



European Tourism Forum 2010

Strengthening Europe's Role as the Leading Tourism Destination

Malta, Mellieha, 18-19 November 2010

Kerstin HOWALD, EFFAT Tourism Sector Secretary

on behalf of ETLC (European Trade Union Liaison Committee on Tourism)

Dear Ministers,
Dear Commissioner and Representatives of the European Institutions,
Dear Ladies and Gentlemen,
Dear Colleagues,

I am the Tourism Sector Secretary of EFFAT, the European Federation of Trade Unions in Agriculture, Food and Tourism, and I speak here on behalf of the ETLC, the European Trade Union Liaison Committee on Tourism, which is the cooperation platform of all European trade unions representing workers in the various tourism sectors, e.g. hotels, restaurants, transport, travel agencies, tour operators, leisure parks, etc.

We, the European tourism trade unions, very much welcome the increased / accelerated activities on tourism in Europe, which is certainly also due to the fact that we now have an article on tourism in the Lisbon Treaty.

One critical remark:

We noticed that social aspects, such as employment, workers, working conditions, social dialogue, etc. are playing a less and less prominent role in EU documents and activities, and this although we all know that social aspects are crucial for the sustainability, the competitiveness and the high quality of tourism. The TSG report had clearly underlined this.

Just to give you one example:

In the ETLC we carried out a survey in summer 2010, a pilot study on the working conditions of those who work for the tour operators in the destinations, i.e. the workers who welcome the tourists, guide them in the destination and entertain them. The results of this pilot study showed very appalling working conditions: long working hours, low salaries, insufficient social security coverage, etc., in short: precarious working conditions unacceptable in the 21st century.

We brought the results of the pilot study to the knowledge of the Commission.

We are discussing the results with the managements of the transnational tour operators.

And we would also like to discuss the results with the concerned European associations.



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As I said:

We welcome the Commission's Communication and the draft implementation plan. I will highlight the items we are particularly in favour of, and to which we are ready to contribute and to cooperate:

1. Observatory on tourism

Yes, we are in favour of the setting up of an observatory, we have been asking for it for many years. Such an observatory should cover also social aspects and employment. In many countries the social partners have set up observatories on tourism and we could look into existing social partner structures and initiatives.

2. Improving professional skills

Yes, we need the improvement of the professional skills in our sector. But we do not have to reinvent the wheel: at many levels, in many countries the social partners are cooperating on vocational and continuous training. We know, and Anna Torres just mentioned it, EFFAT and HOTREC developed in the framework of the European sectoral social dialogue for the hotel and restaurant sector, a Qualification and Skills Passport for the European hospitality sector. We now want to implement, to test it in a number of Member States. For this we need the support of the Commission, and we will come back to you on this in the near future.

Furthermore, we would like to extend the good cooperation in the sectoral social dialogue, which also exists in transport and at national levels, to the whole tourism sector.

3. Extension of the touristic season

Yes, we have been asking for this for a long time. In this context, we would like to stress the important role of social tourism. We very much hope that Calypso will come up with some concrete actions soon, and that it will not stop at the end of 2011. EFFAT and BITS are cooperating on employment in social tourism.

4. Promotion of sustainable, responsible and quality tourism

Indicators for the sustainable development of destinations – yes. Awareness campaigns for consumers – yes. But particularly if it comes to labels or a charter for tourism, it is crucial that we as trade unions are involved, and social aspects such as employment, working conditions, social security, etc. are taken into account.

As you will recall, ETLC had launched its European Trade Union Charter on Tourism at the ETF 2009 in Brussels. This charter summarises the main challenges for tourism from a trade union point of view and what has to be done, and we are happy to into the work on a charter on its basis.

By the way: besides 7 or 8 European languages the ETLC Charter also is available in Japanese. The Japanese tourism trade unions deemed it such a useful document that they translated it into Japanese and use it in their work.



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Allow me to finish my intervention with some more basic reflections:

What is the basis for tourism?

- people need TIME to go on holidays
- people need MONEY to go on holidays

In other words:

In order to be able to participate in tourism, people need:

- limitation of working time
- paid annual leave
- decent income

This is what trade unions have been fighting for for more than 100 years, and are still fighting for. We have to keep in mind that our European social model, our social 'acquis' are the major precondition for tourism as it exists today. It is not by chance that Europe is the major tourism destination in the world, and the major source market. We see it confirmed in the emerging countries, and in the BRIC countries: with improving social situation and rising living standards people travel.

My conclusion:

Any attempt to cut back social achievements is counter-productive to tourism. All actors in tourism should have an interest to pursue high social standards and purchasing power, in Europe and worldwide.

As Bryan Cassidy said: Why does everything always have to become cheaper? The same goes with work: Why does the workforce always have to become cheaper and more flexible?

We are very much looking forward to pursue the common goal – social progress – with all of you.

Thank you very much.



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