

**Calypso**

means tourism for all



**European Commission**  
Enterprise and Industry



## Extending the tourism season...widening the possibilities to travel

Calypso, the European Commission's three-year action promoting social tourism, opens up travel to underprivileged groups, boosting at the same time local economies and employment opportunities.

Calypso targets four categories: seniors; youths aged 18-30; people with disabilities; and families on low incomes. Its budget was increased in 2011 from €1 million to €1.5 million in recognition of its potential to reach disadvantaged groups, also spreading the tourism season more evenly across the year.

Launched in 2009, Calypso has been greeted enthusiastically by many players – from tourism stakeholders to regional, national and European authorities, as well as NGOs and private companies.

France, Spain and Portugal already have considerable experience in the field, but many countries in northern and eastern Europe are new to the idea and keen to set up structures.

By encouraging low-season, cross-border tourism, Calypso increases travel chances for those who find it difficult to holiday abroad. Regions across Europe rely even more on tourism for their livelihood, but



the months outside school holidays, are lean periods when incomes drop drastically. Travel during these quiet months would greatly assist job creation and economic revival, as well as allow people from abroad to discover new cultures and be able to feel like truly European citizens.

The promotion of social tourism benefits everyone.

## Two busy years

Calypso has made giant strides in its first two years of activity - 2009 and 2010. Twenty-one countries from across Europe took part in a study on social tourism and its positive impact. The study focused on: best practices; establishing country profiles; exploring target groups; suggesting mechanisms for tourism exchanges and ways to sell the scheme; and how to involve the EU countries that hadn't yet taken part.

Among its conclusions, the study recommends:

- Helping EU countries set up structures to manage the scheme
- Creating a Calypso platform to offer a meeting place for the supply and demand sides of tourism.



Over two years, meetings took place in Poland, Romania, Italy, Spain, France and Belgium to discuss how to promote low-season, attractively priced tourism exchanges between EU countries.

As well as setting up a group of experts, Calypso now has its own website <http://ec.europa.eu/enterprise/calypso> and a distinctive logo showing the mythological nymph who welcomed Odysseus on his long trip back home.

A call for proposals in 2010 set out a number of challenges:

- How to help public authorities set up Calypso offices
- How to encourage collaboration between public authorities

Four proposals were selected (see box) and a new call in 2011 should see other proposals from across Europe receiving financial support. 2011 will also see the creation of a web platform to facilitate tourism exchanges, and two networking and information workshops.

## 2010 winners of Calypso's call for proposals

**S.O.WELL** (Social Tourism Opportunities in Wellness and Leisure Activities) - Project Leader - France

France's Midi Pyrenees Region heads a project promoting low-season access to wellness centres and spas for seniors and young people, via exchanges between France, Spain, Italy and the Czech Republic. This sector is highly developed in most Member States and could greatly benefit from developing off-season activities.

**U.R.T.S** (Una Rete di Turismo Sociale) - Project Leader - Italy

Under the leadership of the Italian Ministry of Tourism, U.R.T.S. explores exchanges for the four target groups, particularly seniors, between the tourism authorities of Italy and Malta. As with the other three winners, the aim is to improve the recipients' quality of life, while also stimulating low-season tourism.

**A.A.A.E.** (Able-Access for All Exchange) - Project Leader - Finland

An initiative of Finland's Kainuu Region, AAAE promotes low-season exchanges for disabled people between Finland and Portugal, with Cyprus participating here in an observer's role. The idea is to transfer this model to other EU countries.

**E.S.T.** (European Senior Travel) - Project Leader - Portugal

With Portugal its prime mover, E.S.T. promotes senior citizen exchanges between Portugal, Spain and Poland. The partners - Portugal's Inatel, Spain's Segittur and Poland's Ministry of Sport and Tourism - already have considerable experience in social tourism. Here too, the idea is to create models that can be transferred to other countries.





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## Forging ahead

When the three-year action ends in 2011, Calypso's work will be far from over. The European Commission is committed to pushing Europe as the world's top tourist destination, and to using tourism as a tool for economic and social development. Discussions are ongoing on how to make the best use of EU financial instruments to help do this.

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*Printed in Belgium*

PUBLICATIONS OFFICE OF THE EUROPEAN UNION  
L-2985 Luxembourg



Publications Office

cover © Dreamstime

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**DG Enterprise and Industry**

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doi: 10.2769/19445

ISBN 978-92-79-20207-0



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