

CALL FOR ACTION: SPEED UP SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC RECOVERY BY FOSTERING SUSTAINABLE TOURISM DEVELOPMENT

According to the European Commission's Communication 'Europe's moment: Repair and Prepare for the Next Generation'¹, travel and tourism is one of the most affected ecosystems by the COVID-19 pandemic and requires € 161 billion² worth of investment to bounce back to pre-crisis levels. The new Recovery and Resilience Facility³, proposed by the Commission to help the EU rebuild after the pandemic, offers an unprecedented opportunity to support tourism and ensure that the sector helps to drive digital and green transitions, and thereby strengthens both economic and social resilience.

The aim of the Recovery and Resilience Facility is to provide large-scale financial support for reforms and investments undertaken by Member States, to mitigate the economic and social impact of the coronavirus pandemic, making the EU's economies more sustainable and resilient. In order to benefit from this unprecedented funding opportunity, Member States must submit to the Commission as from 15 October 2020 (until April 2021) their draft recovery and resilience plans outlining national investment and reform agendas in line with the twin strategic objectives: digitalisation and sustainability.

Why invest in tourism?

MULTIPLIER EFFECT: Tourism is transversal and its extensive value chain touches upon multiple sub-sectors.

- Travel and Tourism is a healthy and growing sector that has been expanding in the last 30 years. Europe is the number one tourism destination worldwide, holding half of the global market share of international tourism.⁴
- In the EU, the sector accounts for more than 9.5% of the GDP, provides jobs to 22.6 million people and has direct impact on transport, retail, agro-food industry, and the wider economy⁵.
- 1 EUR of value generated by tourism results in additional 56 cent of added value in indirect effect on other industries.⁶

¹ Communication from the European Commission 'Europe's moment: Repair and Prepare for the Next Generation', 27th May 2020 - <https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/info/files/communication-europe-moment-repair-prepare-next-generation.pdf>

² Commission Staff Working Document 'Identifying Europe's recovery needs', accompanying the document Communication from the European Commission 'Europe's moment: Repair and Prepare for the Next Generation', 27th May 2020 - https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/info/files/economy-finance/assessment_of_economic_and_investment_needs.pdf

³ Commission presents next steps for €672.5 billion Recovery and Resilience Facility in 2021 Annual Sustainable Growth Strategy, 17th September 2020 - https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/qanda_20_1659

⁴ UNWTO, World Tourism Barometer, August/September 2020 - <https://www.unwto.org/news/international-tourist-numbers-down-65-in-first-half-of-2020-unwto-reports>

⁵ WTTC, EU 2020 ANNUAL RESEARCH: KEY HIGHLIGHTS (2019 data) - <https://wtcc.org/Research/Economic-Impact>

⁶ Communication from the European Commission 'Tourism and transport in 2020 and beyond', 13th May 2020 - https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/info/files/communication-commission-tourism-transport-2020-and-beyond_en.pdf

ALIGNMENT WITH STRATEGIC GOALS: A healthy travel and tourism ecosystem can help achieve all four general objectives of the Recovery and Resilience Facility:

- **Promote the EU's economic, social and territorial cohesion:** with appropriate support, travel and tourism can be one of the most effective engines to deliver sustainable development, as it supports employment across all areas and demographics. Travel and tourism contributes to wellbeing and generates revenue which is needed to preserve community identity, culture, and heritage.
- **Strengthen the Union's resilience:** Tourism is 90% micro/SME dominated⁷, an important composition on which Europe's distinctiveness and appeal as a destination depends.
- **Mitigate impact of the crisis:** Smaller businesses always return employment to the economy faster than larger corporations. In the travel and tourism sector access to short-term funding means long-term job generation.
- **Support green and digital transitions:** (Big) data and artificial intelligence have the ability to transform the travel and tourism sector. From reducing the impact of airline disruption and supporting decarbonisation efforts to real time management of tourism flows, digital solutions could result in a tourism offer that is more attractive, efficient, inclusive, and economically, socially and environmentally sustainable.

RISK AND OPPORTUNITY: Tourism must be firmly incorporated in the recovery and resilience plans. If it's not in the plan, it's not in the budget.

- It is essential that impact on the travel and tourism ecosystem is an evaluation criterion for all major components of Recovery and Resilience plans: the multiplier effect of smart investment that also benefits tourism is highly significant.
- The COVID-19 crisis represents a once-in-a-generation opportunity to fund the reset of one of Europe's most distinctive and successful sectors, and one of our best exports.
- Without that reset, rate and risk of return of tourism's negative impacts are increased. According to UNWTO⁸, Europe saw a 68% decline in tourist arrivals in the first eight months of 2020 and WTTC estimates⁹ that 11.5 million travel and tourism jobs were already impacted in the EU.

How does it work in practice?

The European Commission provides **Guidance to Member States on Recovery and Resilience Plans**¹⁰. Below is a **provisional non-exhaustive list of investment ideas to enable travel and tourism to generate jobs and growth and support green and digital transitions**. A more elaborated version of this paper including additional investment ideas will be published towards the end of the year. These investments are grouped according to the EU flagship initiatives listed in the European Commission's Guidance.

⁷ Communication from the European Commission 'Tourism and transport in 2020 and beyond', 13th May 2020 - https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/info/files/communication-commission-tourism-transport-2020-and-beyond_en.pdf

⁸ UNWTO, World Tourism Barometer, October 2020 - <https://www.unwto.org/news/international-tourism-down-70-as-travel-restrictions-impact-all-regions>

⁹ <https://wtcc.org/Research/Economic-Impact/Recovery-Scenarios>

¹⁰ https://ec.europa.eu/info/departments/recovery-and-resilience-task-force_en#Documents

1. Power up

- Support the development (e.g. consultancy assistance and support) of tourism businesses' roadmaps, introducing science based targets – setting greenhouse gas emission reduction targets in line with climate science – to achieve carbon neutrality by 2050 and secure future-proof growth (with a focus on aviation, cruises, tour vehicles, accommodation and offices, including retail facilities). In parallel, pilot and upscale next generation technologies to drive both a sustainable as well as a digital transformation.
- Fund eco-conception projects for building of recreational boats with identification of common objective criteria for their environmental performance (such as benchmarking eco-design actions, substitute materials, Life Cycle Analysis).
- Provide additional budget for sustainable tourism promotion at all levels (regional, national, European and global) to help the recovery of travel confidence in domestic, intra-European and long-haul markets and retain the current position of Europe as the most visited tourism destination in the world.

2. Renovate

- Building greener tourism infrastructure across the value chain, including accommodations, transportation and activities:
 - o Implement eco-renovations to make hospitality establishments more user friendly (e.g. development of efficient cooling and heating systems)
 - o Expand the use of solar/PV panels on existing buildings (e.g. hotels, offices);
 - o Pilot and upscale circular economy practices including water circulation systems in hotels and waste management in destinations;
 - o Invest in projects that minimise food waste across the value chain;
 - o Pilot sustainable modes of transportation including the introduction of electric or hydrogen powered vehicles.
- Improvement of infrastructure for sustainable and active travel:
 - o Accelerate the development of cycling infrastructure to boost active and clean energy travel and transition to a greener tourism. This should include the deployment of new non-motorised infrastructures and the upgrade of the existing ones, as well as re-using as much as possible abandoned transport infrastructure, mainly disused railways for cycling and walking.
 - o Install self-sufficient charging stations e-bikes along greenways & cycle routes; invest in safe, direct and connected infrastructure to further develop the EuroVelo and other long distance, transnational cycling route networks; develop cycle-friendly services, amenities and concepts; and promote European cities and regions as cycle tourism destinations.
 - o Improve connectivity between the non-motorised routes (as greenways and cycle routes) and the main attractions nearby (natural as e.g. N2000 and cultural assets as UNESCO sites and other heritage assets), small villages and areas around. Furthermore, improve connectivity with public transportation to facilitate the intermodality, removing obstacles to favour cycle routes, their services and attractions, for tourists and local people.
 - o Facilitate combined travel (bicycle + train / boat /buses).

- Invest in research at national or international level to develop more eco-friendly products (e.g. developing affordable replacing materials for single use plastic food containers).
- Invest in biodiversity and nature-based solutions (e.g. improving infrastructure in protected areas in nature tourism; planting trees; greening urban areas).
- Continue to work on the recovery and recycling of packaging through national schemes, and invest in R&D projects to reduce overpackaging, and to minimise packaging waste.
- Prioritise government support to tourism establishments that commit to sourcing ingredients locally and have introduced healthy/local approaches to food procurement and provision (as this in turn supports the local economy).
- Green marinas: Funding for renovation and environmental transformation of coastal and inland marinas for recreational boats as part of nautical tourism (such as new berths, renewable energy installations, power storage, waste disposal facilities, small-scale local desalination plants, climate change adaptation).
- Renovate inland waterways: Funding for renovation and environmental transformation of inland waterways to allow for infrastructure suited to continued use for nautical tourism and water sports and creation of new local and regional tourism/recreational opportunities (such as canals, locks, marinas, docks).
- Eco-mooring: Roll-out of eco-friendly permanent mooring solutions for recreational boats in marine protected areas and areas of high ecological value as alternatives to anchoring and existing permanent mooring solutions.

3. Recharge and Refuel

- Promote cycle-friendly modes of public transport (airports, railways stations, harbours, bus terminals), including installation of self-sufficient charging stations for e-bikes.
- Support research, development, infrastructure and deployment of clean synthetic and/or biofuels for cruise ships, while maintaining a technology-neutral and goal-based approach.
- Fund research, development, and implementation of sustainable alternative fuels for recreational boat engines (such as biofuels, electrification, hybrid engines, hydrogen, new fuels and propulsion systems).
- Make funding available for consumers to retrofit older recreational boats with new engines (such as replacement of old two-stroke engines, biofuel, electric, hybrid).
- Promote charging infrastructure at tourism business locations, thereby ensuring electric or hybrid vehicles can be properly utilised.

4. Connect

- Invest in fast rollout of rapid broadband services to rural and mountainous areas, especially in the surroundings of non-motorised, cultural and natural thematic routes (such as greenways), to enable the digitisation of SMEs.
- Support the creation of alliances between tourism operators for the development of digital solutions that diversify products (also through European networks).
- Finance research for the development of smart tourism data. Develop a system where private businesses have access to data-sharing instruments and plans in order to make the offer to clients more attractive.

- Invest in connecting coastal regions to the hinterland for more integrated regional development.
- Digital marinas: Funding for transformation of marinas for a customer-centred digital infrastructure and approach (such as 5G, Wi-Fi and digital infrastructure allowing for connected boating, smart marinas, improved land-sea connectivity, the Internet of Things, digital connectivity and automatised customer interaction technology).
- Digitalisation of boating: Fund the development of digital tools to digitise the existing offer of companies in the boating industry and the boating experience (such as marinas, navigation, maintenance, weather information).
- Invest in integrated connectivity solutions, including inter and multi-modal journey planning and ticketing (air, rail, road and water) for locals and visitors to benefit from sustainable mobility and optimal accessibility.
- Make rail transport more attractive, by investing in modern rolling stock, increase the high-speed network, open distribution, etc.
- Improve surface access to ports and airports to improve public transport usage to and from international gateways.

5. Modernise

- Support the Digital transformation programme for Destination Management/Marketing Organisations (DMOs) by equipping them with digital tools to connect to tourist offices, travel agencies and hotels.
- Invest in the digitalisation of public administration and services, specifically on tourism ecosystems and thematic routes related to natural and cultural heritage.
- Promote better use of technologies, including the Internet of Things, location-based services, artificial intelligence, augmented and virtual reality, and blockchain technology to improve the tourism offer to make it more attractive, efficient, inclusive, and economically, socially and environmentally sustainable.
- Accelerate the recovery of the sector by promoting and investing in biometric solutions that can reduce friction caused by physical touchpoints.
- Use technology to develop
 - o smart travel facilitation, i.e. smart visas, borders, security processes and infrastructure, as well as
 - o smart destinations, i.e. measure impact, predict and manage tourist flows in order to more efficiently and effectively manage destinations.
- Implement existing and proven measurement tools on a voluntary basis at EU level (like ETIS) or international level (Measuring Sustainable Tourism Framework, GSTC of UNWTO), to be integrated with specific tailor-made indicators, in order to collect dynamic information at the destination level. Promote the uptake and use of sustainability standards.
- Provide support for the development of mobile applications to improve services (e.g. menus; check-in/check-out; improve personalised service).

6. Scale-up

- Ensure that tourism and travel is considered a strategic priority for the Cloud. Promote mobility & travel data space and use cases through potential collaborative projects where funding might be needed.
- Install cutting-edge counters along greenways and cycle routes for data gathering on cycling & walking users, to gain detailed information about the user behaviour - frequency peak hours, preferred areas, to help for planning and for measuring the impact of investments. Permitting sharing data and benchmarking, counters are a strategic tool for the elaboration of tourism promotion plans.
- Provide funding for (pilot) digital products aimed specifically at improving tourists' experience.

7. Reskill and upskill

- Adapt education systems to support digital skills and educational and vocational training for all ages to businesses' needs, including new products of emerging tourism (cycling, nature, outdoor, heritage, etc.). Fund educational programmes for developing sustainable, digitally advanced tourism programmes for the new era in tourism.
- Provide funding support for digital and sustainable upskilling and reskilling programmes to tourism companies of all sizes, as there is also a need for legacy market players to develop their existing workforce. Such initiatives could be developed to make platforms available to other tourism companies and beyond, in which best practices particularly on sustainability are shared.
- Provide practical training, including support to the digitalisation of SMEs for better digital management of their businesses, customisation of the service offer and the promotion of tourism products; supported by mentoring for SMEs and micro-enterprises in the tourism sector and the exchange of good practices to favour collaboration (local, regional, national and transnational).
- Support businesses/employers in substantially re-/upskilling their workforce during periods with less economic activity.
- Support tourism and culture freelance professionals and employees in substantially re-/upskilling during periods with less economic activity.
- Develop digital training platforms offering free access to digital training and practical support to hospitality staff with regular updated resources covering e.g., safety and hygiene, operations and profitability, team management, skills and guest experience, etc. Online certifications should be considered.
- Support tourism training and capacity-building programmes that create career opportunities especially for women and young people, in vulnerable, marginalised communities.
- Give particular support to apprenticeship schemes, which provide young people with profound vocational training and an excellent entry point into the labour market (many apprenticeships are currently suspended due to COVID-19 pandemic).
- Support incubators, accelerators and labs that encourage partnerships between tech and tourism companies.
- Develop a complete program to introduce SME in internet sales (skills, joint platforms, promotion).

Where to find examples?

(Draft) National recovery plans:

- **France Relance**
- **Espana Puede (Spain)**
- **Linee guida per la definizione del piano nazionale di ripresa e resilienza (Italy)**
- **Recuperar Portugal 2021-2026 (Portugal)**

(Draft) Local authorities' recovery plans:

- **Mechelen** (Belgium)
- **Flanders recovery plan** (Belgium)
- **Wallonia tourism recovery plan** (Belgium)
- **Visit Wallonia pass** (Belgium)

The **European Tourism Manifesto alliance** gathers more than 60 European public and private organisations, covering the whole tourism value chain and beyond. The alliance calls on the European Union for action on key policy priorities for the tourism sector. For more information, please visit tourismmanifesto.eu.

The Secretariat and Chairmanship of the alliance are currently held by the European Travel Commission (ETC). For any enquiries, please contact us via <https://tourismmanifesto.eu/contact/>.