



Pan-European dialogue between cruise operators, ports and coastal tourism stakeholders

Conference summary by the European Commission

Brussels, 5 and 6 March 2015

The European Commission, in close cooperation with stakeholders from the cruise industry, European sea ports and the coastal and maritime tourism sector, convened the first pan-European dialogue for cruise tourism, which took place in Brussels, on 5 and 6 March 2015. This dialogue was announced in the Communication "A European Strategy for more Growth and Jobs in Coastal and Maritime Tourism" (Action 3)¹, taking into account a general demand by relevant stakeholders made during the public consultation for that Communication.

About 200 participants, representing all sectors of cruise tourism stakeholders, came together to discuss common challenges and build bridges towards achieving a more coherent, integrated and participative approach to the development of a competitive and sustainable cruise tourism in Europe.

The conference and its participants generally

- acknowledged the principles and objectives set forth in the Europe 2020 Strategy, in the European Strategy for more Growth and Jobs in Coastal and Maritime Tourism, the Blue Growth Communication², the Communication "Europe, the world's No 1 tourist destination a new political framework for tourism in Europe"³ and President Juncker's Political Guidelines for the European Commission⁴; emphasised that tourism is a key sector of the European economy, but also an important means of promoting Europe's image in the world, projecting our values and promoting the European model – which is the result of centuries of cultural exchanges, linguistic and historical diversity, common identity and creativity; Underlined the importance of the Directive establishing a framework for maritime spatial planning⁵, and of the Protocol to the Barcelona Convention on Integrated Coastal Zone Management and the relevant Council Recommendation, for a harmonious development of cruise tourism in our maritime regions;
- stressed the importance of sustainable cruise, coastal and maritime tourism for the European economy as a driving force to the creation of jobs and growth and to the promotion of Blue Growth for Europe;
- recognised the fast growth of cruise tourism and its specificities compared to other forms of tourism;

¹ COM(2014) 86 final

² COM (2012)494

³ COM (2010) 352 final

⁴ *A New Start for Europe: My Agenda for Jobs, Growth, Fairness and Democratic Change - Political Guidelines for the next European Commission*, Opening Statement to the Plenary of the European Parliament by the Candidate for President of the European Commission, Strasbourg, 15 July 2014

⁵ Directive 2014/89/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 23 July 2014 establishing a framework for maritime spatial planning

- underlined the need to involve all the tourism chain in the benefits and deliveries for cruise tourism;
- recognized the contribution of cruise, coastal and maritime tourism to the social and economic development of coastal and insular destinations, the importance of coastal and insular destinations as touristic attractions and the need to preserve their authenticity and heritage;
- emphasized the need to guarantee the well-being of coastal and insular populations by ensuring the economic, social and environmental sustainability of cruise visits;
- reaffirmed the need for environmental sustainability of cruise tourism achieved through appropriate management of noise levels, waste, water, air quality and energy efficiency, in full application of existing legislation;
- recognized the importance of port efficiency for the development of connection gateways for coastal regions, and their multiple functions in relation to the economic and social set up of regions and Member States;
- underlined, also, that ports are playing a significant role in the protection of the marine environment and avoidance of pollution from ships by providing adequate port reception facilities⁶ and suitable quayside energy infrastructure;
- stressed the need for better connectivity between ports and coastal inland attractions;
- acknowledged the importance and the role of existing cruise tourism fora and other consultation mechanisms for the wider shipping industry, such as the European Sustainable Shipping Forum;
- reminded that the promotion of tourism is first and foremost a matter for national, regional and local authorities;
- stressed the importance of a structured dialogue for the development of a coherent policy and cooperation framework for cruise, coastal and maritime tourism in Europe, involving the whole coastal tourism value chain, local, regional and national policymakers, port representatives and cruise operators;
- paid tribute to the particularities of different sea basins and the need for a dedicated approach to different regional challenges and untapped potentials;
- underlined the need of coordinated implementation of environmental legislation by Member States.

⁶ In accordance with Directive 2000/59/EC on port reception facilities for ship generated waste and cargo residues and the International Convention on the Prevention of Pollution from Ships (MARPOL) in its up-to-date version

In the conference, it was agreed to follow up this initiative by

- cooperating towards the promotion of a competitive and sustainable cruise, coastal and maritime tourism in Europe, with shared benefits for all stakeholders, including coastal and insular communities;
- promoting an integrated approach between cruise industry, ports and coastal tourism stakeholders for cruise tourism at local, regional, national and European level, and to encourage the involvement of stakeholders in the decision making process;
- encouraging the development of transnational and inter-regional partnerships, networks, clusters and strategies for smart specialisation in order to overcome fragmentation in the sector⁷;
- fostering cooperation towards innovation and digitalisation for the cruise, coastal and maritime tourism sector, including by encouraging skills training development, by seeking research based policy decisions and by promoting innovative information and communication technologies;
- promoting existing stakeholder (ports authorities, cruise lines, tourism authorities) networks and initiatives for cooperation, dialogue and best practice exchange in the sector;
- helping the main coastal tourism stakeholders to overcome the challenges that they face, namely seasonality, sustainability and accessibility;
- continuing the dialogue at European level in order to address common challenges and to promote best practice sharing for the identification and implementation of solutions for common challenges such as congestion in ports, provision of sufficient and adequate services and facilities in ports, saturation and carrying capacity of destinations, connections from ports to touristic centres and inland attractors, and coordinated implementation of legislation;
- promoting the dialogue at regional level, at a regular basis and in different European regions/ sea basins, and joint best practice solutions for specific regional challenges, and fostering regional cooperation towards joint policy development, including for example joint tourism and / or promotion of European destinations strategies;
- establishing by the main stakeholders a "cooperation platform" for the continuation of the dialogue, bringing together cruise operators, ports and coastal tourism stakeholders, in order to organise and promote the dialogue at European and regional / sea-basin level;
- collaborating towards the development of quality of services for the cruise tourism offer, enhancing the position of Europe as a cruise destination of excellence and towards the joint promotion of Europe as a coastal destination, including by joint regional promotion of destinations in external tourism markets.

The relevant European Commission services will continue to facilitate this pan-European dialogue and to take or propose the relevant measures which could contribute to the sustainable development of the coastal and maritime tourism.

⁷ Smart specialisation involves a process of developing a vision, identifying competitive advantage, setting strategic priorities and making use of smart policies to maximise the knowledge-based development potential of any region, strong or weak, high-tech or low-tech. Available at <http://s3platform.jrc.ec.europa.eu/home>.