

Tourism can be a key to transforming Bosnia and Herzegovina

The CNN campaign that has just been launched, urging millions of people around the world to “Enjoy Bosnia and Herzegovina ” could generate mass employment in tourism, but this will only happen if Bosnia and Herzegovina successfully manages its God-given treasures, the High Representative and EU Special Representative, Christian Schwarz-Schilling, argued today in his weekly newspaper column.

The High Representative/EU Special Representative wrote in the article that appeared in *Dnevni avaz*, *Nezavisne novine* and *Večernji list* that countries such as Greece , Italy , Spain and Turkey , which have transformed their economies through tourism, have the basic resources, have marketed those resources effectively and have a properly developed tourism infrastructure, strategy and culture. However, while Bosnia and Herzegovina has the resources and is beginning to market them, it is lacking the third element.

“Hoteliers and tour operators know what they need in terms of strategic planning, marketing and infrastructure development, but the authorities have yet to demonstrate that they are willing to respond,” Mr Schwarz-Schilling wrote.

The High Representative/EU Special Representative noted that the draft tourism law, which would provide for the efficient regulation of the industry, “has been bogged down at the drafting stage for years because professional, bureaucratic and political interest groups prefer to squabble among themselves than reach a compromise agreement that could allow the tourism sector to take off and start creating wealth for Bosnia and Herzegovina”.

The High Representative/EU Special Representative also cited the failure to establish a countrywide system of hotel classification and provide adequate training opportunities for tourism staff as reasons for the slow development of this sector.

He said these issues could be tackled successfully, if the authorities adopt a more pragmatic approach to what could be a major engine of economic recovery. If this is done, he wrote, Bosnia and Herzegovina can “evolve into the tourist paradise portrayed in the CNN advertisements”.

“Tourism can be a key to transforming Bosnia and Herzegovina so that both Bosnians and Herzegovinians and millions of people from around the world will ‘enjoy Bosnia and Herzegovina ,’” Mr Schwarz-Schilling concluded.

The full text of the High Representative/EU Special Representative weekly column can be found at www.ohr.int