

High-Level Forum for Sustainable Tourism (14th of May)

Presidency background note

1. Introduction

Tourism is a cross-sectoral economic activity with a far-reaching impact on European economic growth, employment and sustainable development. This sector has been one of the most heavily impacted sectors by the pandemic, and the way it recovers will impact the macroeconomic recovery in many countries, and in Europe as a whole.

Sustainable Tourism policy should have in mind the environmental, economic, and socio-cultural aspects of tourism development and, at the same time, a suitable balance between all of them, in order to guarantee its long-term sustainability.

Tourism has demonstrated the potential to contribute directly and indirectly to all 17 United Nations Sustainable Development Goals. It has been included, in particular, in Goals 8 (decent work and economic growth), 12 (responsible consumption and production) and 14 (life below water) and is today an activity, as are all of its stakeholders, committed to sustainable development on a global scale.

This ambition towards a long-term sustainable tourism should be based on the will of the parts with the aim to set new lines of cooperation and actions in order and aligned with the EU strategies, like the European Green Deal, EU Digital Single Market, the enhance of the ecosystem skills and the recent presented review of European Industrial Strategy.

2. Framework

The economic and employment effects of the COVID-19 pandemic and the change of the Tourism consumers profile poses a challenge on how the sector should promote a sustainable transformation in a medium- and long-term view.

While the short-term EU answers to the pandemic impacts on this sector were debated on the 1st of March 2021, Extraordinary Informal Meeting of EU Ministers of Tourism, the EU should enhance the discussion on its medium and long term vision for the sector.

On the 13th of May 2020, in the Communication from the Commission “Tourism and transport in 2020 and beyond”, a long-term joint initiative was projected to build a new page on sustainable tourism:

«Beyond the immediate steps to bring relief, we should look ahead to the future of tourism and transport in the EU and look at how to make it more resilient and sustainable, learning from the crisis and anticipating new trends and consumer patterns related to it.

Our shared ambition should be to maintain Europe as the world's leading tourist destination in terms of value, quality, sustainability and innovation. This vision should guide the use of financial resources and investment at European, national, regional and local levels.»

The European Parliament adopted the Resolution of 25 March 2021 on establishing an EU strategy for sustainable tourism, presented its position with a diagnostic and a vision that should be part of the debate.

At the same time, the Council is on the last mile of a new Council Conclusions on “*Tourism in Europe for the next decade: sustainable, resilient, digital, global and social*”.

3. The EU Agenda for Tourism 2030/2050

In line with the above, the Portuguese Presidency of the EU Council calls upon the EU Member States, the European Commission, the European Parliament and the Committee of Regions to work towards a common approach to strengthen joint cooperation, aligned with the EU Treaties, that should be rendered into a **European Agenda for Tourism 2030/2050**.

This EU Agenda should be carried out based on qualified foresight exercise and constructed by collecting shared priorities, targets and actions, to drive the green and digital transition of the tourism ecosystem and strengthen its competitiveness, resilience and sustainability, focusing on key strategic challenges, such as:

- a) green transition of the tourism industry and destinations, as an integrated and holistic system, focusing on sustainable and responsible tourism;
- b) digital transition of the tourism industry and destinations, exploiting the value of data and all available digital tools;
- c) developing the multi-disciplinarity, knowledge base and necessary skills of the tourism industry and all other stakeholders, aiming at value-added services, contributing to the prosperity of local communities;
- d) strengthening the resilience of the tourism industry, in light with COVID-19 lessons-learned, while enhancing global competitiveness;
- e) reflecting tourism into wider EU policies, such as transport, health, consumer protection, environment and culture.

This Agenda should pay special attention to SME, women and youth's employment, different regional and local challenges, islands and outmost regions, the periphery of the EU, the economic and social role on less developed regions, tourism pressure and other areas that faces specific challenges.

As a methodological approach, a joint work involving experts from the Member States, the European Commission and other European Institutions must work with a broad group of stakeholders to present a first outline of the Agenda by the end of 2021. This input could feed into the work of the Council Working Party on Tourism under the subsequent Presidencies with the intention to frame the European Agenda for Tourism, which frames out the shared priorities, agreed targets and cooperation actions for the Member States and EU institutions.

4. Questions for debate

In order to guide our work, the Presidency invites the Ministers to make an assessment of the results, actions proposals, suggestions and new policy needs reported from the morning workshops.

Furthermore, suggests that the debate focus on these three questions:

- What are the main sustainable challenges and opportunities within the Tourism ecosystem that the EU should tackle, having in mind the construction of a European common vision for the sector, and how can the EU involve stakeholders in this long term vision?
- Having in mind the EU competences described within the Treaties what type of support, policy actions and specific EU cooperation tools would you like to see from the Union for the medium and long term, that could be critical to enhance the long-term EU Tourism ecosystem?
- Is the updated EU Industrial Strategy presented by the European Commission last 5 of May a good assessment starting point?

*

**