

memorandum^x

of the International Social Tourism Organisation

ISTO

Tourism for all: a European challenge



Since its creation in 1963, the International Social Tourism Organisation (ISTO) has focused on promoting access to holidays for as many people as possible, as well as ensuring that tourism is an inclusive activity at the service of both host communities and those employed in the field.

Over the past 50 years, the context has clearly changed dramatically in all our societies and worldwide. Our world has developed significantly; globalisation and the dominance of the economy restrict political room for manoeuvre, and the deep cleavages that existed in the previous century are no longer relevant, even if we believe that there are more valid reasons than ever to be dissatisfied with the world as it is. The tourism sector, transportation and the growing mobility of a large number of people on the planet have greatly expanded¹, as has ecological awareness, not without sharp contradictions.

Despite the fact that there is growing recognition of the impact of access to holidays on people's quality of life and well-being and that there have been decades of a sustained increase in the number of people in developed countries going on holidays, this is no longer the case today. On the contrary, stagnation or even, at times, a significant decline can be observed in those countries².

Conversely, everything suggests that growth - in this area and others - is occurring instead in Asia and emerging economies. Faced with more pressing priorities, Africa has remained largely untouched by this trend, even if interest is perceptible in some African countries.

1 According to estimates from the European Commission's DG Enterprise and Industry, tourism accounts for more than 5% of the EU's GDP. The tourist accommodation sector employs 2.4 million people in the EU, and total employment within the whole of the EU's tourism industry is estimated to be between 12 and 14 million people. Tourism therefore represents the third largest socioeconomic activity in the EU after the trade, distribution and construction sectors.

2 According to Eurostat, it is estimated that some 51.5 % of the EU's population took part in tourism in 2012, in other words made at least one trip of at least four overnight stays during the year.

Therefore advocating the development of tourism's social dimension is not a thing of the past. It remains thoroughly topical. If, on the one hand, the financial resources provided to social tourism operators have stagnated or declined, we can, on the other hand, note that policy-makers are tending to pay greater attention to tourism's social dimension. It cannot be ignored that this dimension can be used to leverage economic activity and employment in this sector. This is particularly true for "domestic" tourism, just as the growing trend of transferring tourism activity from the States to local and regional communities may translate into more initiatives encouraging people to go on holidays. Together with the development of the European dimension and international action - Europe is the world's number one tourist destination - this can become a new policy framework for European tourism³.



Finally, travel in the European Union also contributes to the development of a sense of European citizenship through the discovery of other cultures and contact with the inhabitants of other countries. In this regard, tourism can enhance European identity and promote peace in Europe.

Given all the reasons mentioned above, and at a time when ISTO, backed by its various members (States, local and regional authorities, trade unions, tourism operators and stakeholders, scholars, etc.), not only looks back over the past 50 years of action and hard work but also, more importantly, looks forward to the future,

we would like to call on political, social and economic decision-makers to give the tourism industry the attention that it deserves, and to support actual policies to promote real access to holidays for the citizens of our countries.

From the right to holidays and the legal existence of annual leave to the actual possibility of "going on holidays", a gaping hole still needs to be filled in most countries.

³ See the Commission Communication of 30 June 2010

Ten proposals for the European Union

The studies available in 2013 all show that the crisis we are experiencing in the European Union is now clearly impacting on Europeans' holiday behaviour.

The number of people going on holidays has fallen to its lowest since the beginning of this century, and, according to estimates, only a small majority (about 55%) of European citizens were able to go on holidays this year. The drop is particularly severe in Italy, Spain, Greece and Portugal and is also very noticeable in the United Kingdom and France. In many Eastern European countries, although the holiday rate is still low, it has not fallen as low and, in some cases, is even growing.

ISTO was very pleased to see the European Parliament and Commission address this issue through implementing and funding the Calypso programme. It has raised awareness among multiple public and private stakeholders, conducted a wide-ranging study on social tourism in the EU, implemented pilot projects among four target audiences (seniors, the youth, low-income families and people with disabilities), and funded an ambitious European social tourism platform, with a view to creating conditions conducive to the establishment of a real "market of European tourism for all". These are valuable achievements.

The issue of “Tourism for All” or the access to holidays for the greatest number of people has, moreover, been formally acknowledged and taken into account in several official texts recently adopted by various European institutions, including: the European Parliament resolution of 27 September 2011 on *Europe, the world's No 1 tourist destination - a new political framework for tourism in Europe*, which calls on the Commission and the Member States to “continue with this action, allowing disadvantaged people [...] to have easier access to holidays”; the Commission Communication of 30 June 2010, mentioned earlier, which specifies actions planned under Calypso; the Madrid Declaration of 15 April 2010, *Towards a socially responsible tourism model*, adopted at an informal meeting of Ministers.

But the European Union will not stop here.

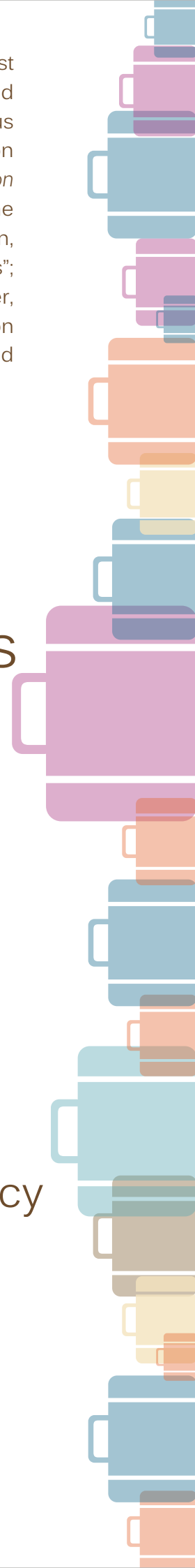
This is why ISTO calls on the European Commission and Members of the European Parliament, the European Council and Member States to consider the following 10 proposals:

Two major policy directions

- 1 On the basis of a better recognition through the Lisbon treaty (article 195) of the role of tourism as a strategic sector in the European economy (it is the third largest economic sector), initiate and promote greater cooperation amongst Member States, particularly in developing European domestic tourism for all and taking it into account in inter-departmental tourism policies.
- 2 Identify more accurately the European mechanisms and sources of funding capable of supporting this cooperation during the 2014-2020 period.

Three proposals for a comprehensive tourism policy

- 3 Support transnational initiatives and projects within the European Union, particularly in order to move towards a better distribution of tourism activity across seasons.
- 4 Encourage the development of youth exchanges, such as educational trips in Europe, which are the first steps towards personal ownership of European identity.
- 5 Ensure a decent legal status for tourism workers, including seasonal workers and volunteers.



Five proposals for the development of social tourism policies

Considering that social tourism is the foundation of actions and mechanisms providing easier access to holidays and tourism for all those who would otherwise be excluded because of financial or physical constraints, ISTO submits the following proposals:

- 6 Strengthen the cooperation amongst Member States to support or create transnational aid mechanisms allowing access to tourism to audiences who cannot go on holidays for financial or physical reasons, on the basis of best practices, for example: holiday programmes for seniors, initiated in Spain and Portugal; holiday vouchers, created more than 30 years ago in France and Switzerland; double holiday pay in Belgium; the Erzsébet programme in Hungary.
- 7 Design new support mechanisms, such as a European Aid Fund for holidays, which would complement existing national or regional mechanisms, in order to disseminate and enhance best practices, such as those implemented through the e-Calypso platform, as well as facilitate the development of transnational exchanges.
- 8 Provide support to social tourism operators who subscribe to a social and inclusive economy, as well as to all those who engage in measurable activities benefitting the greatest number of our fellow citizens and in line with a sustainable development approach, through promoting, for example, destinations that apply the European Charter for sustainable and responsible tourism (under development).
- 9 Foster the exchange of best practices and actions allowing people with disabilities to gain access to tourism and leisure activities, and promote European initiatives for improving tourism services accessible to everyone⁴.
- 10 Encourage the European Union and its Member States to include in their policies support for social and inclusive tourism programmes in the context of cooperation processes with partners outside the European Union.

4 United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, 2007

Through these 10 priorities, ISTO invites policy-makers to pay greater attention to tourism and the humanistic values within it, which are grounded in social and economic reality.

ISTO is convinced that enabling more European Union citizens and families to go on holidays, whether in their own country or to other EU countries, also means allowing Europe to progress while promoting “its values and the well-being of its peoples” (article 3, Treaty on European Union).

Brussels, 4 October 2013

