

General Programme

High-level Meeting of the Ministers of Tourism of the EU member states

Tourism and Economic Growth

13th of February 2018

Sofia, National Palace of Culture

Informal Meeting of the Ministers of Tourism

8.00 - 9.00 Arrivals of the Heads of Delegations – National Palace of Culture, Entrance A6

9.00 - 10.15 Informal Meeting of the Ministers of Tourism (Closed doors) – HALL 10

The meeting will focus on tourism industry as a sustainable factor for economic growth, regional integration and peace. The participants will examine the development of the shared economy and the development of EU regulation policies related to tourism. Special attention will be drawn on connectivity as enabling factor for broadening of people relations and its positive impact for the Balkan region. EU integration policies with the special accent on cohesion will be discussed. Participants will have the opportunity to share brief success stories in terms of tourism projects in their respective countries as well as the opportunities related potential common European tourism initiatives.

10.15 - 10.30 Family photo

Format:

Participants in the Informal Meeting of the Ministers Responsible for Tourism

10.30 - 11.15 Press Conference – HALL 6

Format:

Mrs. Nikolina Angelkova, Minister of Tourism of the Republic of Bulgaria

Mrs. Elżbieta Bienkowska, EU Commissioner for Internal Market, Industry, Entrepreneurship and SMEs

Mr. Zurab Pololikashvili, Secretary General of the UNWTO

09.30 – 11.15 Conference Registration and Coffee Break

Registration will be proceeded at the Entrance A4 of the National Palace of Culture

11.30 - 12.00 Official opening – HALL 3

Welcome addresses:

Mrs. Tsveta Karayancheva, President of the National Assembly of the Republic of Bulgaria

Mrs. Elżbieta Bienkowska, EU Commissioner for Internal Market, Industry, Entrepreneurship and SMEs

Mr. Zurab Pololikashvili, Secretary General of the UNWTO

Mr. Valeri Simeonov, Deputy Prime Minister of the Republic of Bulgaria

Mrs. Nikolina Angelkova, Minister of Tourism of the Republic of Bulgaria

12.00 - 13.00 Panel Discussion 1:

Tourism and Economic Growth – Factors for Tourism Development

National Palace of Culture, HALL 3

Moderator: Eduardo Santander, Executive Director of the European Travel Commission

The panel will focus on tourism industry as a sustainable factor for economic growth in regional and European aspect. A summary of the morning informal meeting of the ministers of tourism will be presented by Mrs. Nikolina Angelkova, Minister of Tourism of the Republic of Bulgaria. Special focus will be drawn on tourism as factor for integration of people, goods and services in the Balkan region. EU policies as catalysts for the development of tourism industry in terms of competition, consumer protection, and common initiatives will be examined.

Representatives of ministries responsible for tourism of the EU-28 member states, as well as ministers responsible for tourism from the Balkan region, Secretary General of the UNWTO, Mr. Zurab Pololikashvili, Secretary General of the BSEC, Mr. Michael Christides, Vice-Chair of the Committee on Transport and Tourism of the European Parliament, Mr. Istvan Ujhelyi, Former Foreign Minister of Bulgaria and President of the Atlantic Club of Bulgaria, Mr. Solomon Passy, Mayor of Breitenwang in Tirol, Committee of Regions Rapporteur on Tourism, Mr. Hanspeter Wagner, CEO of Fraport Twin Star Airport Management, Mr. Ulrich Heppe will take part in the panel.

13.15 – 14.30 Lunch

14.30 - 15.30 Panel Discussion 2:

Tourism and Security – Geopolitical and Geo-economic Aspects

Moderator: Mr. Solomon Passy, Ph.D., President of the Atlantic Club of Bulgaria

Measures and decisions for making a tourism destination more safe and attractive will be discussed. The session will incorporate recent policy developments in close cooperation between all tourism stakeholders in order to examine security as a major factor in the development of the sector. The positive developments as well as some challenges regarding the new image of the Western Balkans as a region of prosperity and peace will be evaluated.

Panel participants:

Mr. Michael B. Christides, Secretary General of the BSEC, confirmed

Mr. Yordan Bozhilov, Chairman of the Sofia Security Forum, confirmed

Ms. Velina Tchakarova, M.A., Austrian Institute for European and Security Policy, confirmed

Mr. Kancho Stoychev, Gallup International, confirmed

Mr. Lachezar Todorov, Bulgarian tourism business stakeholder, confirmed

15.30 - 16.00 **Coffee Break**

16.00 - 17.00 **Panel Discussion 3:**

Europe and China 2018 – New Dimensions, Challenges and Opportunities

Moderator: Ms. Anna Athanasopoulou, DG GROW, European Commission

In the context of 2018 EU – China Tourism Year, the panel discussion will focus on the recent important developments, projects and initiatives concerning the cooperation in tourism between Europe and China. The role of the Silk Road connecting two of the world's largest economic powers and ancient cultures in Europe and China will be examined. The discussion will underline the significance of the regional and cross-border cooperation for the development and implementation of joint tourism products and packages designed for long distance markets as China. The discussion will focus on the opportunities for attracting more Chinese visitors to Europe and the Balkan region in particular.

Panel participants:

H.E. Mr. Zhang Haizhou, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the People's Republic of China to the Republic of Bulgaria, confirmed

Mr. Tom Jenkins - CEO, European Tourism Association, confirmed

Mr. Oliver Fodor, Deputy Director General Department for Tourism International Relations, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade of Hungary, confirmed

Mr. Martin Zahariev, Managing Director of the National Tourism Board Association, confirmed

Mr. Ivan Todorov, Chairman of Bulgarian Center for Development, Investment and Tourism in China, confirmed

Ms. Claudia Vernotti – ChinaEU, confirmed

Mr. Vassil Gelev, Director of the Centre for Promotion of Cooperation in Agriculture between China and the Central and Eastern Europe countries (CEEC), confirmed