

# Committee of the Regions presents “European Citizens Travel Card”

Hanspeter Wagner, rapporteur on tourism for the European Committee of the Regions (CoR), attended the informal Council of EU Tourism Ministers. At the meeting in Sofia on 13 February, he called for better coverage of tourism in the EU budget and for a “European Citizens Travel Card”.

*“Tourism is the third largest industry in the EU, a real job and growth engine, and certainly a priority issue. For many EU regions, the tourism industry is vital for economic, social and territorial cohesion. Tourism can prevent rural depopulation and demographic imbalances. All of these factors need to be given more visibility”,* said **Hanspeter Wagner** (AT/ EPP), rapporteur for the CoR opinion on “ [Tourism as a driving force for regional cooperation across the EU](#) ” and Mayor of Breitenwang in Tyrol.

Mr Wagner advocated a stronger anchoring of tourism in the EU’s regional policy, in EU agricultural policy and in EU rural development programmes after 2020. For cross-border tourism projects, a separate budget line should be included in the annual EU budget.

*“In the tourism industry the share of SMEs is particularly high. They pay the most taxes and create the most jobs. In my home region 90% of all tourism businesses are family businesses. These SMEs need our support to be innovative. Together, we must ensure that EU cohesion policy remains a well-funded EU investment policy, but see that it invests more in innovation and is massively simplified”,* **Mr Wagner** stated.

Mr Wagner also underlined that it should not be underestimated what intra-European tourism can do for European citizenship. “ *Tourism can contribute to what we are currently desperately looking for: a positive attitude towards Europe, the European Union and to a greater openness and understanding for other cultures, states and regions* ,” he said. Concrete initiatives bringing tangible benefits to traveling EU citizens and highlighting the benefits of European citizenship would be greatly needed.

The European Committee of the Regions proposes launching a free digital European Citizens Travel Card that offers EU citizens traveling in the EU discounted prices on public transport, museums, etc, particularly if the infrastructure was financed by EU funds. The travel card scheme would not involve producing a new card. Member States, regions and cities that already have their own discount cards could voluntarily join the EU Travel Card programme in the form of an app, offering a special bonus to EU citizens through their cards. The app would also provide useful information on EU consumer rights, EU passenger rights or healthcare for EU citizens in other Member States.

**Further information:**

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