



EUROPEAN TRAVEL COMMISSION

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

€114 BILLION PRIZE FOR VISA REFORM

London, 3rd November 2015. The European Travel Commission (ETC), the organisation responsible for promoting Europe as a destination, today called for reform of the way visas are granted to leisure and business travellers and it said the benefit to Europe's economy could be in excess of €114 billion in export revenue and 615,000 new jobs by 2020.

At a press conference at the World Travel Market in London, **Peter De Wilde**, President of ETC, said: *"Europe is losing share of global tourism arrivals and our visa regimes are a contributory factor in this decline. It is the view of ETC that liberalisation of Europe's visa regimes for leisure travellers is essential for the Continent to maximise its share of the benefit from global tourism growth in the decades ahead"*. And he called for immediate action: *"It is within our power to change this and to improve our tourism competitiveness. At a time when Europe needs to create new employment, particularly amongst our youth, pro-tourism policy initiatives can deliver a strong return on investment and can do so in a relatively short timeframe"*.

Europe's visa regimes are among the most restrictive in the world according to the United Nation's World Tourism Organisation (UNWTO). ETC estimates that 56% of visitors from non-European markets that arrived in European destinations in 2014 required a visa. These visitors from the largely long-haul source markets are amongst the most valuable because they tend to stay longer and spend more per day than the average visitor.

Mark Henry, Vice-President and Coordinator of ETC's visa advocacy work, presented a range of practical initiatives to deliver improved openness in ways that avoid compromising security or immigration control. ETC's recommendations for action include: First is the adoption of "Best Practice" improvements for the current available visa types to ease the administrative burden for tourists, such as the implementation of simplified application processes, reduced application fees, and lengthening visa validity. Second is the greater deployment of new visa types, in particular greater adoption of electronic visas and visas on arrival. And third is the continued growth in the list of nations whose citizens can access Europe visa-free.

To assess the potential impact on the economy, ETC briefed **Tourism Economics** to undertake an analysis of the impact for Continental Europe¹ of each of these three degrees of liberalisation (benchmarked against no reform) for 10 priority source markets, which together account for more than half (53%) of the visa-constrained visits to European destinations. These priority markets are: China, Russia, India, Turkey, Indonesia, Belarus, Tunisia, Saudi Arabia, South Africa and Thailand. They were selected for their size and growth potential as well as their population's propensity to travel.

¹ The Continental Europe consists of the EU nations and other Schengen member states, plus European microstates and countries in the Balkans, which are neither EU member states nor members of the Schengen Area, accounting for a total of 39 countries.

David Goodger, Tourism Economics' Director, explained that adopting the 'Best Practice' policies for the ten profiled markets would generate 3.4 million additional arrivals to European destinations each year by 2020. This would involve a cumulative total of €18.3 billion in associated tourism spending over the period to 2020 and 95,000 new jobs.

Offering new visa types, such as an eVisa or visa on arrival, would further reduce the burden on travellers and would help fuel stronger economic growth in subsequent years. The impact would be 8.5 million more annual visitor arrivals, a cumulative total of €45 billion in additional spending and more than 200,000 additional jobs over the period. The largest benefits would flow from a complete visa waiver for these markets, in which case 21.8 million additional arrivals per year would be expected. Over the period to 2020, this would generate €114 billion in new export revenue and 615,000 additional jobs, including direct, indirect and induced employment.

The Benefits of Visa Liberalisation for Europe (Cumulatively 2015-2020)

	For the Schengen Area	For the EU28	For Wider Europe
Best practice	10.9 million additional arrivals, spending €14.4 billion, generating 66,000 jobs	12.3 million additional arrivals, spending €16.3 billion, generating 83,000 jobs	13.3 million additional arrivals, spending €18.3 billion, generating 95,000 jobs
New visa types	28.3 million additional arrivals, spending €37.1 billion, generating 181,000 jobs	30.9 million additional arrivals, spending €40.5 billion, generating 213,000 jobs	33.1 million additional arrivals, spending €45.2 billion, generating 238,000 jobs
Visa-free travel	72.6 million additional arrivals, spending €94.6 billion, generating 477,000 jobs	79 million additional arrivals, spending €103.1 billion, generating 557,000 jobs	84.1 million additional arrivals, spending €113.8 billion, generating 615,000 jobs

Source: Tourism Economics

The **World Travel & Tourism Council** (WTTC), which represents big business in the Travel & Tourism industry, joined with ETC to encourage governments to embrace visa facilitation, proactively. **Helen Marano**, Vice-President Government and Industry Affairs, WTTC, said that “*visa facilitation is central to stimulating economic growth and job creation through tourism in Europe and worldwide.*” WTTC has studied the potential impact of visa reform in the G20 economies and

assessed the potential to create 3.1 million additional direct tourism-related jobs and 5.1 million jobs overall. The G20 could see growth in tourist arrivals of 16% and an increase in international tourism receipts of 21% in just three years. This represents a gain of 112 million additional international tourists, spending US\$206 billion. Marano also called for collaboration between the public and private sectors to achieve the potential benefits. *“It is of significant importance that our sector speaks with one voice to ensure messaging and policy are aligned when we are working towards smoother visa processes for the purpose of business and leisure travel”.*

Mark Henry concluded: *“The prize on offer is significant, up to 84 million new visitor arrivals across wider Europe by year 2020. If we are interested in growing our share of global tourism and capturing the substantial economic benefits, there is only one correct path to follow – that of increased openness. The introduction of the Schengen Area in 1995 undoubtedly contributed significantly to boosting travel within Europe and we need to see it extended and reformed to make it much easier than it is currently for leisure tourists and other legitimate travellers from long-haul markets to come here and to come back again”.*

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Note to editors:

The European Travel Commission is an association of National Tourism Organisations (NTOs). It was created in 1948 to promote Europe as a tourist destination to the long-haul markets outside of Europe, originally in the USA and later in Canada, Latin America and Asia. It currently has 32 member NTOs, including 8 from outside the European Union.

Europe is the world's no. 1 tourist destination with 588 million international arrivals in 2014 and more than 50% of the market share of worldwide tourism.

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For further information: ETC's corporate website www.etc-corporate.org is aimed at industry, government and educational personnel interested in tourism to Europe. Tourists seeking travel-specific information and ideas are directed to ETC's consumer portal www.visiteurope.com.