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PRESS RELEASE

BRINGING EUROPE TOGETHER - 60 YEARS OF THE EUROPEAN TRAVEL COMMISSION

Brussels, 28 November 2008. Can you remember when the jumbo jet was a novelty and set to transform travel across the Atlantic ? The European Travel Commission (ETC) can. It held a tourism industry conference on the likely impact of the new aircraft in Amsterdam in 1969.

That all seems a long time ago, but now, in 2008, ETC is celebrating its *diamond* jubilee. The organisation created to promote 'Destination Europe' to international tourism markets was established in 1948, long before anyone had ever heard of the European Community or the European Union (EU). Since then, it has seen its membership grow from 19 national tourism organisations (NTOs) to 39 today. It is a model of European co-operation that goes far beyond the borders of the EU and that draws on a rich reserve of experience and expertise.

A new brochure published today - *60 years of joint action: 1948-2008* - tells ETC's story and celebrates its achievements in helping to ensure that Europe maintains its rightful place as the world's number one tourism destination.

The first seeds of collaboration by Europe's NTOs were planted as long ago as the 1920s, but it was only after the Second World War and against the backdrop of the Marshall Plan that these efforts began to take a more lasting shape. Visitors from the United States were seen as central to efforts to rebuild Europe's tourism industry, and ETC wasted no time in running its first American promotional campaign in late 1949 - at a time when transport capacity across the Atlantic was provided almost entirely by shipping lines.

The American market remained at the heart of ETC's activities for several years, and is still hugely important today. The organisation's representatives there - the 'US Operations Group' - soon achieved a high profile in political circles, being invited to meet President Eisenhower in 1954 and President Kennedy in 1960 at the White House. The group continues to occupy a leading position in both ETC and the American tourism industry, running a wide range of marketing programmes and communications activities.

ETC has evolved considerably since those early days. Its US Operations Group has since been joined by Operations Groups in Canada, Japan and Latin America. The organisation's Market Intelligence Group comprising NTOs' market research directors goes from strength to strength, publishing acclaimed market studies and best-practice handbooks with the support of major industry partners such as the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO). Likewise its Marketing and Technology Network consisting of NTOs' online marketing experts has played a leading role in equipping ETC for the 21st century with its contribution to the development of the visiteurope.com internet portal.

As it nears the end of its jubilee year, ETC can look back on its record with pride. In the words of its President, Dr Arthur Oberascher, "The idea at the core of the European Travel Commission is that 'Destination Europe' can be more effective as a whole - that we can achieve more, be more successful together than we can on our own". He continues, "Our research shows us that our culture is what potential guests overseas think is unique about Europe. 'Europe the origin' - the origin of so many things, past and present, that have shaped our world."

Rob Franklin, ETC's Executive Director in Brussels, doesn't underestimate the challenge that the current global economic climate represents for Europe's tourism industry. "These are very difficult times for the industry and its customers," he says, "and many people will ask themselves whether they can afford to travel. However, we will be drawing on all the knowledge and skills gained over the last 60 years to remind potential travellers across the world that Europe still offers tourists excellent value for money and is open for business as usual."

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Note to editors:

A copy of the brochure "**60 years of joint action: 1948-2008**" can be downloaded from the ETC corporate website on: <http://www.etc-corporate.org>

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 39 member NTOs, including 12 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, see ETC's corporate website: www.etc-corporate.org

ETC's corporate website 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-oriented site (www.visiteurope.com).