

Ministers, Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is with great pleasure that I welcome you all to this year's edition of European Maritime Day. Over the years, this celebration of Europe's maritime community has had great popular success, proving that the maritime dimension is one that strongly resonates with citizens. And I can think of no better backdrop to our debate than the island of Malta - since ancient times the gateway to the Mediterranean and the outpost toward Africa and the Orient. This year we focus on the single largest activity of the maritime economy: tourism. This sector employs 2 and a half million people. It has been growing in recent years and is expected to keep growing by a further 2 to 3 percent a year for the next 20 years: it is only natural that it should feature high on our agendas.

European tourism has many success stories. Ranging from the spa resorts on the Black Sea, to the specialized golf facilities of Marbella, the offer has become ever more varied and specialized. The cruise sector alone has tripled in the last decade and is still growing. It can be done.

But let's face it, the market is changing. Our beaches are still busy, but there has been a shift in what tourists want from coastal resorts. Holiday makers want new, unique experiences, they want a range of activities to choose from; they want top-notch service in clean and pristine resorts; they want an offer that can be customized to their interests... and they want all this at an attractive price!

We need to adapt to this kind of demand.

We need to equip our professionals with the skills they need.

We need to advertise our destinations to the global audience and make them appealing all year round. We have some good examples to follow.

Like the Adriatic coast, we need to attract new tourists from emerging and booming economies like Brazil, Russia, India or China.

Like the 300 mayors in Spain, France and Portugal who have adhered to the transnational nautical sports concept, we need to make the sector more cohesive.

Like Malta and Greece, we need to develop modern tourism strategies.

Like Portugal and Ireland, we must give tourism the priority it deserves within the national economic plans.

And crucially we must do all of this in a sustainable way.

Of course the economic crisis and the fierce competition from other parts of the world complicate things. And if sixty percent of Europeans prefer the sea for their holidays, seven out of 10 take their trips between June and September!

The impact of this seasonality on the ground is profound: entire communities with widely fluctuating populations and job markets, sometimes cut off by poor connectivity, and therefore clearly unattractive to business investors. This must change.

Challenges and opportunities therefore.

And in order to help Member States confront them all, my fellow Commissioner Antonio Tajani and I are preparing a Communication on Coastal and Maritime Tourism to be released by the end of the year.

We are determined to bring lasting growth to our coastal destinations; and we will do that by ensuring that private investments have favourable conditions, by promoting public-private cooperation and by boosting the benefits inherent to trans-regional and transnational cooperation.

Of course the key players remain the regions and the private sector, and this is why we are all in the room today. We must work together. In the next two days we will be listening to your ideas.

Today's event is in fact your opportunity to feed into the strategy and I urge you all to have your say.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Coastal and maritime tourism is a pillar of our overarching "Blue Growth" strategy, which aims to support employment and promote growth of maritime sectors.

We know that overall employment in the European maritime economic activities could grow to 7 million jobs by 2020. But how can we make sure it does, under the combined pressure of the economic crisis and of global competition?

We prioritize the areas which carry the strongest promise for growth, innovation and employment.

Tourism is one of them, but renewable energy, aquaculture, seabed mining and blue biotechnology also carry that promise. Sea bed mining for example is going to get new impetus through our research funding. All these initiatives though, need a rational use of marine space. The issue of space is crucial. Just think that offshore wind energy is expected to grow by 30% by 2020.

Also, a lot of other new technologies and investment opportunities will compete for space.

Our recent proposal for Maritime Spatial Planning and Integrated Coastal Zone Management will make it easier for Member States and Coastal Regions to manage emerging activities while leaving space for existing ones.

Operators will know what developments are possible, where and with what licensing obligations. This certainty will be conducive to investment.

In parallel, we also want to make sure that funding opportunities are maximised. For the next funding period, running from next year to 2020, we want to streamline programmes and make sure they meet the actual needs of the end users. If, for instance, in the face of dwindling stocks a fishing community wants to reconvert to angling or other forms of tourism, we will strongly encourage that. Last month we have given our guidelines for aquaculture. We urge the Member States to come with national plans that can be founded properly.

For coastal tourism, we must ensure that all available funding opportunities are clear and easily accessible to all good projects.

Our brand-new Action Plan for the Atlantic Ocean and the maritime Strategy for the Adriatic and Ionian Seas will help in this sense. The exchange of experience and know-how across sea-basins will lead to new, concrete ideas for funding – which I'm sure can be replicated to other regions as well.

Once again, Ladies and Gentlemen,

The key to success lies in our capacity to work together.

This is why we are here today. I hope that today's discussions will bring new ideas to the table, and I encourage each of you to give us feedback and suggestions that can help us match the real needs of the maritime sectors.

Again, thank you for being here and a warm thank you also to our hosts and co-organisers for their exquisite hospitality.

I wish you all a good and productive European Maritime Day 2013.

Consultez la source sur Veille info tourisme: [Discours Défis et opportunités pour le](#)

Discours Défis et opportunités pour le tourisme maritime et côtier

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