



Communiqué

5th European Forum of Social Tourism – Social tourism and the crisis: impacts and opportunities

Brussels, 22nd October 2009

Some 200 representatives coming from 20 countries have met from 15 to 17 October in Malaga (Spain) to take part in the 5th European Forum of Social Tourism organised by the BITS in partnership with SEGITTUR (the State Agency for Management of Tourism Innovation and Technologies) and the European Commission.

The impacts of the crisis on the sector of social tourism show that the sector is doing rather well in a context where a number of holidaymakers chose domestic tourism. However, despite this favourable trend, important challenges are still to be taken up in order to adapt to the changing clientele, improve the quality and reinforce the distribution of products.

The preparatory action CALYPSO aiming at developing social tourism in Europe was also at the heart of this forum that has allowed to identify action lines to favour tourism exchanges among member States. The *Europe Senior Tourism* project developed by SEGITTUR, the networking of countries having holiday cheques, as well as the creation of a European portal aiming at presenting a specific offer for young people are among the proposals that have been discussed.

The BITS president, Norberto Tonini, has stressed in his various speeches the importance of CALYPSO to ensure that a greater number of European citizens have access to holidays. Today more than 40% of European citizens cannot go on holidays, mainly for financial reasons.

Pedro Ortún, director “New Approach Industries, Tourism and CSR” at the European Commission Enterprise and Industry DG, has underlined the objectives of the CALYPSO initiative, that can contribute to create jobs, spread seasonality, reinforce European citizenship, generate economic activity and favour local and regional development.

In a context of work precariousness, the question of the right and access to holidays for all must also concern socio-economic stakeholders. This was reminded of by the representative of the European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC), who is currently working on that question together with the BITS.

Furthermore, a partnership agreement has been signed between the BITS and the European Network for Accessible Tourism (ENAT) in order to cooperate more closely on the questions of accessibility to tourism for disabled people.

Finally, the representatives of the region Emilia Romagna and the city of Rimini (Italy) have invited all participants to the next World Congress of social tourism that will be held in Rimini from 29 September to 1st October 2010.