Tourism sector: Community measures affecting tourism in 1992 and 1993. Report

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By adopting the report the Committee has called on the Commission to set up a European Tourism Agency, which, in cooperation with the European Environment Agency, could help to establish the priorities for a Community policy on environmentally responsible tourism, assess the capacity of certain saturated coastal areas or of over-exploited resources such as water etc., and at the same time monitor compliance with the required quality standards. The rapporteur expressed her astonishment that the Maastricht Treaty almost totally ignores tourism despite its predominant role within the Union and said : "Tourism is a key factor in the European economy and European competitiveness. At the time Europe is racked by unemployment, tourism creates nine million jobs, i.e. 6% of direct EU employment, not to mention the jobs indirectly related to tourism". The rapporteur said : "What needs to be done is to look to the future so that we can draw up a new Community policy on the subject. This is something we can only do by trying to influence the Council and the Commission regarding the substance of the forthcoming Commission Green Paper on tourism". The rapporteur added: "In this new resolution we are basically calling for once again the next revision of the Treaty in 1996 to include a specific section on tourism with a view, once and for all, to establishing such an important EU activity on a firm and consistent foundation. What Parliament is calling for, will constitute the "backbone" of the forthcoming Green Paper. On the other hand, the Committee wants a European Tourism Policy that strives for quality levels and well being, both for tourists and for the people who lives in tourist areas. But this must be achieved through the setting of ambitious social, employment, economic and environmental objectives. Therefore, a tourism quality label should be introduced for tourist centres, travel agencies, hotel and accommodation businesses and also local authorities, provided that they practise environmentally-sound tourism. The Committee, considering that tourists have specific rights AND obligations, is in favour of a European Tourists' Charter, to draw up by the Committee itself, which should form part of all information an distribution campaigns undertaken by agencies, wholesalers and operators. The report also calls for recommendations in the Commissions's Green Paper: - excessive tourism provision should be avoided, and it should even be recommended that, in certain mountain and coastal areas, provision should be reduced; - a basis should be established for regulating the growth in water-based tourism which, because of a lack of regulation, is doing increasing damage to the environment and sea bed; - the introduction of a European Tourist label, similar to the 'eco label' or the 'Grune Koffer', which would be a distinguishing sign and serve as guidance to tourists regarding tourist centres, travel agencies and hotels which developed and promoted tourism which was compatible with the natural and social environment and with natural resources; - the principle of municipal environment auditing should be based on: waste, consumption of water, energy and resources, water pollution, pollution caused by waste water, recycling and re-use, traffic, noise and air pollution, land use, zoning and planning, protection of sensitive areas, forests, soils, agriculture etc. Finally, the report calls for specific measures and initiatives devoted to disabled tourists, for arbitration bodies to settle disputes on the deplorable practice of overbooking and for specific measures to promote youth tourism. Some amendments carried: Mr. Lyndon HARRISON (UK, PES) saw his amendment carried on calling upon the Commission to promote policies to help SMEs in the tourism sector. Mrs. Hedwig KEPPELHOFF-WIECHERT and Mr. Georg JARZEMBOWSKI (both D, EPP) tabled a successful amendment on the significance of ruraltourism for the economic development of rural areas and for safeguarding the basis of the livelihood of many farming families. And Mrs. Nel VAN DIJK and Mr. Alexander LANGER (NL and I, GREEN) got the full support of the Committee for the amendment taking the view that assistance should be provided as matter of urgency for a public campaign to combat sex tourism to third countries. An amendment tabled by Mrs. Anne Caroline McINTOSH (UK, EPP), calling on the Commission and the Council to promote Europe as a global destination for tourist in cooperation with America, the Far East and Africa, was also adopted.