

## **European Tourism Convention 2020**

The Portuguese Government welcomes Commissioner Breton's initiative to launch the European Tourism Convention 2020.

This forum will be a milestone in strengthening the debate around Tourism in the Union, with the purpose of promoting the sector's companies' competitiveness and the creation of jobs.

Tourism is facing one of its most difficult times. This sector was deeply affected by the crisis arising from the COVID-19 pandemic, having had its activity almost completely paralyzed, as shown by a decrease of 90% during this period, according to the World Tourism Organization data.

The lack of a coordinated response in defining air travel corridors and the diversity of criteria applied in removing travel bans have resulted in significant disruptions in the sector and the loss of consumer's confidence.

Looking to the future of the European Tourism sector in the next 10-20 years, one must consider two distinct moments.

Firstly, the short-term, in which we must ensure that the previously installed capacity in the sector is preserved, together with its capacity to respond speedily to new market and demand challenges. The coming months of international tourism activity will require an agile, flexible management, capable to respond quickly to changes in a competitive, and strongly influenced by each country's responsiveness to pandemic control, environment.

As such, the sector will face a number of challenges, such as the need for a clear and coordinated approach to lifting travel restrictions and in the organisation of air corridors, at risk of threatening the economic and financial viability of the aviation sector, with disastrous consequences for the survival of thousands of companies and jobs; and the need for the harmonisation of criteria and procedures to ensure the continuity of travel intra and extra EU. Stabilisation of both the criteria for compulsory testing or evidence of non-infection and the criteria for travel insurance and compensations in the event of cancellations is of vital importance.

On the other hand, one must look at financing the activities of the companies in the sector, in a context of significant reduction of their revenues, as a way to ensure the

their competitiveness; as well as at the development of virtual interaction technologies with consumers that ensure friendly solutions to reduce physical contact.

Secondly, a medium/long term strategy is necessary to strengthen Europe's competitive capacity as a tourist destination by promoting destination Europe on the intra-EU market, stimulating residents' travels to European destinations and reducing dependence on non-EU markets.

We must pursue a mobility policy that, framed in European legislation, allows the Union to compete with neighbouring destinations by promoting the digitisation of tourist offer – through the massive adoption of technological solutions and the training of the sector's workforce – and the development of the concept of "seamless travel" in European destinations by incorporating the various components of tourist offer and providing solutions to ensure simplification of procedures – mobility, customized information, automation of reservations and payments, among others.

The development model for Tourism should be structured on the basis of sustainable principles and practices, common to all segments of the sector, ensuring respect for the Sustainable Development Goals that are of increasing importance to consumers.

Investment priorities in the tourism sector should focus on short and medium/long term challenges to ensure their recovery and resilience, within five major areas:

1. Digital transformation of the sector's companies, encouraging the use of technologies, both in strategic and operational management, and allowing for improvements in the ability to adapt to the new competitive context, through intelligent and consumer-oriented business models.
2. Transition to carbon neutrality and the creation of more sustainable business models using intelligent energy consumption, water and waste management systems and the adoption of best practices in this area, ensuring that European operators are at the forefront of consumer trends.
3. Promotion of regional ecosystems of tourism companies with the integration of services made available to consumers and adapting them to demand preferences.
4. Training of the sector's workforce for an economy in the digital context, focused on all levels of management, supporting an effective digital transition and ensuring long-term career prospects.
5. Significant improvements of the European Statistical System by ensuring the availability of, and daily access to, relevant data, supported by intelligent information systems and big data management.

We believe that these should be the priorities of the European Tourism Agenda in the coming decades. In this context, we will work, during the Portuguese Presidency of the Council of the European Union, to ensure the follow-up of the results of this Convention and to maintain Tourism as a priority for the European Union.

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