Enhancing tourism's potential for employment: recommendations of the High Level Group

1999/2115(COS) - 28/04/1999 - Non-legislative basic document

PURPOSE : to propose a strategy aiming to increase tourism's potential for employment. CONTENT : Activities linked to tourism currently represent a significant share of employment in Europe (9 million jobs). With a limited rate of increase of 1 to 1.5%, employment should rise from 2.2 to 3.3 million additional jobs in Europe by 2010 (the tourism industry itself represents only 5.5% to 6% of employment and 30% of external trade in services). In 1998, a High Level Group was set up and it confirmed, in a report published at the end of 1998, this rising trend of employment in the European tourism industry and stressing the necessity for the Union to coordinate better the measures taken at different levels in order to fully exploit the potential of tourism in terms of creating new jobs and jobs of which are of a better quality. For the High Level Group, this meant an integrated and multi-sectorial approach to planning, development and implementation of tourism activities, by ensuring the protection and the optimal use of the natural and social environment in the host regions. This communication responds precisely to the links between tourism and employment and examines the terms and conditions permitting to optimize the contribution of tourism to employment and to favour the implementation of positive measures aiming to ensure the exploitation of this potential. From this analysis, it emerged that the coordinated approach, advocated by the High Level Group, should be reinforced at Community level in line with the policies of the Union and the Member States. The strategy should address three main problem areas, namely : 1) the need for better knowledge, know-how and expertise in tourism; 2) improving information on, and access to targeted Copmmunity initiatives and programmes of interest to tourism; and 3) greater exchange of information on development initiatives and on legislative measures affecting tourism, taken by public authorities in the Member States. This strategy implies the implementation of a multi-annual framework programme on tourism comprising: - the pooling and dissemination of qualitative and quantitative information, including best practice, - the development of user-friendly information tools on EU programmes and initiatives of interest to tourism; and - the development of a structured platform of consultation and cooperation with public authorities, the tourism industry and other interested parties. This in turn implies policy guidelines proposed by the Commission and the Member States and the creation of the European Consultative Committee on Tourism comprising top managers from the European tourism sector. The communication also identifies ways of strengthening the contribution of tourism to the European employment strategy. In fact, this sector is promising both in terms of the net creation of jobs and its structure (dynamic because of the youthfulness of the workers, high rate of female workers, well-developed continuing training). The Commission, furthermore, stresses the importance ofstrengthening the synergies in order to better exploit the possibilities offered by the Union thanks to the Structural Funds and certain measures allowing the improvement of competitiveness of European tourism thanks to the EurONet network which operates like an information office for all the tourism sector or the exchange of information on best practice existing in the field. Other initiatives are also foreseen in particular on the European tax front or with regard to training (recognition of diplomas, in particular) or the improvement of the tourism infrastructure with a concern for sustainable development. Lastly, it is planned to introduce a strategy to coordinate measures at European level and in the Member States which will permit the improved determination of political priorities and ensure greater cost-effectiveness in the Community's contribution to improving the competitiveness of European tourism. The identification and the elimination of barriers to the development of the tourism sector would also be facilitated. In order to achieve this, the Commission intends to concentrate on information, cooperation and partnership. Practical proposals will be discussed at the European Tourism Summit which is planned for the year 2000.