

Govor potpredsjednika Sabora Željka Reintera na plenarnom zasjedanju PD SEI-ja, Zagreb, 26.11.2018.

Address by Deputy Speaker of the Croatian Parliament Mr. Željko Reiner

Central European Initiative Parliamentary Dimension

Plenary Assembly

„Tourism Development and Local Community - How to Foster Sustainability?”

Croatian Parliament, 26 November 2018

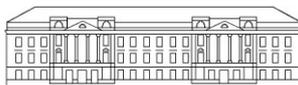
Honourable members of the parliaments,

Dear guests,

Allow me to warmly greet you on behalf of the Speaker of the Croatian Parliament Mr. Gordan Jandroković who was unfortunately unable to be here with us today, and myself personally.

According to the World Tourism Organization, **more than 1.3 billion people** travelled the world in **2017**, which is the **highest growth** in international tourist arrivals in the last **seven** years. By region, **Africa and Europe** grew above average. Europe is still the most visited region in the world, largely owing to the richness and diversity of tourist offers, good transport connectivity, peace and stability and a high level of awareness of the need to protect the environment. The tourism sector employs **one hundred million people** around the world. Tourism today is not merely one of the most important growing economic branches: it has become a **global phenomenon**.

Tourism is **one of the most important economic** branches in Croatia and fortunately, it is still characterized with a **high level of ecological preservation and protection of the landscapes**, which is, together with many historical places of interest, to a great extent the **basis** for its tourist offer. In order to preserve natural beauties and natural resources, Croatia has placed the emphasis on the **development of sustainable tourism** in its **Tourism Development Strategy**. Furthermore, Croatia pays great attention to **relations between tourism and other branches of economy** such as agriculture and food, particularly ecological food, production. The key to a successful cooperation that inevitably leads to excellent tourist results is **synergy** of many economy branches and businesses. Why not enjoy Istrian prosciutto with Slavonian wines and Neretva region mandarins during your stay in Dubrovnik? This kind of synergy shows the real strength of cooperation and management, but also points out to another contribution of tourism that I would like to stress: getting to know a country's **cultural heritage**.



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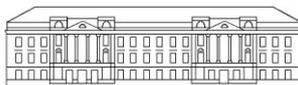
Tourism contributes to culture, and vice versa, in various ways: by **presenting cultural heritage** of the country, especially those enlisted on the UNESCO's "World Heritage" and "Intangible Cultural Heritage" lists, **branding indigenous products** as recognizable souvenirs, but also, presenting new, **modern inputs** of society in forms of **modern art, music and theatres**. Tourists of the new, modern times are more demanding than ever, and they have the right to be! They are highly motivated by the cultural and historical heritage of the destination, and the most important role in providing them with the right offer have – **local communities**. **Branding of local communities** is the new soft power of touristic countries. In this regard allow me to quote American political scientist, professor **Joseph Nye**: *The world of traditional "power politics" is about whose military or economy wins. Politics in a new, information age may ultimately be about whose story wins.* Telling the "new story" opens the door to investments, cultural cooperation, economy growth, but also increased number of tourists. Many tourists wish to hear and to "live" the story of the local community.

Besides providing many pleasures both to tourists and tourist workers, **unmanaged or badly managed tourism may also feature some negative elements**. We only have to remind ourselves of the long queues on the highways and traffic jams on the roads in the summer, resulting in increased air pollution. These mostly affect local communities. National tourism development strategies should put a strong accent to sustainability of tourism at the local level. For members of the European Union, Cohesion Policy and its financial instruments provide an excellent framework for planning and investing. To increase the sustainability, it is essential to improve the existing **transport infrastructure** – in order to reduce air and water pollution, **environmental infrastructure** - such as water supply, waste disposal, pollution control services, and **energy infrastructure** – with focus on alternative sources such as biomass products, sun and wind energy.

Even though Europe is the most visited region in the world, with new technologies in service of the highest touristic demands, we still have millions of people in the world who have no electricity, no drinking water or sewerage systems, and who cannot fight diseases that were eradicated in the Western world a hundred years ago. Is this the nature's way of keeping balance in the world? Will we ever have the chance to give the entire world equal chances for development? We are all aware that evolution is still in progress, until the day humans will learn how to control the nature – if this will ever happen. We must face the consequences which the technological progress has on the environment and put much more thought on how to preserve the essentials: natural resources and the nature in general. Only by respecting and protecting the God-given natural beauties, we can make amends for the damage which we have already done to our environment in the past.

Ladies and gentlemen,

In **order to preserve** our waters, land and air, and show our natural assets to our guests, we must **unify natural and cultural offers** of the country, and **distance** ourselves from



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traditionally too-intense predominantly seasonal resource utilization. Tourism is a very complex phenomenon that has a **very strong local character**, but inevitably has a **global impact**. The key element is recognizing how to emphasize values of the rich cultural heritage and natural beauties of the country **by applying modern know-how** for environmental protection and preservation of the heritage in order to foster sustainability.

Dear colleagues,

I am very happy to participate at this event and I would like to encourage the exchange of opinions and experiences from good legislative practice in the field of tourism with other Member States of the Central European Initiative with the aim of protecting and preserving the national particularities of every state.

I wish you a successful conference and hope that you will enjoy your time in Croatia.

Thank you.