

## ETC Partners with IGLTA and VISITFLANDERS to Advance LGBTQ travel in Europe

### Educational Forum in Brussels includes new research findings on the LGBTQ tourism to Europe, promotes greater understanding of tourism throughout the region

*Brussels, 25 June 2018* – The European Travel Commission (ETC) united with the International Gay & Lesbian Travel Association (IGLTA) and the Flemish tourist board VISITFLANDERS to present the Educational Forum on LGBTQ Tourism at the Hilton Brussels Grand Place on 21 June. The event provided a preview of key findings from The Handbook on LGBTQ Tourism in Europe, scheduled for release next month as a joint research project from ETC and the IGLTA Foundation. Forum speakers also addressed ways to make Europe safer and more inclusive for LGBTQ travelers, shared best practices for reaching the diverse segments of this market, and discussed the future evolution of LGBTQ tourism in Europe.

“We are proud to be a partner of ETC’s first event and publication on the LGBTQ travel market and to engage many of our European members in this important discussion,” said IGLTA President/CEO John Tanzella, who delivered opening remarks at the forum along with VISITFLANDERS CEO & ETC President Peter De Wilde. “While Europe is a global leader for the LGBTQ market segment, not every country is equal in its LGBTQ inclusiveness—and the research clearly showed that inclusive destinations have the best opportunity to attract diverse visitors.”

Handbook author Peter Jordan presented the first look at this soon-to-be-released research, which focuses on perceptions of 35 states within Europe from LGBTQ travelers in five long-haul markets: Russia, China, Japan, Brazil and the United States. An open-minded culture topped the list of reasons for travellers to select a destination and LGBTQ events were the leading choice for their next visit.

“More tolerance, respect and understanding are the basic principles of Europe to become the ultimate inclusive tourism destination worldwide,” said ETC Executive Director Eduardo Santander. “We are very proud to see from the results of the study and the discussions today that Europe is seen as a highly desirable travel destination for the LGBTQ segment. But we know that we should not be complacent as there is still room for improvement. ETC remains committed to this goal, and events like the Educational Forum are a step in the right direction.”

Forum speakers also included Thomas Bachinger, Vienna Tourist Board; Matěj Valencić, Luxury Slovenia; Mateo Asensio, Turisme de Barcelona; Anna Shepherd, ILGA Europe; Patrick Bontinck, [visit.brussels](http://visit.brussels); Kaspars Zalītis, Baltic Pride; and Sean Howell of Hornet.

“We want to have Flanders evolving towards a society in which sexual orientation will never be a question nor issue,” said De Wilde, who also moderated a panel discussion on communicating diversity to the industry and travelers with journalists from DIVA in the UK, blu media group in Germany and Out & About in Denmark. “On the contrary, we want the LGBTQ traveler to be treated with integrity and respect. VISITFLANDERS will continue to break down barriers and will focus on promoting inclusive tourism. We like to use our strongest assets towards these goals like our gastronomy, our Flemish Masters and our cycling culture. All topics that might trigger and inspire LGBTQ travelers from the entire globe to visit Flanders.”

The Handbook on LGBTQ Tourism in Europe is scheduled for release on 12 July and will be available for free download at [etc-corporate.org](http://etc-corporate.org).

Photos of the event are available on request.

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## Note to editors

### About the European Travel Commission

The European Travel Commission (ETC) is the non-profit organisation responsible for the promotion of European tourism in long-haul markets. For 70 years, the ETC has been a state-of-the-art unique association in the public sector, and it is now representing 33 members National Tourism Organisations in Europe. In accordance with its mission to strengthen the sustainable development of Europe as a tourist destination, ETC works in areas of advocacy, best practice, market intelligence sharing, and promotion, with the long-term aspiration of setting up a new unique forum in which public and private tourism stakeholders can cooperate to create benefits and eliminate disadvantages for the travel industry in Europe. For more information: [www.etc-corporate.org](http://www.etc-corporate.org) and follow us on Twitter @ETC\_Corporate and LinkedIn European Travel Commission

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### About IGLTA & the IGLTA Foundation

The International Gay and Lesbian Travel Association (IGLTA) is the world's leading global travel network dedicated to connecting and educating LGBTQ travelers and the businesses that welcome and support them. The mission of IGLTA is to provide information and resources for LGBTQ travelers and expand LGBTQ tourism globally by demonstrating its significant social and economic impact. IGLTA member businesses represent all travel sectors and are located in more than 80 countries. The IGLTA Foundation supports the mission of IGLTA and its membership with a focus on education, research and developing future leaders in LGBTQ tourism. For more information: [iglta.org](http://iglta.org) or [iglta.org/foundation](http://iglta.org/foundation) and follow us on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram @iglta.

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### About VISITFLANDERS

VISITFLANDERS is an internal independent agency of the Flemish government and a part of the policy area 'Foreign Affairs'; it falls under the competence of the Flemish minister for Tourism. VISITFLANDERS invests in the sustainable development and promotion of Flanders and Brussels as a top tourist destination and stimulates the professionalisation of the tourist sector in order to guarantee all visitors a qualitative offer and experience. Visit Flanders Convention Bureau is the official convention bureau promoting the destination for MICE (Meetings, Incentives, Congresses and Events) and assists meeting professionals in finding the right local partners and industry suppliers for their events and congresses.

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