

7TH FORUM OF THE CHAMBERS OF COMMERCE OF THE ADRIATIC AND IONIAN REGION

Tourism coordination Committee

Speech by Dr Michele De Vita

ACTIVITIES OF THE WORKGROUP ON TOURISM

The Workgroup on Tourism, which gathered on the occasion of the last Forum session in Durres, set itself the following priority objectives:

1. Reinforce and consolidate the **Committee for Tourism Coordination** within the Forum and the Forum Secretariat, in order for it to become an operational body for the joint promotion of the Adriatic-Ionian macro-region and a centre for the collection and analysis of all tourist information on all the countries that are members of the Forum.
2. Use communication as a central and transversal tool to exchange contents, information, ideas and knowledge, both inwards among all those involved in the tourist sector, and outwards (companies, potential interlocutors, and customers). **Communication** will have to highlight the numerous offers in the various tourist segments, which make the Adriatic-Ionian region a well-integrated area with big potential.
3. Create **a single tourist system**, which is able to present itself and compete at international level with a strong and well-constructed offer comprising territory, culture and services. This offer should be conceived in the logic of a system and be able to highlight differences, traditions and the different historical and environmental contexts, yet at the same time it should use an effective and incisive message to promote a network of services that are organized on the basis of common quality criteria and standards.
4. Develop the many niche sectors present in the area to create **integrated tourist packages** that can be of interest for both Adriatic shores and their hinterlands, with the possibility for these niche sectors to be developed also in relation to the new forms of specialised tourism that are currently asserting themselves on international markets (ecotourism, tourism in protected areas and inland parks, sports tourism, religious tourism).
5. Also with the help of its representation offices in Brussels, thoroughly analyse all the **opportunities offered by the new community programmes** for the financing of projects focussing on tourist promotion and the economic development of the macro-region.

On the basis of the objectives listed above, concrete initiatives and promotion projects were thus started, the effects of which can turn out to be useful for the people working in the field and for the territories of that macro-area that the same European Union now recognizes as the Adriatic Euroregion.

--- o ---

An **internal preliminary meeting** between the Forum Secretariat, the Chamber of Commerce of Ancona, the *Istituto Adriano Olivetti di Studi per la Gestione dell'Economia e delle Aziende Istaio* (Adriano Olivetti Institute for Studies on Economic and Corporate Management) and an expert graphic designer was first held on 2nd November 2006.

The following results emerged from the meeting:

- Several bodies of the province of Ancona are already working on tourist promotion projects and have started checking the possibility of promoting integrated tourist packages for the Adriatic-Ionian area - this kind of initiatives are, however, very complex and nobody has yet started working towards this goal;
- The idea of planning tourist packages for the promotion of tourism in the Adriatic-Ionian area must foresee a meeting with tour operators on both shores in order to direct the preliminary collection and analysis of tourist data and collect information and opinions on the market, the profile of the Adriatic-Ionian area's potential customers, as well as on the best way possible to prepare a successful tourist offer for this territory;
- It is first necessary to check if the various tour operators are willing to sit at a table and discuss this topic, as they might show an attitude of closure for fear of reciprocal competition;
- Tour operators working in the Italian regions of Emilia Romagna, Veneto and Apulia and Croatian tour operators should also be involved.

--- ° ---

This preliminary meeting was followed by an important **workshop with travel agencies and tour operators** working in the provinces of Ancona, Ascoli Piceno, Macerata, as well as in Bosnia, Montenegro and Croatia. The Workgroup saw the participation of the Forum Secretariat, officials of the Chamber of Commerce of Ancona, Istao, an expert graphic designer and an official of the Province of Ancona in charge of community policies (4th December 2006).

The workshop aimed at starting a workgroup with private operators working in the Italian and non-Italian Adriatic area, which might have shown interest or might have experience in the tourist market of the Adriatic region, in order to highlight viewpoints, problems, starting points for possible remarks on an integrated tourist offer for the macro-area concerned (area potential, target segments, emerging markets, support to tour operators, types of offer).

Topics dealt with:

- Presentation of the Forum and its Workgroups, presentation of the objectives of the Workgroup on Tourism
- Presentation of data concerning the European tourist market, tourist flows in the countries belonging to the Adriatic Euroregion, main markets of origin for the tourists who come to the macro-area concerned, tourist world trend, forecasts for 2020, major market segments for the 2000-2020 period in Adriatic countries.

Meeting conclusions:

- 1) There is a big interest in promoting and starting the project. The creation of a Euro-Adriatic tourist offer can be used as an occasion to achieve the following goals:
 - Reinforce current tourist proposals, which refer to single destinations, and rethink them from a new point of view that bears in mind different and theme-related topics;
 - Have the possibility of deseasonalizing the current seasonal tourist demand;
 - Create a new development that can be acknowledged also in new tourist markets, thanks to wide and varied tourist proposal resulting from the project.
- 2) Working mainly on communication is however extremely necessary. The idea of an Adriatic macro-region as a possible tourist destination must be created in the collective imagery. Today there are single destinations (Croatia, the Marche region, Venice...), whereas it is necessary to create the idea of a single tourist destination area.

If the direction is shared, building concrete operational opportunities is thus more complex. Before proposing integrated packages, it is in fact essential that **demand for integrated tourism develops and grows**. There is a major front where work should be focussed, i.e. **communication**. This means that we must work to build an Adriatic tourist identity and disseminate and have it acknowledged in the collective imagery of tourists, so that they can become aware of this area, its destinations, as well as of all the elements that are common to the territory around the Adriatic. For the objective of the Adriatic Euroregion to be successful, **a number of elements are urgently needed, e.g. significant investments, cooperation between the institutions of the macro-area and a partnership between public and private sector**.

Problems to solve:

- Identify and find the financial resources necessary to start a communication project that requires strong investments
- Build tourist offers that provide for various tourist destinations within the Euro-Adriatic area
- Identify target markets and segments
- Define the roles of the various players (Forum, private operators, etc.)

Operational proposals:

- Building of a marketing and communication master plan
- Institutional initiatives (observatory of tourist flows, promotional brochure, web site, participation in trade fairs)
- Private experimental initiatives

Actions to find financial resources:

- Presentation of the master plan to the European Union for the financing of the project through a public-private partnership with properly identified funds
- Financing of targeted institutional initiatives by the players participating in the Forum
- Identification of calls for proposals and resources, allowing at least for the partial coverage of experimental initiatives.

Master plan hypothesis:

PHASES	OBJECTIVES	TOOLS
ANALYSIS	Knowledge of the qualitative and quantitative macro-features of the Euro-Adriatic tourist market	Partially implemented
	Analysis of the competition context of Euro-Adriatic areas – markets and competitors (both potential and current ones)	- desk/ workgroups of tourist operators
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Identification of Euro-Adriatic tourist areas and their lifecycle. o Identification of Euro-Adriatic strategic resources and "tourist products" – ranking of potentials 	- exchange of opinions between tourist operators - collection of offer proposals by the Forum institutional players
STRATEGY	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Identification of the target (young people, families, schools ...) o "Product portfolio", -i.e. 	- workgroup of tourist operators

	Euro-Adriatic tourist products and integrated tourist packages, strategy and current and prospective positioning (i.e. price, quality level, package days, etc. ...)	
COMMUNICATION CHOICES	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Identification of strategic concept o Identification of communication tools: Development of editorial supports, advertising and editorial spaces, public relations, the Internet, seminars, trade fairs and exhibitions, etc.... 	- workgroup of tourist operators
OPERATIONAL DEVELOPMENT	Building of experimental packages	- private tourist operators

--- ° ---

After the first workshop with private tourist operators, **a restricted group of local tourist operators** was set up in order to actually implement the integrated communication initiative. The workgroup saw the participation of the Forum Secretariat, the Chamber of Commerce of Ancona, Amatori Tour Operator, Eden Viaggi, Promozione Viaggi, Istao and Raffaele Giorgetti (2nd February 2007).

Proposals emerged:

- Need to create **a distinctive brand** identifying the macro-area, which must be simple and evocative of the willingness of being together. This brand should act as some sort of "umbrella" - brand or like the "*indicazione geografica tipica*" certification of origin and identify the area as a whole. This brand must create a single identity for the area and help tourists recognize the Adriatic area as a whole, irrespective of the single regions or countries it is made up of. The brand will be the core element, around which all communication initiatives of the area should be developed (portal, brochures, events, trade fairs, or use of the brand in the catalogues of those tour operators that join the initiatives);
- Need to start from **a communication - identification brand**, which at some later stage can become a quality brand to be monitored on the basis of a disciplinary set of measures or a body with the task of controlling and evaluating the quality of the proposed services;
- Need to **identify financial resources** allowing the implementation of this ambitious project of integrated tourist promotion and experimental tourist packages. Resources can be found by focussing on community calls for proposals (e.g. Interreg), on the competitiveness of the business system and the economic development of the areas involved, on know-how transfer and service standardization on both shores of the Adriatic, as well as by evaluating medium and long-term actions with micro-financing (through public-private co-financing);
- Urgent need to **start a political workgroup** with other local public bodies with the participation of private tourist operators as well, in order to concentrate the commitments of the various institutional players working in the field of tourism, especially from the viewpoint of a financial integration of community, national and regional funds. The idea of an integrated tourist offer in the Adriatic requires huge

investments in communication, logistics, definition and concrete application of quality standards. It is thus essential to closely monitor those various financial opportunities available at both local and international level, which can contribute in a synergic way to the implementation of the project, and it is also necessary to consider the opportunities deriving from the new planning of the 2007/2013 ERDF structural funds.

--- ° ---

To this end, **an operational meeting** between the Secretariat of the Workgroup on Tourism, the Chamber of Commerce of Ancona, executives from the Province of Ancona and the Marche Region, as well as two representatives of the Polytechnic University of the Marche Region was held on 16th April, with the aim of sharing projects on tourism and available European resources and start a better coordination between the institutions involved in the elaboration of projects and initiatives for the sector. The meeting highlighted the strong and widespread need for the following actions:

- Provide for a more efficient implementation of single projects from a managerial and financial point of view;
- Capitalize all implicit and explicit technical know-how acquired during the implementation of single projects and make this knowledge accessible.

In view of a more complex project of integrated tourist promotion of the macro-area and tourist packages to present the European Community in order to get adequate financial resources, the collaboration with some local tour operators allowed to identify a number of **communication vehicles** for the promotion of the area (e.g. tools, trade fairs, advertising, etc.) and to draft a **yearly budget** of the necessary communication tools (creation of the logo, brochures, advertisements and posters, gadgets, postcards, catalogue of integrated offers, portal, etc.) and of the possible communication initiatives (targeted advertising campaigns, participation in trade fairs, events, congresses, etc.).

--- ° ---

Creation of a promotional brochure and an interactive web portal

In order to realize two of the integrated communication actions agreed upon by the Workgroup on Tourism during the last Forum session, between January and April **tourist information and pictures were gathered** by the Forum members and the travel agencies that participated in the December meeting. They received a standard data sheet to fill in with the following information:

- Tourist flows
- Origin of tourist flows
- Excellencies of the reference area
- Brief historical description of the country
- Naturalistic and environmental elements
- Monuments and sites of historical and cultural interest
- Religious sites and events
- Traditions and folk events
- Accommodation and catering facilities
- Sports facilities, events, centres and associations
- Recreational events and facilities
- Tourist ports and sea activities
- Street map
- Embassies, consulates
- Commercial ports and ship connections
- Airports and air connections

Unfortunately, the information obtained is not homogeneous and not all Forum members have sent such data or representative images of their area yet. In spite of this, a useful database was created with information and photos of each single territory. It was decided not to go into detail on this material in this first stage, but to evaluate these pictures and information within the May Forum and to discuss with all Forum participants all possible developments of the integrated promotion project illustrated above.

--- ° ---

The lack of financial resources, homogeneous information and pictures for the various reference areas has led us not to proceed, at least for the moment, with the creation of a 32-page brochure in various languages and to opt for the **realization of a 4-page leaflet** with a brief and general description of the reference countries, instead, with images and information presented in theme-related sections (Art-History-Culture, Sea, Nature, Living Well -Wellbeing-Food and Wine, Sports, Religion).

--- ° ---

The web site on tourism is currently being implemented within the Forum web site and will present the following features:

1) **Creativity**

Together with the Forum logo, graphics will feature elements that will characterize and identify all Forum-related web sites (e.g. the web site on women's entrepreneurship);

2) **Home page**

The web site can be surfed in 2 different ways:

a) By "geographical areas"

b) By "itineraries"

By clicking on a "geographical area" one can access the desired country of interest, in which it is then possible to choose the territories included in the project (Ancona, Venice, etc.). Each territory is presented as a data sheet with images, a brief introduction and a series of useful links for the tourist who might want to visit the area concerned. By clicking on "itineraries" one can access a data sheet (per each itinerary), with text and images on the selected itinerary (the contents and materials presented will be the same as the brochure).

3) **Use**

Navigation will thus take place in the two ways identified above (geographical areas and itineraries) in a very simple way and with the possibility of having direct access to the data sheet with the desired information.

Given the poor financial resources available and the plenty of heterogeneous information and pictures received, the web site will not be developed with territorial in depth information and navigation will be possible by countries, provincial territories or itinerary themes. Related useful links will be added to the site, without however providing in depth information.

--- ° ---

Given the importance attributed by private tourist operators to the creation of a brand/logo that can identify the macro-area, **an international online competition for graphic designers was started** through the help of a communication agency based in Rimini. The competition is expected to come out with about twenty proposals, which will be presented to the Forum and "voted" by the participants in the Workshop on Tourism. For this reason, no brand will thus appear on the brochure or on the web site.