

PRESS RELEASE

18 November 2009

At the 5th European Forum of Social Tourism, which took place in Malaga Spain, from 15 to 17 October, BITS – the International Bureau of Social Tourism and ENAT – the European Network for Accessible Tourism, signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU), with a view to establishing closer cooperation between the two associations.

BITS President, Snr. Norberto Tonini and ENAT President, Mrs. Lilian Müller emphasised the importance of the agreement, as they signed the MoU in the presence of the delegates on the first day of the European Forum, which was organised by BITS.

“Europe is actively exploring new ways to develop social tourism, in support of the tourism industry and in order to deliver better services to those citizens who can least afford to take holidays. At this time it is especially important that our organisations work closely together to help deliver accessible, affordable holidays for all sections of society”, said Mrs. Müller.

The MoU will provide a framework for joint initiatives, supporting the common goals of BITS and ENAT and making effective use of the complementary strengths of both organisations.

ENAT, which has more than 300 members in over 30 countries, promotes measures which can improve access to tourism venues, accommodation and offers for disabled people, senior citizens and others by advising on access and implementing solutions in information, management, transport, buildings and customer services.

BITS, which was set up in 1963, promotes social tourism at the international level. Its members provide leisure activities, holidays and tourism for as many people as possible. BITS encourages all actors to share this responsibility, actively, namely States, social players and operators. The mission of BITS is also to promote sustainable tourism based on solidarity which ensures that the local populations draw some benefit and which respects the natural and cultural heritage.

The Memorandum of Understanding will open possibilities for collaboration between BITS and ENAT in areas such as:

- Cooperation in the international exchange of knowledge and experience;
- Joint working groups to deliver policy White Papers to lay out common positions and an agenda for the wider implementation of social tourism which is accessible for all,
- Joint actions or working groups to exchange information and explore the above, including themes such as: "Accessibility Standards", "Staff Training", etc.;
- European proposals and projects, developed jointly by teams of ENAT and BITS members;
- Regional- and National-level projects for clients in areas of the world where either party operates;
- Mutual promotion and dissemination of activities;
- Coordination of international meetings and events

Further information:

ENAT website at www.accessibletourism.org

BITS website at www.bits-int.org

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