

NECSTouR EXTRAORDINARY GENERAL ASSEMBLY MEETING 2017

26th of September 2017 from 17.30 until 19.00h
Brussels Delegation of the Government of Catalonia to the EU

MINUTES

17.30 – 19.00 NECSTOUR EXTRAORDINARY GENERAL ASSEMBLY MEETING 2017

The NECSTouR Presidency, the Region of Catalonia, being represented by Mr. Patrick Torrent, Executive Director of the Catalan Tourism Board - hereinafter referred to as "The President" - welcomed NECSTouR Members participating physically and virtually to the NECSTouR Extraordinary General Assembly Meeting 2017 - hereinafter referred to as "Extraordinary AGM 2017"- being held at the Brussels Delegation of the Government of Catalonia to the EU.

REASONS FOR CALLING THE NECSTOUR EXTRAORDINARY GENERAL ASSEMBLY MEETING 2017

The President explained the reasons and process for calling the NECSTouR Extraordinary AGM 2017. The President mentioned the two key moments in 2017 where it was proposed and approved the organization and content of this Extraordinary AGM 2017:

- The NECSTouR General Assembly of 30th March 2017 in Seville, which approved the decision of organizing a NECSTouR Extraordinary Assembly Meeting by the end of 2017 in order to revise the status to better reflect the membership profile. It was approved unanimously to organize the meeting partly virtual.
- The NECSTouR Executive Committee of 20th June 2017 in Brussels, which approved the reasons why undertaking this Extraordinary Assembly Meeting in 2017 was purely related to membership issues, especially regarding the i) the raise of the membership fee and ii) the interruption of the process for building an ETIS Committee in NECSTouR

APPROVAL OF THE NECSTOUR EXTRAORDINARY AGM 2017 PROGRAMME

The President introduced the Programme of the NECSTouR Extraordinary AGM 2017, which main goal is to vote:

- The "Proposal to raise the NECSTouR annual contribution"
- The "Proposal to interrupt the process of the so-called ETIS Destinations Committee in NECSTouR"

The President invited the NECSTouR Vice Presidency, the Region of Flanders, being represented by Mr. Jan Korthout, Director for Tourism of the Flemish Government, to Chair the Extraordinary AGM 2017 as from 18.45h if necessary, due to his appointment with high level representatives of the EU Institutions at 19.00 elsewhere in the framework of the 2018 EU-China Tourism Year. Since the President needed to attend at 19.00h a VIP Dinner on the.

- ✓ The NECSTouR Extraordinary AGM 2017 Programme was approved

APPROVAL OF THE VOTING PROCEDURE

The President transferred to the General Assembly the proposal of the NECSTouR Executive Committee (meeting 18th of September 2017) to allow the Associated Members to vote, only for the specific question regarding the raise of their Annual Contribution.

The President explained that the NECSTouR Permanent Secretariat had developed a voting system as to enable all NECSTouR Members participating both virtually and physically to express their vote.

The NECSTouR Communication officer explained how to use the voting system, which consist in an e-form with three main questions that required the Member's vote "Yes" or "No":

1. The NECSTouR annual contribution of the Full Members is 4000€ as from the 1st of January 2018.
 2. The NECSTouR annual contribution of the Associated Members is 750€ as from the 1st of January 2018.
 3. ETIS destinations candidates to adhere to NECSTouR
- ✓ The NECSTouR Voting Procedure as well as the Proposal to give the Associated Members the possibility to vote when it concerned the point on raising the Annual Contribution of the Associated Members was approved.

MEMBERSHIP

The first point of the Membership section of the programme regarded the **"Proposal to raise the NECSTouR annual contribution"**.

The President shared some background information and reflections as to set the scene of the "Proposal to raise the NECSTouR annual contribution".

The President started thanking the NECSTouR Members for enabling NECSTouR to be this prestigious network, which has evolved from being an initiative launched by three European regions ten years ago to a network of 65 members, 35 regional authorities competent in tourism, having representation in 18 Member States.

The President expressed that NECSTouR has been growing in intensity of its activity, regarding the services offered and performed, in visibility, in positioning and recognition at EU and international level, in opportunities for members, in expertise and in focus, especially due to the NECSTouR strategy 2015 – 2018. However, the NECSTouR annual contribution of the members has remained the same since 2009, situation that is compromising the financial sustainability of the network.

The incomes received by the NECSTouR annual contribution of the members is not enough to cover NECSTouR expenses, not even NECSTouR staff costs. As such, the network is being partly financed through EU projects which do contribute to maintain the financial balance besides being sometimes out of scope.

The President reiterated the need to focus on the NECSTouR Strategy as to enable the Permanent Secretariat to concentrate on reaching the network objectives and to avoid spending time on EU projects which scope is not at the centre of NECSTouR Strategy.

Examples of the current opportunities being offered by the Network concern the 27/09 High Level Events taking place in Brussels and being co-organised and supported by NECSTouR:

- Committee of the Regions and NECSTouR event on "EU Financing for Innovation in Tourism" (morning)
- European Parliament High-level conference on Tourism "A European strategy to enhance the competitiveness of the tourism industry, a key driver for job creation" (afternoon)
- European Parliament Reception "Investing in Innovation for Sustainable and Competitive European Tourism" (evening) hosted by MEP Tapardel in co-sponsorship of NECSTouR, ETC and HOTREC

The President added that It is key for NECSTouR to be part of these high - level events and discussions to ensure our regional position, reinforce strategic alliances and take part of new opportunities. At the same time, NECSTouR needs to ensure its leadership as representative of Regions on Sustainable and Competitive Tourism in Europe, all decisions on EU tourism deserve and need NECSTouR's contribution. As such, NECSTouR cannot lose focus, NECSTouR needs to work close to our priorities and this is why NECSTouR needs to be autonomous and self-financed 100%.

The President confirmed that NECSTouR needs to attract more members, but the objectives of the strategy target quality and not quantity. At this moment NECSTouR represents close to 65% of top tourism regions in Europe.

Due to the above-mentioned reasons, which are deeply presented in the document "Proposal to raise the NECSTouR annual contribution", the President proceed to present the Proposal to raise NECSTouR annual contribution according the different type of Members: Full and Associated.

- **The NECSTouR annual contribution of the Full Members is 4000€ as from the 1st of January 2018.**

A transition period during the financial exercise 2018 is foreseen only for those Full members, which might face procedural constraints about their budget amendment at this time of the year. The abovementioned members should formally notify the situation to the Executive Committee, which will analyse their request on a case per case basis, before the end of this year. Proven evidence of the above-mentioned situation as well as the commitment to apply the new annual contribution as from the 1st of January 2019 is required by the concerned member in view of a decision taken by the Executive Committee.

Any Member willing to contribute with a higher amount can do it so provided it does not exceed the amount of 10.000€.

- **The NECSTouR annual contribution of the Associated Members is 750€ as from the 1st of January 2018.**

Any Member willing to contribute with a higher amount can do it so provided it does not exceed the amount of 10.000€.

The President opened the floor for debate.

The region of Balearic Islands asked the possibility to create a new type of membership instead of full or associated, some intermediary typology that could enable some regions to maintain the fee on 2000€ while receiving possibly less services.

The President agreed on the pertinence of the question. Indeed, the President shared with the Assembly that this proposal was considered during the different discussions between the Executive Committee, however, after an assessment of the pros and cons it was decided not to give this possibility as to be in coherence with the network and its goals: there cannot be differences among the full members since the ultimate goal of the network is represent them equally with no differences on the type/number/quality of services offered.

The President gave the floor to the Coordinator who presented the evolution of NECSTouR services since its origin until now.

Moreover, the following members shared some additional reflections about the added value that NECSTouR brings to their regions:

Andalusia:

- NECSTouR is supporting the regions towards the identification of a strong Tourism sector at the EU level as an independent and relevant industry. Management of online platforms and OTA's. Management of excessive tourism pressure in specific destinations. Safety management and collaboration with security bodies at the EU level are new tasks ahead of us that need a great deal of efforts and they are all priorities for many of us. This requires that we all need to work hard and that more resources are needed for new challenges.
- Based on the regions experience, precisely in the Indicators WG, NECSTouR members are quite active and there is a high level of expertise, which is a great asset for the network and the members.
- The Permanent Secretariat has played a critical role in achieving the recognition NECSTouR has now, and we are growing, not just in members, but also in new tasks. Given the experience of working close with Cristina, Sandra and Tomaso, they also deserve a support not just in terms of new staff, but also some other incentives given their proactivity in their day to day work and in their search of new European projects as a source of funding for NECSTouR.

Flanders:

- Expressed its agreement with the statement of Andalucía and added that NECSTouR provides the regions with highly recognized strategic alliances as for example the members of the EU Tourism Manifesto at European level but event at international level through the MoU with the UNWTO.

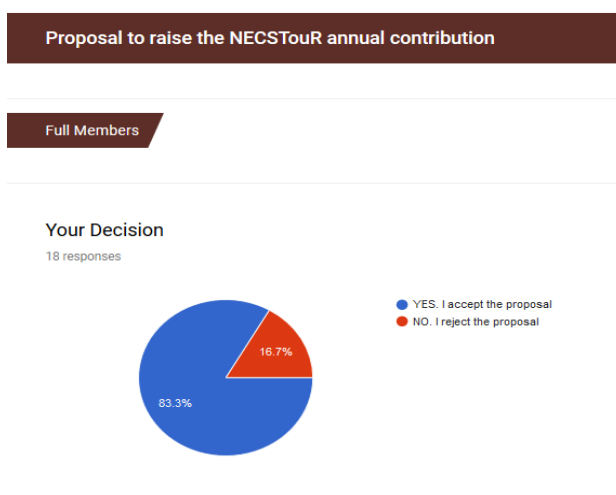
- Due to the great cooperation between NECSTouR and other networks, the members have also the possibility to have access to other networks through NECSTouR
- The tremendous work of the Permanent Secretariat needs to be valorized and highly recognized. As the only region of the Executive Committee being located in Brussels, Flanders has the chance to work hand in hand with the Permanent Secretariat, witnessing their high level of commitment, work load and performance.

Catalonia:

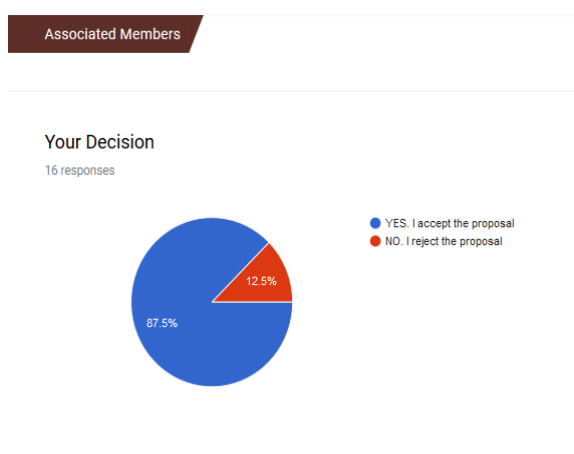
- Agreed with the former regions interventions and stressed the fact that the main reason of why the network is growing on visibility, influence, capacity and respect by EU Institutions is due to the Permanent Secretariat.

The President opened the voting for each of the proposals. The results were as follows:

1. Proposal to raise the NECSTouR annual contribution to full members



2. Proposal to raise the NECSTouR annual contribution to associated members



- ✓ The proposal to raise NECSTouR annual contribution for Full and Associated members as from 2018 was approved

The second point of the Membership section of the programme regarded the **“Proposal to interrupt the process of the so-called *ETIS Destinations Committee* in NECSTouR”**.

The President introduced the initiative regarding the so-called *ETIS Destinations Committee* in NECSTouR and the reasons why the Executive Committee decided to interrupt the process (see document “Proposal to Interrupt the Building Process of the so Called “*ETIS Destinations Committee*” in NECSTouR):

1. Regions and Destinations have a different approach when measuring sustainable tourism at sub-national level, making the compromise between both highly challenging. This requires indeed a disproportionate effort compared to the advantages for NECSTouR, as we can foresee at the moment.
2. The proposed dissemination activities for engaging possible local destinations are not part of the NECSTouR priorities, taken into account, in one hand, the scarce resources and, on the other hand, the selected top priorities decided by the NECSTouR Executive Committee and the General Assembly, which need to be achieved by the Network in the next months.
3. The necessary task of collecting the required indicators using the 2016 “*ETIS Toolkit*”, as well as the possible need of finding the appropriate platform for hosting them, or even organizing its host at the Virtual Tourism Observatory, entitles a workload that the NECSTouR Permanent Secretariat cannot assume.

As such, the NECSTouR Executive Committee Meeting of the 20th of June 2017 concluded that the NECSTouR Permanent Secretariat had not the capacity to build up the new so called “*ETIS Committee*” within NECSTouR until now and that it will not have this capacity for the upcoming months as well.

The President asked the validation of this proposal by the General Assembly.

- ✓ The proposal to interrupt the process of the so-called *ETIS Destinations Committee* in NECSTouR” was approved.

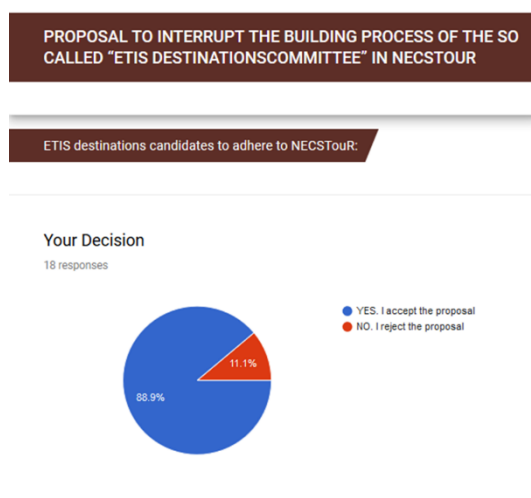
The President presented to vote the candidature of three *ETIS Destinations* being located within three NECSTouR Regions. As agreed when the so-called *ETIS Destinations Committee* in NECSTouR started, those *ETIS destinations* being located in a NECSTouR Region should ask for the validation of the regional authority to be part of NECSTouR. Considering this is the case for the three following candidates:

- South Sardinia (Sardinia, Italy)
- Terrae Anio Jubesianaee (Lazio, Italy)
- Abano Terme (Veneto, Italy)”

Being aware of the interruption of the so-called *ETIS Destinations Committee* in NECSTouR, the President proposed the members to vote “Yes” or “No” for the following proposal:

ETIS destinations candidates to adhere to NECSTouR. If they acknowledge that they can belong to the NECSTouR Indicators Working Group and this meets their expectations, then they can be offered the possibility of joining as associated members. They can still become associated members.

The results of the voting process went as follows:



However, the Regions Veneto and Lazio did not approve the adhesion of their municipalities to NECSTouR. Therefore, the General Assembly respected this decision and decided not to interfere in these Regions' territory, as it is the custom of NECSTouR. Therefore, the adhesion of Terrae Anio Jubesiana (Lazio, Italy) and Abano Terme (Veneto, Italy) was not approved.

Sardinia Region was not represented at the Extraordinary AGM2017 therefore the Region will be consulted about the adhesion of its destination South Sardinia in due course.

AOB

The Coordinator explained that the NECSTouR Annual General Meeting 2018 will take place in Île-de-France Region, for which the Permanent Secretariat will meet the Director for Tourism as to start fixing the date and work in its organisation. The Coordinator reminded that in 2018 NECSTouR Executive Committee elections should take place.

The President thanked the members and closed the Extraordinary AGM 2017.