

7th Forum of the Chambers of Commerce of the Adriatic and Ionian Sea

Speech by the President of the Chamber of Commerce of Ancona Mr Giampaolo Giampaoli

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1. Main strategic guidelines defined in the final paper of the 2006 Workgroup on Tourism

The large number of participants in the Workgroup on Tourism registered this year shows that tourism is a subject, which is very topical and of strong interest for all the countries that participate in this event - hence the need for us all to commit ourselves for this topic.

All our territories possess an exceptional heritage of naturalistic, landscape, historical and cultural beauties, which all together can make up a single and diversified tourist offer and represent the pivot of attraction for the entire Adriatic and Ionian area.

In brief, I would like to remind you the strategic guidelines defined in the final paper that was drafted at last year's Forum in Durres:

A. Reinforce and consolidate the Committee for Tourism Coordination, which was set up in 2006, within the Forum, so that the committee can become an operational body for the promotion of the Adriatic-Ionian macro-region and a centre for tourist information collection and analysis;

B. The Chambers of Commerce of the Forum will have to contribute to the creation of a single tourist system of the Adriatic-Ionian region. This can occur through the elimination of localisms, if possible, and the promotion of the idea of an "extended territory". This extended territory can present itself and compete at an international level with a distinct tourist offer and by proposing the tourist market the Adriatic-Ionian region as a "single product";

C. Plan, realize and implement joint communication tools for the promotion of the macro-region (internet site, brochure, participation in trade fairs, etc.).

Our effort now is to plan and evaluate common marketing actions together to promote the "Adriatic-Ionian Euroregion" as a product on the international tourist market.

2. Implemented activities since the last Forum

In order to start working on this ambitious project and make it effective, a number of activities and actions in line with the strategic guidelines defined during the last Forum session were started.

A number of operational meetings were organized in order to involve all participating countries and find common guidelines that can allow everybody to work towards the same direction. Mr De Vita will relate in detail on the contents emerged from these meetings.

It soon emerged from these meetings that the shared priority is to give a **strong commercial orientation** to the tourist promotion project of the area through the involvement of the industry's private operators in the meetings and decisions. The combination between public and private sector has led to collaboration with operators of the tourist industry, which have given their fundamental contribution as "experts in the field" and constantly supported us in the identification of the necessary actions and tools to pursue the Forum objectives.

A number of activities have been organized, including a workshop with both Italian and foreign tour operators and travel agencies in order to have practical indications and receive suggestions, and above all to **follow an approach that is in line with market needs right from the start**.

We started taking short steps: after the meetings organized during the last months and thanks to the collection of information material and tourist photos sent by some of the Chambers of Commerce that participate in the Forum we were able to realize a brochure and a web portal.

We are only at the beginning, yet: this ambitious project will namely continue only with the active participation of everyone because the work to be done is very structured and complex. For the above reasons we hope that additional proposals and suggestions can emerge from this workgroup.

The actions carried out up to now have in fact allowed us to start working on the objectives set before. These actions represent the basis for the proposals that will emerge from this Workgroup working on tourism in the Adriatic-Ionian region.

3. The potential of the Adriatic-Ionian region

I would now like to share with you some results of a survey assigned by the Forum on tourism in the Euro-Adriatic area. These results were already presented during the December meeting with tour operators, which showed the real potential for the area with reference to the development trends foreseen for the world tourist market.

The following emerged from the survey:

- The Adriatic Euroregion considered as a whole is the third area in the world in terms of tourist flow destination;
- Tourist flows having the Adriatic Euroregion as their destination rose by 7% from 2005 to 2006 with higher growth rates for the Eastern Adriatic shore;
- The tourist market is expected to grow in terms of demand over the next 15 years. Together with demand coming from already established markets (Europe, USA, Japan, etc.), demand will grow considerably also from emerging markets like China, Russia, India, Korea, the Middle East, Singapore, Mexico and Brazil;
- Demand is becoming increasingly diversified: Together with the classical "sun & beach" and "sport" tourist offer, new types of tourism are starting to gain ground, i.e. adventure tourism, naturalistic tourism, cultural tourism, tourism in cities, country tourism, cruises, theme parks and wellness.

On the basis of what emerged from this analysis, a number of **strengths** can be identified for the Euro-Adriatic area and the following remarks can thus be made:

- In terms of demand, the tourist market is growing. This can bring about important trade opportunities for the Adriatic-Ionian area;
- The types of tourist offers required are becoming increasingly differentiated; the Adriatic-Ionian area will be competitive for the "Sun & Beach" tourist types and has the potential, in terms of natural and environmental resources, to build specific offers for the tourist segments adventure tourism, naturalistic tourism, cruises, charters, theme parks and wellness;
- All the Adriatic-Ionian area has the inborn potential to become a leading destination of the world tourist market: Flows are increasing and the area as a whole is among the world's most important tourist destinations.

By way of conclusion, I would like to underline that it is worth investing in this area and trying to exploit its actual development potential, as the prerequisites for our common initiative to be successful are already present.

4. Objectives and strategies for the very near future

The above analysis has strengthened our belief that our project is feasible and can bring about advantages for the entire Euro-Adriatic territory.

For this reason, this year we have implemented all actions and activities mentioned before and proved that it is possible to join forces and collaborate to work in an integrated way towards the same direction. What has been done so far was a successful collaboration effort between the Chambers of Commerce and the private sector, which has laid the foundations to continue working together and focus even more on the work done so far.

The following issues must now be defined together:

- Decide over **a common brand** to build an image that can identify and distinguish us at a global level;
- Define the **development guidelines of the tourist brochure and the web site** (this will be illustrated to you by Mr Giorgetti);
- Identify the **target objectives** of tourist promotion (young people, families, schools, etc.);
- Define the necessary communication tools (development of editorial supports, editorial spaces, the Internet, seminars, trade fairs, etc.);
- Define **specific objectives and medium-term strategies**; possible alternatives in this respect can be the following: Develop integrated tourist packages, create a qualified circuit of tourist subjects that work using this brand, etc.;
- Start **actions of coordination between the institutions** involved in the drafting of projects and initiatives for the tourist sector to make the implementation of single projects more effective from a managerial and financial point of view and to make the knowledge acquired and elaborated during the single projects usable;
- **Identify European funds or other sources of financing** to realize and implement the necessary communication tools and the **adequate marketing actions**, as well as to test integrated tourist packages. To this end, a close collaboration between the Forum of Chambers of Commerce of the Adriatic and Ionian Sea, the Forum of Adriatic Cities, the UniAdriatic university network and other local governments is of fundamental importance.

Given the strong interest shown by this Workgroup and the large number of participants today, I would like to conclude by expressing the hope that new ideas, hints and suggestions can come out from this occasion, in order for us to continue working on this ambitious project and foster the development and economic growth of our territories by working in synergy.