Parliamentary Assembly
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COUNCIL OF EUROPE
CONSEIL DE L'EUROPE

Resolution 1148 (1998)[1]

Need to accelerate the development of tourism in central and eastern Europe

Parliamentary Assembly

1. In a Europe which, following the divisions of the past, is rapidly coming together, tourism is becoming a major contributor to international understanding and peace as well as a primary factor in employment and economic growth. Europe, which is already the world's major tourist destination, now faces the challenge of enhancing tourist exchanges across the entire continent, and notably toward its central and eastern parts which, during the decades of confrontation, suffered significant disadvantages in the development of this sector.

2. If the countries of central and eastern Europe are to be able to tap more fully their enormous tourism potential in terms of architectural heritage, natural treasures, cultural and ethnic diversity and cost advantages in terms of tourism services, they need to take urgent and determined action in various fields and be assisted in doing so by the countries in other parts of Europe.

3. The Assembly, with this in mind, calls on the member states of the Council of Europe:

3.1. to share more fully their experiences, positive as well as negative, as regards tourism development so as to allow the countries of central and eastern Europe to avoid pitfalls such as overburdening the natural environment or laying excessive emphasis on the quantitative as opposed to qualitative aspects of tourism growth;

3.2. to enhance co-operation and co-ordination efforts aimed at defining a coherent European tourism policy that complements and supports national tourism promotion measures;

3.3. to have the international institutions in which they participate – such as the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development, the World Bank, the OECD, the United Nations Development Programme, the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe, and the European Union – support infrastructure development projects and devote greater attention and resources to the expansion of the tourism industry in central and eastern Europe;

3.4. to initiate joint programmes for the training of different categories of employees involved in the build-up of tourism in central and eastern Europe, such as landscape planning, hotel management, catering, travel agency development, computer literacy, security and languages – drawing also on the expertise of the World Tourism Organisation in this field;

3.5. to facilitate travel for tourists by making available adequate information and by speeding up border crossing procedures, in particular, the granting of visas when required;

3.6. to apply legislation efficiently and to co-operate in the elaboration of a legal framework and computerised information exchange network, both at national and international level, in order to protect tourists against physical attack, theft and fraud involving credit cards and currency transactions;

3.7. to pursue, within appropriate international fora, such as the World Tourism Organisation and the OECD, efforts to offer tourists greater choice and strengthen their rights as consumers, for instance, by enhancing their opportunities to compare services offered by hotels and other tourist establishments.

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1. Assembly debate on 30 January 1998 (8th Sitting) (see Doc. 7976, report of the Committee on Economic Affairs and Development, rapporteur: Mrs Stepova). Text adopted by the Assembly on 30 January 1998 (8th Sitting).

4. The Assembly more particularly encourages the countries of central and eastern Europe:

4.1. to do their utmost to establish tourism policies which preserve and make better use of the richness and diversity of their natural and cultural heritage while promoting a balanced growth of tourism;

4.2. to take a clear position on the development of tourism by finalising and adopting national tourism laws in conformity with the guidelines established by the specialised international tourism organisations and the appropriate bodies of the European Union;

4.3. to aim for greater co-operation among themselves and within the competent international institutions in order to harmonise and co-ordinate their tourism promotion policies, particularly as regards lowering of taxation, providing better consumer rights protection for tourists, marketing of multi-destination package tours, crossing of borders and development of transfrontier tourist regions;

4.4. to improve methods of collecting data on tourism in each country in order to make them comparable within a European statistical framework;

4.5. to increase the responsibility of national tourism boards for regional tourism promotion aimed at more even distribution of tourist flows;

4.6. to seek the right balance, specific to each country, between public and private involvement in the promotion of tourism, while recognising the essential contribution that governments can make in providing an overall framework fostering the country’s image abroad;

4.7. to stimulate the creation of lasting partnerships between the public and the private sectors, to encourage the development of small and medium-sized enterprises in the travel and tourism fields as a means of creating employment opportunities, and to ensure that such enterprises are not overburdened by excessive regulations;

4.8. to pay particular attention to the demographic trend toward "grey tourism" in Europe by adapting facilities and medical services to the needs of the elderly;

4.9. to further expand their automatic cash dispenser machine and credit card servicing networks, considering their importance for tourism development.