

Regions Boosting the European Tourism's Digitalisation and Safety!

At the occasion of the World Tourism Day 2017, 8 European Regions launched a partnership to foster investment on Digitalisation and Safety for Tourism under the Platform for Industrial Modernisation!

The Conference "EU Financing for Innovation in Tourism" gathered about 120 regional representatives, destination managers and tourism-related stakeholders at the European Committee of the Regions (CoR) and welcomed the setup of this new interregional cooperation, which is also supported by NECSTouR, the Network of European Regions for Competitive and Sustainable Tourism.

Digitalisation and Safety. Europe is the top world destination and tourism is the third biggest industry in the EU. For many European regions and cities tourism is crucial for securing their economic and social stability while *Digitalisation* and *Safety* are the global megatrends in tourism business.

Joining the regions' forces, Andalusia and Lapland (leading Regions) together with Slovenia (co-leading Region), Castilla y Leon, Catalonia, Lazio, Tuscany and Valencia decided it is time to face common challenges together in the context of smart specialisation strategies. Thus, they launched this initiative to facilitate public-private investments to finance projects, which will boost the innovation of the tourism industry.

"**NECSTouR** has decided to host and support this platform – stated Mr **Patrick Torrent**, NECSTouR President, Region of Catalonia - as result of an exercise of analysis and good practice exchange on how tourism is financed by the means of the EU funds, initiated already in 2013."

The European Commission. "We welcome this bottom up initiative on Tourism, aimed to facilitate the process from interregional cooperation up to the development of concrete investment projects" declared **Mark Nicklas** Head of Unit on Innovation Policy and Investment for Growth at DG GROW.

The leading Regions. "Through this initiative we want to be at the forefront of tourism innovation" declared Mrs **Susana Ibáñez**, General Secretary for Tourism of Andalusia. "The cooperation among us will be the key of our success - continued Mrs **Eija Raasakka**, on behalf of Lapland.

The CoR President, Mr **Karl-Heinz Lambertz** (BE/PES), referred to the #CohesionAlliance that will be launched on 9 October and said, "Tourism is the economic lifeline of many EU regions and cities. By cooperating across borders and driving innovative thinking, this initiative will help Europe's tourism industry thrive in every region. Once again this demonstrates the added value of EU cohesion policy which must continue to part of the future of Europe."

High-level Endorsement. The event counted also with the presence of Mr **Mircea - Titus Dobre**, Minister of Tourism of the Romanian Government; Mr **István Ujhelyi**, Vice-chair of the Tourism Task Force at the TRAN Committee of the European Parliament; Mrs **Ana-Claudia Țapardel**, Co-Chair of the Intergroup Tourism and Cultural Heritage; and Mr **Ossi Martikainen** (FI/ALDE), CoR Member.

DG GROW Commissioner, Mrs **Elżbieta Bieńkowska** welcomed the new platform during her speech at the high-level Conference on Tourism, organised this afternoon by the President of the European Parliament at the Hemicycle.

A description of the initiative is available here: www.s3platform.jrc.ec.europa.eu/tourism