July 2013

BRITISH HOSPITALITY ASSOCIATION RESPONSE TO THE BALANCE OF COMPETENCES REVIEW ON CULTURE, TOURISM AND SPORT

Tourism Questions

Is there added value to UK tourism in EU activity to co-operate with non-EU countries' tourism sectors?

We are aware of action 17 of the Tourism Unit's implementation plan, relating to co-operation with the main emerging countries and Mediterranean countries to promote sustainable tourism development models and the exchange of best practices. There has been some concern within the industry about exchanges of customers (CALYPSO) which benefit competitor countries, but we have not yet seen any evidence of the impact of the first pilot.

More generally, we see co-operation on sustainable tourism as valuable, and achievable without devotion of substantial resources.

How does competition for tourists across Member States impact on the effectiveness of EU action in this area?

We would draw an analogy with VisitBritain (VB): it brings visitors to the UK and is effective in doing so, but each UK tourism business has to compete for those visitors. However, it is possible for VB to present the UK as a market to potential visitors from around the world. Can the European Travel Commission's 'Destination Europe' programme (action 18, and visiteurope.com under action 19) deliver similar benefits? Is there a 'distinctive European brand'? This must be more doubtful. However, this is a matter which can be left to national tourist boards, such as VB, to decide whether to participate in such EU-wide programmes, which may bring market intelligence benefits.

More generally, we have not yet seen any significant impact from article 195 of the TFEU, though we would draw attention to the proposed Regulation on an EU Tourism Quality Label. There seems to be some uncertainty over the requirement this Regulation could impose on Member States to set up a board to assess applications from quality schemes to be included in the label scheme.

There are other areas of Commission activity, referred to in the Implementation Plan, which we would support: the tourism observatory (action 10) where the UK Office for National Statistics was the lead partner in the feasibility study for the Commission, and helping mobility of hospitality workers through the EURES system adopting the Qualification and Skills Passport for the hospitality sector, in which our European association, HOTREC, has played a major role.

There is work in hand which we think could turn out to be valuable, for example, the forthcoming strategy for sustainable coastal and marine tourism (action 16 in the Implementation Plan), which could assist UK resorts.

General Questions

What evidence is there that EU action in … Tourism …benefits or disadvantages the UK?

We were concerned that the tourism competence (article 195) might lead to increased regulation of what is already a heavily regulated sector. So far, this has not happened. The only areas where EU action may disadvantage the UK are those where the UK has chosen not to participate in what might turn out to be advantageous for those who do take part. One small example is the EDEN (European Destinations of Excellence) scheme.

Have you noticed any change in EU activity or emphasis since the 2009 Treaty of Lisbon and is this welcome?

There has been a noticeable increase in activity from the Tourism Unit since the Treaty of Lisbon, some of which, as indicated above, has been or could be valuable, but there are now perhaps too many actions in the Implementation Plan.

What other areas of EU competence or activity impact on your sector and how?

As noted above, the hospitality industry is subject to a considerable level of regulation, much of which comes from the EU, employment and food law being two major examples. The consultation document acknowledges this in paragraph 25.

END.