

EU Intelligence Report

March 2016



KEY HIGHLIGHTS

Tourism Policy

[European Parliament committee adopts Visa Code revision report](#)

[Limitation of free-movement in Europe: Temporary border controls may be re-established until the end of the year](#)

Taxation/VAT

[EU VAT Action Plan to be published soon](#)

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Tourism Policy

European Parliament Home Affairs Committee adopts Visa Code revision

EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

On 16th March the European Parliament's Committee on Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs (LIBE) adopted its report on the Visa Code revision. This report is of particular interest for the amusement parks industry, since it is aimed at harmonizing and simplifying the application procedure for third-country tourists, making Europe a more attractive destination.

The outcome of the vote was very positive and incorporated some of the key requests that IAAPA pushed for with the European private sector in Tourism (NET). These requests were aimed at making the visa application system simpler, less burdensome and less costly to travelers. They included:

- Extended timeframe for lodging the visa application
- More flexible definition of "VIS Registered Regular Traveller"
- Mandatory consular cooperation: the possibility for the traveller to apply for the

visa at a consulate located closer to his/her place of residence.

According to a [study](#) commissioned by the European Commission, different facilitation options could lead to an increase in trips to the Schengen area of between 30% and up to 60% from the six target countries of the study (China, India, Russia, Saudi Arabia, South Africa and Ukraine).

The report on the Visa Code revision will now be negotiated between the European Parliament and the Council.

Limitation of free-movement in Europe: Possible temporary border controls until end 2016

EUROPEAN COMMISSION

Following the refugee crisis and the increasing security threats, some EU Member States have reinstated temporary border controls within the Schengen area. As a response, the European Commission has published on the 4th of March a [Roadmap](#) to restore the full functioning of Europe's passport-free Schengen zone by the end of the year.

The Roadmap foresees a series of activities that in the next couple of months should help cope with the emergency, including stepping up cooperation with Turkey, creating an EU

coastguard force and helping Greece to strengthen its external border.

A [deal](#) on EU-Turkey cooperation was already reached in mid-March. Regarding Greece, on 12th May the Commission will assess to what extent the serious deficiencies in the country's external border management have been remedied.

If deficiencies still persist, the Commission will publish a proposal for re-establishing some temporary internal border controls in the Schengen area - only where necessary and just until the external border deficiencies are remedied. The objective would be to lift again all internal border controls by mid-November, so that there can be a return to a normally functioning Schengen area by the end of 2016.

A limitation to free movement in Europe could have a significant impact on our industry, and the European Parliament has already [called](#) on the Commission to assess the potential damages to the EU tourism industry of a suspension of the Schengen Agreement.

Overall, it was [estimated](#) that at least 13 million tourist nights could be lost in the EU due to the reduction of intra-Schengen tourist trips caused by cumbersome border controls, with a total cost of €1.2 billion for the tourism sector.

European Parliament Internal Market Committee and Commission discuss EU Accessibility Act

EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT
EUROPEAN COMMISSION

On 14th March, the European Parliament Committee for Internal Market and Consumer Affairs (IMCO) discussed the new [Accessibility Act](#) with the European Commission, which was published in December. This initiative notably seeks to set common accessibility requirements in a range of product and services.

Park or attractions are not directly included, but some measures designed to make e-commerce websites more accessible may impact parks retailing tickets or products online.

During the discussion on 14th March, most members of the European Parliament welcomed the proposal, although the Conservatives members were skeptical on its ability to deliver and suggested that it should not go beyond what already exists in sectorial legislation.

In the coming months the proposal will be discussed by the Parliament and the Council – who already raised some concerns about the economic impact on SMEs.

IAAPA Europe will follow the developments of these discussion to ensure that the final act does not impose unreasonable burdens on amusement parks and attractions.

European Parliament Transport Committee Study on Best Practices for Sustainable Tourism Development

EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

On 1st March, the European Parliament Committee for Transport and Tourism (TRAN) published a [study](#) on the best practices in EU Member States for the development of sustainable tourism.

This study explores sustainable development in EU tourism and concludes that there is a lack of up-to-date data for both the environmental and social effects of tourism. It also argues that EU tourism, environmental and transport policies need to be better integrated in order to promote sustainable development.

In the concluding section the study provides policy recommendations for sustainable transport, destinations and businesses, and suggests how to improve tourism monitoring, statistics and research.

Taxation/VAT

EU VAT Action Plan to be published soon

EUROPEAN COMMISSION

In the coming days, the Commission should adopt the announced Action Plan for a more effective VAT regime.

Regarding reduced VAT rates, the Commission does not seem interested anymore in trying to reduce the number of reduced rates contained in the annex of the VAT Directives. This is a positive development for our industry, since entry to amusement parks is one of those services that qualifies for a reduced rate under the existing legislation, if Member States wish to apply it.

In the upcoming VAT Action Plan, the Commission should instead consider two options:

- Extension and regular review of the list of products and services that qualify for a reduced rate - In consultation with Member States;
- A full renationalisation of reduced rates that would give Member States the opportunity to decide for themselves which sector should benefit from a reduced rate within certain parameters.

IAAPA Europe will continue to follow closely the developments related to the VAT Action Plan to identify any potential impact on the industry.

Employment Law/ Labour Skills

European Parliament hearing on work-life balance

EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

On 22nd March, the European Parliament Committees for Employment and Social Affairs (EMPL) and on Women's Rights and Gender Equality (FEMM) held a hearing on creating labour market conditions that are favourable for work-life balance. The hearing addressed different aspects of working conditions and industrial relations, including sociology and gender policies, in order to adapt the EU legal framework.

The EMPL Chair, MEP [Thomas Händel](#), (Nordic Green Left), highlighted that the EU should take action and assist Member States in introducing measures for a good work-life balance, as this would have a positive impact on the well-being of people and therefore on the quality of their work.

The two committees have decided to draft a joint non-legislative report entitled "*Creating Labour Market conditions Favourable for Work-Life Balance*" in order to feed into the

Commission's [Roadmap](#) "*New start to address the challenges of work-life balance faced by working families*".

IAAPA Europe will follow these developments closely to ensure that they do not result in onerous requirements for employers.

Employment Council discusses New Skills Agenda for Europe

COUNCIL OF THE EU

On 7th March, the Employment, Social Policy, Health and Consumer Affairs Council (EPSCO) held a policy [debate](#) on the forthcoming New Skills Agenda for Europe. During the debate, Member States stressed the importance of supporting transitions from education to employment, addressing skills mismatches and gaps, and supporting new and digital skills throughout the lifecycle.

The New Skills Agenda is expected to be published on 25th May 2016 and should include five key areas:

- Improving the skills level – including digital skills.
- Making vocational education and training a first choice
- Crossing the skills caps to make them more comparable across Europe

- Helping SMEs to invest and upgrade in the skills of their workers
- Encouraging entrepreneurship

Consumer Issues

Commission publishes results of public consultation on geo-blocking

COUNCIL OF THE EU

On 21st March, the Commission published a [synopsis report](#) on the [results](#) of the public consultation on geo-blocking. Respondents included consumers' organisations, Member state authorities, companies and business associations.

While the majority of respondents agreed that consumers should be able to purchase and access services from everywhere in the EU, the definition of justified/unjustified geo-blocking remains key issue. Business associations in particular criticised the wide definition of geo-blocking in the public consultation and raised concerns about commercial freedom.

The Commission will propose measures to address unjustified geo-blocking as part of a legislative package to boost e-commerce in May.

Amusement parks may be impacted by these proposals because of possible future limitations

on their ability to set different prices for consumers from different markets, even if these can be justified on the basis of the cost of marketing or to remain price attractive.

MEP Questions and Answers

[MEP question on supporting tourism on Greek islands](#)

[MEP Elissavet Vozemberg-Vrionidi \(Centre-right, Greece\)](#) asked the Commission whether the Commission intended to provide specific financial assistance for the Greek islands, which have been hit hard by the increasing influx of refugees, at a time when tourist bookings are constantly falling. She also asked if there were provisions for further supporting those islands by promoting Greek tourism in the EU.

[MEP Question on Tourism in Aegean islands](#)

[MEP Manolis Kefalogiannis \(Centre-right, Greece\)](#) asked the Commission whether it was possible to take emergency compensatory measures for local businesses and under which Structural Funds can this aid could be granted. He also asked if exceptional financial measures could be taken for tourism businesses in East Aegean islands.

[MEP Question on harmonisation of accommodation classification systems in the EU](#)

[MEP Rosa Estaràs Ferragut \(Centre-right, Spain\)](#) wanted to know how the Commission intended to promote the initiative to gradually harmonise the accommodation offer across Europe. She also asked whether the Commission was running any programmes for cooperation with tourism associations aimed at framing with them a common European system for the classification of tourism infrastructure.

[Commission answers EP question on Tourism industry after Paris attacks](#)

[MEP István Ujhelyi \(Socialist, Hungarian\)](#) observed that the recent terrorist attacks will have negative consequences on tourism, as they impact the confidence in Europe as a destination. He asked the Commission if they had any concrete experiences and ideas to help deal with these changes.

The Commission replied that in order to help to deal with and alleviate the impact of tragic events, such as the Paris attacks, the Commission focused on ensuring the safe and efficient movement of EU citizens and foreign visitors. The agreements reached on the Passenger Name Record Directive, firearms and police cooperation are important

milestones in this context. In addition, the Commission is undertaking several actions to better protect EU citizens and critical infrastructures from terrorist threats, such as developing various practical tools, e.g. handbooks for law enforcement practitioners to support protection of soft targets like hotels or museums and in the case of public events.

[Commission answers EP question on age-friendly tourism strategies](#)

[MEP Claudia Tapardel \(Socialist, Romania\)](#) was wondering whether the Commission was taking any measures to support initiatives aimed at stimulating senior tourism in the EU, and whether they intended to develop any guidelines to address specific barriers which seniors face in accessing tourism.

The Commission replied that in the framework of COSME, the Commission launched three calls for proposals to increase low season tourism flows of senior citizens in Europe. Following the last call for proposals, around 19 additional projects will be selected for co-funding in early 2016.

The added that they have organised targeted meetings with stakeholders to discuss main challenges for low-season tourism and entrusted an external consultant to prepare a

report on existing studies and best practices at national and EU level on tourism for seniors.

[Commission answers EP question on Green Paper on Safety of Tourism Accommodation Services](#)

[MEP Claudia Tapardel \(Socialist, Romania\)](#)

asked the Commission's view on the better sharing and collection of tourism accommodation-related safety incident data. She also asked whether the Commission would keep this policy under review and whether the Directorate-General for Justice and Consumers would retain responsibility for the safety of services relating to tourism accommodation within the EU.

The Commission replied that for the time being, they were not planning any initiative on collection of tourism accommodation-related safety incident data. The Commission supports better enforcement of existing national rules aiming at improving the safety of accommodation services. The Commission added that they will keep monitoring any developments in the sector.

Events

April

- 5 April 2016: [High Level Conference on attracting investment in tourism](#), Brussels, Belgium

September

- 27 September 2016: UNWTO World Tourism Day 2016