

ZAGREB / LOŠINJ 10 - 13 September 2014
EUROPEAN INTERPARLIAMENTARY CONFERENCE
CHALLENGES OF SUSTAINABLE TOURISM
Promoting Cultural Heritage and Environment Protection



CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

of the European Interparliamentary Conference

„Challenges of Sustainable Tourism: Promoting Cultural Heritage and Environment Protection“

Zagreb/Mali Lošinj, 10 – 13 September 2014

The first European Interparliamentary Conference **“Challenges of Sustainable Tourism: Promoting Cultural Heritage and Environment Protection”** was held in Zagreb and Mali Lošinj from 10 to 13 September 2014. The Conference was initiated and organised by the Croatian Parliament.

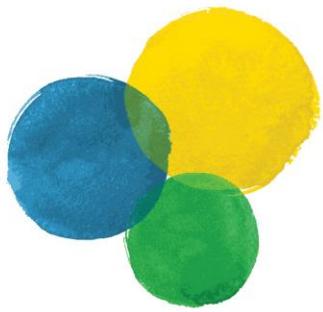
The Conference was attended by the chairpersons and members of tourism committees in national parliaments of Austria, Belgium, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Cyprus, Montenegro, Czech Republic, Denmark, France, Greece, Croatia, Ireland, Italy, Malta, Morocco, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Serbia, Great Britain and Turkey, diplomatic representatives of Bulgaria, Lithuania, Hungary, Macedonia, Germany and Poland, as well as representatives of the European Parliament, European Commission, UN World Tourist Organisation, other international tourist organisations and experts in the field of environmental protection and cultural heritage.

The Committee on Tourism of the Croatian Parliament launched this initiative immediately after Croatia's accession to the European Union in July 2013, and this was welcomed and accepted by a number of other national parliaments in Europe.

The Conference was chaired by Mr. Goran Beus Richembergh, Chairman of the Committee on Tourism of the Croatian Parliament, and co-chaired by Mr. Ettore Guglielmo Epifani, Chairman of the Committee on Production, Trade and Tourism of the House of Representatives (Camera Italiana) of the Italian Parliament.

The first part of the Conference on 10 and 11 September 2014 was held in the Croatian Parliament in Zagreb, while the other part of the Conference on 12 September moved to Mali Lošinj.

The official opening of the Conference by Mr. Josip Leko, Speaker of Croatian Parliament, was also attended by the Deputy Speakers of Croatian Parliament, the First Deputy Prime Minister of the Republic of Croatia and Minister of Foreign and European Affairs, the Minister of Tourism of the Republic of Croatia, the Minister of Culture of the Republic of Croatia, the Deputy Minister of Environmental and Nature Protection and the Chairman of the Education, Science and Culture Committee of the Croatian Parliament.



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The main objective of the first European Interparliamentary Conference on Sustainable Tourism was to promote the cooperation between EU Member States and the neighbouring countries through the exchange of experiences in and information about the legislative practices. The Conference also intended to highlight the role of tourism in the development of national economies, the need of constant strengthening the sustainable tourism concepts and the affirmation of concrete practice in a responsible use of cultural heritage and environment protection as parts of this concept.

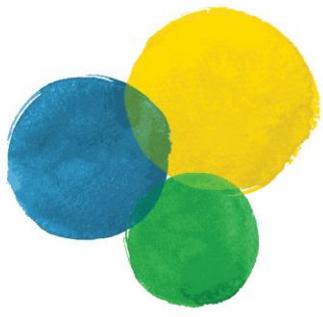
As the organiser and host of the Conference, Croatia presented several examples of good practice in the island of Lošinj: the construction of the Apoxyomenos Museum and the work of the Blue World Institute, which is focused on the protection of endangered marine species and brings together young scientists in the field of environmental protection. The island of Lošinj was presented as a health and cultural tourist destination.

The intention of the Croatian Parliament as the organiser was to cause the Conference to evolve into a parliamentary meeting that will gather parliamentarians from all EU Member States on an annual basis so as to give greater prominence to the common European tourism development policy, since in a large number of European countries tourism is a very important driver of economic development, generating a significant share in the GDP.

The Greek parliamentary delegation acknowledged this initiative and announced at the closing of the Conference that the Hellenic Parliament will host and organise the second European Conference on Sustainable Tourism in 2015.

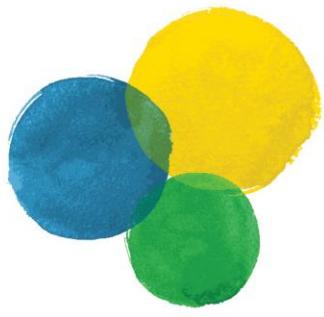
The focus in the addresses and debates at the Conference was placed on the following:

- Today, tourism represents a synthesis of different economic branches as a cross-sectorial industry and a lifestyle of many people, and it is significantly marked and conditioned by globalisation processes. In addition to the ICT sector, it is one of the fastest growing industries in the world and one of the important income sources in many countries.
- Long ago tourism stopped being the privilege of the elite travelling to find diversity and became the possibility of every human being to exercise his/her right to freedom of movement, giving him/her the opportunity to learn much more about other cultures and civilisations and respect them more.
- European countries have different experiences in tourism development. While some countries and regions faced on this road many challenges that resulted in excessive urbanisation, exploitation of resources, endangering of the cultural and especially architectural heritage, environment pollution and disorders of the biodiversity system, some other countries started applying principles and standards of



sustainable development in time and generate long-term benefits from a balanced social development.

- Interdisciplinary, cross-sectorial nature of tourism provides a huge array of topics dealt with by business, academic and governance sectors. Sustainable tourism takes part in many various EU bodies and can be traced in areas promoted by the 2020 strategy as the Flagship initiatives (resource efficiency, innovation, youth, digital agenda, jobs...). Based on the current diffusion of sustainable tourism practices and the EU goals related to it, the Conference participants fell that some form of focal point is needed in order to make knowledge disseminated and policies more effective in achieving "smart, sustainable, inclusive growth".
- A responsible approach of all tourism development stakeholders that implies observing of the principles of sustainable tourism can contribute to European countries' coming out of the recession and to the return of both the European Union and its surrounding to sustainable economic growth and social prosperity.
- The creators of national development policies in the EU, including parliaments which set the legislative frameworks, do not make use to a sufficient extent of their possibilities of operating with synergy effect as provided by the Lisbon Treaty. Their cooperation and harmonisation of practices could open new perspectives to development project holders in presenting Europe as a unique destination in other markets.
- The idea of holding interparliamentary conferences is an important tool for the coordination of development policies of the countries of the European Union as the single market and of its surrounding, especially with respect to candidate countries and countries developing their European perspective.
- Setting up a modern institutional framework, encouraging entrepreneurship in the tourism sector, developing human resources and simplifying administrative procedures provides the possibility of improving a quality tourist product.
- Care for the environment, preserving local traditions, organic farming and regional interconnection of the tourist offer represent the basis for combined job creation, sustainable living, environment protection, acceptable preservation of local traditions and landscapes. Sustainable tourism not only develops the sector, but it also develops local people and their assets in a sustainable manner, it encourages ecological development, ecological agriculture and fisheries, keeps rural areas alive and preserves and protects the environment and the heritage.
- Sustainable tourism can and should reduce the adverse effects of tourism development on the community and the environment to a minimum so as to produce a positive impact on the local economy, nature protection and affirmation of cultural heritage and to improve the quality of life of the domestic population and visitors. Enacting good laws is the basis of sustainable tourism.



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On the basis of the conducted debates of the representatives of national parliaments and experts in the field of protection of cultural heritage and environment as well as the representatives of international organisations, the Conference Chairmanship adopted the following

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

I

European countries, respecting all particularities and in keeping the previous different experiences, can develop tourism more successfully on the basis of common and harmonised policies, cross-border projects and regional initiatives with the aim of achieving sustainable tourism, but also sustainable development as a whole.

II

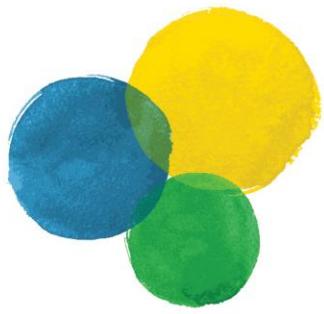
Knowledge pooling, education and expert exchange, active exchange of experiences and harmonisation of legislative initiatives for setting up European standards of preservation and protection of cultural heritage and environment can help, on a long-term basis, improve the European practice both on professional and political level. The active involvement of European institutions in this process has proved to be important for its future.

III

The relation of tourism towards the environment and cultural heritage, redefining of sustainability of development and importance of sustainable and responsible tourism for the overall development should be the issues on which the focus should be when contemplating development policies and strategies in tourism. The care and promotion of heritage (natural, traditional, culinary, linguistic, historical, architectural, cultural etc.) provide room for launching new and responsible entrepreneur initiatives. The implementation of such initiatives would create possibilities for opening new jobs, especially for the employment of young people of various professions who would use their knowledge to interpret and protect heritage.

IV

National parliaments and governments are advised to take into consideration the great importance of strengthening cross-sectorial cooperation between tourism and culture when operating and proposing legislative initiatives. Tourism can contribute to the creation of jobs, but it cannot act autonomously without continuous and responsible care for cultural values and heritage at a destination. Tourism can contribute to culture in various ways, one



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of them being the tourist presentation of cultural heritage, especially in places that have been proclaimed world heritage sites by the UNESCO. On the other hand, culture can also contribute to tourism through the development of new forms of tourist offer, cultural routes or digitalisation of cultural heritage in the form of tourist products. UNWTO and UNESCO have already taken this direction by signing a Memorandum of Understanding in 2013, thereby committing themselves to joint activities in national, regional and global initiatives in the fields of sustainable tourism and preservation of natural and cultural heritage.

V

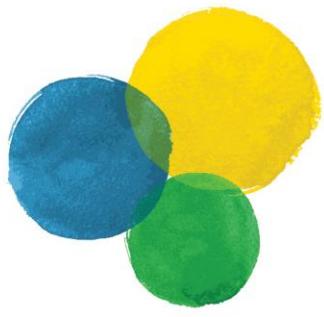
In many countries of the Mediterranean belt with increased requirements of a growing number of tourists significant adverse effects can be observed in the coastal zones. These primarily include changes of the landscapes, water pollution and over-exploitation of natural resources. In order to avoid such effects, it is recommended to apply an integrated coastal zone management by pooling the efforts and capacities of regional and local communities and coordinating tourism development plans, spatial planning and environmental protection measures. To this end the Conference emphasises the importance to apply the Protocol No. 7 of the Barcelona Convention from 2008, addressing in particular the issue of integrated coastal zone management in the Mediterranean and featuring guidelines and recommendations that are important for the protection and sustainable management of coastal zones.

VI

The Conference draws the attention of all the relevant national, regional and local administrations to the great importance of the implementation of integrated policies that create the conditions for capacity building of the 'blue economy'. Parts of the 'blue economy', such as tourism, energy, fisheries, shipbuilding and transportation, employ, according to data from 2012, around 5.4 million people, with a tendency of further growth to 7 million jobs by 2020, which is where the opportunity should be seen for development in general.

VII

Regional cooperation plays a crucial role in the development of tourism. Some advantages of EU membership are easier access to the EU funds and common market. In this sense, all Member States are recommended to make efforts that will allow maximum use of the resources provided, and the countries that are in the process of negotiations on EU membership are recommended to timely prepare for the use of these development opportunities.



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VIII

High standards of environmental and nature protection must not be an obstacle for the development of tourism, a reason to impair the quality of life, or an excuse for administrations in hindering the development of entrepreneurship. They must be the basis for a proactive policy of sustainable and responsible development for the benefit and in the interests of the local population. Initiatives for sustainable development are expected primarily from the local level because local communities can recognize best both development opportunities and potential negative impacts of uncontrolled development of tourism infrastructure and facilities.

IX

Respecting the impact and consequences of climate changes, that have caused unpredictable weather situations and threatened seasonal tourist offer in the recent years, the Conference recommends all the stakeholders in tourism to encourage the diversity of tourist products and services by developing special or specific forms of tourism featuring year-round instead of seasonal characteristics. In this sense, it is recommended to rely on the good practices of those countries that have introduced innovations in the concept of destination management advocated also by the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO).

On behalf of the Conference Chairmanship:

Goran Beus Richembergh, MP

Chairman of the Committee on Tourism

Croatian Parliament