



International Bureau of Social Tourism

News release

Launching of the Regional and Local Authorities Network of Social and Fair Tourism

The International Bureau of Social Tourism (BITS) and the Community of the Garlaban-Huveaune-Sainte-Beaume (GHB) launched the Regional and Local Authorities Network on December 1st 2006. Almost 100 participants from several regions representing 16 different countries took part at this event organized at the Committee of the Regions in Brussels.

The network will allow to support a partnership between the actors whose mission is to contribute to the development of access to tourism and holidays for the greatest number of people - young people, families, seniors – within the framework of a sustainable development of the tourism activity.

Norberto Tonini, President of the BITS, Alain Belviso, President of the Community of GHB, Jaén Palacios, Delegate of the Government of the Balearic Islands and Member of the Committee of the Regions as well as Alan Vella, Expert at the Tourism Unit of the European Commission, Patrick Bernard-Brunet, Policy analyst at the Regional Policy Directorate General of the European Commission and Juan Mendoza, Advisor at the European Economic and Social Committee spoke at the opening session. Following a presentation the objectives and themes of the network, participants were given the opportunity to make comments and proposal about their expectations of this network.

The main objective of this new international network is to support a partnership and the exchange of good practices between the local and regional stakeholders acting in the sector of social and fair tourism. That relates at the same time to the initiatives which facilitate holiday access to the citizens of the regions and local communities concerned; the organization of tourist infrastructure in these areas – whether it concerns accommodation and facilities of social tourism or cultural and environmental activities; and the contribution of social and fair tourism as regards to job creation, social cohesion and economic growth.

The decision to launch this network is the result of a meeting between public authorities in charge of tourism at the local and regional level, organized by the BITS during the last World Congress on Social Tourism held in Aubagne, France in May 2006.

The network is open to local and regional authorities, whether members or non-members of the BITS, including regions, departments, provinces and municipalities competent in the tourism or social sector. The Community of (GHB), located in Aubagne, France, will assume the Presidency and will take in charge the technical secretariat of this network.