

***KEY POINTS discussed during the Forum on
«Economic Impacts of the Cruise Industry on Coastal, Insular and River
Destinations»***

held in

Ancient Olympia, Greece

Saturday, May 23rd, 2015

The Forum aimed to be a dialogue between local SMEs/stakeholders and the cruise industry on the framework of the European Maritime Day

Key issues discussed at the Forum:

- Maritime Tourism needs infrastructure, planification, accessibility and requires dialogue with local public and private stakeholders;
- Maritime Tourism has positive benefits for local economy as a whole: commerce, taxi drivers, local shops...
- Maritime Tourism brings unique experiences to tourists;
- The Chambers of Commerce may play a crucial role in this field together with local authorities and cruise industry
- Coastal and Maritime Tourism is one of the key sectors of the blue growth Agenda and an Instrument to achieve growth for European Economy.
- Coastal and Maritime Tourism is the largest sub-sector of tourism in Europe with 3.2 million people employee and 183 billion euros generated and it's a highly competitive sector
- Blue growth is a horizontal policy for the EU that helps us to understand the ties between land and sea, an integrated territorial growth. It has impacts on the economy as a whole, and on the employment and the environment.
- The major challenges for coastal and maritime tourism are: protection of the marine environment; seasonality; connectivity, accessibility of islands; gaps of official data; lack of innovation; diversification of the tourism offer; appropriate skill developments; fragmentation among stakeholders.
- Key actions for the EU, Member States, regions and stakeholders in this field: Increase the qualification for professionals; promote ecotourism, sustainable tourism products, waste prevention; diversification of tourism; promote innovative marina development.
- Member states, regions and private stakeholders are invited to strengthen cooperation and dialogue at EU macro-regional, sea-basin, national and local level.

- A Pan-European Dialogue has to involve the whole tourism value chain in benefits and deliveries; it should contribute to guaranteeing the well being of coastal and insular population, address common issue and contribute to social and economic coastal development;
- Access to destination and environmental compliance (port reception facilities) requires adequate infrastructure .
- The challenge is to improve the interaction of the destination with the cruise lines in order to assure a WIN-WIN situation
- Cruise industry has steadily grown in the last decade in Europe.
- It is one of the most sustainable economic activities.
- The image does matter (size and aspect of the port)
- The word "visit" can be replaced with the term "experience" and have a more global approach.
- A successful program in destination has to be built. This means that ports have to organize themselves depending on the season and that the relation between enterprises around the port area has to be organized to guarantee mobility to the city and transport infrastructure from/to the port. A higher degree of cooperation between enterprises around the port area will be necessary.
- The industry has to be consulted on a regular basis if there are legislative changes, and should be involved in the whole process.
- Accessibility has an invisible element: the visa issue. This is twofold: on one hand it is key to adopt the proposed EU visa code reform to facilitate crew and passenger visas, in particular vis a vis emerging source markets (China, Russia, India). On the other hand, .there is a need of harmonized implementation of current Schengen visa rules in order to facilitate cruise ships operations (e. g. crew movement)
- The macro-regional strategies, such as the Danube Region and the Adriatic-Ionian Strategy help to strengthen cooperation to address common challenges as connecting core networks elements with ports and routes.
- The best for the small islands is: small yachts, small organized groups and big respect for the islands, instead of big cruises or mega yachts.
- It is important to involve stakeholders to diversify the economic impact of the cruise tourism.
- It is necessary to create a proposal on the port area to implement the changes to improve quality.
- It is necessary to pursue an integrated policie at local and extraterritorial level.
- It is good for all to achieve a sense of mutual understanding and cooperation among cruises and local businesses. This generates a win-win situation.
- It is recommendable to have trained, qualified guides in destination to make sure that the visitor has enjoyable time.
- The population expects from cruises new jobs and incomes, economic growth and sustainability.
- Niche destinations reachable by adequate infrastructure will allow to know better local culture and de-congest marquee destinations.

- Different situations demand different planifications.
- It is necessary to monitor the strategy to everyone involved in the policy making.

FINAL MESSAGE

In order to unlock the potential of cruise tourism it is key to strengthen COOPERATION between actors at local level (ports; municipalities; urban planners; Chambers of Commerce) and cruise lines in order to get an infrastructure that is able to provide the BEST EXPERIENCE ever, safe, reliable and accessible and contribute to growth and jobs.