

# EU Intelligence Report

March 2015



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- ❖ [European Commission launches Digital Tourism Platform](#)

### Taxation

- ❖ [EC presents Tax Transparency Package to combat corporate tax avoidance](#)

### Employment Law/ Labour Skills

- ❖ [IAAPA submits response to Commission consultation on the Working Time Directive](#)

### Consumer Issues

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## Tourism Policy

### EC launches Digital Tourism Platform

#### European Commission

On 27 March, IAAPA Europe attended a [kick-off meeting](#) of the Digital Tourism Platform, a Commission led network of representatives from the tourism industry interested in improving the digital skills of tourism entrepreneurs and the regulatory environment for these companies. IAAPA Europe intervened to raise concerns about the negative impact that soon to be agreed rules on package travel will have for parks and attractions by limiting their ability to cross promote travel services through direct electronic marketing.

### EC holds a Pan-European dialogue between cruise operators, ports, and coastal tourism stakeholders

On 5-6 March in Brussels, the European Commission launched a structured dialogue on cruise and coastal tourism to share best practice in relation to innovation, competitiveness, and sustainability. This was an outcome of the [Communication](#) "A European Strategy for more Growth and Jobs in Coastal and Maritime Tourism" which was launched in February 2014.

Karmenu Vella, EU Commissioner for Environment, Maritime Affairs and Fisheries, attended the event. Issues discussed included the management of ports, greener solutions for the cruise sector, cruise tourism opportunities for coastal economies and regional cooperation.

Read the full conclusions [here](#).

### Eurobarometer publishes survey on travel intentions of EU citizens

#### Eurobarometer

On 3 March, Eurobarometer published its [annual survey](#) of the travel intentions of EU citizens.

The survey identifies trends in travel – not only where people intend to go and how long they plan to stay, but also how they find out about transport, accommodation, sites to see and places to eat, and how they go about arranging their trips.

Europeans are planning more travel in 2015, continuing the trend from 2014. Of 27,051 respondents, 45% said they will go on holiday this year without changing their previous plans, while 32% said they will go on holiday but with changed plans. 11% will

not go on holiday as a result of the economic situation, while 4% say they never go on holiday. Finally, 8% said they do not know if the economic situation will affect their plans.

### EP LIBE committee holds a debate on Visa Package

#### European Parliament

On 5 March 2015 the LIBE Committee held a preliminary discussion on the Working Document by Mr Juan Fernando López Aguilar (S&D/Spain) on the Visa Code recast and a linked report on touring visas prepared by Mr. Brice Hortefeux (EPP/France). On the whole, the Visa Code recast was welcomed by several MEPs, whereas discussions on the touring visa were more problematic.

Sensitive areas for MEPs included: mandatory consular representation, the use of External Service Providers (ESP) to process visas, requirements for travel and medical insurance, flexibility for countries to issue temporary visas at the border as well as the willingness of the Rapporteur and Greens to include humanitarian visas in the Visa Code.

A draft report will be presented on 16-17 June and the deadline for amendments will

be the 3<sup>rd</sup> of September 2015. The LIBE Committee will then vote on the 13<sup>th</sup> of October 2015.

### **Taxation/ VAT**

#### **European Parliament's special committee on tax meets for the first time**

##### European Parliament

A special committee with a six month mandate and 45 members has been set up to examine national tax rulings as far back as 1 January 1991. It will also review the way the European Commission treats state aid in member states and the extent to which they are transparent about their tax rulings.

The Committee was set up in the wake of revelations that Luxembourg had used tax deals as an incentive to encourage multinationals to relocate to the country while new Commission President Jean-Claude Juncker was Prime Minister of the country.

The Committee's first meeting on the 9<sup>th</sup> of March saw Alain [LAMASSOURE](#) (EPP) elected Chair of the group. Bernd [LUCKE](#) (ECR) is the 1<sup>st</sup> Vice-Chair, Marisa [MATIAS](#) (GUE/NGL) is the 2<sup>nd</sup> Vice-Chair and Eva [JOLY](#) (Greens) is the 3<sup>rd</sup> Vice-Chair. The

opening meeting was dominated by procedural discussions on its mandate, calendar and working methods.

#### **EC presents Tax Transparency Package to combat corporate tax avoidance**

On 18 March, the European Commission [presented](#) a package of tax transparency measures as part of its ambitious agenda to tackle corporate tax avoidance and harmful tax competition in the EU.

A key element of this Tax Transparency Package is a proposal to introduce the automatic exchange of information between Member States on their tax rulings.

Corporate tax avoidance is thought to deprive EU Member States' public budgets of billions of euros a year. Companies relying on the complexity of tax rules and the lack of cooperation between Member States to shift profits and minimise taxes could find it much harder to do so in the future once these changes are agreed.

The two legislative proposals of the package will be submitted to the European Parliament for consultation and to the Council for adoption. Member States should agree on the Tax Rulings proposal by the

end of 2015, so that it can enter into force on 1 January 2016.

Given that the European Council requested the Commission to draft this proposal in December 2014, it looks likely that it will receive the unanimous backing necessary for agreement on tax issues.

The Commission plans to follow this proposal with an Action Plan on Corporate Taxation which will be presented before the summer. This second Action Plan will focus on measures to make corporate taxation fairer and more efficient within the Single Market, including a re-launch of a proposal for a Common Consolidated Corporate Tax Base (CCCTB) and ideas for integrating new OECD/G20 actions to combat base erosion and profit shifting (BEPS) at EU level.

### **Employment Law/ Training/ Skills**

#### **IAAPA Europe submits response to Commission consultation on the Working Time Directive**

##### European Commission

A Commission consultation on the Working Time Directive closed on the 15<sup>th</sup> March. The Working Time Directive has been the

subject of a number of ECJ judgements which the Commission will have to correct with a revised proposal. An attempt was made to broker an agreement between social partners under the last Commission but this proved unsuccessful.

IAAPA's response focused on:

The need to find some flexibility in awarding compensatory rest to staff who have not received the required rest periods, a challenge for parks during peak periods.

The need to increase the reference period over which average weekly hours are calculated to 12 months.

The need to maintain the opt-out particularly if a 12 month reference period is not applied.

The Commission will produce a summary of the consultation results later this year.

### **Main results of the European Council discussion on the European Semester**

#### European Council

On 9 March, Ministers [discussed](#) the employment and social policy aspects of the 2015 European Semester exercise. The Council adopted conclusions on inclusive labour markets. Inclusive growth should

enable everyone to take up employment, education or training and to provide all citizens with adequate social protection. The EPSCO Council adopted conclusions on the annual growth survey and on the joint employment report.

The Joint employment report contains an analysis and messages based on the employment and social situation in member states. This annual report constitutes the basis for the European Council to consider the employment situation in the EU. The reports main conclusions are:

- The employment and social situation continues to cause concern
- Reforms supporting well-functioning labour markets must continue
- Step up the implementation of the youth guarantee
- Investing in human capital through education and training will increase productivity
- Foster labour market reintegration of the long-term unemployed
- Tax and benefits systems should support job creation

– Tackle gender gaps

– Modernisation of social protection systems with protection for all and investment in human capital.

### **Tripartite Social Summit: focus on jobs, growth and investment for Europe**

On 19 March, EU leaders and social partners gathered at the [Tripartite Social Summit](#) and focused on jobs, growth and investment priorities for Europe.

The Tripartite Social Summit meets twice a year, ahead of the spring and autumn European Councils. It is an opportunity for a constructive exchange between European employer and employee representatives ("social partners"), the European Commission, EU Heads of State or Government, and Employment and Social Affairs Ministers from the countries holding the current and future EU Council Presidencies.

The participants in the Social Summit discussed the analysis of the Member States' economic situation contained in the [Country Reports](#) recently published by the Commission, as well as the preparation of national programmes expected in April. The Social Summit also discussed progress with

the Commission's Investment Plan for Europe, launched last year, and the views of social partners on other major EU policy initiatives, such as the Energy Union.

This was the first Tripartite Social Summit since the new European Commission took office in November.

Jean-Claude Juncker, the President of the European Council, Donald Tusk; and Latvian Prime Minister, Laimdota Straujuma. Vice President Dombrovskis, Commissioner Thyssen, Dutch Deputy Prime Minister Lodewijk Asscher, Latvian Minister Uldis Augulis and Luxembourg Minister Nicolas Schmit also joined the debate.

### Consumer Issues

#### **Package Travel negotiations continue to place parks at risk of new regulatory requirements**

[European Council](#)  
[European Commission](#)  
[European Parliament](#)

The European Council, European Commission and European Parliament are locked in three-way negotiations to finalise a legal text on the Package Travel Directive.

IAAPA Europe in coalition with HotRec (representing the hospitality sector), IAATA (representing the airlines) and ET TSA (representing the online travel agents) have submitted proposals to the negotiating parties in an effort to reduce the scope of so-called assisted travel arrangements (ATAs). ATAs will prevent parks from cross selling other tourism products and services using direct e-marketing without being subject to new consumer rights and insolvency protection.

The trilogue partners meet on the 1<sup>st</sup> April for a further round of negotiations. The objective is to adopt a final legal text before Member States meet for a Competitiveness Council meeting at the end of May.

#### **Consumer Safety- Results of the Rapid Alert System report 2014**

[European Commission](#)

On 23 March Commissioner Věra Jourová announced the results of the [Rapid Alert System report 2014](#). Nearly 2500 products, ranging from toys to motor vehicles, were either stopped before they entered the EU or removed from markets because they were dangerous for EU consumers.

In 2014, toys (28%) and clothing, textiles and fashion items (23%) were the two main product categories for which corrective measures had to be taken. Among the most frequently notified risks caused by these products were risk of injury, chemical risks and choking. China remains the number one country of origin in the alert system. Last year, 64% of the total number of notifications on dangerous products related to products coming from China, the same as in 2013.

The Rapid Alert System ensures that information about dangerous non-food products withdrawn from the market and/or recalled anywhere in Europe is quickly circulated between Member States and the European Commission.

### MEP Questions

[European Parliament](#)

#### **MEP question on Package Travel Directive and Assisted Travel arrangements answered by the Commission**

In January, the Irish MEP Deirdre Clune asked the Commission to clarify what measures were in place under this directive to protect small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), and what level of

consideration had been given to the fact that this directive will add another layer of red tape to tourism-related SMEs across Europe.

Ms Jourová [answered](#) that while SMEs were not excluded from the revised Package Travel Directive proposal, it should be noted that the typical facilitator of an ATA is a transport provider, e.g. an airline, which links to providers of additional travel services such as accommodation. Moreover, the proposal makes clear that only situations where the consumer is prompted to book the additional service in a targeted manner are covered; if a small hotel simply informs about further travel services e.g. by providing on its website a list of all operators offering transport to its location then no ATA is created.

In the still ongoing legislative negotiations some further amendments have been proposed to facilitate SMEs, including e.g. that Member States should not be prevented from taking into account the special situation of smaller companies when calculating the payments required for insolvency protection cover.

#### **MEP question on EU funding for the tourism Industry**

On 27 February, Fulvio Martusciello (PPE) [tabled](#) two questions about EU funding for tourism: What support does the Commission intend to provide for the tourism industry and those working in it? What funding is available for the tourism industry in the 2014-2020 programming period?

The Commission should provide an answer within 8 weeks.

#### **MEP question on the timetable for realisation of the European Strategy for more Growth and Jobs in Coastal and Maritime Tourism**

On 3 March, MEP Patricija Šulin (PPE) [asked](#) the Commission how long it would take to develop the Internet guide with a summary of the main financing possibilities that are available for that sector, and if it was possible to say on what timescale each of the 14 defined activities in the strategy will be delivered.

In 2014, the Commission approved the strategy for more Growth and Jobs in Coastal and Maritime Tourism ([COM\(2014\)0086](#)). In its report it defined 14 measures for stimulating lasting growth in this sector and the development of European coastal regions.

The Commission should answer within 8 weeks.

#### **MEP question on visa rules**

On 3 March, MEP István Ujhelyi (S&D) [tabled](#) a question regarding changes in visa policy and tourism. He wanted to know which countries rejected visa applications and on what grounds, how much revenue was lost to tourism as a result, which Member State(s) earned the most money from issuing visas, and if there was any link between this and a significant easing of visa procedures in the Member State(s) concerned, with the deliberate aim of issuing as many visas as possible and earning revenue from doing so.

He also asked if the Commission would also make the rules on the issuing of visas available on the internet in Russian and Chinese, and if it would make it possible for the European Union's diplomatic representations in third countries to issue Schengen visas, in cooperation with the Member States concerned. The Commission should provide an answer within 8 weeks.

#### **MEP question on tourism and people with disabilities**

On 5 March, MEP Marlene Mizzi (S&D) [tabled](#) a question on tourism and people with disabilities. She asked the Commission whether it could clarify what measures the EU authorities were taking with a view to increasing tourism mobility for people with disabilities.

The Commission should answer within 8 weeks.

## Events

### April

- 3-6 April: [GITANDO.ALL](#) Italy – fair on Accessible Tourism, Venice
- 14<sup>th</sup> April: Lunch meeting of the Tourism Advisory Group
- 16-17 April: [EIPA.EU](#) Evaluating EU Structural Funds support for Business growth and innovation: moving from 2007-2013 to 2014-2020

### May

- 6<sup>th</sup> May: IAAPA Europe meets with the European Commissioner for Tourism Elzbieata Bienkowska.
- 24-27 May: 2015 European Conference [Global Growth Agendas: Regions, Institutions and Sustainability](#), Piacenza, Italy