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Sustainable development and tourism: towards quality growth

Committee Opinion¹

Committee on Culture, Science and Education
Rapporteur: Mr Kent OLSSON, Sweden

1. The Committee on Culture, Science and Education in general supports the report by Mr Mendes Bota, rapporteur of the Committee on Economic Affairs and Development, and which explores in depth the economic aspects of this question.
2. It wishes to recall past Parliamentary Assembly work on this subject, to which the committee has contributed in insisting on the cultural aspects of tourism.
3. We would also draw attention to the relevant parts of more recent Council of Europe instruments and the related work on cultural tourism by other organisations notably Icomos and Europa Nostra.
4. Our concern has always been to balance encouragement of cultural tourism with protection of the cultural and natural heritage on which it relies. This concern is reflected in the report by Mr Mendes Bota with his emphasis on sustainability and on the need to spread tourist pressure geographically and seasonally.
5. Certain advantages of quality tourism cannot be easily quantified in economic terms but are no less important such as cultural diversity and intercultural dialogue.

A. Amendments to the draft recommendation proposed by the committee

Amendment A (to the draft recommendation)

In paragraph 10 insert after the first sentence the following:

“Quality tourism contributes to cultural diversity and intercultural dialogue.”

Amendment B (to the draft recommendation)

After sub-paragraph 12.1.14, insert a new sub-paragraph to read:

“to encourage provision of multilingual material in museums and other places frequented by tourists and to abandon, wherever this still exists, the discriminatory practice of not allowing foreign tourist guides who satisfy quality standards valid in the country visited;”

Amendment C (to the draft recommendation)

In paragraph 12.1.18, replace: “further development” with “protection, maintenance and appropriate development”.

1. See [Doc. 11539](#) tabled by the Committee on Economic Affairs and Development.



B. Explanatory memorandum, by Mr Kent Olsson

1. Since 1967 the Parliamentary Assembly has held six debates on tourism on the basis of nine reports and four opinions presented by its committees dealing with the environment, local authorities, economic affairs, agriculture as well as culture and education. Three orders, three resolutions and four recommendations have been adopted.
2. The Committee on Culture and Education presented an opinion on European co-operation in the field of tourism in June 1977, a report on the European tourism year: cultural considerations in September 1990, and another opinion on tapping Europe's tourism potential in May 2002.
3. In addition to these our committee has dealt with tourism, directly or indirectly, in many other reports on themes such as the European pilgrim routes (now developed as the Council of Europe's Cultural Routes), the cultural heritage of central and eastern Europe, heritage conservation or "Europe, a common heritage" – the Council of Europe campaign of 1999-2000, tax incentives to cultural heritage conservation and private management or cultural property.
4. Our concern has always been to balance the cultural advantages of tourism with the protection of the cultural and natural heritage from the tourists it attracts. The need to build a replica of the Lascaux cave to protect the real one from mass tourism illustrates this issue.
5. This position has been underlined in related work on cultural tourism by other organisations. We would mention, for example, the UNWTO Global Code of Ethics for Tourism (1999), the Icomos International Cultural Tourism Charter (1999) and the work by the European Cultural Tourism Network and Europa Nostra, which issued a position paper on the encouragement of cultural tourism and the mitigation of its effects (2006). Recent instruments of the Council of Europe are the European Landscape Convention (ETS No. 176) and the Framework Convention on the Value of Cultural Heritage for Society (ETS No. 199). The Congress has also been active in the field and Mr Krug (Germany) and Ms Bolan (United Kingdom) are currently working on a report on cultural tourism.
6. Six years after the last Assembly debate, Mr Mendes Bota and the Committee on Economic Affairs and Development are presenting a new report on tourism. The Committee on Culture, Science and Education congratulates the rapporteur, and welcomes his report, which addresses a number of issues of concern to the committee.
7. Already in 1990 the Assembly regretted that "tourism in recent years has evolved into an insufficiently controlled mass phenomenon, which may cause landscapes to become deteriorated, the environment to be degraded, the soil to be eroded, the water to be polluted, cultures to be denatured, cultural identities to be lost". The committee therefore endorses the call for quality tourism – as opposed to mass tourism – such that will prevent irreversible damage to the cultural heritage and assist sustainable development.
8. The committee further agrees that part of the income generated from tourism should be used in the maintenance of cultural "tourist attractions", in particular to restore damage and dilapidation caused to monuments and the landscape but also to ensure that its further development is appropriate and sustainable in cultural terms.
9. This does not apply only to government action to rescue and preserve national monuments. Public-private partnerships should be developed. Individuals, organisations and small enterprises should be encouraged to invest in making a wider range of sites, museums and galleries, facilities and buildings available to cultural tourists.
10. Governments should provide advice, assistance or support (through grants or through tax incentives) for this purpose, as is already the case in several member states of the Council of Europe. In general, closer co-operation is needed among all the stakeholders.
11. It should be recognised, however, that cultural tourism in itself can be a viable exercise in supporting local economies through the preservation of local cultural traditions, crafts and activities that might otherwise die out. Baroness Hooper is currently preparing a report on old and traditional crafts. It is important to insist on quality and authenticity and avoid the artificial promotion of folk art (many cheap tourist products sold throughout Europe are marked "Made in China").
12. Another important area of quality tourism is the field of gastronomy with the maintenance of local and regional specialities. This should be the subject of a separate study.

13. Quality growth in cultural tourism can bring many advantages that are not easily quantified in economic terms, as for example through greater awareness of cultural diversity and the encouragement of intercultural dialogue. It can also broaden the impact of tourism on local infrastructure and diversify the range of services involved.

14. The committee also notes with interest the growth in popularity of major art exhibitions and televised travel programmes that facilitate a wider and more satisfying public access to cultural experiences.

15. More specifically we note the improvements that new technology has brought to tourism and notably to the quality of cultural tourism, for example, in facilitating nonintrusive tour guides to exhibitions and the development of multilingual material. In this context we continue to deplore discrimination against foreign tourist guides.

Reporting committee: Committee on Economic Affairs and Development.

Committee for opinion: Committee on Culture, Science and Education.

Reference to committee: Doc.11069 and Reference No. 3316 of 16 March 2007 (modification of the Reference No. 3290 of 22 January 2007).

Opinion: approved by the committee on 17 April 2008. See 18th Sitting, 18 April 2008 (adoption of the draft recommendation, as amended); and Recommendation 1835.