



# EU Intelligence Report

## February 2015



## KEY HIGHLIGHTS

### Tourism Policy

[UNWTO launches a new manual on Accessible Tourism for All](#)

### Taxation

[More clarification on Commission initiatives to tackle tax evasion and avoidance](#)

### Consumer Policy

[Tourism Industry issues joint letter on Package Travel Directive \(PTD\)](#)

### Employment

[Commission boosts investment to reduce youth unemployment](#)

### MEP Question

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### Tourism Policy

#### **UNWTO launches a new manual on Accessible Tourism for All**

##### UNWTO

The new World Tourism Organization's [publication](#) "Manual on Accessible Tourism for All: Public-Private Alliances and Good Practices" is a technical guide for tourism operators wishing to increase accessibility. The manual takes into account the market needs generated by the demand for tourism for all and the sustainability of the production of goods and services created to provide accessibility.

The manual was produced by [UNWTO](#) and the [ACS](#) Foundation. The extensive experience of the ACS Foundation in these areas has served to stimulate the development of activities and products that make it possible to turn universal access in tourism into a real possibility

#### **NET submits its amendments to the Visa Package**

##### NET

MEPs in the Parliament's Civil Liberties Committee (LIBE) are considering two

proposals for reform of the European Union's visa system – a [recast of the EU's visa code](#) and a [codification of the EU's Schengen visa rules](#) - the inconsistency of existing rules between Member States is often cited as a significant barrier to tourism flows from emerging markets like China, India and Latin America. IAAPA along with other associations representing the private sector in tourism in Europe have submitted amendments to MEPs in an effort to simplify visa rules. The Commission's original proposal which would help to reduce red tape and processing times has been resisted by Member States.

MEPs meet for a joint debate on visas in the European Parliament on the 5<sup>th</sup> of March.

### Taxation

#### **More clarification on Commission initiatives to tackle tax evasion and avoidance**

##### EUROPEAN COMMISSION

On 18 February, the College of European Commissioners held a first orientation debate on possible actions to ensure a fairer and more transparent approach to taxation in the EU. After this debate, the Commission

confirmed that it will present a legislative proposal to oblige Member States to automatically exchange information on their tax rulings, where there is a cross-border impact. This proposal will form part of "a wider set of measures to increase tax transparency, legislative and non-legislative", notes the Commission.

Prior to the summer, the European Commission plans to produce a package of measures dealing with fair and efficient corporate taxation, which will also take into account current initiatives by the G20 and OECD to tackle tax avoidance.

#### **EP votes overwhelmingly in favour of Special Committee on tax**

##### EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

The European Parliament has voted by a large majority (612 in favour, 19 against and 23 abstentions) to set up a special parliamentary committee to look into EU member states' "tax rulings and other measures similar in nature or effect" and make recommendations for the future. The committee will have 45 members and is established for an initial period of six months. The committee will look into tax rulings as far back as 1 January 1991, but 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. It will also seek to ascertain the negative impact of aggressive tax planning on public finances and will come up with recommendations for the future. MEP Alain Lamassoure (EPP, FR) has been appointed as the committee's chair. The vice-chairs will be Bernd Lucke (ECR, DE), Marisa Matias (GUE/NGL, PT) and Eva Joly (Greens/EFA, FR). Rapporteurs will be appointed on 9 March and are likely to come from the S&D and ALDE group. Please click here for the [list of committee members](#).

### **Consumer Issues**

#### **Tourism Industry issues joint letter on Package Travel Directive (PTD)**

##### TOURISM STAKEHOLDERS

IAAPA has endorsed a joint industry paper on the Package Travel Directive ([PTD](#)). The paper is an attempt by Europe's travel industry to influence the outcome of trialogue negotiations between the European Commission, Parliament and Council. Signatories of the paper include the International Air Transport Association, ETTSA, the European Technology and Travel Services Association (ETTSA), and

Hotrec, the association of the hotel industry. The paper makes proposals for several amendments including changes to article 3.5 (b) on Assisted Travel Arrangements (ATAs). Assisted Travel Arrangements will limit parks' ability to use direct marketing to encourage customers to purchase additional services from other traders.

The next trialogue meeting is to be held on 5 March 2015.

### **Employment**

#### **Commission boosts investment to reduce youth unemployment**

##### EUROPEAN COMMISSION

On 4 February the European Commission proposed to make €1 billion from the Youth Employment Initiative ([YEI](#)) available earlier and increase the pre-financing rate by up to 30 times for eligible member states in order to boost youth employment. The proposal means that member states that benefit from the initiative could receive a third of the total allocation (€3.2 billion) immediately after the adoption of the Operational Programmes.

Member states are expected to make the funding available immediately to project beneficiaries through advance payments for

projects, which will be closely monitored by the Commission.

#### **Commission consults over long-term unemployment**

##### COMMISSION

On 24 February the European Commission launched a public [consultation](#) on long-term unemployment.

Running until the 15 May 2015, the consultation aims to contribute to an impact assessment preparing a proposal for a Council Recommendation on the integration in the labour market of the long-term unemployed. Respondents are asked for their opinion on the integration of services, the need for tailored support for job-seekers as well as incentives for employers to recruit long-term unemployed candidates.

### **MEP Questions**

#### **MEP questions regulatory framework of amusement parks equipment**

##### EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

On 6 February [MEP Patrizia Toia](#) (S&D IT) tabled a [question](#) highlighting that Italy is one of the world's top producers of equipment for amusement parks. Related equipment however do not fall under any

specific legislation. The fact that equipment is subject to different certification in different countries leads to higher costs and red tape. MEP Toia asks the Commission whether it plans to harmonise the certification of standards. The question will be answered in 8 Weeks

### **MEP question on Promotion of the EU as Tourism Destination for non EU countries**

#### EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

In February the Commission replied to MEP [Gabriel Mato's](#) (EPP, MT's EP) [question](#) asking the Commission whether it will extend actions for the promotion of European tourism to support enhance Europe's cultural heritage to non-EU countries considering the remarkable gaining that it would have on the European Economy. The Commission replied saying that the EU directly supports cultural tourism and Europe's cultural heritage through various policies, programmes and activities as outlined in the recently published EU funding guide.

#### **Funding**

#### **Erasmus+**

#### COUNCIL/ EUROPEAN COMMISSION

The Council adopted on 3<sup>rd</sup> December a regulation establishing "[ERASMUS+](#)" the Union Programme for Education, Training, Youth and Sport for the period 2014-2020. It brings together in a single programme activities previously covered by a number of separate programmes (including the Lifelong Learning Programme, Erasmus Mundus and Youth in Action) and it also covers activities in the new area of European competence, sport.

The new programme has a total budget of about €14.7 billion which represents an increase of 40% compared to the precedent budget.

Its main operational priorities are simplification of procedures and a performance-based allocation of funds, as well as closer links between the formal, informal and non-formal education and learning sectors.

On-Going Calls for Proposal:

- [Call "Meeting between young people and decision-makers in the field of youth"](#)  
[Call "Strategic partnerships in the field of youth"](#) (Deadline 04.2.2015)

- [Call "Mobility of individuals in the field of youth"](#) (deadline 04.02.2015)

### **COSME - Programme for the Competitiveness of Enterprises and SMEs**

#### EUROPEAN COMMISSION

For the period 2014-2020, the European Commission has published a proposal for a [Programme for the Competitiveness of Enterprises and SMEs](#) (COSME) with a planned budget of € 2.5 billion.

The Programme has the following general objectives: 1) improve access to finance for SMEs in the form of equity and debt; 2) improve access to markets inside the Union and globally through Enterprise Europe Network that will facilitate expansion of businesses beyond the borders; 3) promote entrepreneurship by developing entrepreneurial skills and attitudes, especially among new entrepreneurs, young people and women.

The Commission proposal includes a reference to specific objectives to improve the competitiveness of enterprises in the tourism sector. The Commission intends to ensure coherence and consistency implementation, as well as informed policy-making at Union level. Benchmarking, the

exchange of best practices and sectorial initiatives in particular will be encouraged. The main beneficiaries will include existing entrepreneurs (small businesses in particular), future entrepreneurs (including young people) as well as national, regional and local authorities. On this basis, eligible tourism partners could include: Accommodation providers, Transport providers, Restaurants/ Cafés, **Attractions**, Public Authorities

### **Consumer Programme 2014-2020**

#### EUROPEAN COMMISSION

The new consumer programme was adopted last 23 October and [proposed](#) by the Commission in November 2011. Although ensuring continuity with the previous one, the new initiative aims to better serve consumers' interests by enhancing product safety through effective market surveillance, improving consumers' information, education and awareness of their rights, consolidating consumer rights and strengthening effective redress, especially through alternative dispute resolution.

This programme sets financial framework for many actions that aim to improve consumer protection throughout the EU. These actions include financing of joint

cooperation actions between Member States market surveillance authorities and supporting Union level consumer organizations.

### **European Regional Development Fund 2014 – 2020**

#### EUROPEAN COMMISSION

[The European Regional Development Fund](#) (ERDF) aims to strengthen economic and social cohesion in the European Union by correcting imbalances between its regions. For the next period (2014 – 2020), the ERDF focuses its investments on several key priority areas namely Innovation and research, the digital agenda, support for small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) and the low-carbon economy.

The ERDF resources allocated to these priorities will depend on the category of region.

#### **Upcoming Events**

- [T-Guide European Conference](#), 21 March 2015, Brussels
- [Pan-European Dialogue between cruise operators, ports and](#)

[coastal tourism stakeholders](#), 5-6 March 2015, Brussels

- [The WTTC Global Summit 2015](#), organised by the World Travel and Tourism Council, 15-16 April 2015, Madrid,
- [European Sport Tourism Summit 2015](#), 14-15 May 2015, Limerick, Ireland
- [Sustainable Energy Week 2015](#), organised by the European Commission, 15-19 June 2015, Brussels
- [EU Tourism Day](#): 7 September 2015