



**EOS CODE
Launching Conference**

**Monday, 23 January 2012
Hotel Grande Bretagne (Golden Room), Athens**

**George Telonis
President of HATTA**

Welcome Address

Dear Ministers

Dear President of ECTAA, Ms Irina Gueorguieva

Dear Presidents and Representatives of Entities

Dear Representative of the European Commission, Ms. Iuliana Aluas

Dear Members of the Parliament

Dear Representative of the European TRAVELIFE initiative, Mr. Naut Kusters

Dear Partners

Dear Guests

On behalf of the Board of Directors of HATTA, I thank you all very much for coming to the official launching of “EOS CODE”, the European Code of Practice on Environment Oriented Sustainability.

Tourism is facing many **challenges** these days. Many things have **changed** rapidly in the last decades (most prominent among them the rise of the Internet), which have deeply affected the way of operating for tour operators and travel agencies alike. The travel enterprises are bound to find new ways to develop their businesses and make them grow. The first one is, without a doubt, the constant enhancement of the **quality** of the services offered to their clients. This element can, to an extended degree, make them indispensable in their clients’ eyes. **They are not simple travel enterprises anymore, but become travel advisers.** They are highly specialized, providing a full range of services with a deep knowledge of their subject.

A travel enterprise has the possibility to **take into consideration the consumer's preferences** and propose destinations, packages and ideas for holidays adapted to the personal wishes of this particular consumer. In its capacity as travel adviser, it can provide specialized travel information in a responsible and qualitative way.

This is a time of rearrangements. Tour operators and travel agencies need to modernize their way of operating and provide high quality services and specialized products in a responsible and professional manner. Their new role as travel advisers allows them to offer a wide range of choices and new programmes, formed in a flexible way.

We should have no fear of the Internet. We should only put into use the vast possibilities it has to offer.

The economic crisis, in Europe and in the rest of the world, has contributed significantly to make things difficult for the tourism enterprises of every kind, as well as for the consumers. But other challenges already existed before...

Among other things, the multiple threats that the **environment** is facing have begun to shift the priorities of tourists with regard to their holidays. New ways of travelling are in demand, with less impact on the environment. New ways of interacting with the destinations are being explored, which will leave as little imprint as possible on the visited places and preserve the local nature, culture and societies for the future.

The service providers, the destinations and the consumers become **links in one common chain**, which, together with the tour operators and travel agencies, are indispensable for achieving **sustainability** in tourism.

The world is changing fast and those who are willing to adapt have better chances not only to survive, but also to overcome the difficulties and be more competitive, thus securing a better future for themselves and for the object of their business.

Competitiveness through **quality** and **sustainability** are the three axes that can decide for success for a tour operator or a travel agency in today's highly demanding tourism market.

We, as travel Associations, have the aim, as well as the duty, to always assist our members in their professional efforts, but also to come up with new ideas that will propel them towards their goals.

When the relative Call for Proposals was published, requesting Projects that would provide added value by improving the sustainability and competitiveness performance of European Tourism, we, at HATTA, were in the best position to know that, at least in Greece, the notion of sustainability was not widely spread. And it certainly was not one of the first priorities among the small and micro tour operators and travel agencies, who were the main target groups of the Call. The same was certainly also true in most other European countries.

Knowing the major impact that **sustainability** has in our days on the **quality** of services and the **competitiveness** of our members, and while foreseeing the possible difficulties, we came in contact with Partners from countries that consider tourism as an important factor of their economies, but also of the every day life of their population. We found out that they shared similar thoughts and concerns, so we proposed to them to try and change the situation in our countries, by submitting a Proposal for a simple, strictly voluntary and friendly tool, the “EOS CODE”. Its goal would be to smooth out the first encounter of small and micro tour operators and travel agencies with sustainability and facilitate its integration in their operations and work.

This Code of Practice could only be voluntary, because the elements contained in it can only be regulated by the market itself and its needs, and not by any kind of legislation.

HATTA’s proposition was gladly accepted and all together we built a strong team of research Partners and travel Associations, who worked enthusiastically to materialize this idea.

The Code of Practice that we present to you today is the product of this collaboration.

We know the problems, but we also know that we want our members to be able to face up to them. We want to give them the opportunity to get to know sustainability and its advantages for the destinations and for their enterprises. And we want to strengthen tourism in general, which can contribute immensely to the development of our respective countries.

On behalf of all the Partners I give you “EOS CODE”, wishing it -as well as this Conference- plenty of success.

I thank you all!