

## **Contribution to the PES Manifesto** *Support social tourism*

In a context where all European member states face important changes in their demography, characterised by an increased number of elderly, it is the role of European Socialists to promote new policies which foster solidarity between generations.

For this purpose, the PES supports at the European level, through an initiative launched by several MEPs, a project of social tourism. Aimed at giving a concrete answer to the senior citizens which cannot afford to leave on holidays, this project consists in financing, through European funds, the travel and hosting of seniors in different tourism structures across Europe.

The PES support to this project directly contributes to the EU strategy to ensure a sustainable development of tourism in its economic, social and environmental dimensions. Indeed, it favours access to holidays for seniors in a way that meets their specific needs and demands, but it also improves the economic profitability of the tourism sector, mainly by developing off-season tourism, in particular in regions where this sector suffers from a high seasonality.

By facilitating the travelling of seniors between September and April, the project would therefore favour the creation of new and better jobs over the whole year, and would facilitate the protection of natural and cultural sites by a better management of tourist flows.

The implementation of such projects would be an opportunity to promote partnerships between the public sector, the private sector and the social economy sector, and would constitute a new field for cooperation between member states.

The project is inspired by the success of similar programs in Spain, Portugal and Great-Britain. The Spanish experience proved that the state participation in financing the expenses for these trips enabled it to get back on its investment, thanks to the savings done in unemployment compensations, social security contributions and the collection of taxes resulting from this increased activity. Moreover, the improvement of the seniors' health and quality of life resulting from these trips enabled additional savings in health expenses.

**This ambitious project of social tourism, which is supported as a PES priority for the 2009 EU budget, is a positive illustration of the Socialists' commitment to foster a deeper dialogue between generations and between Europeans, by facilitating cultural exchanges, and to promote a more sustainable and high quality tourism affordable to all EU citizens.**

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