

**EU Intelligence Report**  
**February 2017**



## **KEY HIGHLIGHTS**

### **TOURISM**

[Schengen - Council recommends further extension of border controls as of February](#)

### **EMPLOYMENT/ LABOUR SKILLS**

[New Skills Agenda - Commission publishes Blueprint for sectoral cooperation](#)

### **CONSUMER ISSUES**

[Geo-blocking – MEPs support possibility for traders to have targeted offers](#)

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### Tourism Policy

#### **Visa reciprocity: European Parliament calls on Commission to suspend visa waiver with the US**

##### EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

The European Parliament Committee for Civil Liberties (LIBE) has [adopted](#) a draft motion for resolution calling on the Commission to adopt a delegated act to temporarily suspend the exemption from the visa requirement for nationals of third countries which have not lifted the visa requirement for citizens of certain EU Member States, such as the USA for example.

The draft resolution should be adopted in miniparliamentary on 1<sup>st</sup> March. If it is adopted, the Commission must introduce the delegated act within two months.

The delegated act only enters into force if no objection has been expressed by either the European Parliament or the Council within a period of four months of notification or if, before the expiry of that period, both institutions informed the Commission that they will not object.

In light of these developments, the Network of European Private Entrepreneurs in the Tourism

Sector (NET) – of which IAAPA is a member, has been considering reaching out to MEPs, maybe by associating with European Travel Commission, by sending a press release signed by all tourism stakeholders before the vote in March. NET is also considering requesting a meeting with the Council Presidency.

#### **Schengen – Council recommends further extension of border controls until mid-May**

##### COUNCIL

Following a proposal by the European Commission end of January, the Council [adopted](#) a recommendation to prolong temporary internal border controls in exceptional circumstances until mid-May.

The Council recommended that Austria, Germany, Denmark, Sweden and Norway should prolong proportionate temporary border controls as of 11<sup>th</sup> February, for a maximum period of three months at the following internal borders:

- Austria at the Austrian-Hungarian land border and Austrian-Slovenian land border
- Germany at the German-Austrian land border
- Denmark in the Danish ports with ferry connections to Germany and at the Danish-German land border

- Sweden in the Swedish harbours in the Police Region South and West and at the Öresund bridge
- Norway in the Norwegian ports with ferry connections to Denmark, Germany and Sweden

Prior to prolonging the border controls, Member States should ensure that they have considered all possible alternatives and that the border controls are carried out only where necessary and proportionate. In addition, they should review each week whether they are still necessary and adjust them to the level of the threat, phasing them out wherever appropriate. They should report to the Commission and the Council every month.

As long as there are important migratory flows and countries such as Greece are unable to stabilise their frontiers, the Commission may have difficulties to restore the freedom of movement within Schengen.

#### **European Accessibility Act - MEPs say tourism-related services should be in scope**

##### EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

The European Parliament Committee for Transport and Tourism published the [amendments](#) to the draft Opinion by MEP Keith Taylor (Greens, UK) on the European Accessibility Act. Amendments include tourism-

related services such as catering and accommodation in the scope, in line with the Internal Market's Committee draft report.

This inclusion was not foreseen in the original [draft report](#) from the Committee for Internal Market (IMCO), which is leading on this dossier in the European Parliament.

NET has been reaching out to MEPs, sending a letter to call for the exclusion of tourism in the scope, and meetings will be organised.

### **Modest EU Tourism growth shows need for increased efforts towards competitiveness**

#### STAKEHOLDERS

According to the European Travel Commission's latest [report](#) on "European Tourism – Trends & Prospects", European tourism growth has slowed down compared to 2015. For Eduardo Santander, Executive Director of ETC, *"only through increased commitment and cooperation from the European tourism authorities will Europe remain a competitive destination and will succeed in fostering inbound travel"*.

The majority of the destinations have enjoyed a healthy growth, however those which suffered from terrorist attacks have suffered from important decreases in market confidence. The figures show that security concerns have

weighted down on tourists numbers in Turkey and Belgium. The report also indicates that the new Trump administration raises questions as to the continuing high percentage of American tourists travelling to Europe, and that Chinese tourists have been less coming to Europe.

Initiatives to address those trends have been launched, such as the partnership between the European Travel Commission and ITB China, which was officially [announced](#) on 31<sup>st</sup> January. ITB China, the three-day B2B travel trade fair, focuses exclusively on the Chinese travel industry and takes place on 10-12 May 2017 in Shanghai.

A dedicated Europe Pavilion at will be showcasing the multitude of European tourism products and destinations. In addition to the Europe pavilion, ITB China will show strong individual presences of other major European destinations such as Portugal, Finland, Greece and Austria.

2018 will be the EU-China Tourism Year (ECTY), which is likely to increase visitors on both sides. This will be the opportunity for our industry to develop strategies to attract more Chinese tourists to amusement parks.

### **EU Ecolabel - Commission strengthen criteria for tourist accommodation**

#### EUROPEAN COMMISSION

In order for hospitality businesses such as hotels to be able to display the EU Ecolabel, they will have to comply with new criteria. The European Commission [adopted](#) a revised set of criteria including for the for the service group "Tourism Accommodation", which now includes both campsite services and tourist accommodation services.

The criteria notably address energy and water consumption, waste generation and food waste. For the first time criteria also address the social dimension by including new requirements related to employee minimum wage, insurance and working hours.

The European Consumer Bureau (BEUC) has [welcomed](#) the decisions, underlining that it is now up to the Commission and the Member States to widely promote the EU Ecolabel among producers. They argue that manufacturers, if they do not seek the certification, often use the criteria as a benchmark to improve their products.

The new criteria are valid for five years, until the next revision.

## Employment/ Labour skills

### **New Skills Agenda - Commission publishes Blueprint for sectoral cooperation**

#### EUROPEAN COMMISSION

In order to deliver sector-specific skills solutions and address sector skills mismatches, the Commission has launched the [Blueprint for Sectoral Cooperation on Skills](#). Tourism has been chosen as one of the experiments sectors.

The Blueprint is a new framework for strategic cooperation between key stakeholders, such as business, trade unions, research, education and training institutions and public authorities. It will build on existing partnerships such as the Sector Skills Councils and the European Sector Skills Alliances.

The three steps which will be undertaken are:

1. Assessing skills gaps in the sector and their potential impact on growth, innovation and competitiveness;
2. Once the sectors have been chosen, the Commission supports the set-up and the work of sectoral partnerships at EU-level. Each partnership will develop a sectoral skills strategy by notably identifying priorities and milestones for action;
3. Building on the results achieved at EU level, the Blueprint will be progressively

rolled out at national and regional level, in cooperation with national and regional authorities, and key stakeholders.

The proposed actions will be financed through a new dedicated lot (Lot 3) in Erasmus+ Sector Skills Alliances as well as through a new dedicated [call for tender](#) under COSME, which has been opened.

### **EP Employment Committee vote on protection of workers from harmful substances in the workplace**

#### EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

On the 28<sup>th</sup> of February, the European Parliament's Employment Committee has adopted its report on the proposal for amending the EU Directive on the protection of workers from risks of exposure to harmful substances at work. The report proposes stricter value limits for three substances (chromium VI, wood dust, and breathable crystalline silica). It also aims to improve data collection on exposure to harmful substances.

This is the first of a series of proposals to limit workers' exposure to various carcinogens and mutagens. The Employment committee will now start working on the second batch presented by the Commission in January and a third batch is expected to be published in 2018.

## Consumer Issues

### **Geo-blocking – MEPs support possibility for traders to have targeted offers**

#### EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

The European Parliament Committee for Internal Market and Consumer Protection published the [amendments](#) to the [draft report](#) on geo-blocking by MEP Roza Thun (EPP, Poland). Several amendments are business-friendly, notably enabling targeted offers different terms and conditions of access. This would mean that amusement parks would be able to have different prices for entry tickets on national websites, with different terms and conditions. However, they could not ringfence national offers and would have to enable access by all customers across the EU to all the offers. This is also supported by the Legal Affairs Committee (JURI) in their draft Opinion.

Other amendments to the draft report include clarifications of applicable consumer protection law and defining what targeting activities mean.

The amendments will be discussed on 6<sup>th</sup> March in the Internal Market Committee (IMCO). The draft report will be voted in Committee on 25<sup>th</sup> April and the vote in the European Parliament Plenary should take place before the summer break. Following

interinstitutional negotiations, the file could be concluded by the end of the year.

### MEP Questions and Answers

#### [MEP question Commission about EU-US visa reciprocity mechanism](#)

Socialist [MEP Momchil Nekov](#) (Bulgaria) tabled several parliamentary question, asking the Commission why they have not obeyed the legal obligation to introduce a visa requirement for US citizens. He wanted to know which economic criteria could actually outweigh legal obligations and whether they believed the US would immediately introduce a visa requirement for all EU citizens, as the Commissioner himself does not want to introduce the visa requirement out of fear of the economic losses it would lead to in the EU. He also asked about the economic effects on both economies, especially since a decrease in EU-US travels would lead to an increase in intra-EU tourism, thus saving jobs in the EU tourism industry.

#### [MEP questions EU harmonisation of VAT rates](#)

Socialist [MEP Claudia ȚEP Clau](#) (Romania) tabled a parliamentary question, asking the Commission whether they would draw up recommendations regarding minimum and

maximum VAT levels in the Member States. She also wanted to know how they planned to resolve the problem of VAT-free zones in the Union and what priority areas were being envisaged by the Commission for application of reduced VAT.

### Events

#### **March**

- 21 March: [Cultural and Creative Industries in Europe: Maximising the Contribution of Culture towards Social and Economic Development](#), Public Policy Exchange, Brussels

#### **May**

- 25-26: [Ministerial Conference on Tourism](#), Maltese Presidency

#### **June**

- 14-16 June: Digital Assembly, tbc, Maltese Presidency, Brussels

#### **October**

- 19 October: European Tourism Forum, Estonian Presidency and the European Commission, Tallinn (Estonia)

#### **November**

- 28-29 November: European Tourism Day, European Commission, Brussels