

EU Intelligence Report

April 2016



KEY HIGHLIGHTS

Tourism Policy

[IAAPA EMEA Digital Skills Network conference](#)

[Potential suspension of EU visa waiver for US and Canada](#)

Taxation/VAT

[Commission unveils EU VAT Action Plan](#)

Consumer issues

[Investigation on pricing at Disneyland Paris concludes with undertaking to increase access to national deals](#)

CONTENTS

| | |
|--|---|
| Tourism Policy | 4 |
| Commission follows-up European Parliament Resolution on Tourism | 4 |
| IAAPA EMEA Digital Skills Network conference | 4 |
| Potential suspension of EU visa waiver for US and Canada | 5 |
| Tourism Industry Manifesto presented to the European Parliament..... | 5 |
| Committee of Regions Opinion on tourism as a driver for regional cooperation | 5 |
| South Sardinia and Barcelona win top prizes at the first ETIS and Accessible Tourism Awards | 5 |
| Taxation/VAT | 6 |
| Commission unveils EU VAT Action Plan | 6 |
| Employment Law/ Labour Skills | 6 |
| Attracting investment in tourism conference discusses employment and skills..... | 6 |
| Consumer Issues | 7 |
| Investigation on pricing at Disneyland Paris concludes with undertaking to increase access to national deals | 7 |
| Funding | 7 |
| DG GROWTH call to enhance quality jobs, apprenticeships and traineeships in tourism | 7 |
| MEP Questions and Answers | 7 |
| Events | 9 |

Contents

Tourism Policy

Commission follows-up European Parliament Resolution on Tourism

EUROPEAN COMMISSION

During an exchange of views with the European Parliament on their non-legislative resolution on tourism, the Commission underlined several actions they intended to implement to support the promotion of tourism:

- The Commission is working on a detailed overview on the implementation of the 2010 Tourism Communication activities and will present a new strategy at the 2016 European Tourism Forum (ETF).
- In 2016, they will publish a study to identify the main gaps in skills provision in the sector.
- The Commission is looking at the feasibility for a study on the impact of taxes on the competitiveness of the EU tourism sector;
- By the end of the 2016, a European Task Force aimed at promoting EU Ecolabel Tourist Accommodation Services will be launched.

- The Digital Tourism Network will conduct research on challenges and opportunities of digitisation in EU tourism, with a view to proposing recommendations for potential policy actions. The outcome of this research will be summarised in a report, which should be presented in 2016.
- The Commission will take actions aimed at enhancing the visibility of EU tourism SMEs in key international markets, without specifying which ones.

IAAPA EMEA Digital Skills Network conference

STAKEHOLDERS

EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

On the 11th of April, more than 40 IAAPA members from across Europe gathered at Europa-Park for the second Digital Skills Network event. A delegation of 12 MEPs joined the event for a roundtable discussion on digital policy. This reflects the fact that IAAPA is a valued stakeholder for Europe's policymakers.

One of the highlights was that the industry is analog rather than digital, however digital is increasingly changing the way the industry markets, retails and develops new products.

Lance Montague, Director of Operations Planning and Industrial Engineering at Disneyland Paris, presented how customer expectations of service and interaction have changed and the type of immersive customer experience that the industry should be looking to provide in the future. He also identified some of the factors that will affect the success of this, such as breadth of the offers.

Fernando Aldecoa, Director General of PortAventura in Spain, gave an overview of how customer data has helped to influence his business as well as giving a preview of some of the new products they will be offering as a result.

Robert Arvidsson, Head of Marketing Liseberg, gave a step-by-step guide on how to use social media in a crisis and emphasised the importance of treating social media seriously, which have to be integrated fully into communications strategies. Steffen Kottkamp, Creative Director at Europa-Park in Germany explained how social media have helped Europa-Park to engage with customers and create valuable communities of guests.

Potential suspension of EU visa waiver for US and Canada

EUROPEAN COMMISSION

The European Commission issued a [communication](#) which assesses the political, economic and administrative consequences of the possible suspension of the visa waiver for citizens from the US and Canada. The document states that consequences would indeed be significant and foresees a potential decrease of 5% – considered to be a conservative estimate – in the number of US/Canadian tourists to the EU, which would represent a loss of EUR 1,8 billion for the EU tourism sector.

This could have an impact on the industry, by reducing the number of US and Canadian tourists visiting amusement parks.

ETC, the European Travel Commission, has [reacted](#) to the risk of suspension by urging the Parliament and Council to consider the impact of such a change to the visa regime. ETC also appeals to the EU authorities to follow the requirements of listing the third countries whose nationals must be in possession of visas when crossing the external borders and those whose nationals are exempt from that requirement.

The European Parliament and Council have to take a position on the most appropriate way forward by 12 July 2016 at the latest.

Tourism Industry Manifesto presented to the European Parliament

EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT STAKEHOLDERS

On the 26th of April, the TRAN Committee held an exchange of views in the framework of the Tourism Task Force, with European tourism stakeholders presenting the Tourism Growth and Jobs [Manifesto](#). The document highlights the EU policy priorities for the sector in the coming years.

Among the priorities mentioned there are many of topical interest for the attraction industry, including accessibility, employment, digitalization, seasonality and taxation. The initiative is gaining support both from the European Commission and Parliament and will contribute to the promotion of the tourism industry at European, national and local level. During the debate MEPs raised in particular the issues of sustainability, skills gap and funding.

These recommendation should also be taken into account in the Tourism Action Programme that is expected to be published by the Commission by the end of the year.

Committee of Regions Opinion on tourism as a driver for regional cooperation

COMMITTEE OF REGIONS

To support the European Commission, the Committee of the Regions (CoR) is drafting an [opinion](#) on 'Tourism as a driving force for regional cooperation across the EU'. This opinion will look at links between tourism and other sectors and identify obstacles which cities and regions are facing when designing and implementing tourism strategies.

The CoR will focus on recommendations for the development of strategies to make Europe an attractive destination. The Rapporteur, Mr Hanspeter Wagner (Austria, Centre-right), has called on stakeholders to contribute to the opinion by answering the suggested [survey](#).

South Sardinia and Barcelona win top prizes at the first ETIS and Accessible Tourism Awards

EUROPEAN COMMISSION STAKEHOLDERS

On 22nd April, the jury of the first joint ETIS (European Tourism Indicators System) and Accessible Tourism Awards handed out prizes to 10 destinations for sustainability, accessibility, and social impact awards in three categories: overall winners, responsible

destination management, and sustainable economic development. South Sardinia and Barcelona won the best prizes for sustainability and accessibility.

A new 2016 ETIS toolkit was launched as a tangible contribution from the European Commission towards the UNWTO International Year of Sustainable Tourism Development in 2017.

Taxation/VAT

Commission unveils EU VAT Action Plan

EUROPEAN COMMISSION

On 7th April, the Commission [announced](#) an Action Plan for a more effective VAT regime. The Commission will also work to modernize VAT rates and considers two options:

- An extension and regular review of the list of products and services that qualify for a reduced rate, in consultation with Member States. The minimum standard VAT rate of 15% would be maintained;
- 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. The minimum standard VAT rate would be removed.

The first option would be a positive development for the 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. The Second option might lead to more competition.

The European Parliament and the Council are now expected to provide political guidance on the options put forward and to confirm their support for the reforms set out in this Communication.

By the end of 2016, the Commission will come forward with a legislative proposal to modernise and simplify VAT for cross-border e-commerce as part of the Digital Single Market strategy. In 2017, the Commission will then present a VAT simplification package to ease cross-border commerce for SMEs.

Employment Law/ Labour Skills

Attracting investment in tourism conference discusses employment and skills

EUROPEAN COMMISSION STAKEHOLDERS

On the 5th of April, the European Commission Directorate General for Internal Market, Industry, Entrepreneurship and SME's organised a [high level conference on attracting](#)

[investment and tourism](#), gathering aviation and hotel industry stakeholders, representatives from Member States and the European Commission, as well as MEPs.

The panellists notably discussed different ways to attract young people to the tourism sector despite the negative image of the sector in terms of working conditions i.e seasonality, late working hours, low pay, lack of career opportunities. Stakeholders acknowledged that it was equally important to find ways to upgrade skills (digital, social, language and adapted to the aging population) of those currently working in the sector to render it more productive and profitable – and thereby more attractive as a work place.

Internal Market and Industry Commissioner Bienkowska underlined the need for creative innovations and to match the supply and demand for skills. In this regard, the Commission has launched the [drop'pin platform](#), which enables employers, students and entrepreneurs to meet and cooperate.

Commissioner for Employment, Marianne Thyssen, stated that the key challenge for tourism is how the industry is being perceived. The industry needs to combat the image of low skilled, low paid and unstable seasonal employment sector. She added that the

industry needed to highlight that the skills learned in the sector are interchangeable. MEP Isabella de Monte, member of the EP Transport and Tourism Committee, underlined that the professionalisation of tourism sector needed to be taken into account.

Several industry stakeholders pointed out that funding for providing training to employees was difficult to obtain.

Consumer Issues

Investigation on pricing at Disneyland Paris concludes with undertaking to increase access to national deals

STAKEHOLDERS EUROPEAN COMMISSION

The Commission and the amusement park have found an agreement to ensure fair access by all consumers to the best national offers.

The Financial Times reported that, according to the French authorities' investigation, the park was not in breach with French law. In spite of this, Disneyland Paris has changed its online ticket reservation system, following discussions with the European Commission. The park will make it easier to access and compare prices across national websites and to buy tickets on any national website. Consumers with non-

French credit cards will now also be able to purchase subscriptions.

In the meantime, the Commission has thought about how to address different geoblocking practices. On 25th May, the Commission will present a legislative proposal that will impose a non-discrimination obligation based on nationality or place of residence. This means that customers from other Member States will be able to buy under the same conditions as local customers, including tourism services. This may impact IAAPA members, which sell park tickets at a different price according to the customers' nationality or place of residence.

Regarding payment methods, the proposal states that traders are not allowed to reject payment instruments (such as credit or debit cards) issued in another country if they accept the same type of payment instruments issued to customers in their country.

Funding

DG GROWTH call to enhance quality jobs, apprenticeships and traineeships in tourism

EUROPEAN COMMISSION

The Commission Directorate General for Internal Market (GROWTH) has launched a [call](#) for proposal for projects aiming at enhancing quality jobs, apprenticeships and traineeships

positions in the tourism sector. The focus is laid on SMEs.

The total budget earmarked for the co-financing of projects is estimated at €500.000, and the EU contribution will ceiling at 75% of the total costs. The project should last no longer than 18 months.

The deadline for [application](#) is 9th June 2016.

MEP Questions and Answers

[Commission answers MEP question on certification of equipment for amusement parks](#)

The European Commission replied to a [question](#) on certification of equipment for amusement parks by [Italian MEP Patrizia Toia \(Socialists\)](#). The Commission stated that they had no intention of taking measures to harmonise equipment for amusement parks in the EU, as this is the prerogative of the Member States. The Commission recalled however, that European Standards EN 13814 and EN 13782 were developed by the European Committee for Standardisation (CEN) in response to a Commission mandate intended to provide manufacturers and national authorities with a common basis for the safe design and assessment of amusement park equipment.

[Commission answers MEP question on the European Year of Cultural Heritage and Tourism](#)

In the reply to a [question](#) tabled by [Romanian MEP Claudia Tapardel \(Socialists\)](#) on designating a year for Tourism, the Commission replied that the Council had not addressed this issue yet.

[Commission answers MEP question on Terrorism, tourism and security](#)

In their response to a [question](#) tabled by [Estonian MEP Urmas Paet \(Liberals\)](#) on terrorism and tourism security, the Commission replied that in the area of consular cooperation, Consular authorities exchange security related information, as far as possible, relevant for the safety of their citizens. However, given the competence of Member States for consular protection matters and the differences in national interests, an EU wide travel alert system is not achievable at this stage.

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

In their reply to a [question](#) tabled by [MEP Elissavet Vozemberg-Vrionidi \(Centre-right, Greece\)](#) on specific financial assistance to promote tourism in the northern Aegean and Dodecanese islands, the Commission

highlighted that in accordance with the shared management principle, concrete actions under the Greek Partnership Agreement for 2014-2020, and the priorities laid down in the programmes concerned, fall under the responsibility of the national and regional authorities of the Member State.

[Commission answers MEP question on UNWTO and EU cooperation in the tourism sector](#)

In the reply to a [question](#) tabled by [Portuguese MEP Cláudia Monteiro de Aguiar \(Centre-right\)](#) on tourism cooperation between the UNWTO and the EU, the Commission stated that they were not aware of a project entitled 'social empowerment to improve socioeconomic knowledge of the sector'. The Commission highlighted that in the future, cooperation with UNWTO will also focus on improving socioeconomic knowledge about the tourism sector.

[MEP Question on dynamic pricing in the EU](#)

The [Czech MEP Dita Charanzová \(Liberals\)](#) asked the Commission whether they had carried out any research into dynamic pricing and the use of personal or discriminating data in pricing algorithms. She also asked whether the Commission could confirm that data which could lead to discrimination should be excluded

from algorithms. Eventually, she wondered what the Commission would view as unfair or unethical commercial practices as regards dynamic pricing.

[MEPs written declaration on skills and competences in the tourism industry](#)

On 27th April, a group of MEPs submitted a written declaration on skills and competences in the tourism industry.

The MEPs underline that the tourism sector provides employment for 15.2 million European citizens and that many parts of the tourism sector in the EU suffer from a lack of both soft and management skills. Recruitment of staff with high-level skills is also acknowledged as being challenging.

They call on the Commission to give greater priority to the development of skills by elaborating a Tourism Workforce Development Strategy. They also call on them to consider the possibility of establishing a European Academy for training workers in the tourism industry and to promote better use of existing programmes such as Erasmus+.

The declaration has been sent to the Commission and the Council for scrutiny.

[MEP Question on support for tourism SMEs](#)

The Irish MEP [Deirdre Clune \(Centre-right\)](#) asked the Commission whether they had any plans to support start-up businesses specifically in the tourism sector.

[MEP Question on fire prevention regulations for tourist/hotel facilities in Italy](#)

The [Italian MEP Sergio Gaetano Cofferati \(Socialists\)](#) inquired the Commission on whether they would take steps to promote an improvement of fire protection measures in tourist/hotel facilities in the EU and their gradual standardisation.

[MEP Question on geo-blocking](#)

The [Maltese MEP David Casa \(Centre-right\)](#) asked the Commission to clarify what instances of geo-blocking could be considered to be 'unjustified'. He also requested a time frame for the phasing out of these instances of geo-blocking, and whether any proposed legislation was adopted.

Events

May

- 20-22 May 2016: [Accessibility and Accessible Tourism](#), WDU Istanbul, Turkey

June

- 15 June 2016: European Network for Accessible Tourism [Annual General Assembly](#)

September

- 27 September 2016: UNWTO World Tourism Day 2016

October

- TBC European Tourism Forum

November/December

- TBC European Tourism Day