

Mr Eduardo Santander
Executive Director
European Travel Commission
Rue du Marché aux Herbes 61
B-1000 Brussels

Brussels, **31 AUG 2017**

Dear Mr Santander,

On behalf of President Juncker and First Vice-President Timmermans, I would like to thank you for your letter of 17 July. I am very pleased to see your commitment to the EU tourism industry.

Tourism is indeed a sector which brings a significant contribution to the EU economy, both in terms of growth and jobs creation. The European Commission is committed to continue fostering the competitiveness of the EU tourism businesses, particularly SMEs, to the ultimate benefit of European citizens.

The Commission has taken strong action to further improve the Single Market for Services¹ and we are helping, through the Blueprint for sectorial cooperation, to close the gap between skills² needed by industry and skills provided by the education and training systems of the Member States.

To support the competitiveness of the tourism sector in Europe, the Commission complements this with concrete actions, notably through our support under the Programme for the Competitiveness of Enterprises and Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (COSME). We work with public administration and companies to create a favourable environment for businesses, including in the tourism sector. We raise awareness and facilitate the use of EU funding opportunities and financial instruments. We act as an enabler for the rapid uptake of new information, communication and digital technologies and we closely cooperate with the Member States, their regions, as well as international organisations and the industry, to ensure the promotion of Europe as a tourist destination. For example, the 2018 EU-China Tourism Year initiative will contribute to enhancing tourism flows to Europe from this important emerging market.

Our actions are implemented in the framework of the 2010 Communication on Tourism² and the 2014 Communication on Coastal and Maritime Tourism³, which we consider still valid and fit for purpose. These Communications still address the challenges and opportunities in the tourism sector.

¹ https://ec.europa.eu/growth/single-market/services_en

² COM/2010/0352 final

³ COM/2014/086 final

The Commission is also implementing several tourism-specific pilot projects and preparatory actions initiated by the European Parliament. These projects contribute to the competitiveness of the tourism sector. To mention one example, "Youth on the Spot – Special Partnership on Tourism" will boost the employability of young Europeans and foster cross-border apprenticeships and traineeships in tourism.

Moreover, actions in other policy areas also benefit the tourism sector, for example the end of roaming charges and passenger rights. They are all integrated and aligned to the Commission's broad priorities and vision for growth and jobs in the EU.

The Commission counts on your support. The continuation of good cooperation with the European Parliament, the Committee of the Regions, as well as with European organisations and the industry is crucial for the successful implementation of concrete initiatives in support of the EU tourism sector.

Please kindly note that this letter is being sent to all six co-signatories of your letter.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Elzbieta Bienkowska', with a large, stylized flourish at the end.

Elżbieta Bienkowska