



**COUNCIL OF
THE EUROPEAN UNION**

Brussels, 16 September 2011

14353/11

**COMPET 403
IND 106
TOUR 14**

INFORMATION NOTE

From: Presidency
To: Delegations
Subject: COUNCIL “COMPETITIVENESS” (Internal Market, Industry and Research)
on 29-30 September 2011
European Tourism Forum and the informal ministerial meeting in Cracow
(5-7 October 2011)
- Information from the Presidency
(Other business item)

Delegations will find in annex an information note from the Presidency on the above-mentioned subject.

European Tourism Forum and the Informal Ministerial Meeting in Kraków (5-7 October)

The Polish Presidency, Ministry of Sport and Tourism, in cooperation with the European Commission and the Municipality of Cracow, will be organising the European Tourism Forum as well as an Informal Meeting of Tourism Ministers on the 5th -7th October 2011.

European Tourism Forum 5-7 October 2011

The main Forum theme will be “*Stimulating Competitiveness in European Tourism Sector*”, which represents one of the four axes of the Commission Communication “Europe, the world’s No 1 tourist destination – a new political framework for tourism in Europe”, adopted on 30th of June 2010. Strengthening the competitiveness of the tourism industry represents a daunting task which appears high on the agenda of the Polish presidency as well as of all the EU Member States. In order to be able to react immediately and manage critical tourism situations and challenges, the European Union and its Member States need a strong, flexible and innovative tourism sector. Therefore, the European Tourism Forum 2011 will be dedicated to two topics:

Panel I “Consolidating the socio-economic knowledge base for Tourism”

A more competitive tourism sector would benefit from an improved socioeconomic knowledge base at European level. It is necessary to encourage networking between research institutes, universities and other research-oriented institutions, in close cooperation with regional and national authorities and tourism offices, as well as with statistical institutes and other operators. The coordination and development of research in the field of tourism on a European scale are essential for a more integrated approach and greater synergy. Better cooperation with European and international organisations, such as the OECD and UNWTO, is also appropriate.

Panel II “Developing innovation and ICT in tourism”

Innovation and new information technologies have become determining factors for the competitiveness of the tourism industry and for strengthening exchanges with other sectors linked to it. Their use by public and private tourism operators, particularly SMEs, should be strengthened through awareness-raising and partnership initiatives as well as the appropriate use of various national and European programs. There is also a need to accelerate the integration of information society tools and services into all tourism activities, particularly those carried out by SMEs, and to facilitate access for the various tourism operators to the relevant financial instruments.

The Polish Presidency hopes that the European Tourism Forum will serve as a fruitful discussion platform targeting especially exchanges of views and of best practices and experiences on amongst others:

- Latest available tools to improve the socio-economic knowledge base for European tourism;
- Ways and means to strengthen cooperation with international and European organisations;
- Establishing a Virtual European Tourism Observatory as a central source of information for policy makers, tourism stakeholders, researchers and other interested parties.
- Innovation and ICT in the tourism industry;
- Importance of innovation and information technologies in strengthening tourism competitiveness;
- Needs of the tourism industry in relation to information technology and innovation;
- Ways and means how information technologies could assist European stakeholders in improving their access to data.

The European Tourism Forum 2011 will be directly followed by an:

Informal Meeting of Tourism Ministers in Cracow on 6th October 2011

The Polish Presidency considers, in line with the “Madrid Declaration” that “reinforcing Europe’s image and visibility in the main third countries, through joint actions which may generate added value to already existing national promotional activities” is of utmost importance at the present stage in the implementation of the Communication. Therefore, the theme to be proposed for discussion at this meeting will be: *“Promotion of Europe in third countries: strengthening transnational cooperation between the European Commission, Member States (and Candidate Countries) and their National Tourism Organisations, with the cooperation of the European Travel Commission”*.

The Polish Presidency expects the discussions to identify the Member States’ needs concerning tourist promotion as well as possible directions for strengthening transnational cooperation in this field between the European Commission, Member States (and Candidate Countries) and their National Tourism Organisations, with the cooperation of the European Travel Commission