Tourism sector: the role of the Union. Green Paper

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OBJECTIVE: to define the role of the Union in the tourism sector and inaugurate a debate with all parties concerned on the future development of this policy at Community level. CONTENT: the Commission's Green Paper opens a debate on three specific aspects of tourism policy at Community level: . description of current Community projects and instruments in the tourism sector: in particular, a description of the first Community action plan for tourism (1993-1995) and of other indirect Community measures which affect tourism (projects to do with the environment, culture, training, enterprise policy, trans-European networks and the Structural Funds); . examination of the added value which a policy implemented at Community level would have: according to the Green Paper, tourism helps to strengthen economic and social cohesion in the Community and helps enormously in promoting a European identity, especially through the exchanges which it encourages. Developing a European tourism policy would promote sustainable and balanced economic development in the Community and would help manage structural and technological changes and develop the SME tourist sector. Taking account of these facts and of the guidelines issued by the European Parliament, the ESC and the Committee of the Regions in this context, the Commission has identified three priority lines of approach for action at Community level: *support for improvements in the quality of tourism by taking account of the demand for tourism; *diversification of tourist activities and products with a view to improving competitiveness in this sector; *integration of the concept of sustainable, balanced development (taking account of the cultural and environmental dimensions of tourism); . development prospects: the Green Paper sets out four major options on which the parties involved need to decide by 30 June 1995: *to reduce or eliminate specific Community projects; *to maintain the current framework and level of intervention (for example through action plans such as the 1993 tourism plan which, while complying fully with the principle of subsidiarity, allows common projects and strategies to be developed); *to strengthen Community action on the basis of the TEU: the Community could give greater support to research into growth in this sector and develop the cultural and natural heritage of Europe. The idea would be to develop projects which take greater account of the "tourism" variable within each Community policy. From this point of view, Community action would respond to sectoral or specific needs but would be less visible as such; *to create a Community tourism policy: the Community would act as an interface between the various interested parties in the sector in the Union and would coordinate action by Member States in this sector (with the Commission acting as the kingpin). It would encourage the harmonization of national policies and would implement action to complement action taken by the Member States. By developing separately, this Community policy could act as a demonstration model, taking account both of the interests of tourism and the integration of tourism into a pattern of sustainable development.