



International Organization for Migration (IOM)



International Labour Organization

EU-China Dialogue on Migration and Mobility Support Project 支持中欧人员往来和移民领域对话项目

Training Workshop

“European Approaches to Tourism Management for Travel Agencies and Tourism Authorities in Provinces”
11 September 2015, the Marriot Hotel, Guangzhou, Guangdong province

Summary Report



On 11 September 2015, IOM held a half-day Training Workshop *“European Approaches to Tourism Management for Travel Agencies and Tourism Authorities in Provinces”* in Guangzhou, Guangdong province. Organized with the support of the Italian Consulate General in Guangzhou and other EU Member States’ representations in Guangzhou, the training workshop is the first activity carried out within the framework of the ‘EU-China Dialogue on Migration and Mobility Support Project’.

Strengthening and promoting the provision of safe and legal migration and mobility opportunities is one of the focus areas of the ‘EU-China Dialogue on Migration and Mobility Support Project’. The outbound tourism from China to Europe is growing in figures, a major segment of which comes from provinces. In order to establish sustainable and responsible mobility and to benefit from the economic gain of tourism, it is essential for the EU and China to strengthen cooperation and improve tourism management. In line with these expected outcomes, the training aimed at contributing to improved management of tourism from China to Europe by enhancing the management capacities of the provincial tourism authorities/travel agencies.



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The training workshop used an interactive approach and was mainly focussed on exchange of best practice and shared information on Common ‘Schengen’ visa policy, European up-to-date visa application practices and developments, the roll-out of the Visa Information System (VIS) and its implications on operational management of tourism, the Approved Destination Status (ADS) visa application process and other issues relevant to visa processing. The objective was to bring practical solutions to provincial tourism authorities/travel agencies on implementing ADS-supported tourism. Additionally, it offered a platform of enhanced cooperation and exchange of information between the EU Consulates and the provincial tourism authorities/travel agencies with the aim of reducing the risks of irregular migration.

The training invited various actors dealing with tourism in Guangzhou, considered as one of the major contributing provinces in outbound tourism. 16 representatives from the EU MS Consulates, 30 Chinese Travel Agency representatives, as well as the China National Tourism Administration (CNTA) and the Delegation of the European Union to China and Mongolia attended the Workshop.

Opening Remarks

The session chaired by Ms. Laura Egoli, Consul General, Consulate General of Italy in Guangzhou, with opening remarks from Mr. Dong Jiabao, Director, Guangdong Tourism Institute, Guangdong Tourism Administration (on behalf of China National Tourism Administration (CNTA)), Mr. Marcin Grabciec, First Secretary, Delegation of the European Union to China and Mongolia and Mr. Pär Liljert, Head of IOM Liaison Office in China.

Mr. Pär Liljert, **Head of IOM China Office** introduced briefly the ‘EU-China Dialogue on Migration and Mobility Support Project’, with financial support from the Partnership Instrument (PI), under which the training activity was carried out. He explained the objectives of the training, improving tourism management between EU and China as well as IOM’s approach in achieving those objectives through information-sharing, encouragement of inter-agency cooperation and direct exchange by inviting EU MS Consulates and Travel Agencies/Tourism authorities to jointly address irregular migration through misuse of ADS systems through introducing preventive mechanism as well as the sanction mechanisms in place. Two similar training workshops will soon be held in Chongqing and Chengdu, he informed the participants.

Mr. Marcin Grabciec of the **Delegation of the European Union in Beijing** pointed out in his opening remarks that 600 million tourists visit Europe every year and that it is important to rationalize tourism management between EU and China. He reflected on new procedures for the Visa Information System (VIS) and its introduction in China effective 12 October this year. All visitors to Schengen area will be required to provide their biometric data when applying for a visa. The recourse to biometric technology will protect visa applicants better against identity theft and prevent false identifications. This will also allow to establish more easily the lawful use of previous visas and applicants' travel history (e.g. when applying for a multiple-entry visa). The implementation of the VIS is part of the gradual worldwide deployment, which began in 2011.



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Mr. Dong Jiabao from **Guangdong Tourism Administration** expressed appreciation to the organizers, emphasized on the importance of a dialogue between the travel agents and the EU representatives, and presented an overview on outbound tourism from China in 2014 as well as tourism figures from Guangzhou to Europe.

Presentations

Several **EU MS Consulates** presented European approaches to visa processing and issuance, ADS system and operations as well as measures to prevent irregular migration through misuse of ADS. **Mr. Daniel Panfilo**, Visa Officer, Consulate General of Italy highlighted that in 2014 the Italian Consulate General had issued 254,000 visas. **Ms. Prudence Plessis**, Head of Visa Section, Consulate General of France, presented France's approach on preventive measures and sanctions to address irregular migration through misuse of ADS and stressed on the importance of 'return checks'.

Mr. MENG Dingyi, Manager of European Division, GZL International Travel Service Ltd., on behalf of the Chinese travel agencies, provided an overview of operations at ADS –accredited travel agencies.

Questions and Answers

The workshop allowed for an open exchange between all participants. Travel agency representatives raised numerous questions and shared their thoughts, many of which were technical and practical questions related to the roll-out of the VIS in China and its implication on visa application process.

Some travel agency representatives foresee a decrease in the number of applications due to an increase in costs, with many applicants needing to travel a certain distance to get to the nearest Visa Application Centers (VACs). However, it was emphasized that examples from other countries where the VIS has been implemented, and from countries that already require biometric data, show that the number of applicants have steadily increased.

There was a general consensus that applications for Schengen visas might see a drop in applications after 12 October 2015 but it was foreseen to stabilize after a certain period of time.

Technical options to facilitate the visa application were discussed and including the potential possibility of using 'mobile kits'. However, at this stage no decision had been taken in this regard. Other questions were related to if family members are allowed to apply for ADS at different locations within China. There seemed to be some variations amongst the Schengen consulates on this.

The point was raised that the request for more VACs to be established in various in China had been made at several occasions in the past but until recently such requests had not been favored positively by Chinese authorities. Only recently 15 new locations have been approved for VACs.



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The dissemination of Information

To help improve operations of the Chinese provincial travel agencies, 30 Handbooks on ADS-related issues including VIS, ADS Sanctions Manual, Schengen Visa Application Form, the MOU between CNTA and the EU other relevant information were disseminated by IOM to participating Chinese travel agencies. Other disseminated information comprised visibility material of the ‘EU-China Dialogue on Migration and Mobility Support Project’ including project brochure, newsletter, promotional notepads etc.

Evaluation questionnaires

31 Chinese and 9 European participants filled in the Evaluation questionnaire. Overall impression is very positive. All agreed that the training encouraged participation and exchange and 37 acknowledged that they improved their understanding on specific topics covered in the training. 33 approved the objectives of the training were achieved.

The information on VIS and its launch in China, direct exchange with the Consulates during the Q and A session were highly appreciated. Travel agencies demanded guidelines on the implementation of VIS and the collection of biometric data. The importance of Visa Centers in provinces was pointed out. Some travel agencies predicted there might be a decrease in demands for practical reasons, especially for those travelers living faraway from VACs.

Annexes:

Annex 1: Agenda

Annex 2: List of participants

Annex 3: Evaluation Summary