1. Introduction to the workshop

**Charles Etienne Bélanger**, Director at the International Social Tourism Organisation (ISTO), introduces the meeting and welcomes everyone. He explains that the Senior market will be rising in the years to come, as we can see already with several operators who have developed packages for this target group and with different governments who are coming up with specific programs. Most famous is IMSERSO in Spain which makes over one million seniors able to travel in the low season and contribute to maintain jobs in the tourism sector. Accessible tourism for people with disabilities has also known an important development over the last years and can contribute to senior tourism.

In this workshop, different examples of senior programs will be presented. The purpose of this workshop is to present the potential of EU for senior tourism and to identify, from ongoing programs and best practices at national level, the mechanisms that would allow to develop the market for senior tourism to and from the EU Member States and South America, taking into account the seasonality issue.

For historic and cultural reasons, there is a long tradition of tourism activity between South America and Europe, especially with Portugal and Spain. Figures show there is a good basis for further development with Brazil and Chili as the main markets in senior tourism.

2. Policies and programs of the European Union

**The EU Senior Tourism Initiative**

**Oscar Almendros-Bonis**, National Expert at the Tourism Unit – DG Enterprise & Industry of the European Commission presents the EU Senior Tourism Initiative. Senior tourism has a huge development potential, and especially in the EU. This growth potential is there because of
demographic changes: European people are growing older, which is a very important aspect with what we have to deal. So there is a big market for the operations of the European Commission.

The Commission expects to increase transnational flows for senior tourists facilitating the design and development of tourism products in Europe. Moreover, the Commission wants to expand their network by aiming at an international level as well (e.g. improve senior tourism in China, USA and Brazil). Contacts with a national agency in China and a very important private foundation in USA, who deal with both tourism promotion and elderly, have already been made. This workshop could serve also as an example of a potential cooperation with Brazil if there is a critical mass of public and private partners willing to cooperate.

Goals:

- To learn from local, regional and national experiences and best practices.
- Create networks of cooperation.
- The maintenance of Private Public Partnerships (PPP’s): make the private sector aware of the importance of senior tourism, mainly in the low season.

Regarding senior tourism, the Commission carried out already the Calypso project: this must enhance tourism for whoever needs it the most during the low season. Since 2012, Calypso has been reshaped to the Senior Initiative, which will lead to a new strategy for senior tourism. One of the main actions was the launch of the first call for proposals addressed to seniors, published in June 2013 to co-finance European transnational tourism flows in the low season for senior citizens. The Commission is re-defining the European policy, and wants to maintain Europe as the main tourist destination.

The new European Parliament will support the Commission when it comes to senior tourism as tourism is extremely relevant. The Commission is also facing a transition moment and there is a need to build on existing experiences to set up a common narrative on this particular issue in order to get a strong impact in the Commission’s agenda. To this aim, actions at EU level shall provide evidence that tourism can contribute to growth and employment. New cooperation models are needed and could be developed through a multi-stakeholder working group based on senior tourism development. To back this up, we need to develop and evaluate specific projects, along with statistical information on seniors trends, needs and behaviors, with a specific focus on seasonality.

A group of experts will develop guidelines for future senior tourism and what it means for the market. Out of this expert group, which is an inter-sectorial cooperation, an action plan is developed. What are the priorities and the strategies for the Senior initiative?

Action plan:

- Boost the demand in the EU and internationally (by studies, analysis, etc.).
- Diversification of the supply (exchange good practices on accessibility and quality issues, B2B processes and development of tourism products).
- Promotion (international events, European awards and internationalization of pilot projects): specify to this niche market.
- Government and finance (create a monitoring group: EUSTIB, search for funding and building on synergies and coordination with other DG services on active ageing within the Commission).
Both themes **accessibility and seniors** are very important as there are around 80 million people with a disability in the EU. Accessibility also means employment opportunities within the senior population. Nonetheless, some questions could be raised: how can we map out the opportunities? How could we involve all public and private partners into this initiative? How to look at the different age ranges? A specification of the niche market is welcome.

**The eCalypso platform and SENTour project**

**Luc Gobin**, Director of ISTO Europe, presents the eCalypso and the SENTour project.

**eCalypso objectives:**

- To help those less fortunate to go on vacation especially during low season.
- Encourage exchanges between different Member States and Regions of the European Union.
- 4 target groups: youngsters, families, disabled and seniors.
- Encourage tourism in the low season.
- Promotes lesser known destinations.
- Encourage the creation of more jobs in the long term by expanding tourism sector needs beyond the high season.

**The platform** ([www.ecalypso.eu](http://www.ecalypso.eu)):

- Supports organizations, groups and operators who plan, organize and provide travel experiences to specific target groups with quick and easy access to offers and packages across Europe.
- Provides an opportunity for tourism service providers to cooperate with each other.
- Aims to educate and inform stakeholders to combat seasonality or attract new market segments through multiple benchmarks for social tourism.
- The meeting place of sale for the large community of European Actors of social tourism.

**SENTour Connect project objectives:**

- Study and develop mechanisms supporting transnational stakeholder cooperation.
- Improve tourism seasonality patterns across Europe.
- Create innovative and sustainable transnational tourism packages for seniors.
- Strengthen public-private partnerships.

**Facilitate transnational tourism exchanges for seniors in the low season within the European domestic market.**

The project will first investigate the existing senior market. Second, packages will be created and integrated in the eCalypso program, and these will lead to the set-up of 3 pilot exchanges to further evaluate these packages.
3. National Programs in South America

Program: Travel More at your Best Age (Brazil)
By Rafaela Levay Lehman, General Coordinator of Incentive Travel Programs, Brazilian Ministry of Tourism

Objectives:

- The program started in 2007: wants to promote the social inclusion of the elderly (60+) and retired people.
- Provide opportunities to travel and to enjoy the benefits of travel, hereby strengthening the tourism sector in Brazil.
- The main target is to travel in low season as retired people can do this easily and to strengthen their travel habits and increase social inclusion.

2007-2010: 1st edition of the program

- Restricted to the low season.
- Travel in groups to predefined destinations.
- Work with packages, only sold through travel agencies.
- Included in the holiday: 1 companion.
- 599,000 packages were sold (R$ 531.15 million).

2013-2014: 2nd edition of the program (www.viajamais.gov.br)

- Creation of the website www.viajamais.gov.br with possibility to search for packages.
- Program not restricted to the low season or to closed packages.
- More discounts (min. 20% and also valid for companion, and can be for a product or period) and more benefits for the people.
- Use of newer technologies.
- Try to be economically feasible.
- Easy to buy.
- More destinations, a greater coverage of destinations.
- Also free entrance to events, have extra tours, have all-in option and an upgrade of the room category.

Procedure = the tourist visits www.viajamais.gov.br, chooses an offer and contacts the supplier. Hereby the condition of the elderly/retired is checked (ID, social security, pay check).
- Participating companies have some pre-conditions, they have to carry out a technical cooperation agreement with the Ministry of Tourism. This results in an online catalogue on the website of the Ministry of Tourism.

Advantages for participating organisations:
- A broader penetration on national level
- Increasing of revenues and number of clients
- Attract new customer segments
- Social responsibility
There was no cost to set up the website, only a cost to promote (on a national level) the website on TV, internet, in magazines, newspapers, etc.

Results 2nd edition:

- More than 400,000 peoples accessed the website.
- More than 460 available offers.
- Initially there where 9 companies represented, now there are 107 companies in more than 86 destinations (first only 40 destinations).
- A more open and flexible approach which covers the whole country, with easy access and easy management and with a larger credit margin.

Difficulties:

- Determining the amount of sales.
- The World Cup and the election period.
- Financing the project.
- In the future: focus on small businesses and less consolidated destinations.

Holiday Program for the Third Age (Chile)

By Maria Francesca Retamal Wiedmaier, Programme Officer in SERNATUR

- This program is an initiative of the National Tourism Service of Chile
- Offers subsidized tourist packages for seniors in the medium and low season to various destinations in the country

Structure of the packages:

- Transport (bus and plane as Chile is a big country)
- Accommodation
- Meals (full board)
- Recreational activities and optional tours
- Excursions
- Health care
- Travel Assistance Insurance

Beneficiaries:

- Intermediaries (adults over 60 years, retired people, people with a disability, companions)
- Direct (accommodations, restaurants, transportation, travel agencies)
- Indirect (destinations, local businesses, craftsmen)

Concrete implementation of the program: SERNATUR which is the technical partners and has a contractual relationship with the Tour Operators approves the tourism businesses who are under subcontract with the Tour Operators.

- All the target groups are in the database of the government (disadvantaged, disabled, etc.). Based on this info, new packages are created.
- The program also promotes senior travel in the own region as people often don’t know their own neighborhood (turned out to be very successful).
Results: a total of 405.289 tourists and 2.690.512 overnight stays (with a total investment of $152.701.639 in the program). People are pleased about the program: 60% of the seniors made friends on the trip, and a lot of people meet again after. Communication remains important: aiming specifically for senior population as seniors are not interested in normal communication channels.

Tourism Program for the elderly (Uruguay)
Paula Moran, Product Manager for Senior Tourism Programs, Ministry of Sports and Tourism

The National System of Social Tourism

- The National System of Social Tourism in Uruguay is a set of programs, coordinated by the Ministry of Tourism and Sport who runs these in cooperation with public and private agencies (such as the Social Insurance Bank, the Ministry of Education and Culture, the National Youth Institute, local governments, etc.). With these PPP’s they can reach the end consumer with a good product.
- Each agency implements its programs, all responsible for different levels of coordination. Because of the involvement of the Ministry, more tourist services are used.
- The Ministry only works with complete high quality packages that include transport, accommodation, meals, tours and cultural activities (involvement of the entire value chain of the tourism industry).
- Social inclusion is an important factor! (going to exhibitions, theatre, etc.).
- In 2013 more than 60,000 people participated in social tourism programs.
- The Social Insurance Bank is an important partner: they have different holiday centers (San José, Río Negro, Piriápolis, Lavelleja) with 22,836 beneficiaries and different programs for social tourism (for students, workers, youth, seniors).

Tourism program for the elderly

- A program started in 2012 aimed at seniors and retired people from different income levels.
- There is no income limit for participation: open to all.
- Format of a trip: 3 days and 2 nights (includes accommodation, half pension, transfers & tours).
- Subsidized: between 30-60% of the package.
- Cost for the user: 110 US$ (for an average package).

Colonia de Vacaciones Raigón

- Scope: social tourism for retirees and pensioners of the Social Insurance Bank (SIB) and institutions that serve people with disabilities who are attached to SIB
- Several pacts: also children and youth from different organisations such as ANEP, CES, ... and functionaries with their family and childcare of SIB
- In 2005 the summer camp Martín O Machiñena (Raigón) joins the National System of social tourism.
- In 2008: first heated pool opens with full accessibility for disabled people.
In 2010: first accommodation for disabled people (special equipment for total accessibility)
  - This summer camp is the only public institution in the country accessible for all
  - High quality services (incl. transport, accommodation, activities, etc.)
  - Sold in travel agencies

Cooperation with National Union of Rural Workers so they can enjoy their right on holiday and recreation as well.

All the government departments of Uruguay have the responsibility to spread the programs and activities, together with the private sector. New destinations and facilities are permanently added.

4. International exchanges: current practices

INATEL Foundation (Portugal)

Fernando Ribeiro Mendes, President of INATEL Foundation

INATEL exists already for 80 years and has changed a lot over the past years. It is a public foundation under the supervision of the Ministry of Solidarity, Employment and Social Security which promote tourist activities. It has 185,000 individual members and 2000 collective members and has a network of hotels, campsites, sport parks etc.

The Portuguese population is an older one today: Portugal has 10 million inhabitants of which 2 million are seniors. (even more if 55 years of age is included). INATEL has experience in senior tourism since 1995. Through their programs, they want to improve the quality of life and increase the inclusion of older people. INATEL also wants to increase the use of hotel capacity in the low season and create more jobs in the areas.

In the senior program of INATEL more than 700 000 people (65+) participated since the beginning. Note that Senior Tourism is not only for people with a low income, it is about social inclusion. INATEL does have specific ‘tourism for all’ programs which is for people with a lower income.

- Senior tourism on a transnational level: IMSERSO in Spain and SESC in Brazil are the two most important. These partnerships are based on the concept of proximity in monitoring groups, facilitated by the similarity of the languages. There is a very close assistant with these groups during all the phases of the program.

IMSERSO: exchange between Portugal and Spain, but the demand will differ as countries are different from size. On transnational level, the difficulty is the financial crisis which has reduced tourism movement. No level of subsidies by the State when it comes to offering senior tourism for lower income groups. There was a complete cut of subsidies which had an impact on the exchange of the IMSERSO programs.
Challenges for increasing transnational partnership for senior tourism:

- Developing tourist itineraries: Senior tourism in both countries demands knowledge of aspects of culture that are different in countries. Brazil-Portugal: hotels are different (look at hygiene) and this demands preparation. Analyze the packages is very important and sources of funding for this could be useful.
- Transnational events in the fields of culture, active ageing, intergenerational aspects (the elderly want to interact with other age groups).
- Transnational thematic campaigns to improve the quality of life for seniors.

Brazilian Association of Tour Operators - BRAZTOA

Marco Ferraz, President of BRAZTOA

Braztoa has 90 companies members who received 5.9 million passengers the last year, with 4 million trips to Brazil. The focus lies on international destinations. Senior packages: 20% out of all destination choices, they prefer to go to the USA.

Most travelers are single, and 19% travels as a group, which includes senior travelers. Brazilians dream of going to Europe (no visa needed) so we see it as a strong relationship. There are 23,5 million seniors in Brazil so as an association representing the tour operators, Braztoa wants to have options for them. A lot of people are still travelling by bus but there is a trend towards air transportation.

There exist special fares for seniors but the high season is difficult to negotiate fees. Seniors who travel in group have 1 leader, and this is the one we need to attract. Seniors want to mingle with other age groups, not only with other seniors.

The theme of religious destinations should be explored as it represents a real potential for the development of senior tourism.

5. Recommendations to set up mechanisms

Veronica Gomez, Director of ISTO Americas presented some preliminary recommendations. There are some common points within all these experiences. Most important: the growth of the senior share of the population, not only in Europe, but also in the Americas. Further, we see that Social Tourism is not only for the poor. The population is growing, and they demand more custom-made services so that they can travel comfortably. The importance is to improve the quality of life of seniors, from when they leave on holiday until they return. All the presentations understand who seniors are and what they require. Another important issue is to engage all the value chain in the process in order to involve local, regional and federal authorities as well as private operators, businesses (highlighting the development of proper CSR schemes) and PYME’s.

We have to deal with seasonality. Here, the economic factor is also present of course as well as the physical accessibility: seniors need special arrangements for their access. There is also a need for
improvement for cultural tourism in a wider sense, and the economic status of this population shouldn’t be taken into account.

It’s obvious that there is a need for more public policies, to benefit the senior citizen’s quality of life; this can be a synergy between Europe and the Americas at governmental level as well as the common approach on public/private partnerships. **Collaboration is promising!**

The projects presented during this panel work on very similar patterns and some of them are quite inspirational for others on another scale or location. Exchange of knowledge is thus an important step towards further international cooperation.