

Involvement in the eCalypso platform (www.ecalypso.eu)

The eCalypso platform aims at bringing the offer & demand within social tourism in one location which would allow for quick and simple transactions between the 2 (offer & demand). Furthermore it can also give the opportunity for parallel tourism services providers to find and cooperate with each other. In the case of the of different services providers can promote their tourism packages completely detailed with prices and attract groups, organizations, operators to purchase and/or promote the offers. Another possibility is that i.e. Coach touring service providers and Accommodation providers can liaise with other members of the platform which may be able to offer parallel services such as activities, accommodation and meals.

Through the eCalypso platform, a service provider or Social Tourism Professionals can strike accords with hotels, restaurants and other tourism professionals in order to construct a full package offer. In turn this package can be placed onto the eCalypso platform and bought directly from the Platform (transaction directly between the service provider and buyer; the eCalypso platform is an intermediary simplifying and liaising the 2 parties) by member organizations, institutions, groups, operators and other tourism professionals specifically related to Social Tourism.

What is therefore sought out is that different operators may during the project phase of the ECalypso platform be able to place their products and promote them on the platform and possibly be able to consult with other service providers to further build their business operations. Furthermore they will all have access to a public section which offers multiple section of information regarding best practices, partnerships and other useful information.

During the period of the project this service is completely free of charge and will only require the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) and Ethical charter and complying with the requests therein. This basically means respecting the vision and scope of the platform and reporting to the eCalypso platform team their critiques, comments or appreciation for the tools within the platform.

When the project comes to a close, any service provider that has been supportive and assisted in the building up of the eCalypso platform will be given privileged treatment once it officially opens “for business” on the 01.07.2013

Another section of the Platform may also provide product ideas, Good Practices to improve services and other data that may prove useful to the entrepreneur aiming at the specific target groups: Seniors, youth, families and People with disabilities.

The Conception of STEEP

The Social Tourism European Exchanges Platform (STEER) project was launched in April 2012 with the objective to create an informative and transactional platform that would link the supply and demand behind social tourism, tourism service providers and social organizations throughout the European Union. The eCalypso platform aims at facilitating transnational travel & tourism in Europe for four target groups: seniors, youth, families and people with disabilities.

The STEER project will run until the 30 June 2013 and will have a beta version of the platform run in the last 4 months of the project. At the end of the project, it is foreseen that the Platform be associated to a new non-profit structure with a specific European Scope.

This STEER Project is now carried out by a consortium of seven European Organizations active in Social Tourism and led by the International Social Tourism Organization (OITS-ISTO).

The eCalypso platform intends to support organizations, groups and operators who plan, organize and provide travel experiences to the specific target groups by offering them quick and easy access to offers and packages from across Europe. This will be done through the unique strategy of having tourism stakeholders market and sell their exclusively designed products right from the platform.

Beyond being a marketplace for supply and demand the eCalypso platform will also contain a wealth of knowledge through multiple references on Social tourism as well as contain an array of publications, best practices, news and background data on European initiatives in the field. Ultimately it is the meeting place for the vast community of European social tourism stakeholders, a place for all to interact and market their services.

Visit: www.ecalypso.eu

THE EU CALYPSO INITIATIVE

To better understand the ECalypso platform, here is a short outline of the Calypso initiative which has been the drive for the creation of the platform:

The Calypso initiative helps disadvantaged people go on holiday – while at the same time increasing tourism in the low season.

It works by promoting exchanges between different countries/areas.

Calypso seeks to support 4 groups:

- underprivileged young adults (aged 18-30)
- families facing financial or other pressures
- people with disabilities
- over-65s and pensioners who cannot afford travel or are daunted by the challenges of organizing a journey.

The Calypso exchange model:

- promotes off-season tourism, particularly in regions where tourism is well developed but highly seasonal
- gives less-known, small or emerging destinations the opportunity to promote themselves to a broader range of European tourists
- encourages longer-lasting employment in the tourism industry by making it possible to extend jobs beyond the peak season.

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