



International
Association of
Amusement Parks
and Attractions

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Sent by e-mail to:
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Dear Ms Aluas

A new framework for tourism policy in the EU

IAAPA Europe welcomes this opportunity to contribute its thoughts to the consultation on tourism policy in Europe following the Lisbon Treaty. In the short time available, we have been able only to put together some brief ideas but we look forward to playing a continuing role in the discussions as they evolve.

First, a few words about IAAPA Europe itself. We are the recently created European chapter of IAAPA, the largest international trade association for permanently situated amusement facilities worldwide. 700 of IAAPA's 4,300 worldwide members are represented by IAAPA Europe and this number continues to grow.

The amusement park and attraction sector itself is a significant player in the European tourism industry. A study commissioned by us and published in September 2009, *European amusement and theme park industry: an assessment of economic impact of on-site visitor spending*, demonstrates that theme and amusement parks alone generated a total economic impact of €8.6 billion in 2008. They also supported an estimated 48,000 direct full-time-equivalent jobs.¹

Lisbon Treaty and the development of European tourism policy

The creation of new tourism powers for the European Union by the Lisbon Treaty is an important development. Formal recognition of the sector by the European institutions creates the conditions and opportunity for a far greater understanding of tourism as a serious contributor to the development of the European economy and the prosperity of European society. It is essential that this opportunity is grasped by the European Commission in the drafting of the new policy framework.

The new treaty powers are about more than just continuing the tried and tested. They offer the chance of a fresh start and new levels of co-operation between the institutions and all involved in the sector, not least the industry itself. While the three main policy priorities identified in the consultation document are essentially correct, we regret that the activities outlined are generally little more than a continuation of recent activities.

¹ A copy of this report is available on request from the IAAPA Europe secretariat.

The competitiveness of European tourism

This has to be the driving force behind new tourism policy development. If Europe's tourism sector cannot compete on the world stage, then the European share of the market will continue to decline. The new policy framework can do much to create the conditions that will allow tourism to flourish - and to do so in a way that is fully in line with the European Union's sustainability objectives.

The first priority must be to ensure that tourism's interests are taken fully into account in other EU policies. This has been said before in previous European tourism communications and was reiterated in the EU programme published by the current trio of Council presidencies (Spain, Belgium and Hungary) in December 2009. Yet it has been omitted entirely from the present consultation document. Why? It needs to be reinstated and turned into a central plank of the new EU strategy.

Getting tourism's interests taken into account does not mean lobbying by Tourism Unit officials. Lobbying is the responsibility of trade associations like our own. Instead, it is about giving officials throughout the institutions - not just the Commission - the insights they need to appreciate that tourism is a serious business affected directly and indirectly by decisions in other policy areas. Doing so allows tourism concerns to be built in at the earliest stage of the policy development process and lends considerable support to the sector's own representations.

Practical initiatives

If a main objective of the new policy is to support tourism's competitiveness, the emphasis should really be on simple, practical measures that tourism businesses can recognise as being tailored to their needs and as meeting their concerns.

The consultation document highlights, for example, a desire to encourage innovation by the industry. It also proposes to continue efforts to raise awareness of European funding to support businesses. In themselves, these are worthy ambitions but attempts to realise them have, so far, centred largely on the organisation of large conferences which, inevitably, achieve little. Instead, the emphasis should be on more direct, accessible means: simple, clear and frequently updated websites, for example, accompanied by well-targeted publicity campaigns which give businesspeople the opportunity to look for the information and advice at times that suit them and their enterprises.

Any work on funding should also understand that the main source of EU tourism funding is the European structural funds, many of whose grants/loans are managed in the relevant regions. DG Regional Policy may welcome the support of the Tourism Unit in helping programme authorities and partners to promote their schemes to eligible businesses.

Furthermore, European trade associations are well placed through their networks of national member associations or individual business members to promote EU funding schemes, innovation advice and other support/policy measures. We urge the Commission to make better use of such existing networks and to be open to constructive co-operation with European associations in doing so. There should be more emphasis on this and less on the creation of yet more networks (as in the current document).

Perhaps the suggestion of more networks stems in part from a lack of familiarity with the industry networks that exist already (other than the main Brussels representatives) - or from gaps in knowledge about individual sectors. Whether or not that is the case, however, officials' knowledge of the industry on whose behalf they are active would gain immeasurably from increased first-hand experience of that industry.

There are several ways in which this could be done. For example:

- Familiarisation visits for members of the Commission staff. IAAPA Europe would be delighted to devise a programme of site visits for officials.
- We also advocate the creation by the Commission of a new industry advisory panel that would meet under an industry chairman and complement the existing Tourism Consultative Committee.
- Create a new post in the Tourism Unit for a full-time tourism adviser from the industry to act as the first contact point between industry and officials, and also to help in improving understanding and appreciation of tourism throughout the Commission's services.

These are just some initial thoughts, but if you or your colleagues would like to discuss any of them with us in more detail, we would be happy to help. We look forward to a further dialogue about the new tourism policy.

With kind regards

Andreas Veilstrup Andersen
Executive Director, IAAPA Europe

Founded in 1918, IAAPA is the largest international trade association for permanently situated amusement facilities worldwide. The organisation represents more than 4,300 facility, supplier, and individual members from more than 90 countries. IAAPA has 700 members in Europe.