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ENTERPRISE AND INDUSTRY DIRECTORATE-GENERAL

Tourism, CSR, Consumer Goods and International Regulatory Agreements
Tourism Policy Development

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CONSULTATION DOCUMENT

Subject: European Charter for Sustainable and Responsible Tourism

1. BACKGROUND

In line with the Lisbon Treaty and the EU competence to carry out actions to support, coordinate or supplement actions of the Members States in the tourism field, as well as with the Union's 'Europe 2020' Strategy, the 2010 Commission Communication "**Europe, the world's N°1 tourist destination – a new political framework for tourism in Europe**"¹ establishes a consolidated framework for action at European level. The main aim of the European tourism policy is to stimulate competitiveness in the sector, while being aware that in the long term, competitiveness is closely linked to the 'sustainable' way in which it is developed. One of the four axes of the Communication is devoted to actions aiming at **promoting the development of sustainable, responsible and high-quality tourism.**

The sector's competitiveness is closely linked to its sustainability, as the quality of tourist destinations is strongly influenced by their natural and cultural environment and their integration into a local community. To be sustainable, tourism must be economically viable, meet the needs of society and preserve the environment. In this way, tourism should deliver benefits without detriment to current and future generations. Tourism sustainability covers a wide range of aspects, among which: the responsible use of natural resources, the use of 'clean' energy wherever possible, taking account of the environmental impact of activities (production of waste, pressure on water, land and biodiversity, etc.), protection of the heritage and preservation of the natural and cultural integrity of destinations, the quality and sustainability of jobs created, local economic fallout or customer care. These issues are already tackled to some extent and principles of sustainability are largely reflected in tourism strategies at national and regional level, although they still find insufficient expression in specific actions.

As announced under action 15 of the 2010 Communication, the Commission intends to:

¹ COM(2010)352 final

Propose a charter for sustainable and responsible tourism and establish a European prize for tourism businesses and destinations respecting the values set out in the charter.

In 2011, the Commission, together with its experts group - the Tourism Sustainability Group (TSG), has started working on the concept of this Charter. Several meetings were held between the Commission and the TSG in Brussels (24th February, 20th June and 26th September 2011) and the first draft text of the Charter has been elaborated. The Commission's intention now is to consult public and private tourism stakeholders at a larger scale on the draft text of the Charter in order to collect their views and ideas on the text itself as well as on the best ways for its adoption, implementation and monitoring.

Stakeholders are invited to read the first draft of the Charter (in Annex 1) and send their comments by answering the questions of the Questionnaire (in Annex 2) by email to: entr-tourism@ec.europa.eu **by 20 April 2012 at the latest.**

2. THE EUROPEAN CHARTER FOR SUSTAINABLE AND RESPONSIBLE TOURISM

2.1 Objective

The overall objective of the "European Charter for Sustainable and Responsible Tourism" (hereafter referred as the Charter) is to contribute to ensuring sustainable and responsible tourism development. The Charter should reflect the commitment of public authorities, destinations, businesses, tourists and other stakeholders to develop tourism in the EU following a set of agreed objectives and principles. The purpose of the Charter is to encourage sustainable and responsible tourism policies and actions across Europe, by providing a common reference point for all stakeholders in tourism.

More specifically, the Charter should contribute to the sustainable and responsible development of the tourism sector, by encouraging initiatives aimed at, among others:

- reinforcing the image and perception of Europe as a set of high quality and sustainable destinations;
- promoting sustainable management by destinations and responsible best practices by tourism enterprises;
- promoting responsible attitudes from European citizens travelling within the EU and abroad;
- strengthening the European social model in line with the Lisbon Treaty and the Europe 2020 Strategy;
- raising awareness of the industry, especially of the small and micro enterprises, on the importance of following sustainability and responsibility principles:

The Charter should also contribute to reinforcing the ethic values of the European citizenship, especially by enhancing the feeling of belonging to the EU. The Charter is primarily aimed at tourism within Europe, but it should also influence how we as

European citizens can contribute to sustainable and responsible tourism development as investors, operators and travellers in third countries, in particular in emerging and developing ones.

2.2 The structure of the Charter

The current first draft of the Charter proposal is structured broadly along the following outline:

- Ø I. Introduction
- Ø II. Objectives
- Ø III. Key functions and target groups
- Ø IV. Principles
- Ø V. Lines of action
- Ø VI. Implementation and promotion

The introduction should be completed at a later stage, depending on the form in which the Charter will be adopted. It should make reference to the background documents on which the Charter is based, e.g.: the Commission Communications, EP resolutions, reference to existing codes of conducts and charters... It should also include background information on the economic and socio-cultural role of tourism in Europe and justify the need for sustainable and responsible tourism.

During the elaboration of the first draft of the Charter, some views expressed that the Charter should be a reference document, comprising a concise set of general principles and specific guidelines that could be subsequently developed into actions by the sector stakeholders.

2.3. Implementation of the Charter

The aim of the Commission is to enhance sustainable and responsible development of tourism in the EU as a key element for ensuring the competitiveness of the EU tourism enterprises. Therefore the Charter should be of real benefit to the sector. Furthermore, the Commission considers that the Charter would only be really useful if well implemented and if its implementation can be duly monitored.

The Commission would like to encourage tourism stakeholders in Europe to pledge support for the Charter and contribute to implementing sustainable and responsible tourism by respecting and translating into actions the Charter's principles and general guidelines.

For the time being, several non exclusive options for the implementation of the Charter are under consideration among others (*the list is not exhaustive*):

- 1) Endorsement of the Charter by signature of the stakeholders and publishing a list of signatories, by public authorities (national, regional, local destinations), businesses and their organisations, Trade Unions and Civil Society Organisations.
- 2) Setting up of a European platform of stakeholders which would exchange/share practices on the implementation of the Charter;
- 3) Setting up of a monitoring system for the Charter's implementation;
- 4) Establishing a kind of periodic award schemes for stakeholders for exemplary practices of the Charter's implementation.

Annex 1. First draft text of the European Charter for Sustainable and Responsible Tourism

Annex 2. Questionnaire on the first draft of the European Charter for Sustainable and Responsible Tourism