

Professor Andrew Holden
Director of the Institute for Tourism Research (INTOUR)
University of Bedfordshire

Concerning the two themes that have emerged from the comments, I take the view that both are relevant to the health of UK tourism and are not necessarily incompatible, although I am not clear of the full implications of an EU tourism market. It is evident that we are in competition with other EU states for inbound tourists both from other EU countries and from outside the EU. This is a historic situation and with the growth of neo-liberalism and removal of state incentives for tourism development in the UK has meant that market forces have largely dictated the health of the UK tourism market. In my view the ability to access EU funds for tourism and culture remains an important resource for the development of tourism in the UK to fulfil a wider economic, social and environmental agenda of urban regeneration, employment creation, environmental sustainability and social tourism. However, I also think it important that tourism remains an EU supporting competence to allow actions to be taken independently at localised levels rather than being pressured to follow a more generalised blueprint that may be rolled out across the European Union. It is also evident that control needs to be retained over the marketing of the tourism product characteristics of EU nation states outside the EU- indeed an attraction of the EU as a region is of course the cultural diversification within a small geographical area.

Tourism demand to the EU as a region is indeed under threat from regions and its percentage share of global international arrivals continues to fall. However, this is partly caused by EU citizens wanting to travel further afield to new destinations- e.g. to LDCs. I would view this trend as a natural evolution of the tourism market- one that will be temporarily affected at times of economic recession but may be challenged in the longer term by the environmental impact of aviation. There is also the point to be considered of not being blinded by quantity. Assessing the success of tourism is much more complicated than simple statistics of volume and needs to be evaluated against defined strategic goals which would embrace the environmental and social alongside the economic.