

**EU Intelligence Report**  
**August-September 2016**



## **KEY HIGHLIGHTS**

### **TOURISM**

[Commission to present legislative proposal for a European ESTA system](#)

### **CONSUMER ISSUES**

[Council makes progress on geo-blocking dossier](#)

### **EMPLOYMENT**

[MEP calls for support in training staff in the tourism sector](#)

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### Institutional

#### **Brexit – EU Commission’s Article 50 Taskforce to begin work on 1<sup>st</sup> October**

##### EUROPEAN COUNCIL

On 14 September, the Commission announced the setup of a Task Force for the preparation and conduct of the negotiations with the United Kingdom under Article 50 of the Treaty of the European Union ("Article 50 Task Force"). This follows the [appointment](#) in July by President Juncker of Michel Barnier as Chief Negotiator in charge of those negotiations and of the new Task Force. It will coordinate the Commission's work on all strategic, operational, legal and financial issues related to these negotiations. The Commission also appointed Ms Sabine Weyand, who is currently Deputy Director-General in the Commission's trade department, as Deputy Chief Negotiator.

In the European Parliament (EP), the Conference of Presidents appointed the leader of the Liberals [Guy Verhofstadt](#) (Belgium) as EP leader for Brexit negotiations. Mr Verhofstadt will help prepare the EP's position in the negotiations, in close consultation with the Conference of Presidents. The EP will need to approve a possible agreement on the

conditions for the UK's departure from the EU. Once article 50 of the EU Treaty has been triggered by the UK authorities and the European Council has adopted the negotiation guidelines, he will lead the Parliament's work in drafting their position.

Regarding Tourism policy, British Prime Minister Theresa May has announced a £40 million (around €46.8 million) fund to foster tourism in the U.K., particularly outside of London, promising Britain's exit from the European Union would create "real opportunities for growth." Prime Minister May stated that the Government would "work in close partnership with the tourism industry, to ensure it continues to thrive as negotiations on the U.K.'s exit progress".

### Tourism Policy

#### **Commission to present legislative proposal for a European ESTA system**

##### COMMISSION

The European Commission published a [Communication](#) which notably presents the Commission's intention to come forward with a legislative proposal by November for establishing a European Travel Information and Authorisation System (ETIAS). The purpose would be to determine the eligibility of travellers

which are visa-exempted, such as in existing systems in the U.S.A or in Canada. The system would cover at least all visa exempted third country nationals travelling to the Schengen Area for a short stay (maximum 90 days over any period of 180 days). The proposal will address issues including the costs of developing and running the system, the impact on tourism and business, or legal aspects including data protection considerations.

The Commission is expected to publish the results of a feasibility study of ETIAS in October. They have also invited all stakeholders to provide input on possible impact of ETIAS on tourism. Comments can be sent by mid-October.

#### **Commission launches public consultation on the evaluation of the Machinery Directive**

##### COMMISSION

On 22<sup>nd</sup> September, the European Commission [launched](#) a public consultation on the evaluation of the 2006 [Machinery Directive](#). Amusement parks and fairground equipment are excluded from the scope of the Directive for now. According to the Commission's [roadmap](#) (2016), scope is one of many issues that the Commission intends to consider but it does not suggest that this will be a major focus. However, it is possible that the [European](#)

[consumer group for standards](#) will use the consultation as another opportunity to call for amusement park and fairground equipment to be included in the scope of the Directive.

### **Commission consults on the Zoos Directive** COMMISSION

The European Commission published a [public consultation](#) on the Zoos Directive to gather views on its implementation up to date. This procedure is part of the [Refit evaluation](#) of the Directive, which looks at whether the Directive is proportionate and fit for purpose, and is delivering as expected. The REFIT's conclusions are scheduled to be published in July 2017.

The Commission intends to look at the extent to which zoos have contributed to the conservation of biodiversity which is an obligation under article 3 of the Directive. As this evaluation process may attract significant attention from NGOs, it will be important to follow how this issue develops for the parts of our industry that are interested.

### **2018 : EU-China year of Tourism and suggested European Year of Cultural Heritage**

COMMISSION  
STAKEHOLDERS

At the opening of the EU-China summit on 12<sup>th</sup> July, Commission President Jean-Claude Juncker and Mr Li Keqiang, Premier of the State Council of the People's Republic of China, designated 2018 the EU-China year of Tourism. The European Travel Commission welcomed this designation stating that “the EU-China Tourism Year is a great opportunity for the European tourism industry to (...) learn how to attract Chinese visitors and offer them the best experience”. A discussion with a high level Chinese delegation is scheduled for 25 October 2016 in Beijing in the framework of the ETC Operations Group's activities.

The Commission has also presented a [proposal](#) to the European Parliament and Council to designate 2018 as the European Year of Cultural Heritage. The proposal notably highlights the interplay between cultural heritage and tourism, such as the potential of cultural heritage to promote sustainable tourism. The Network for the European private sector in Tourism (NET) has written to the Commission supporting the initiative and highlighting the strong link between cultural heritage and tourism.

**World tourism day: EU residents travel within the EU**  
STAKEHOLDERS

On World Tourism Day, the European Statistics agency Eurostat published a [data](#) factsheet and [infographic](#) on tourism activities in 2014, which shows that over 40% of EU residents visited an EU country, the preferred destinations being Spain, France and the UK. Tourists aged 65 or over living in the EU accounted for 20% of the tourism activity.

### **Visa reciprocity with third countries: MEPs concerned about US and CANADA cases** COMMISSION EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

On 31<sup>st</sup> August, the Commission presented the current state of play of discussions regarding the non-reciprocity of visa policies with third countries to the Committee on Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs of the European Parliament (LIBE). MEPs welcomed the lifting of visa requirements for Croatian nationals by Brunei, but were not pleased by the current situation concerning Canada and the US.

The Commission informed the Parliament about progress being made towards visa reciprocity with Canada, but could not provide such reassurances with regards to the US, given the particular political situation. While the Commission would prefer to proceed with caution, the Committee asked for a stronger stance by the Commission, and stated that

further action will be taken by the Parliament, which does not exclude bringing the issue before the European Court of Justice.

### **Commission reviews EU Ecolabel for Tourism accommodation**

#### COMMISSION

The Commission published a draft [Decision](#) on establishing EU Ecolabel criteria for tourist accommodation, which is addressed to the Member States. The [Annex](#) presents the mandatory and optional revised criteria to obtain the ecolabel, as well as the assessment and verification requirements. The criteria and the assessment requirements will be valid for 5 years from the day of the notification in the Official Journal.

The revision was expected as the current criteria are valid until 31<sup>st</sup> December 2016.

### **Taxation and VAT**

#### **EU Parliament and stakeholders discuss a definitive VAT system**

##### EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

On 31<sup>st</sup> August, MEPs and key stakeholders briefly addressed the issue of reduced VAT rates during a European Parliament [Public Hearing](#) on “Towards a definitive VAT system and fighting VAT fraud”, which was hosted by

the European Parliament Committee on Economic and Monetary Affairs (ECON). A representative from the European Association of Craft, Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (UEAPME) warned that a list of reduced VAT rates (which can currently apply to amusement parks tickets) is prejudicial to the internal market as Member States can use reduced rates to attract consumers. This issue was not really picked up by MEPs as the debate rather focused on VAT fraud.

As a reminder, in his [non-binding report](#), MEP Werner Langen (Centre-right, Germany) calls for a single list of products that would apply for reduced rates. His report was a response to the Commission [VAT Action Plan](#).

The vote in ECON is scheduled for 11<sup>th</sup> October and the vote in plenary is expected for 21<sup>st</sup> November. The report and the debates may inform the Commission’s proposal on reduced rates which is due in 2017.

The VAT debate will also be fueled by a [study](#) by the Commission, which shows that €159.5 billion in VAT revenues were lost across the EU in 2014. One of the chapters looks at the contribution of VAT reduced rates and exemptions to the loss of revenue, showing that the revenue of several countries could increase

by more than 15% if no reduced rates were applied.

### **Consumer Issues**

#### **Council makes progress on geo-blocking dossier**

##### COUNCIL

##### EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

According to the Slovak Presidency, the Council has fairly advanced on the geo-blocking dossier. Key issues that have been addressed by member states up to now include clarifications on what law will govern cross-border transactions, i.e. if the consumer’s national law or the trader’s national law will apply. Questions have also been raised about the liability of intermediaries, should sellers not be compelled to deliver the goods they are selling, as the Commission currently suggests in the proposal. The Council is expected to publish a draft position in October.

In the European Parliament, [MEP Isabella Adinolfi](#) (Far-right, Italy) has drafted a [Motion for Resolution](#) on geo-blocking. The Motion calls on the Commission to develop incentive measures to ensure that the rights of European consumers are protected, as consumers are faced with barriers to access online content from other countries.

As a reminder, in May the Commission the European Commission published a [legislative proposal](#) for a regulation to address unjustified geo-blocking based on nationality or place of residence, which includes in its scope services like hotel accommodation and entry tickets to leisure parks.

### Employment and labour skills

#### **Skills: MEP calls for support in training staff in the tourism sector**

##### EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

[MEP Aldo Patriciello](#) (Centre-right, Italy) has drafted a [Motion for Resolution](#), which calls on the Commission to take measures to support the training of specialised staff in the Member States, including through existing European programmes. This resolution comes as the Commission intends to review the [European Qualifications Framework](#), to publish a proposal for a revision of the [Europass Framework](#) and to increase the attractiveness of Vocational Education and Trainings (VET) Systems. For the amusement parks and attractions sector, it will be important to monitor in particular the progress of the [New Skills Agenda](#) published in June, which envisages the creation of cooperation partnerships on skills at European level, including in the tourism sector.

On 8<sup>th</sup> September, the European Parliament Committees for Employment and Social Affairs and Culture and Education co-organized a [workshop](#) on the “New Skills Agenda for Europe”. A representative from the Centre for vocational and educational training explained that VET and apprenticeships are less in demand in countries which are more service-oriented economies such as Greece, which rely more on sectors such as tourism.

The Commission notably presented an overview of the proposed [Skills Guarantee](#), which seeks at helping low-skilled adults acquire a minimum level of literacy, numeracy and digital skills and progress towards an upper secondary qualification. The Commission also stated that the launch of the "[Digital Skills and Jobs Coalition](#)" is planned for end 2016. This coalition will bring together Member States and education, employment and industry stakeholders to develop a large digital talent pool and ensure that the labour force in Europe is equipped with adequate digital skills.

#### **EP Committees adopt non-legislative draft report on work-life balance**

##### EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

On 13<sup>th</sup> September, the European Parliament Plenary adopted the [non-binding report](#) on "Creating Labour Market Conditions

Favourable for Work-Life Balance", which was jointly drafted by MEPs [Vilija Blinkevičiūtė \(Socialists, Lithuania\)](#) and [Tatjana Ždanoka \(Greens, Latvia\)](#).

As in the draft report, MEPs highlight that a significant proportion of workers in the EU has atypical working hours, including working at weekends and on public holidays, however the report does not call for specific action regarding this type of work.

The report notably calls on the Commission:

- To put forward an ambitious proposal in place of the retrieved Maternity Leave Directive, with high-level standards;
- To publish an implementation report on the Parental Leave Directive and to bring forward initiatives on a Paternity Leave Directive with a minimum of a compulsory two-week fully paid leave;
- To propose a Carers' Leave Directive which would supplement the provision of professional care, enable workers to care for dependents and offer the care-giver adequate remuneration and social protection.

The report also calls for employee-driven flexibility and sufficient incentives for men to take up carers' leave and on the Member States

to collect equality data in a systematic way and to make them available.

### MEP Questions and Answers

#### [Commission answer MEP question on how to fully unlock the potential of the European tourism sector](#)

Internal market Commissioner Bieńkowska highlighted in her reply that the Commission was implementing targeted actions to promote Europe as a collection of sustainable and high-quality destinations both within the EU and internationally. Besides its current campaign in the EU 'Wonder is all around', the Commission also supports regions and businesses in promoting themselves in key third-countries markets, such as China and the US.

In his [question](#), [MEP Andrey Novakov](#) (Centre-right, Bulgaria) notably asked the Commission if they were planning to issue any concrete guidelines to the Member States with a view to improving employee skills and qualifications in the tourism sector and what concrete measures the Commission was planning to take in order to maximise the potential of EU financial instruments for developing tourism.

#### [Commission answers MEP question on streamlining procedures and simplifying access to information in tourism sector](#)

In her reply to a question by [MEP Damiano Zoffoli](#) (Socialists, Italy), Commissioner Bieńkowska (Internal Market) indicated that the legislators were examining the Commission's proposal for a recast of the Visa Code. She added that the translation of the Guide for EU funding for the tourism sector should be finalised by the end of 2016.

MEP Damiano Zoffoli [wanted to know](#) how the Commission would make it easier for people wishing to visit the EU to obtain tourist visas and whether they would ensure that the guide to EU funding for the tourism sector was translated into all the EU languages so that it was fully accessible to all the EU businesses concerned.

#### [Commission answers MEP question on the implementation of its communication on tourism](#)

In her reply to an MEP question on the Commission's Tourism Communication, Commissioner Bieńkowska (Internal Market) announced that an evaluation of the tourism activities co-financed under the COSME Programme would be carried out within the context of the mid-term review foreseen by 2018.

[MEP Renaud Muselier](#) (Centre right, France) wanted to know whether the Commission had

carried out such a study, aimed at evaluating the effectiveness of actions to promote tourism.

#### [Commission answers MEP question on life after Brexit and the possibility of a crisis in tourism](#)

In his reply to a [parliamentary question](#) on the impact of Brexit on tourism, Commission President Jean-Claude Juncker indicated that impact would be analysed through EuroStat and the European Travel Commission. He added that adequate policy actions would be developed if needed in cooperation with the Member States, the industry and other relevant stakeholders. He recalled that until the negotiations start, the UK remains a member of the Union with all the rights and obligations of a Member State, including in the areas of tourism and transport.

[MEP István Ujhelyi](#) (Socialist, Hungary) asked the Commission how they could measure the impact of Brexit on European tourism and whether they had an action plan.

#### [Commission answers MEP question on terrorism attacks and the impact on Tourism](#)

Commission Bieńkowska indicated in her response to [MEP István Ujhelyi](#) (Socialist, Hungary) that Commission would continue to monitor the medium and long-term impacts in

order to decide on the appropriate policy response if needed, such as they did with the Paris attacks.

MEP Ujhelyi [asked](#) the Commission how such an analysis could be carried out, if it had been produced and how the losses suffered by the sector could be compensated for.

[Commission answers MEP question on growth and jobs in coastal and maritime tourism](#)

Commissioner Vella (Maritime and Fisheries) highlighted in his response to [MEP Claudia Tapardel](#) (Socialists, Romania) that several initiatives developed within the framework of the different maritime regional strategies, namely the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region, the Atlantic Strategy and the EU Strategy for the Adriatic and Ionian Region, bring together national and regional authorities and private stakeholders in the development of concrete initiatives for the promotion of coastal and maritime tourism in Europe.

MEP Tapardel [wanted to know](#) when the Commission would publish recommendations to Member States to promote sustainable growth and jobs in the blue economy. She also asked what other tools had been developed to facilitate better coordination among Member States, regional and local authorities, industry and stakeholders.

[Commission answer MEP question on EU visa reciprocity with the USA and Canada](#)

In his reply to a [question](#) by [MEP Claudia Tapardel](#) (Socialists, Romania), Commissioner Avramopoulos referred to the [Commission's Communication](#) on visa reciprocity. MEP Tapardel wanted to know whether the Commission genuinely intended to consider introducing a visa requirement for Canadian and US citizens. She also asked if the Commission's plan for the negotiations envisaged a specific request for the Governments in Ottawa and Washington to lift the visa requirement for citizens of Member States that are not currently on the visa waiver list.

[Commission answers MEP question on Gender equality and work-life balance](#)

In his reply to a parliamentary question by [MEP Ruža Tomašić](#) (Conservatives, Croatia), Commissioner Jourová (Justice and Consumers) indicated that the Commission's Work Programme for 2016 included a package of legislative and non-legislative proposals to address the challenges of work-life balance for parents and care-givers.

MEP Tomašić [wanted to know](#) how the Commission viewed the attempts to regulate family relationships. He asked whether they

considered that citizens themselves have the right to sort out their own personal relationships within the family.

[Commission answers EP question on EU strategy for e skills](#)

Commission Bieńkowska (Internal Market) highlighted in her [response](#) to [MEP Victor Negrescu](#) (Socialists, Romania) announced that a 'Digital Skills and Jobs Coalition' would be launched at the end of 2016, which will bring together Member States, education and training, employment, industry, and social stakeholders to develop a large digital talent pool. She added that the Commission would further promote the European e-Competence Framework (e-CF), which is the European standard for the key competences of Information Technology (IT) professionals in all industry sectors.

MEP Negrescu asked the Commission if they intended to release a new European e-Competence Framework (e-CF) version 4.0 in the framework of the EU's Strategy for e-Skills.

[Commission answers EP question on Assessment of the Zoos Directive](#)

In his reply to a parliamentary question on the Zoos Directive, Commissioner Vella (Maritime

and Fisheries) indicated that the results of the REFIT's conclusions regarding implementation of the Zoos Directive are scheduled to be published in July 2017.

[MEP Keith Taylor](#) (Greens, UK) [wanted to know](#) if the Commission would, as part of the REFIT programme, consult the Member State competent authorities and ensure that they are competent in the enforcement of the legal requirements and the inspection of zoos. She also asked what evidence the Commission could provide to prove that these mechanisms are utilized and that those Member States that fail to meet their responsibilities are held to account.

#### [Commission answers MEP question on geo-blocking](#)

In his reply to a parliamentary question by MEP David Casa (Centre-right, Malta), Commissioner Oettinger (Digital Single Market) indicated that the timing for adoption of the new rules and their start of application would depend on how rapidly the co-legislators find agreement on the Commission's proposal.

MEP Casa [asked](#) the Commission if they could clarify what instances of geo-blocking can be considered to be 'unjustified'. He also asked for a time frame for the phasing out of these

instances of geo-blocking, if any proposed legislation was to be adopted.

#### [MEP question on Accurate statistics on the European tourism industry](#)

In a parliamentary question, [MEP Claudia Tapardel](#) (Socialists, Romania) asked the Commission if they were planning to create a comprehensive statistical analysis and an annually updated database for the European tourism sector and if so, when it would be available.

#### [MEP question on the Commission's 'Europe. Wonder is all around' campaign](#)

[MEP Petr Mach](#) (Far-right, Czech Republic) inquired the Commission about estimations of the total costs of the Commission's 'Europe. Wonder is all around' campaign. He also asked whether the Commission truly believed that citizens of the Member States would not travel throughout the EU were it not for this campaign and if it would not be more effective and cheaper to leave the promotion of tourist attractions solely to the private sector.

## Events

### October

- [11 October: Slovak Presidency European Tourism Forum Conference](#)
- [11 October - Cultural and Creative Sectors in the EU](#), European Parliament, Brussels
- [18 October: eSkills for jobs 2016 conference](#), Bratislava
- [19-20 October, VET Conference: "Apprenticeship: Better training - Higher skills - Great opportunities"](#), Bratislava

### November

- [4-5 November: Global European Marketplace Workshop 2016](#), London
- [TBC European Tourism Day](#)

### December

- [1-2 December: Digital Tourism Think Tank Global- disrupting the future destination](#), Brussels