TOURISM INDUSTRIAL ECOSYSTEM

Tourism is a key economic activity for the EU. Especially in some EU countries, it contributes greatly to economic growth, employment, and social development.

The tourism ecosystem is a highly diverse and complex one, comprising of businesses in several sectors, from accommodation suppliers to food and beverage services, passenger transport, and tour operators. Large multinationals operate along very small family businesses, forming interconnected and globalised value chains.

Tourism proved resilient in the face of recent crises but is still facing significant challenges. EU tourism policy aims to maintain Europe's position as a leading global destination and to turn Europe into a sustainable destination, bringing benefits to the the host communities and to the environment.

KEY FACTS AND FIGURES

Over **19 million jobs** in EU in 2022 (9% of EU employment; including over 15% in Greece, Portugal, Cyprus, and Malta.)

3.5 million businesses in 2022, of which 99% are small and medium or micro enterprises.

5.6% of the EU Gross Value Added in 2022, reaching over 10% in Malta, Croatia and Greece.

2.9 billion nights spent in the EU in 2023, of which 56% by domestic visitors.

40% of all international tourism arrivals in 2023 (world leading region)

KEY CHALLENGES

A need for more sustainable and responsible tourism: growing customer demand calls for improved sustainability across all tourism segments , including by reducing waste and pollution, increasing water and energy efficiency and improving the overall environmental footprint of tourism services.

Digital transformation and data: access to data, both publicly and privately held, is increasingly important for tourism providers to foster uptake of innovative technologies and provide resource efficient and innovative services.

Building resilience in the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic: the tourism ecosystem was among the most severely affected ecosystems by COVID-19 crisis, experiencing a drop of some 70% in revenues in 2020, losing up to 500 million every day in gross value added. To build resilience to such shocks, the ecosystem is working to improve its crisis management capacities as well as diversify and distribute tourism services to different travellers across seasons and territories.

MAKING TOURISM GREENER, MORE DIGITAL AND MORE RESILIENT

The European Commission, together with stakeholders from the tourism ecosystem, published a Transition Pathway for Tourism in February 2022. This is a dynamic roadmap to support the green and digital transition of the tourism ecosystem, while improving its resilience. The plan focuses on improving three interlinked objectives including economic, social and environmental sustainability.

The transition pathway also provided the basis for an EU Tourism agenda 2030, which was endorsed by Member States for the first time in December 2022. To make the transition pathway a reality, participating stakeholders have shared by October 2023 424 pledged actions, which they are implementing with the Commission's support and collaboration.

Visit Flanders, a campaign by Flemish regional authorities, has set several concrete sustainability objectives, including to have the total number of businesses with a Green Key label increased by 44% by 2030 compared with 2022 and ensuring that of the conference locations financed by Visit Flanders, 25% have a third-party sustainability certificate in 2024 and 100% in 2030.

Smart guide: to help SMEs, attractions or tourism destinations promote themselves, Smart Guide – an SME from Czechia, pledged to provide cutting-edge and ready-made technology for setting up digital guides, allowing them to focus on preparing engaging content about the places they want to promote.

SUPPORTING THE TRANSITION

SECURING RELEVANT SKILLS FOR TOURISM

For EU tourism to flourish and develop resilience to crises, it is crucial for people working in tourism to have the right skills. Under the EU Pact for Skills initiative, the Commission and over 80 partners now comprise the large-scale skills partnership for the tourism ecosystem, launched in January 2022. Local and regional skills partnerships are being set up to implement training initiatives for the tourism sector.

ENSURING TRANSPARENT INFORMATION SHARING

To help public authorities ensure a more balanced development of tourism and increase transparency in the sector, the Commission proposed new rules on short-term accommodation rentals. The generated data could feed into a common European data space for tourism proposed by the Commission, allowing tourism authorities and operators to exchange useful information and better adapt their offers to demand and market conditions.

SUPPORTING TOURISM BUSINESSES

The Guide on EU funding for tourism helps companies, and SMEs in particular, to search efficiently and make the most of EU funding programmes.

TRACKING GREENING AND DIGITALISATION PROGRESS

The EU Tourism Dashboard provides national and regional destinations comparable indicators to measure efficiently their green and digital transition and socio-economic resilience.

PROMOTING TOURISM IN EUROPE

Several EU prizes help to promote tourism in Europe. The European Capital of Smart Tourism recognises outstanding achievements of cities with over 100 000 inhabitants in sustainability, accessibility, digitalisation as well as cultural heritage and creativity. The Green Pioneer of Smart Tourism aims to promote smaller tourism destinations for outstanding sustainability that inspires others in their green transition.