

## NECSTOUR WEBINAR

### “GREEN, DIGITAL AND SDGS: BUILDING THE EUROPEAN TOURISM AGENDA 2050 FOR SUSTAINABLE RECOVERY”

15 JUNE 2020, 14h00 – 15h30

## **DISCUSSION OUTCOMES**

Strong efforts are being devoted by the regional tourism authorities and their DMOs in supporting tourism businesses, re-establishing the trust of the visitors in views of this summer period, and releasing tourism recovery plans while regenerating the tourism ecosystems towards the tourism of tomorrow, which must take a responsible approach to achieve sustainability.

Thus, the webinar “Green, Digital and SDGs: Building The European Tourism Agenda 2050 For Sustainable Recovery” was part of NECSTouR’s programme “Driving behavioural change for sustainable destinations”, aimed at:

1. showcasing concrete examples of “greening” and “digital” transition in tourism ecosystems and linking them to the SDGs agenda<sup>1</sup>.
2. inspiring the European Agenda for tourism 2050<sup>2</sup> starting by the roadmap 2050 towards a sustainable, innovative, and resilient European tourism ecosystem.

## **BUILD TOURISM RECOVERY THROUGH GREENING AND DIGITAL TRANSITION WHILE TARGETING THE SDGs**

### ➤ **REGIONAL CASES**

#### **LAPLAND**

The regional Council of Lapland initiated in September 2019 a two-year project promoting low carbon and economically sustainable development in Lapland tourism, addressing four main objectives: i) measurement the carbon footprint and climate impact in tourism ii) development low carbon solutions in tourism iii) Bio-waste and plastic collection through public-private cooperation iv) examples and solutions sharing, knowledge development and transfer, cross-border cooperation. The objective is to influence all levels, from company level, to regional / national / international, but the strong efforts are being displayed at business level where real changes can happen. This is the way the project is being implemented via concrete pilot actions involving tourism SMES. The Participatory planning process seems to be a crucial cornerstone to get the commitment and participation of these enterprises.

#### **VISIT SCOTLAND**

The tourism industry is part of the ambitious climate target Scotland has landmarked for 2045, to become a net-zero carbon region. Taking advantage of the existing (since 2015) Tourism Quality Assurance Scheme, VisitScotland introduced in its criteria some additional sustainability

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<sup>1</sup> **World Tourism Organization** (UNWTO) has released a set of **recommendations** calling for urgent and strong support to help the global tourism sector not only recover from the unprecedented challenge of COVID-19 but to ‘grow back better’.

<sup>2</sup> **Commissioner Breton calls stakeholders**, and precisely regions, to join the **European Tourism Convention** to kick off the “**Roadmap 2050 towards a sustainable, innovative and resilient European tourism ecosystem: European Agenda for Tourism 2050**” replying to the European Union twining transition strategies: the European Green Deal and the Digital Age.

requirements, which have now become compulsory. The approach has been to connect sustainability as an intrinsically value of quality, while avoiding the creation of an additional scheme / programme. The goal is to deliver free advice (energy, water, waste, transport, purchasing, management, marketing) to the tourism SMEs enabling them to implement basic sustainability measures and to foster behavioural change learning the environmental and economic benefits of going green. For the moment VisitScotland has been able to reach 4000 SMEs and looks forward to engage with the remaining 10.000 SMEs composing the overall tourism ecosystem. To this end, during the COVID19 pandemic, VisitScotland has been interviewing its tourism SMEs to map their relation with sustainability, resulting from which, 150 responsible tourism businesses have been selected as case studies to be showcased and offer guidance towards the rest of the industry.

## **BRITTANY**

The Brittany tourism strategy is based on a holistic and integrated approach, by considering the multidimensional aspects of tourism (economy, spatial planning, transport, culture, nature, innovation) and the tourist as a temporary inhabitant of the territory they are visiting. Ten tourism destinations have been established in Brittany focusing on their economic/cultural factors and not the political/administrative organisation, working through a public private partnership participatory approach: deciding, developing and implementing jointly their tourism strategies, connected to the overall regional one. The regional tourism strategy fosters two main goals: i) Identity: promoting what and who we are but also what we need to respect/preserve, ii) Transition: boosting the territorial transition towards a sustainable climate, economy, society and culture. To this end, joint tourism roadmaps are being done in order to stem the policies into the existing /new sustainable tourism products and experiences related to: water, social aspects, natural and cultural heritage, mobility. The key success factor relies on the coordination between the public - private stakeholders and the awareness and commitment of the tourism private sector as the key enablers of this sustainability transition: due to their capacity to influence both the territory and the tourists.

## **SUSTAINABLE TOURISM COMMUNITY MED**

The Sustainable Tourism Community gathers the outcomes from 24 MED projects targeting sustainable tourism policies and products. The outputs linked to the greening and digital transition focus in four main areas: i) Diversification of tourism offer (Guide for ecotourism products, Guide for the implementation of eco-itinerary, Fishing tourism businesses model, Development of the Mediterranean cycling routes) ii) Environmental management (Green beach management model, Handbook on waste management in tourism destinations, Online tool to monitor sustainable tourism water management) iii) Carrying capacity and tourism flows (Tourism flow management platform, Decision support software to calculate the tourism carrying capacity, Carrying capacity scenarios simulator) and iv) Measuring for better management (Online platform for data collection and sharing indicators, Smart integrated tourism data system, Monitoring system and environmental footprint calculator). All these outputs have been already tested and are being already embedded in the tourism policies/strategies of the Mediterranean destinations. To collect all this knowledge, a set of policy recommendations going from effective monitoring, to promoting alternative tourism models and governance have been developed.

- **UNWTO INSIGHTS** by Ms. Zoritsa Urosevic, UNWTO Director, Institutional Relations and Partnerships Department, Special Representative to the United Nations in Geneva

To support the work being deployed at national level and beyond, the UNWTO has developed several initiatives on response to COVID-19 aiming to Build Recovery and Resilience for People, Prosperity and Planet aligned to the UN 2030 Agenda and Global SDGs: Recommendations for Action, Impact Assessment, UNWTO Global Tourism Dashboard, Report on Travel Restrictions, Measures to support tourism, Tourism recovery technical assistance package, courses, webinars and resources. The UNWTO identifies that the priorities for Global tourism recovery fall and the following lines: i) Provide liquidity and protect jobs, ii) Recover confidence through safety and security, iii) Public private collaboration for efficient reopening, iv) Open borders with responsibility, v) Harmonize and coordinate protocols and procedures, vi) Added value jobs through new technologies, vii) Innovation and sustainability as the new normal, and viii) Investments in digital and green to build a low tourism carbon. To cope with such priorities and to achieve the SGs, the UNWTO has identified that 2.5 trillion USD of funding are needed yearly to reach such targets.

Complimentary to the financing, lighthouse cases are crucial to guide the path. Inspiration of global initiatives can be found in the [T4SDGs platform](#), which is a co-creation ecosystem to empower, inspire and influence the tourism ecosystem in their engagement with tourism and the SDGs. NECSTouR is invited to be part of this ecosystem.

## **TOWARDS THE EUROPEAN TOURISM AGENDA 2050**

Exchanges on what the Tourism Agenda 2050 should include / consider and what should be the role of the regions in this process with:

Mrs. **Alessandra Priante**, Regional Department for Europe, UNWTO:

The COVID-19 pandemic has reshuffled the whole tourism ecosystem and structure showing that tourism is an engine that keeps economies running throughout the year not only during vacation period and proving that its collapse not only affects the tourism related value chain but other indirectly connected value chains. Thus, part of the efforts should be now devoted to establish a Tourism Action plan for 2021 – onwards. An action plan that should guarantee the relaunch and recovery of the tourism business and destinations by integrating a holistic approach, where sustainability becomes a way of living, consuming and traveling but also a cross-cutting priority for the tourism policies where all - consumers, private sector and governments - are committed too. Sustainability should readopt its valuable meaning and become the path to follow for the tourism ecosystem, inspired by the global SDGs. To reach this goal constant financial support is needed reason why tourism must be recognised within the EU financial mechanisms as one of the key economic pillars of the EU making possible a long term budget to recover and to ensure its sustainability transition.

The regions, being the bridge with the local and national authorities and having the direct contact with the public and private stakeholders must drive this change, remain united, strong and cooperative.

**Mrs. Claudia Monteiro de Aguiar**, Member of the European Parliament, TRAN Committee:

Tourism indeed needs an important strategy and political support at EU level, addressing two key priorities: i) the Digitalisation: aligned to the Digital Age strategy where the tourism entrepreneurs, SMEs and private sector should be able to take advantage of the new technologies to improve their competitiveness and endorse better sustainability measures ii) the Greening: tourism should receive help to rebuild and restart its activity but specially to ensure its transition following the EU Green Deal actions.

Both priorities require proper impact assessments and guidance but also specific funding. These priorities will be important items captured in the “European Sustainable Tourism Strategy” own initiative report of the TRAN Committee of the European Parliament, which is being currently drafted.

High quality, sustainable and responsible tourism, raining, education, skills for the future of tourism, are not new, but now have become the only solution to successfully recover from this crisis.

Regions are near and closer to the challenges being faced by this pandemic and are the ones rapidly moving to find emergency solutions that can support its tourism ecosystems. The tourism agenda needs to be build based on existing, bottom up examples on public private partnership cooperation that foster this behavioural change towards 2030 goals and ahead.

## KEY POINTS

The key highlights from the discussions can be gathered under the following points:

- The greening and digital transition were already part of the tourism strategies before the COVID-19 pandemic and nowadays they have become even more strategic and relevant for the tourism destinations: as part of their recovery but also to build their resilience, their competitiveness and their sustainability.
- The SDGs and UN 2030 Agenda are the path to where rely on, it guides the steps towards this transition.
- Rebuild and Recover to add value are important, but also having a strategy and an integrated planning are key to reach success.
- Commitment, cooperation, coordination between private and public stakeholders must be key since the start to the end/follow up of any initiative.
- Regions are the strategic interlocutor between the local the national and the European levels.
- A unique and strong voice is needed to reach common goals, to remain competitive and drive behavioural change at policy and business level.
- The success of the policies in tourism is guaranteed upon the capacity to integrate / transform them into the tourism products, via the participation of the private stakeholders. Pilot actions enable to test and to improve this transition period before scaling it up.
- Two major links:
  - Private and public
  - Quality and sustainability
- This current situation is enabling the regions to accelerate its green and digital transition, leaving the mass tourism paradigm and bidding for tourism products that are better for the regions, enterprises and residents.

## NEXT STEPS

NECSTouR proposes focussing on boosting sustainable industry-product development from a destination approach, combining products-policies-people- promotion-projects. This will guide our interregional cooperation to support members to boost regional tourism recovery and of sharing knowledge and experience towards the European Agenda for Tourism 2050.

To this end, several actions are contemplated:

1. Pursue our good practice exchange and dialogue with the EU Institutions to find the above-mentioned approach:
  - In Members' Regional Tourism Strategies – Certainly embedded in future Smart Specialisation Strategies – In Such A Way We Can Mainstream The Next Generation Of EU Funds For The Benefit Of This Regeneration Of Our Destinations And Value Chain
  - The EU Tourism Agenda for 2050
2. Nourish our knowledge hub to inspire the members and EU in its initiatives.
3. Target the “SGDs for tourism” to inspire our work and to contribute to its success.
4. Develop EU projects to support pilots financing this transition towards sustainability.
5. Organise a workshop about the integration of smart mobility in tourism for sustainable products and policies combining: The lessons learnt from the project Civitas Destinations, and NECSTouR Task Force Smart mobility while fostering cooperation with European Commission DG MOVE and the links between their new strategy as a driver of the Green Deal targets.
6. Organise a workshop on sustainable tourism product development connecting sustainability and the quality of the tourism experience and resident's life.
7. Benchmark NECSTouR member's tourism recovery plans to identify the investment priorities and find possible links with the European recovery plan and the Multiannual Financial Framework 2021-2027.

## BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

Here are the presentation from [VisitScotland](#), [the Regional Council of Lapland](#), [UNWTO](#), [the Interreg MED Sustainable Tourism Community](#). And also the results of a [special "Corona survey"](#) on German tourists from NIT–Institute for Tourism Research in Northern Europe and [the next steps presented by NECSTouR](#).