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PRESS RELEASE

## EUROPE: A UNIQUE DESTINATION FOR CHINESE TRAVELLERS

*The China Day 2012 conference in Copenhagen presented perspectives and outlook on the Chinese outbound travel market to Europe.*

Brussels, 27 November 2012

The **China Day 2012** was successfully held last Thursday 22<sup>nd</sup> and Friday 23<sup>rd</sup> November 2012 at the Axelborg Conference Center in Copenhagen (Denmark). The conference was a joint initiative of the European Travel Commission (ETC), the European Commission (EC), VisitDenmark, Wonderful Copenhagen and the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) as part of the ambitious initiative of ETC to develop a long-term **Destination Europe 2020** strategy in partnership with the European Commission.

The aim of this initiative was to present the characteristics of the Chinese travel market and to highlight its importance for Europe. With the participation of representatives of the European and Chinese public and private tourism sector, the China Day conference offered a unique opportunity to understand and learn from travel experts about how to develop tourism offers for the Chinese market and to foster Euro-Chinese cultural exchange.

### **An inspirational conference with high-profile speakers**

Mr. Peter de Wilde, Ad Interim President of ETC, opened the conference by greeting the over hundred delegates representing local and national tourism offices, airlines, hotel chains and other tourism companies. In their opening speeches, Ms. Julie Russell, expert of the Tourism Policy Unit of the European Commission, emphasized the importance of EC and ETC joint activities to promote Europe as a tourism destination in long-haul markets, while Mr. Márcio Favilla Lucca de Paula, Executive Director for Competitiveness, External Relations and Partnerships of the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO), reported on impressive growth in number of arrivals and expenditure generated by Chinese travel market.

The Ambassador of the People's Republic of China in Denmark, Li Ruiyu, closed the opening session with a revealing speech on the difficulties that Chinese tourists willing to visit Europe have to affront such as visa restrictions, language barriers and insecurity, among others.

The afternoon session kicked off with the presentation of the studies on the Chinese Outbound Travel Market and on the Chinese travelers' Blogosphere, jointly produced by ETC and UNWTO, which dragged attention on some key aspects such as market trends, characteristics of the

operating environment, accessibility and booking channels. The innovative ethnographic study portrayed Chinese travellers as pictured in the footprint they leave in social media. This session was followed by a panel discussion with members of the European Commission, UNWTO, the European Tour Operators Association (ETOA) and European Cities Marketing (ECM).

"I find particularly interesting the huge opportunity that the Chinese market represents but at the same time our lack of knowledge about the behaviour of Chinese travellers" said Mr. Eduardo Santander, Executive Director of ETC, during the opening of the second session and introduced Ms. Julie Russell (EC), who illustrated the European Commission's initiatives to boost industry relations between Europe and China in the tourism sector. Ms. Valeria Croce, Research and Development Manager of ETC, highlighted the competitive positioning of Europe on the Chinese Market. This was followed by the specific experiences of Amsterdam and Copenhagen analysing the Chinese travel market and marketing their cities in China. Dr. Michael Frenzel, Chief Executive Officer of TUI AG, talked about the strategy of the German tour operator for the Chinese market. The China Day 2012 ended with a panel discussion on the industry perspective of accessing the Chinese travel market based on the experiences of airlines and tax-free shopping companies.

### **Targeting the Chinese travel market**

China is world's fastest growing outbound travel market and will continue growing over the coming two decades. Thanks to rapid urbanisation, rising disposable incomes and relaxations of restrictions on foreign travel, the Chinese travel market is expected to produce 100 million outbound tourists a year by 2020, as for UNWTO long-term forecasts. While the number of Chinese travelling to Europe is growing, and European destinations remain at the top of Chinese travellers' wish list, Europe's share of outbound travel is slightly but steadily declining. Discussion held during the China Day conference lead to conclude that a better understanding of the profile and specific needs of Chinese travellers, together with a critical review of legal and cultural barriers to travel will support European destinations to tap the enormous potential of the Chinese outbound travel market effectively. The European public and private sector committed to work together and share best practices in order to target the Chinese traveller and develop products that meet the real expectations of an increasingly diversified travel market.

ETC and UNWTO studies "The Chinese Outbound Travel Market" and "Understanding China Outbound Tourism: What the Chinese Blogosphere is saying about Europe" are available on <http://www.etc-corporate.org/market-intelligence/reports-and-studies.htm>

#### **Note to editors:**

*The European Travel Commission is an association of National Tourism Organisations (NTOs). It was created in 1948 to promote Europe as a tourism destination to the long-haul markets outside Europe, originally in the USA and later in Canada, Latin America and Asia. It currently has 33 member NTOs, including 9 from outside the European Union. ETC is an independent body which is financed entirely by annual membership contributions and partnership funding.*

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**For further information:** ETC's corporate website [www.etc-corporate.org](http://www.etc-corporate.org) is aimed at industry, government and educational personnel interested in tourism to Europe.

Tourists seeking travel-specific information and ideas are directed to ETC's consumer portal [www.visiteurope.com](http://www.visiteurope.com)