Press Release

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The end of roaming is just the beginning!

MEPs, regions, cities and the tourism industry urge the European Commission to come forward with a European Tourism Strategy

40 MEPs, more than 70 Members of the European Committee of the Regions (CoR) and representatives of Europe’s tourism industry call for a comprehensive strategy supporting the tourism sector in an Open Letter addressed to the President of the European Commission Jean-Claude Juncker.

Tourism is the third biggest industry in the EU and an engine for sustainable growth and jobs - generating 10% of the EU's GDP and providing employment for up to 15% of the EU's population, mostly in millions of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs). For many European regions and cities tourism is crucial for securing their economic and social stability.

The Open Letter underlines that “tourism often regenerates dilapidated areas and less developed regions, particularly rural ones.” Additionally tourism also contributes “to creating a sense of pride in European citizenship and promotes mutual understanding within the EU” with the numerous benefits European citizens enjoy when travelling in the EU, such as removed roaming charges, EU passenger- and cross-border consumer rights, the European healthcare regime, as well as customs free shopping with a single currency in the Eurozone.

However, the sector faces massive challenges like a growing investment gap, burdensome bureaucracy for SMEs, the need to align the sector with the energy and climate targets as well as digitalisation, a growing crisis of missing skills, security and marketing issues related to terrorism, and fierce competition from new non-European markets. These challenges cannot be dealt with at national level alone. Therefore political action at the European level is needed to secure Europe's position as the world's leading tourist destination while continuing creating jobs and sustainable growth.

Ending roaming charges is just the beginning. A consistent multi-annual EU tourism strategy is needed. It's time that the European Union steps up its efforts to support this industry which is crucial for Europe's economic development and a shared European identity.

Istvan Ujhelyi, MEP, Vice-Chair of TRAN Committee, Chairman Tourism Task Force
Cláudia Monteiro de Aguiar, MEP, Chair of the Working Group Tourism of SME Europe
Hanspeter Wagner, CoR Member and rapporteur on tourism
Eduardo Santander Executive Director of the European Travel Commission
Patrick Torrent, President of NECSTouR

Further information:
Study of the European Parliamentary Research Service on Tourism
European Committee of the Regions opinion on Tourism
European Travel Commission: European Tourism 2017 – Trends and Prospects

Contact:
EP: Attila Benedek | Tel. +32 2 284 7649 | attila.benedek@europarl.europa.eu
Ana Filipa Costa | Tel. +32 2 283 8458 | anafilipa.costa@europarl.europa.eu
CoR: Carmen Schmidle | Tel. +32 2 282 2366 | carmen.schmidle@cor.europa.eu