Tourism sector: Community measures (dec. 92 /421/EEC). Report 1995-1996

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OBJECTIVE: the report seeks to assess the measures implemented in the framework of Community measures affecting tourism (Decision 92/421/EEC) undertaken in 1995/96 and describes the actions undertaken by the Community in this field, either: - directly through the action plan, or - indirectly through other Community policies (regional, environment, transport, consumer, education, training, culture, etc.). SUBSTANCE: The report shows that the European Union is the main originating area as well as the main destination of international tourist flows and that tourism activities account for 6% of total employment in Europe. The measures taken in 1995/96 affected various types of public and economic activity (European citizens, public authorities, enterprises and relations with third countries) and at Community level are seen at two levels: 1) in the implementation of the action plan itself: in 1995/96 particular attention was paid to: - improving knowledge about European tourism, - promoting transnational cooperation to stimulate the quality of tourist services, - strengthening cooperation and consultation with public and private bodies and other organizations concerned, - improving internal coordination within the Commission; 2) in the context of other Community programmes and actions, activities have sought mainly to: - facilitate citizens' mobility and access to tourism, as well as improve protection of tourists as consumers, - improve the economic and social environment for the development of tourist activities, - bring about a sound relationship between tourist activities and natural, man-made and cultural resources, in the interest of balanced and sustainable tourism development. The report also refers to the many problems which have arisen in the management of tourism actions (see COS0420 - Court of Auditors report on tourist policy) and which have tarnished the image of Community action in this sector. The Commission indicates that it is carrying out a full review of the shortcomings and that it will continue to raise recovery orders and pursue irregularities. It also points out that in the second half of the implementation period worthwhile projects have been launched. On an institutional level, the organization of a European Tourism Forum in December 1995 gave an opportunity to assess the needs and scope of tourism actions. In the last part of its report the Commission regrets the lack of a specific legal basis on tourism in the Treaty, confirmed by the outcome of the IGC. It indicates that it will improve the coordination and consultation of the Member States and organizations concerned in order to increase the potential of this policy in the Union. Lastly, it calls for the speedy adoption of its proposal on the multiannual programme to assist European tourism (Philoxenia, 1997-2000) which is currently under discussion in the Council (CNS96127).