In case you represent a legal person (public authority, organisation, institution etc.) or any of its substructures, please name it. Anonymity can be guaranteed upon request, but for your submission to be taken into account you need to disclose your identity to the Commission services. Please indicate if your reply or some part of it is confidential, and in that case please state your reasons and mark it clearly.

**Comments should reach the Commission no later than 31.7.2003.**

The Commission services do not intend to address individual responses to submissions received. A summary of the comments will be made available in due course.

**Comments on facts, ideas and proposals set out in this document can be submitted to**

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This documents provides [hyperlinks](#) to reference documents.

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## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

Ensuring the economic, social and environmental sustainability of European tourism is crucial both as a contribution to sustainable development in Europe and world-wide, and for the viability, continued growth, competitiveness and commercial success of this economically highly important sector. The challenges for sustainable European tourism are linked to both the consumption patterns, in particular seasonality and tourism travel, and its production patterns, i.e. the supply chain and the tourist destinations. Sustainable tourist behaviour and good public and private governance are key to changing unsustainable tourism patterns.

At all levels, stakeholders have started to prepare the ground towards better matching sustainability requirements in tourism and using its potential for sustainable development. Although barely targeting the tourism sector specifically, the European Community largely contributes to these efforts with a wide range of policies and measures that favour sustainable development (see Annex), both assuming its global responsibilities, and within the European Union.

The Commission would consider, therefore, the right pathway to sustainability of European tourism to be reinforcing the existing framework for action and making best use of it. This would mean mainly relying on the positive effects of established Community policies and measures, and on initiatives in favour of the sustainability of tourism that stakeholders other than the Community undertake in this field. Some specific measures to fill gaps could complement this approach.

In the international context, the Community line could be to consequently continue its policy approach that ensures the sustainability of tourism as a subject matter of trade and of assisting development in the developing countries. It could seek reinforced co-operation for sustainable tourism with United Nation bodies and other international organisations, in respect both of its global responsibility, and the sustainability of tourism in Europe.

The Commission could envisage a set of measures for strengthening the Community contribution to the sustainability of European tourism. These could aim at increasing the benefit from European Governance and from the various Community policies and measures affecting European tourism and its sustainability, and at enhanced co-operation with the World Tourism Organisation and among all stakeholders of the tourism sector in Europe. Specific initiatives could regard sustainability monitoring and reporting of tourism both Europe-wide and locally, activities that further sustainable tourism consumption patterns of European citizens, and measures promoting sustainability in the European tourism supply chain and destinations. They might partly involve target-based tripartite agreements, or similar arrangements, and be supported by the development and use of appropriate information tools and networks.

The Commission would expect other stakeholders in Europe to contribute significantly to the efforts for implementing sustainable tourism. This concerns European citizens and tourists, private sector enterprises, European tourist destinations and public authorities, and the civil society stakeholders. It would invite a *European Multi-Stakeholder Monitoring and Steering Group for Tourism Sustainability* to draft, discuss and table a detailed framework for action, which should allocate specific activities to the individual stakeholders and include an agreed timetable for implementation.

## I. INTRODUCTION

Tourism and its growth has been one of the major economic and social phenomena of the twentieth century, with a global dimension, and continue to be so. It is now an important part of the world economy and probably its largest single sector activity. In the European Union, too, tourism is highly important, comprising a wide variety of products and destinations. It involves many different public and private stakeholders with very decentralised competences often at regional and local levels.

The limits of the natural, economic and social resource base, and of its capacity to regenerate, define the economic sustainability of the tourism sector. The level of economic success of the sector's activities determines the societal and environmental benefits that tourism can create.

Europe, with the greatest diversity and density of tourist attractions, is the most visited tourist region in the world. The volume of tourism in Europe is expected to double by the year 2025, and Europe will remain one of the principal markets for tourism to other parts of the world.

Article 3(u) of the Treaty establishing the European Community provides for Community action to comprise measures in the field of tourism for the purposes set out in Article 2 of the Treaty, which include sustainable development of economic activities.

Since the mid-90s, sustainable development of tourism has become a priority of EU Institutions. In its Communication [Working together for the future of European tourism](#) of November 2001, the Commission proposed to further "*promote sustainable development of tourism activities in Europe by defining and implementing an Agenda 21*". This issue received strong support from the [European Parliament](#), the [Council](#), the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions.

In 2001, the European Union also responded to *Agenda 21*, launched ten years ago, with the [European Sustainable Development Strategy](#) (SDS), which provides the European-level orientation for sustainability. Tourism has great potential for contributing to the achievement of sustainable development objectives.

The *World Summit on Sustainable Development* held in Johannesburg recalled the need for managing our rapidly changing world. Its [Plan of Implementation](#) comprises a direct call for a focus on sustainable tourism development. It also outlines in detail actions to be taken at all levels in order to change unsustainable patterns of consumption and production, including the EU proposed 10-year framework for programmes in support of regional and national initiatives. These actions, and the objectives guiding them, are also highly relevant for sustainable European tourism.

Many Community policies significantly affect the various activities of the tourism sector. Important questions concern fields such as: transport (sustainable mobility), enterprises and competition (concentration of businesses and vertical integration), employment and equal opportunities, consumer protection, environment, cohesion (Structural Funds), trade (GATS) and international relations.

Several attempts have been made at international, regional and local levels to adapt the principle of sustainable development to the specific characteristics of the tourism industry. There is growing demand at European level for the identification of strategic guidelines and the measures necessary to achieve a sustainable development model for tourism. The

implementation of sustainable development principles in destinations and the various sub-sectors of tourism activity is also perceived as added value for the image of the destinations.

The sustainability of tourism concerns particularly important aspects such as: competitive and socially responsible tourism enterprises, the possibilities for all citizens to participate in tourism, good employment opportunities in the sector and benefits from tourism activities for local communities, the incorporation of environmental issues and of the protection of natural resources in tourism measures, good governance improving the participation of all the stakeholders, and the monitoring of implementation of sustainable tourism measures. It must be in line with the overall approach to sustainable development defined for the EU.

This Commission initiative aims at promoting further progress towards the sustainability of tourism in Europe and world-wide. Its objective is to stimulate multi-stakeholder efforts to this end, which span across all territorial and administrative levels, and to outline how the Community and the other stakeholders can further contribute to them. Its result will be a Commission Communication, scheduled for adoption in November 2003, to the Council, the European Parliament, the European Economic and Social Committee, and the Committee of the Regions.

The initiative is developed with the wide involvement of all relevant stakeholders. As well as continued [expert work](#) and consultation with Member States and representatives of the tourism industry and other interest groups, undertaken since the beginning of the year 2000, a wide discussion on the issue took place during [the European Tourism Forum of 10 December 2002](#), which was based on specific documents prepared for this purpose.

Between April and July 2003, this open, largely web-based, public and stakeholder consultation is organised. The policy options will also be the subject of an Extended Impact Assessment which will be included in the final version of the future Communication.

## **II. CHALLENGES AND OBJECTIVES OF SUSTAINABLE TOURISM**

Since 1980 the tourism boom has seen international arrivals in European destinations double, representing today nearly 60% of all international tourism activity world-wide. The signs are that this growth is set to continue - in a fiercely competitive global market: the volume of European tourism is expected to double again over the next 20 to 25 years. Tourism is one of the sectors of the European economy with the best outlook.

Community tourism is largely domestic. only 13 % of its activity recorded is attributed to visitors from non-member countries. As for the tourism of EU citizens, in the recent past three-quarters stayed within the EU. About four-fifths of European tourism is leisure tourism, which also means that the choice of destination is relatively arbitrary. The rest is for other purposes, which normally do not allow a free choice of destination.

In the EU, all this activity involves over two million tourism enterprises, employing 7.7 million people, a figure estimated to rise by approximately 15 % over the next ten years. In 2001, the tourism industry delivered about 5% of EU GDP, a figure that rises to over 12% when the wider tourism economy is taken into account. Nearly 99% of European tourism enterprises are SMEs, however some large corporate companies manage a significant proportion of the volume of trade, particularly at an international level.

### Main challenges

The central challenge for European tourism, its businesses and destinations, is: How can the sector growth expected over the next two decades be managed in such a way as to ensure that it respects the limits of its resource base, and of those resources' capacity to regenerate, while being commercially successful through a competitive quality development that takes into account diverging developments in the various types of tourism, and creating wide societal and environmental benefits?

Through its patterns of consumption and production that hamper sustainability, tourism can have negative impacts. Yet, it is often seen as a motor of modernisation and development at a regional and local level. However, as an increasing part of the tourism product is actually based on environmental, cultural and social quality, the sector is at risk of consuming its own income-generating resource base, and thus of being economically and socially unsustainable.

Further challenges are of key importance for the sustainability of tourism: the lack of skilled manpower for certain jobs, mainly because of the working conditions; the development of transport and its effect on flows, service quality, the use of natural resources and environmental protection; a growing trend towards concentration, strengthening the vertical integration of tourist services; and the adoption and incorporation of new information and communication technologies as a factor of competitiveness.

### Good public and private governance

Good public and private governance is key to addressing these challenges and, therefore achieving sustainable production patterns. Objectives in this respect involve: integrating sustainable tourism development into overall economic, social and environmental development strategies; integrated sector policies and overall coherence across all levels; multilateral environmental agreements and sustainable international trade policies; the development and adoption of corporate responsibility reporting and sustainability accounting in both the public and private sectors; the extension of Local Agenda 21 specifically for tourist destinations, including at regional level; the design and use of supply chain and destination development monitoring and indicator systems; and ensuring citizens' participation in sustainable development, both as consumers and in the work place.

Multi-partnership solutions, i.e. partnerships between public authorities and bodies, the private sector and its enterprises, and other interest groups such as trade unions and NGOs, offer the possibility of moving the industry forward and of overcoming lack of cohesion between these stakeholders. However, traditional decision-making and isolated sector policy-making are difficult to alter. There is therefore a great need to develop transparent multi-stakeholder processes that are organised in functional networks.

## **1. A balanced approach to the three pillars of sustainability**

Sustainable tourism is tourism that is economically and socially viable without detracting from the environment and local culture. Thus, sustainability means business and economic success; environmental containment, preservation and development; and responsibility towards society and cultural values – three facets that are interdependent.

The economic, social and environmental impacts of the European tourism phenomena are visible in markedly altered regional economies and landscapes, while current tourism patterns can create difficulties in meeting broader socio-economic and environmental requirements. A

range of destinations - in particular some coastal zones and islands in the southern part of Europe, some mountain resorts and certain cities - have experienced the negative effects of a tourism development that exceeds their carrying capacity. Sustainable, high-quality, competitive tourism needs to respect the carrying capacity of its natural and cultural areas.

## **2. Sustainable consumption patterns**

The most wide-ranging problem of leisure tourism in Europe is its concentration on specific, restricted periods of the year, which is linked both to climate and the cultural and socio-economic rhythm of everyday life. This results in temporal saturation of the communication infrastructure, tourist facilities, and destinations' carrying capacity.

Off-season operation leaves over-capacity in big dimension infrastructure and in enterprises. It requires very high numbers of workforce that lack continued employment and often suffer poor conditions, with negative effects on qualification levels, service quality and business competitiveness. This in turn leads to difficulties in attracting and maintaining the tourism workforce, and difficulties for tourism sector businesses and employees.

Although European tourism has in the past reduced its mainly seasonal character, problems remain. There is very often only a small window of opportunity for enterprises to make profits, and for employees to earn money, and this period is one of intense activity.

The second crucial influence on the sustainability of tourism, mainly from an environmental point of view, stems from the travel patterns of tourists, in particular with regard to distance and mode of transport. The tourism boom of the past 50 years was made possible mostly with the help of environmentally less-friendly car and air transport, which became increasingly easier and cheaper. This supported trends towards using the car also for long distance travel and boosting tourism air travel not only to distant destinations, but also on short haul trips.

In future, a number of factors are expected to have a major impact on tourism. One of them is that the travel intensity will further increase, both with regard to an even bigger share of the population that travels, in particular those in accession countries, and to shorter but more frequent trips. Another aspect is that leisure tourists are increasingly opting for more individual choices. Largely supported by electronic means, this involves looking for personally tailored products and trying to optimise the ratio between quality and positive experience, on the one hand, and the price of the overall tourist product, on the other hand.

Changes in the demographic structure of Europe will have a further noticeable influence: Europeans aged between 50 and 65 years will be more important to the tourism market. Alongside the significant growth in tourism, this will cause a change in demand regarding the type of tourism. Tourism concerning cultural and natural heritage is expected to grow most.

In addition, more tourists with special needs that must be catered for to enable them to fully benefit from tourism want to travel. Apart from the 10 % of the population formally recognised as handicapped in one way or another, a growing number of tourists can be expected to suffer from reduced mobility as a result of a temporary disability or age.

Furthermore, tourism activity and tourist behaviour are subject to psychological and social influences, personal sensitivities and short-term reactions. This also means that influencing and convincing consumers, and developing their sustainability thinking, can be seen as a successful approach to provoking sustainable consumption patterns, triggering changes in the product offered. The sustainable behaviour of tourists is key to sustainable tourism.

### **3. Sustainable production patterns**

#### *Sustainable supply chain*

The tourism product is extremely diverse and composite. Besides commercialising the product to the tourists, its main components are transporting tourists to and from the destination, and providing all necessary services when they get there. Particularly pronounced vertical interdependence between tourism businesses providing these components, which also exists at world level, results in complex structures and trends in commercial relations. As with the consumers, tourism suppliers follow traditional behavioural patterns, often bound by narrow economic imperatives and decisions based on price in a sector that still needs to internalise socio-economic and environmental cost to get its prices right.

Regarding tourist transport, there is a growing tension between the development of European transport infrastructure and services, and the mobility requirements of tourism with regard to available connections to destinations, the capacity to serve them, and costs linked to it.

Sustainable tourism supply chain management involves competitive enterprises and a level playing field for competition. It is related to quality management for the production of tourism goods and services. Sustainable tourism supply also means optimising employment and social benefits. It requires de-linking economic profit from social and environmental cost, with the help of using appropriate market-based systems.

In short, sustainable tourism production patterns mean that the sector's enterprises consequently implement the concept of corporate social responsibility and its various elements, including adequate employment and learning opportunities, certification systems to promote sustainable production and consumption patterns, and the use of innovation and new technologies where appropriate.

#### *Sustainable destination development*

The tourist product should be seen as the destination and process resulting in the tourist's overall experience. Therefore, destinations, with their different activities, combining public and private interests, are important stakeholders for sustainable production. Natural and cultural resources, the communications infrastructure, hospitality and tourist facilities are the basic resources of a tourist destination. Tourism requirements in relation to wise land-use, local cultural identity and local resident needs have in some cases generated tensions in the economic -social-environmental sustainability framework at destination level.

A pattern of sustainable destination development requires the preservation of the regional diversity of European tourism as a competitiveness asset; ensuring quality and considering community well-being in tourist destinations; conserving or restoring European coastal zones and mountain areas, protected areas and cultural heritage sites as the basis for destinations to be attractive; protecting the environment and natural resources; and promoting sustainable inter- and intra-destination mobility.

#### *The Commission asks for your comments:*

*Do you agree with this analysis and with what is identified as main challenges for the sustainability of European tourism ? Do you agree with the analysis, views and objectives formulated about a balanced approach to the three pillars of sustainability, to sustainable tourism consumption patterns, and to sustainable tourism production patterns ?*



*If yes, please say so.*

*If not, please let us know your views. Where do you disagree ? How do you see the different issues and objectives ? What do you want to add ?*

### **III. WHERE WE STAND: THE STATE OF THE ART**

Tourists, SME and corporate enterprises, destinations, public administrations, and residents need to contribute to the realisation of sustainable tourism objectives. Many of these stakeholders have already started to respond to the challenges. Basic orientations for the sustainability of European tourism can build upon a large amount of work and documents already available. Important processes and principles are outlined in these documents, which apply to the European Union and elsewhere. Networks are being established to exchange or divulge useful information and to encourage the uptake of best practice of sustainable tourism implementation. Nevertheless, a major issue is why available approaches, initiatives, instruments and good practice have so far been insufficiently taken up on the ground.

#### **1. Initiatives and contributions of a wide range of stakeholders**

The global Agenda 21 process and the [Plan of Implementation](#) adopted at the 2002 World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD) are of fundamental importance for the tourism sector. The latter's guidance for changing unsustainable patterns of consumption and production (items 13 to 22) is highly relevant for and directly applicable to the tourism sector. It also specifically refers to the promotion of sustainable tourism development as an issue of protecting and managing the natural resource base for economic and social development, and to sustainable tourism that contributes to social, economic and infrastructure development, and to sustainable development, in the developing parts of the world (items 41, 52 (g) and 64).

Regarding sector-specific initiatives at the global level, in 1996, the World Travel and Tourism Council (WTTC), the World Tourism Organisation (WTO) and the Earth Council drew up an [Agenda 21 for the Travel and Tourism Industry](#). In 1999, the *UN Commission for Sustainable Development* passed a decision on [Tourism and Sustainable Development](#), and the WTO General Assembly adopted the [Global Code of Ethics for Tourism](#), which is an example of the world guiding voluntary agreement approach for responsible practices. The WTO also published a [Guide for Local Authorities on Developing Sustainable Tourism](#).

The United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) / Convention on Biological Diversity produced [International Guidelines for Sustainable Tourism](#) (Guidelines for activities related to sustainable tourism development in vulnerable terrestrial, marine and coastal and mountain ecosystems). UNEP also co-ordinates the [Tour Operators Initiative](#) to develop voluntary guidelines for responsible corporates and contributes to the [Global Reporting Initiative](#). Whereas both initiatives tend to focus on large enterprises, the tourism sector requires that SMEs, too, should be fully aware of how to implement more responsible business activity.

A multi-stakeholder [Tourism Industry Report](#) issued for the 2002 WSSD lists initiatives with which the tourism industry and certain of its major stakeholder groups have responded to sustainable tourism development, emphasising the crucial importance of strong partnerships between the different stakeholders. For the same occasion, the WTO tabled several tourism-specific contributions, including a [publication on Tourism and Poverty Alleviation](#), from

which it developed together with the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) the special initiative [ST-EP](#) (Sustainable Tourism - Eliminating Poverty).

Several initiatives at global level are focusing on the issue of indicators. The World Tourism Organisation has worked on the methodology for the identification and application of sustainable tourism indicators. In 1997, it published a practical [guide \(What Tourism Managers Need to Know\)](#) to their development and use.

Several other measures and exchanges of best practice exist, including some that focus on Europe, such as the [European Charter for Sustainable Tourism in Protected Areas](#). The Council of Europe [European Landscape Convention](#) offers clarification on the approach to ensure the preservation of the regional diversity of Europe as one of the cornerstones for sustainable European tourism. In co-operation with the European Environmental Agency, institutional, environmental, socio-cultural and economic performance “European Indicators for Sustainable Tourism Development in Destinations” are also being developed in the framework of the [VISIT](#) (Voluntary Initiatives for Sustainability In Tourism) project that the European Commission supports under the *Life* financial instrument for the environment.

At a national level certain countries are drawing up *National Sustainable Development Strategies* that include tourism, or more specific tourism sector national plans. Regionally, several tourism monitoring and indicator system prototypes are being designed and tested.

At a local level, the UN *Local Agenda 21* process is of the utmost importance. It is regarded as a key tool to manage a sustainable tourism process, offering guidance for local territorial management, i.e. in tourist destinations, forging the use of monitoring and indicator systems to ensure the quality of sustainable development. A number of municipalities are involved in its implementation, which is particularly promoted by the International Council for Local Environmental Initiatives (ICLEI), an international association of local governments implementing sustainable development, and its European Secretariat.

At all levels, a wide variety of relevant initiatives address the development of information tools to encourage sustainable production and consumption patterns in the tourism sector. A recent (2002) WTO publication on [Voluntary Initiatives for Sustainable Tourism](#) shows the extent to which European products and services have taken a leading role in voluntary eco-labelling initiatives. With about 40 regional, national and international eco-labels for tourism in Europe, these schemes are so plentiful that it is questionable whether tourists can obtain reliable guidance on sustainable consumption. The above-mentioned VISIT project also started developing a standard that allows the identification of the European tourism eco-labels with a high environmental quality.

Alongside these initiatives, the ISO 9000 family on quality management systems and ISO 14000 family on environmental management are particularly relevant to the tourism sector. A number of tourism enterprises are already implementing them.

***The Commission asks for your comments:***

***Do you agree with the analysis and assessment of the state of the art, in particular regarding initiatives and contributions of a wide range of stakeholders ?***

***If yes, please say so.***

***If not, please let us know your views. Where do you disagree ? How do you see and assess the state of the art, in particular regarding initiatives and contributions of the various stakeholders ? What do you want to add ?***

## **2. What the European Community already contributes**

### *Global responsibility*

In accordance with the current work at international level, the EU assumes responsibility for using tourism as an important tool to fight poverty and improve social conditions, especially in the world's poorest countries. This issue largely regards in particular Development Policy and aid programmes. In 1998 the Commission presented [A European Community strategy to support the development of sustainable tourism in the developing countries](#) as an essential policy base, which the Council took-up in a Resolution of 30 November 1998 on [Sustainable tourism in developing countries](#).

Likewise, the Community's global responsibility extends to sustainable trade in services. In addition to implementing the existing commitments, the Community wants to liberalise the tourism sector as fully as possible in the framework of World Trade Organisation-GATS. This should result in substantially reducing remaining restrictions to trade in this sector, without affecting the quality of service, protection of consumers, or public safety.

The EU also strives to have environmental considerations reflected throughout any negotiations and favours strengthening international environmental governance. It aims at maximising potential for positive synergies between trade liberalisation, economic growth, environmental protection and social development. The Commission mainstreams sustainable development into trade policy through promoting the consistency of international trade rules with sustainability objectives and a Sustainability Impact Assessment (SAI). Sector SAI will also deal with trade in services, tourism included.

Sustainable tourism development in the Mediterranean basin is a particularly important issue. It largely benefits from the [Euro-Mediterranean Partnership](#) and Community support in implementation of the [MEDA](#) programme.

### *Sustainability policy for Europe*

Besides the *European Sustainable Development Strategy* (SDS) numerous EU initiatives have a bearing on the sustainability of the tourism sector at the EU level. The *Better Regulation Package*, the *White Paper on Transport*, a number of policy measures in favour of sustainable entrepreneurship and business practice, including *Corporate Social Responsibility*, the EU employment policy and the *Structural Funds, eEurope 2005*, and the *Environmental Action Programmes* are just some of them.

A comprehensive analysis of these elements confirms that their effect on European tourism can significantly contribute to the sector's sustainable development. They mainly target sustainability or specific problems of it, more generally across economic sectors. Although not specifically tailored to the tourism sector, they largely allow this sector to benefit. The Annex summarises the favourable effects on the sustainability of European tourism that could result from a wide range of Community policies and initiatives.

The European Environmental Agency has established some [key indicators](#) and is working to develop a 'Tourism and environment reporting mechanism'. In addition, the [European Spatial](#)

[Development Perspective](#) (ESDP) that aims at achieving a balanced and sustainable development of the European territory is also a reference for territorial development regarding tourism.

***The Commission asks for your comments:***

***Do you agree with the analysis and assessment of the existing European Community contribution?***

***If yes, please say so.***

***If not, please let us know your views. Where do you disagree ? How do you see and assess the existing European Community contribution ? What do you want to add ?***

#### **IV. FACING THE CHALLENGES: THE POLICY OPTIONS**

Despite the numerous initiatives in place, a significant change from unsustainable patterns of consumption and production in European tourism is not yet taking place. The approaches, initiatives, instruments and good practice regarding sustainability in general, but also production in the tourism supply chain, and tourist destination development, which are available everywhere, have so far been insufficiently taken up on the ground. As far as consumption is concerned, the European tourism activity is not yet adapting in a basic manner to sustainability requirements with regard to tourism transport and to the high seasonality of leisure tourism and its economically, socially and environmentally unsustainable effects.

The economic, social and environmental sustainability of European tourism as a contribution to sustainable development in Europe and world-wide, and as a condition for the viability, growth, competitiveness and commercial success of the sector, needs a comprehensive "new approach". This approach must build on the involvement and optimum active contribution of all stakeholders concerned, at all levels. Bearing this in mind, several options can be considered for facing the challenges of the sustainability of European tourism.

##### **A. A comprehensive genuine Community policy in the field of tourism**

For a long time, most Community Institutions, with the exception of the Council, largely favoured the idea of developing a genuine [Community policy in the field of tourism](#)<sup>1</sup>. This move would give the Community an equal-level interface in this field with institutional parties and any kind of stakeholders, at all levels, and make it a pro-active promoter of co-ordination and convergence of policies. It would also include the formulation and implementation of tourism-specific actions, requiring particular budget resources. Given the state of the art and the Member States' position on such approach in the past, this option cannot be expected to receive the support needed for achieving rapid progress in the field of the sustainability of European tourism: the Nice Treaty provides the necessary legal means to act without a comprehensive genuine Community policy in the field of tourism.

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<sup>1</sup> see Council Resolution of 10 April 1984 on a Community policy of tourism and Commission Communication on initial Guidelines for a Community Policy on Tourism, of 1.7.1982, OJ C115 of 30.4.1984, p. 1 and 2

## **B. A non action scenario**

The state of the art shows the wide range of initiatives and contributions of many stakeholders that exists with regard to the sustainability of tourism at various levels, from international down to local. This could lead to questioning whether activities at Community level have a potential of adding value at all. However, it is obvious that the existing initiatives and contributions undertaken by the different stakeholders could, so far, not achieve sufficient sustainability of European tourism. In particular, they are scattered, i.e. little inter-linked and showing only limited synergies. Neither can they easily exploit the wide range of Community measures affecting tourism and the Community's capacity for widely promoting efforts, and making them more efficient and effective, at the European level.

## **C. Relying on established contributions**

### *a) Building on the activities of other stakeholders*

The wide range of existing initiatives and contributions of other stakeholders has the potential to be used in a more systematic and targeted way as a reference for promoting the sustainability of European tourism. While leaving the responsibility for the initiatives entirely with these stakeholders, the Community could further such use through its involvement and supporting. It could also help to inter-link initiatives in a European context and to create synergies between them. This approach could make use of Community measures affecting tourism and the Community's capacity to widely promote efforts.

### *b) Integration of the sustainability of European tourism into established Community measures*

The state of the art (Annex) shows that established Community measures largely serve sustainability policy in general, and its three pillars. The European tourism sector, too, benefits from the initiatives following the Luxembourg Jobs Summit and under the European Employment Strategy, the Cardiff Process for integrating the requirements of environmental protection and sustainable development into other policies, and the progress on the Lisbon Strategy to make the EU the world's most dynamic and competitive economy. Many Community measures affect tourism, and this in particular with regard to sustainability, be they regulatory or voluntary instruments, or funding. It could be argued that the sustainability of European tourism is sufficiently served by these policies and measures that show themselves to be reasonably effective.

Therefore, a possible option would be to rely exclusively on these policies and measures as the Community contribution to the sustainability of European tourism, and to rule out any specific Community activities in this field of sector sustainability. In this case, Community activities for the sustainability of European tourism would consist in the proper application of measures that are not tourism-specific, but aim at broader objectives and other fields that are related to sustainability in this sector. This option would exclude tourism-specific Community activities even in case, where they are needed, and a pro-active integration of the concerns regarding the sustainability of European tourism in Community policies and measures affecting the sector. It would in particular build on ad-hoc impact assessments of Community measures with a potential significant effect on the sustainability of European tourism.

## **D. Reinforcement and best use of the existing framework for action**

Both a comprehensive approach to the sustainability of European tourism in the framework of a genuine Community policy, and the total renunciation of Community activities to face the

challenges of sustainable European tourism, should be ruled out. Instead, the existing framework for action should be reinforced and best use be made of it.

The two basic elements of a feasible way forward for facing the challenges of sustainable European tourism could be a reliance on:

- reinforced initiatives of stakeholders, other than the Community, active in this field; and
- activities of the Community, of which two basic types can be distinguished, i.e.
  - maximising the effect of Community policies and measures on the sustainability of European tourism, and
  - the definition and implementation of complementary specific measures in the sphere of tourism for the purpose of promoting sustainability throughout the Community, which particularly target support of and involvement in other stakeholders' initiatives, and which fill gaps left by Community policies and measures affecting tourism.

This **co-operative and pro-active multi-stakeholder approach** could be considered as the right *pathway to sustainability of European tourism*.

***The Commission asks for your comments:***

***Do you agree with this analysis and assessment of the European Community policy options for facing the challenges of the sustainability of European tourism, and with the conclusions drawn ?***

***If yes, please say so.***

***If not, please let us know your views. Where do you disagree ? How do you see and assess the European Community policy options for facing the challenges of the sustainability of European tourism, and which option do you prefer ? What are the main reasons for your preference, and why do you dislike the other options ?***

## **V. IMPLEMENTING TOURISM SUSTAINABILITY. BASIC ORIENTATIONS**

### **1. The general concept of action**

The sustainability of European tourism needs action in the international context, and within Europe. Such action must address both sustainable consumption patterns, and sustainable tourism production. Regarding tourism consumption patterns it should focus on further reducing the problem of seasonality and on making tourist travelling more sustainable, in particular with regard to distance and mode of transport.

For the sustainability of tourism production, local authorities and the tourism private sector are the key stakeholders. They have to formulate their own Agenda 21 at the local or sub-sector levels. To this end, they need specific orientations and guidelines as a result of a multi-stakeholder voluntary process broadly based on regional, local and non-public stakeholder involvement, endorsed however at European level. Bodies representing the tourism industry, regional and local authorities and civil society interests need to involve themselves with commitment in this process, contributing with their knowledge, experience and views and promoting the messages to public and private players at the various territorial levels.

The general concept of action for implementation should be based above all on the initiatives of directly responsible and specialised stakeholders, and on activities under those Community policies and measures which affect the sustainability of European tourism. In addition to the prime responsibility of the tourism industry, national administrations, and regional and local authorities, activities in this sphere undertaken by specialised international bodies are also important. The great diversity of European tourism, the principle of subsidiarity and the lack of a specific competence mean that the European Community itself can only undertake guidance and complementary activities. These may comprise:

- stimulating the contribution of Community policies, and of complementary measures in the sphere of tourism;
- actively participating in global and international processes, interlinking with international governmental bodies, and bringing together the activities of major international players;
- promoting and practising the principles of European governance, through
  - ensuring adequate Impact Assessment of any relevant Community measure or initiative,
  - furthering the coherence of national policies in relation to Community activities, and between the policies of the different Member States, and
  - liaising, consulting and co-operating with international and European non-public bodies that represent the tourism industry and other stakeholder interests;
- helping national, regional and local private and public stakeholders to assume their responsibilities for the sustainability of tourism production, in particular through
  - the use of available Community instruments,
  - promoting the exchange of good practice and dissemination of information, and flexible co-operation, partnership and networking between stakeholders across Europe, and
  - contributing to stakeholder guidance.

***The Commission asks for your comments:***

***Do you agree with the general concept of action for implementing sustainability of European tourism, as proposed above ?***

***If yes, please say so.***

***If not, please let us know your views. Where do you disagree ? Which general concept of action would you propose? What changes to the concept of action proposed above do you suggest ? What do you want to add ?***

## **2. The further European Community contribution**

### ***a) In the international context***

The Community will consequently continue its policy with regard to sustainable trade in services, including environmental considerations, to international environmental governance,

and to positive synergies between trade liberalisation, economic growth, environmental protection and social development, using Sustainability Impact Assessment (SAI).

The Community will examine how the emphasis that the WSSD *Plan of Implementation* put on sustainable tourism development as a contribution to social, economic and infrastructure development and to sustainable development in the developing parts of the world, and as an issue of protecting and managing the natural resource base of economic and social development, can be still better reflected in its Development Policy and aid programmes. It will continue to ensure that the measures in this field are guided by the Commission's *European Community strategy to support the development of sustainable tourism in the developing countries* of 1998 and the subsequent Council Resolution of 30 November 1998.

Increased emphasis on sustainable tourism development in developing countries could include considering joining forces with the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) and the World Tourism Organisation (WTO) regarding the special initiative ST-EP (Sustainable Tourism - Eliminating Poverty). Likewise, the Community intends to reinforce its co-operation with, and its involvement in initiatives undertaken by international bodies, such as the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), the WTO, [the World Travel & Tourism Council (WTTC),] and the International Council for Local Environmental Initiatives (ICLEI), in respect of a sustainable tourism supply chain, sustainable destination development and tourism related good public and private governance in Europe.

*b) Within Europe*

The sustainability of European tourism needs to primarily identify, systematise and bring to implementation action and good practice to be developed in both the public and private sectors. With regard to a demand-oriented approach and to improving the stakeholder supply chain, destination development, and the institutional framework, focal areas can be:

- Consumer-oriented awareness raising
- Multi-stakeholder partnerships and networks;
- Governance and policy integration at each level;
- Capacity building, good practice and stakeholder commitment to sustainability;
- Multi-stakeholder monitoring and reporting.

Sustainable tourism information, policy tools and best practice need further development. There is an urgent need for: reliable carrying capacity analysis techniques; development of user-friendly sustainability reporting mechanisms for enterprises, public administrations and funding institutions; and the development of integrated statistical monitoring and indicator systems to provide policy-relevant information for managing tourism supply and demand, including the definition and use of sustainable development indicators in the field of tourism in view of the preparation of an Agenda 21 for European tourism, as requested in the Council Resolution of 21 May 2002 on the future of European tourism.

***The Commission asks for your comments:***

***Do you agree with this approach regarding the further European contribution to implementing sustainability of European tourism ?***



*If yes, please say so.*

*If not, please let us know your views. Where do you disagree ? Which approach would you propose ? What changes to the approach proposed above do you suggest ? What do you want to add ?*

### **3. What the Commission intends to do**

The Commission could envisage putting into concrete form the further European Community contribution to implementing tourism sustainability in the international context and within Europe, by a set of measures that could include the following:

- a) *Working arrangements fostering the contribution of Community policies and European governance to the sustainability of European tourism.*

*Measure 1: The Commission will use the Impact Assessment tool to integrate sustainability concerns into Community policies and initiatives affecting European tourism.*

The Impact Assessments undertaken in the preparation of the Commission's annual Legislative and Work Programme, and during its implementation, help to better identify beforehand the initiatives, which are likely to affect tourism, and to undertake a first and, in some cases, extended evaluation of their potential impact on tourism. Through the reinforced Commission culture of consultation and dialogue both with interested parties, and within the Commission, they also should make it possible to bring the concerns of all tourism stakeholders adequately to bear.

*Measure 2: The Commission could prepare and adopt an action plan for enhancing the effect of the various Community policies and measures affecting European tourism to support the sustainability of the sector.*

Based on a detailed analysis of the potential of the various Community policies and measures, the preparation of such an action plan could be a common effort using the method of open co-ordination between all the stakeholders and Commission services concerned. Measures to be foreseen and/or to be favoured in the framework of the various relevant Community policies could be identified, which, in addition to those already sufficiently implemented, contribute to the sustainability of European tourism.

Particular emphasis could be put on policies and measures to face the challenges of sustainable entrepreneurship and competitiveness, and of sustainable employment and skilled workforce, in the tourism sector. Likewise, issues related to the natural resource base of tourism activities, and to the impacts on it, require special attention. A guide addressed to tourism stakeholders on Community support for the sustainability of European tourism could complement the action plan.

- b) *Encouraging stakeholder synergies and co-operation among stakeholders.*

*Measure 3: The Commission could propose a co-operation agreement with the World Tourism Organisation (WTO) in the field of sustainable tourism.*

The agreement would identify the fields and measures of co-operation. Its aim could be to find specific arrangements regarding WTO initiatives for sustainable tourism which particularly target Europe, and to define the European Community co-operation in, and support for, global WTO initiatives for sustainable tourism and their implementation in Europe. The Commission would favour the involvement of EU Member States, in the quality as WTO members, of the tourism industry and civil society groups concerned, and of any other appropriate stakeholder, in the preparation of the agreement and its implementation.

*Measure 4: The Commission could launch a European Multi-Stakeholder Monitoring and Steering Group for Tourism Sustainability.*

To be effective this group, which is crucial for implementing tourism sustainability, should be a joint effort between all the stakeholders concerned, using the method of open co-ordination. It should be led by the European tourism industry, in co-operation with public stakeholders of various levels and civil society organisations. The group could draft, discuss and table a detailed action framework, which should allocate specific activities to the individual stakeholders and include an agreed timetable for implementation. It should also be responsible for regularly evaluating implementation.

This group could also set up and manage a European-Level System of Sustainability Monitoring and Reporting of the Tourism Sector, delivering an annual Report on Governance of Sustainable European Tourism. Furthermore, it could guide the preparation of a prototype of a Local Destination Monitoring and Indicator System. For the purpose of sustainable tourism monitoring and reporting the Commission would continue, together with other public and private stakeholders, the work undertaken in the field of sustainable tourism indicators.

c) *Promotion of sustainable tourism consumption and production patterns.*

*Measure 5: The Commission could launch a wide-ranging initiative, involving all relevant stakeholders, to further sustainable tourism consumption patterns in Europe. This initiative could focus on the two core problems regarding sustainable consumer choices in leisure tourism, i.e. seasonality and sustainable tourism transport.*

In order to address the problem of the seasonal character of European tourism, the Commission or other appropriate body could host a regular Round Table of stakeholders with a major influence and/or knowledge in this field. Its mission would be to appraise the evolution regarding seasonality, its consequences and the factors influencing it, and to develop and discuss approaches for reducing seasonality and mitigating its negative effects.

Concerning sustainable tourism transport, the Commission is launching a Multi-stakeholder European Targeted Action of several phases. After the current preparatory phase, and based on solid information regarding the tourism travel behaviour of Europeans, this measure could produce a quantitative model and a stakeholder-oriented assessment, of the transport-related impact of current European tourism. It could be rounded off by a European tourism sector run competition of ideas to outline and assess innovative approaches and sustainable production and consumption patterns in European tourism with more sustainable transport uses.

Furthermore, the Commission could examine the possibility of promoting stakeholder initiatives, including those undertaken by the media, that aim at raising awareness and developing sustainability thinking with regard to tourism activities, at informing consumers,

as well as at favouring sustainable tourism consumption attitudes and increasingly changing unsustainable patterns of tourism.

*Measure 6: The Commission could prepare and launch a package of special measures for promoting the principles of good governance and fostering Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) practices throughout the European tourism sector and its stakeholders as a specific initiative within the European Multi-stakeholder Forum on CSR.*

This measure would focus on the enterprises of the sustainable supply chain. The package could include elements such as

- co-operation with the UNEP co-ordinated Tour Operators Initiative and efforts to extend this approach to other tourism branches and to European tourism SMEs,
- helping to set-up a tourism sector multi-stakeholder platform for promoting the different elements and tools to implement CSR practices among European tourism enterprises,
- promoting sustainability reporting and transparency of European tourism enterprises,
- defining and implementing, in a multi-stakeholder effort, a communication and awareness campaign on sustainability in the tourism supply chain.

A similar measure 7 should specifically target tourist destinations:

*Measure 7: The Commission could prepare and launch a package of special measures aimed at the promotion of sustainable tourist destination development and management.*

This package could include elements such as:

- co-operating with the International Council for Local Environmental Initiatives (ICLEI) to achieve a wide use of the instrument of Local Agenda 21 in European tourist destinations as a central effort for sustainable tourist destination development and management, and corresponding measures of encouragement,
- co-operating in the development and refinement of reliable carrying capacity analysis that respects the limits identified by competent bodies,
- helping to set-up a platform of European tourist destinations for dealing with issues of sustainable tourist destination development and management, including the use of market-instruments, implementation of the carrying capacity concept, integrated quality management and integrated management of sensitive areas and sites, and local sustainability monitoring and reporting of tourist destinations,
- defining and implementing, together with Member States, regional and local authorities and their representative bodies, and bodies representing European tourist destinations, a comprehensive communication and awareness campaign on these issues of sustainable tourist destination development and management
- developing and disseminating good examples.

An issue to be addressed likewise under measures 5, 6 and 7 is the positive link between the sustainability and the quality of tourism, be it from the consumption or the production point

of view. Sustainability is part of the quality of the tourist product, the supply chain and the destinations. On the other hand, tourists need to be made aware of the fact that sustainable quality has its price and is worth paying for.

For implementing certain elements of measures 6 and 7, the Commission could examine the possibility of using the means of target-based tripartite agreements, or similar arrangements when other stakeholders are involved in addition to public authorities.

*Measure 8: In addition to measures 6 and 7, the Commission could promote the development and use of information tools and networks that involve and target the various types of stakeholders, in order to disseminate best practice and good governance regarding the sustainability of European tourism, at destination and enterprise level.*

The Commission would base this promotion mainly on electronic means, fully exploiting the potential for better use of ITC. It would also favour using this measure for the purpose of regular evaluation of the progress made towards the sustainability of European tourism.

Provided they deal with aspects relevant to the sustainability of European tourism in sufficient breadth, the subject, nature and origin of the tools, networks and stakeholders could be as wide as possible. In this context, the Commission could also seek a solution to ensure long-term viability, up-dating and wider use of helpful tools and networks that have already been created with Community financial support.

***The Commission asks for your comments on each of these eight measures and their explanations:***

***Do you agree with each of these measures that the European Commission could envisage ?***

***If yes, please confirm that you agree with all of the measures.***

***If not, please let us know your views.***

***On which measure or part of a measure do you not agree ? What would you propose to change and how ? Which measure(s) do you want to be deleted ? Why ?***

***What measure(s) would you like to be added ? Please develop this/these measure(s) and provide sufficient explanation.***

#### **4. What the other stakeholders could do**

The Commission would expect the stakeholders identified with regard to the above-mentioned measures, and all others to be involved with these measures, to contribute to their utmost to the success of these measures. Furthermore, it sees the following roles for the various stakeholders to further the implementation of sustainable tourism in Europe:

##### *a) European citizens and tourists*

For tourism to be sustainable, European citizens must increasingly become responsible tourists, and professionals need to commit themselves to sustainability when working in or serving the tourism sector. All should seek out better information about sustainable tourism, and be willing to make responsible purchasing and travel decisions.

Sustainable tourism can only be a success if consumers buy sustainable tourism products. Providing clear information, raising awareness and media presentation are crucial concerns, both for the individual tourist and his behaviour, and for the individual citizen in the tourist destination. An advanced knowledge-based economy will give tourists the possibility of being more aware of sustainability thinking and participating in sustainable development. With the help of coherent and reliable means to identify sustainable tourism products and services, they will be able to make informed choices on what products they buy, who gets their money, with whom they travel, and which companies deserve their loyalty.

*b) Private sector enterprises of the tourism supply chain*

Private tourism enterprises should use the existing instruments and tools that favour the sustainability of the sector and its activities. They should be prepared to reply with product development and cost internalisation to changing and new markets generated by sustainability policies and initiatives of various kind, to business messages that favour sustainability subjects, and to increasing sustainability requirements.

Getting the prices right means recognising the costs and opportunities of implementing sustainable patterns of production and consumption, and accounting for wider economic, environmental and social costs and effects. In this context, the tourism industry should develop and propose solutions to achieve sustainability that are feasible in a situation of low profit margins and tourists' low spending behaviour.

The new open governance structures will require businesses to assume more responsibility in conducting their operations in an economically viable manner that takes into account environmental and social considerations. This means full implementation of adequate CSR practices for tourism supply chain services and enterprises of any kind and size, and looking at the sustainable methods and products available. It includes appropriate training and education, active social dialogue, and sustainability monitoring and reporting.

Tourism enterprises can take commercial advantage from passing to consumer lifestyle choices that are sustainable. They could use recognised tools and systems of management, auditing, certification and labelling of products to attract consumers who are increasingly sustainability-conscious and to make their efforts visible, and sustainable tourism capacity-building and learning programmes for staff to adapt to the new way of doing business. They should also take advantage of enhanced e-business capability to be more sustainable.

A responsible attitude to destination development and product delivery, as well as the involvement of local communities and indigenous peoples in the development approach, are important characteristics of a sustainably managed enterprise of the tourism economy. Tourism industry managers can be expected to recognise self-determination of local social and cultural development and local control of local landscapes. This includes contributing to local destination development in a manner that benefits both local residents, tourists and the landscape, in particular when the product is based on indigenous cultures and their territories. Enterprises involved in tourism services and new tourism development should participate in destination carrying capacity assessment and the application of the different tools used for respecting social and environmental requirements.

*c) European tourist destinations and public authorities*

To best perform their tasks of providing a sustainable tourist product, tourist destinations and public authorities at all levels of government should adopt the good governance principles of openness, participation, accountability, effectiveness and coherence. Multi-stakeholder

partnerships for governance involve the different types of stakeholders, i.e. public authorities, private business, and other civil society groups. All of them could have a direct input into these governance-by-partnership processes through appropriate stakeholder fora.

Effective policy-making and coherent policy integration, including that of environmental and social policy with economic and enterprise policy, so as to balance these three pillars of sustainable development, can be seen as a crucial way to sustainable development. Inter-disciplinary land-use management at regional and local level is central to the process of integrating sector and thematic considerations in tourist destinations. Impact assessment procedures and monitoring and indicator systems as decision-support mechanisms should assist policy-integration and effective policy-making, also at regional and local levels.

Regional and local authorities are key to using Community Structural Funds for enhancing the sustainability of tourist destinations, which should be subject to sustainability reporting. To ensure transparency tourist destinations and public authorities should use mechanisms that measure the balanced public management of economic development, social cohesion and environmental protection. They could develop the same annual triple bottom-line (economic, environmental and social impact) assessment and reporting systems as private corporations.

Most tourist destinations and public bodies need a better sustainability performance. They could involve themselves in the development, promotion and use of market-instruments, voluntary agreements, labelling and certification schemes to facilitate the adoption and take-up of a sustainable quality tourist product by all stakeholder categories. Quality and carrying capacity considerations should guide the performance and development of tourist destinations. Together with other public and private stakeholders active in their territory, and with a view to creating 'Learning Areas' in the tourism sector, regional and local authorities should implement appropriate training and education schemes for sector practitioners.

Tourist destination managers and other public authority bodies need to be familiar with the core documentation of sustainable tourism. Their sustainability knowledge and skills enhancement should in particular target areas that are strategically important for sustainable tourism development, such as inter-disciplinary teamwork, monitoring and reporting, use of new technologies, networking mechanisms and workforce issues.

*d) Other civil society members*

As a leading voice in the sustainable development implementation process, civil society groups could use their high social and media acceptance to favour processes of raising consumer awareness and a sense of sustainability on the part of the tourism workforce.

Trade Unions should build on partnerships and social dialogue that contribute to increased job opportunities and quality employment conditions. When addressing the issues of seasonality, their interest is to secure longer-term job opportunities through cross-sector policy integration, equitable part-time work contracts, improved learning opportunities, and integrated work-unemployment-education packages. In turn, they could review quality working conditions in the sector, and incorporate sustainability principles into social and economic strategies. This could aim at making best use of flexibility, and at higher levels of education and skills on the part of employees, and a more entrepreneurial approach to employment, based on greater sector and geographical mobility.

Environmental and citizen non-governmental organisations (NGOs) would be expected to commit to constructive, solution-oriented interventions and assistance to public and business

stakeholders, providing specific solution-oriented expertise. This should be combined with a deeper involvement in sustainable tourism policy-making, as well as benefits of further capacity-building measures. NGOs would need to develop their own effectiveness at the regional and local level, so that representative associations could interface with tourist destinations and public authorities in appropriate stakeholder fora.

*d) International organisations and Member States*

Relevant international organisations and bodies should continue, and if possible broaden, their sustainable tourism efforts. This will allow the European Community to reinforce its co-operation and join forces with them, in the sphere of sustainable tourism, while benefiting from and contributing even more effectively to global experience and exchange of ideas.

Member States should make tourism a key issue in National Sustainable Development Strategies. They should promote widely the principles of good governance, both in general and with regard to this sector, and practice impact assessment procedures and monitoring and indicator systems as decision-support mechanisms to assist policy-integration and effective policy-making. Furthermore, they should participate in the sustainable tourism efforts undertaken by relevant international organisations and bodies, and support measures to promote this sustainability at any level at which they have an influence.

***The Commission asks for your comments:***

***Do you fully agree with this view as to what other stakeholders should do for implementing sustainability of European tourism ?***

***If yes, please confirm that you agree with all of it.***

***If not, please let us know your views. On which issue(s) regarding which stakeholder group do you disagree ? What would you propose to change and how, or to be deleted ? Why ? What issue(s) would you like to see added for which stakeholder group? Please specify this/these issue(s) and provide sufficient explanation.***

## **VI. CONCLUSIONS**

The Commission expects other stakeholders in Europe to contribute significantly to the efforts for implementing sustainable tourism. This concerns European citizens and tourists, private sector enterprises, European tourist destinations and public authorities, and the civil society stakeholders. It invites them already at this stage of preparing a future Communication on "Basic orientations for the sustainability of European tourism", to contribute as actively as possible, submitting their comments to this document. In doing so, they may also refer to any other relevant document, whether mentioned in this document or not, and comment on it. They may already introduce ideas for a detailed framework for action, which would allocate specific activities to the individual stakeholders, and for a timetable for implementation.

The Commission calls upon all interested parties to examine this document. **It is particularly looking forward to receiving reaction regarding (i) the policy options for facing the challenges of sustainable tourism in a European context, (ii) the concept of action and the Community contribution, (iii) the measures that the Commission could envisage, and (iv) what other stakeholders should do.**

The Commission hopes that this consultation will be useful for triggering and debating ideas, which both will promise a significant positive effect on the sector's sustainability, and can be widely accepted and implemented. It would like to begin the gradual implementation of the measures retained, in 2004. Its intention would be to do this in co-operation with the Council, the other Community institutions and with international bodies active in this field, and with the active participation of the tourism industry and civil society.

**The Commission wishes that the participation in this consultation will be particularly high and intense, and will deliver high quality results.**



## **Community policies and initiatives with a favourable effect on the sustainability of European tourism**

### – Governance, better regulation and policy integration

[European Governance and Better Regulation](#) provide approaches and instruments that support moves to make tourism sustainable. Transversal integration of sector policy making and implementation ensures an adequate account of sustainable concerns in a cross-sector industry like tourism. Impact assessment crucially contributes to integration and improves the quality and coherence of policy design. Beyond the foreseen pilot applications, *tripartite agreements* as instruments of voluntary undertakings that do not involve binding legal commitments might help also to promote the sustainability of tourism.

Article 6 of the Treaty establishing the European Community requires the integration of environmental protection. The Council adopted resolutions, conclusions or strategies for achieving environmental integration and sustainable development within specific policy areas, a number of which are relevant to sustainable tourism development.

The Community Integrated Coastal Zone Management ([ICZM](#)) strategy and the related Recommendation, which outline the way to promote ICZM, are particularly relevant for tourism activities and tourist destinations. Member States are asked to develop, by spring 2006, national ICZM strategies. Commission publications identify and promote best practice in the field of [Integrated Quality Management of Tourist Destinations](#).

### – Sustainable entrepreneurship, business practice and employment

The [EU enterprise policy strategy](#) and related measures, such as the simplification of the business environment, the European Charter for Small Enterprises and the European Observatory for SMEs, have the potential to contribute to the sustainability of the European tourism sector. EU action to promote entrepreneurship and SMEs, such as business support measures and networks, access to finance and measures in favour of small businesses and specific target groups, can help foster sustainable tourism enterprises.

The sustainability of tourism can particularly benefit from a joint stakeholder effort to promote and develop Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR). The Commission [Communication on CSR](#) provides the reference for its further development, including in the tourism sector. An important element is the invitation for companies with at least 500 staff to publish a “triple bottom line” in their annual reports that measures performance against economic, environmental and social criteria, and the recognition, measurement and disclosure of environmental issues in the annual accounts and annual [reports of companies](#).

European competition policy ensures an economically sustainable business world, an adequate level playing field for sustainable business. It backs integrating environmental considerations into Community policies, including with regard to the tourism sector. [Merger control](#) sees to it that continued concentration at the level of the intermediaries, combined with vertical integration and enhanced buying power of travel organisers, does not deteriorate competition in the market, with adverse effects on local suppliers, small operators and the final consumers. [Community guidelines on State aid for environmental protection](#) explore new forms of aid for environmental purposes as a means of promoting sustainable development in application of the ‘polluter pays’ principle while avoiding any conflict with that of internalisation of costs.

Sustainable tourism can benefit from the approaches and instruments outlined in detail in the [Commission Communication on integrating environmental issues with economic policy](#). Economic instruments, in particular market-instruments to achieve the functioning of markets for environmental goods and services, offer a good pathway towards integration of environmental and economic policies in this sector. Negotiated agreements, perhaps for a geographical area or sub-sector, leave industry with great flexibility in reaching agreed targets, provided that most firms concerned are represented and can be expected to join the agreement. Where needed, levying charges or offering payments that put a price on environmental resources also corresponds well to the diversity of the tourism sector.

The annual EU guidelines for Member States' employment, the related recommendations addressed to each Member State,<sup>and</sup> the main lines of the *European Employment Strategy (EES)* can be reaffirmed for the tourism sector. Developing entrepreneurship and job creation, improving employability, encouraging adaptability of businesses and their employees, and strengthening equal opportunities policies for women and men are fundamental areas that could accordingly be explored in regard to tourism potential for job creation.

A socially sustainable tourism sector and its attractiveness for a competitive and skilled labour force can benefit from the intense European Community consideration and work on issues in the field of [quality working and employment conditions](#), such as social dialogue and consultation, social co-operation, collective agreements and bargaining, social protection and mutual information on it, disability, ageing policy, co-ordination of social security schemes and social inclusion. The Commission's commitment and efforts with regard to [Making a European area of lifelong learning a reality](#), are also beneficial for the tourism sector, in particular with a view to *Learning Areas*, so that the tourism industry has all the skills necessary for innovation available to it.

– [Sustainable transport and energy](#)

The White Paper on "[European transport policy for 2010: time to decide](#)" and its Action Plan are of prime importance for the sustainability of European tourism.

The White Paper outlines how to achieve tourist transport that is more efficient, sustainable and of higher quality. The proposed strategy and measures are designed to gradually break the link between constant transport growth and economic growth in order to reduce congestion and the pressure on the environment while maintaining the EU's economic competitiveness and developing a quality transport policy for Europe's citizens. Road safety, low congestion, sustainable mobility, passengers' rights, better quality of transport services, and sustainable infrastructure meet the concerns of tourists and local population and significantly affect the tourism product and life in destinations.

The White Paper stresses the importance of a balanced growth between the different modes of transport thanks to the policies to internalise the external costs of transport and to targeted investments in the networks which ensure a fair competition between the different modes of transport. Eliminating technical and institutional transport barriers between the Member States and creating a true common transport market can favour sustainable tourism transport. The Trans-European transport network (TEN-T) infrastructure for the different modes of transport and its traffic management systems also facilitate tourism and have the potential to do so in accordance with sustainability requirements.

The Community achievements and measures in the field of energy favour sustainable tourism development. The White Paper [Energy for the future - renewable sources of energy](#) sets out the objectives and the related timetable of actions with regard to types of energy that are highly important for the tourism sector, in the form of an Action Plan. Key actions of the White Paper's '*Campaign for take-off*' explicitly refer to tourism-related applications.

- Wise use and management of natural resources and of heritage: protected areas and natural and cultural heritage

To respect bio-diversity, cultural values and cultural heritage the Commission encourages and promotes the assessment of the tourism carrying capacity of ecosystems, habitats and sites, the exchange of best practice among public and private tourism interest and the development of international guidelines for sustainable tourism. It published [guidance](#) on the issue of developing [sustainable tourism](#) within protected areas and on the basis of heritage. The objectives and measures set out in the [European Community Bio-diversity Strategy](#) are directly relevant for sustainable tourism, including required special measures of conservation and protection and particular attention to the impact on Europe's [Nature 2000 sites](#).

Many Community funded measures and projects provide good practice on how sustainable tourism can create opportunities to make good use of heritage and to enhance the great potential of cultural heritage based tourism for sustainable economic development and job creation. The [Culture 2000 programme](#), which aims at promoting a common cultural area characterised by both cultural diversity and a common cultural heritage, and several other European programmes with a cultural dimension, can help explore these opportunities.

- Environment policy

The Community environment policy has a major relevance for the sustainability of European tourism. Besides the measures, instruments and tools mentioned with regard to the wise use and management of biological diversity and natural heritage (see above), and to environmental information, management and assessment (see below), issues such as water, waste water and waste management directly affect the tourism sector.

The [1976 Bathing Water Directive](#) has set binding standards for bathing waters throughout the European Union, which are currently the subject of a [revision](#) under a new directive. The annual Bathing Water Report and Tourist Atlas show the quality of bathing waters. Safe water to swim or play in is an important factor in tourists' choice of a destination, for which clean water is an important argument to attract visitors.

Regarding [waste water](#) and [waste](#), not only are the Community measures for prevention of direct interest for the tourism supply chain, but also those dealing with treatment, reuse, recycling, [disposal](#) or [incineration](#). These, too, are crucial issues for sustainable tourist destinations. Preventing and combating [local environmental noise](#) is also an issue of major importance for the environmentally sustainable management of tourist destinations.

- [Financial support for sustainable tourism development](#): the funds in favour of economic and social cohesion

The Structural Funds and their Community initiatives, in particular Interreg and LEADER+, the Phare programme, and Community support for pre-accession measures for agriculture and rural development (SAPARD), all provide good possibilities for supporting tourism-related measures. The Commission publication on [“Making the best use of the Structural Funds in the sector of Commerce and Tourism”](#) further promotes this role.

The Cohesion Fund and the Instrument for Structural Policies for Pre-accession, respectively finance major environment and transport infrastructure projects that contribute to achieving the objectives of the Community's environment policy and the Trans-European Transport Network and can have a large-scale importance for further tourism development in Europe.

– Implementing new technologies

The Commission *has* highlighted the steps to be taken to ensure that European enterprises can take maximal benefit from [e-economy](#), including those of the tourism sector, for which the potential impact of ICTs is high. The Commission Action [Plan eEurope 2005: An information society for all](#) invites the private sector to work with the Commission and Member States to achieve the eEurope objectives. Explicitly referring to tourism, the plan announces that the Commission, in co-operation with Member States, the private sector and regional authorities, will define e-services to promote Europe and to offer user-friendly public information.

Furthermore, the Priority thematic area of research “Information Society technologies” under the sixth framework programme of the European Community for research, technological development and demonstration activities contributing to the creation of the European Research Area and to innovation (2002 - 2006) provides good opportunities for supporting tourism related projects.

– Strong information, management tools, observation and measurement

Better quality and easily accessible information on the environment and on practical matters helps shape opinions and thus individual tourists' decisions that support sustainability. The extension of the [Community eco-label scheme](#) to services started with the sub-sector of tourist accommodation, the first service sector for which ecological criteria were developed. Likewise, a wide uptake of the [Community Eco-Management and Audit Scheme \(EMAS\)](#) by the tourism sector to evaluate, report and improve environmental performance, together with rigorous and independently verified environmental or sustainable development performance reports, is to be favoured.

Community legislation requires an [Environmental Impact Assessment](#) for certain tourism and leisure installation projects and for plans and programmes which set the framework for their development consent. [Integrated Product Policy](#) contributes to minimising the environmental impact of products through all phases of their life-cycle. Tourism stakeholders can benefit from information on industry and product policy areas that are already being developed and tested, such as eco-industries, and from the possibilities offered by Community law to public purchasers who wish to integrate environmental considerations into [public procurement procedures](#).

An important tool to ensure sustainability during the whole life cycle is the use of an 'Early warning system for the identification of declining tourist destinations and of preventive best practices', on which the Commission has issued a specific [publication](#). Current Commission work on harmonised criteria for [good accessibility](#) of tourist sites and infrastructures for disabled people is expected to result in information that will help observing and measuring also this aspect of the sustainability of European tourism.

The logical point to look for reliable tourism-related indicators is the identification of key impacts of tourism that can be measured directly as outputs from the conduct of tourism businesses and visitors at destinations. Eurostat is launching preparatory work to elaborate a methodological manual on the measurement of sustainable development in tourism.