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EOS CODE

Code of Practice on Environment Oriented Sustainability

Launching Conference

Monday, 23 January 2012 - 09:00 a.m.

Hotel Grande Bretagne (Golden Room)

Welcome address
Irena Gueorguieva
President of ECTAA

Dear Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am very pleased to be here today for the launching conference of the EOS code and to represent on this occasion both ECTAA, the European association of tour operators, and ABTTA, the Association of Bulgarian Tour Operators and Travel Agents, since both of them have been partners in the EOS project.

In the current economic downturn, tourism has proved to be a more resilient sector compared to other economic sectors.

Europe is still the world's n.1 tourist destination: according to the latest UNWTO data, in 2011 Europe recorded 503 million tourist arrivals, with Central and Eastern Europe as well as Southern Mediterranean destinations experiencing the highest growth figures, with an increase of 8% each.

However, Europe has to face important challenges to improve its competitiveness in an increasingly competitive market:

- Consumers are increasingly aware of the environmental impact of their holidays and demand for more sustainable products and eco-innovation;
- With value for money that still remains a strong trend, consumers also look for authentic experiences and tailor made solutions;
- There is an increasing demand for niche markets, such as adventure tourism, gastronomic tours, wellness tourism and tailor-made solutions;

In this changing and complex environment, the EOS project represents a very good example of collaboration between National Associations on how to help our enterprises increase their competitiveness, respond to the changing needs of customers and have a strategic long term vision of their business.

The 5 partner associations presented here today have joined forces to raise awareness on the importance of sustainability for tourism businesses and its strong bond with competitiveness. The idea of elaborating a simple and voluntary code of practice came from the need to assess the existing level of uptake of sustainability principles by tourism enterprises in their countries and to find an easy user-friendly tool that would enable tourism companies to improve their commitment to sustainability principles and to better communicate their sustainable activities to customers.

The results are very promising and the collaboration that has been put in place with TRAVELIFE is indeed a good step in the right direction.

As President of ECTAA I can only praise and encourage these initiatives in which national associations and experts come together and share their expertise and knowledge, for the benefit of the European tourism industry.

I would like to take this opportunity to raise awareness about another initiative that the industry has recently undertaken to improve the competitiveness of our tourism companies: I'm referring to P.ICT.URISM, a 30 months project financed by the European Commission, that aims at facilitating the aggregation and integration of the offer of tourism services in destination countries with agents, tour operators and distributors in generating countries through the creation of common business processes and common electronic languages.

In other words, the main objective is to facilitate the distribution and marketing of local tourism SMEs across the distribution chain; this would give travel agencies and tour operators the possibility to access to new travel content and to differentiate and complement their offering with new products and services at destinations.

The project will be tested with 300 enterprises from all over Europe and interested companies will be able to participate, follow and contribute to the initiative.

I would like to conclude my introductory remarks by wishing all participants of this Conference very fruitful exchange of views and thanking HATTA, the leader organisation, for the excellent coordination of this project.