



Ministero per i beni e le attività culturali e per il turismo

European Tourism Convention (12 October 2020)

Statement of the Minister for Cultural Heritage and Activities and for Tourism, Dario Franceschini

Firstly, I would like to thank Commissioner Breton for his great foresight in convening the European Tourism Convention during the most problematic period of the crisis. This is an important opportunity to reflect on how to strengthen the structure of European tourism in the medium and long terms. We have to think beyond the short-term emergency measures that have been put in place to mitigate the effects of the Covid-19 pandemic on the tourism sector, both for travelers and operators.

The tourism sector showed great vitality during the summer months, by quickly rebounding once physical movement across the European Union was reinstated. However, the latest figures indicate that the current crisis will have prolonged negative effects on the tourism sector. So it is of paramount importance that we start discussing and implementing support and relaunch mechanisms with a broad scope and long duration, to reshape the tourism model upon which the industry has so far been based.

It is important we continue following a shared approach - in the European context at all levels - adopting common protocols for free movement within the EU, according to the principles of transparency, objectivity, non-discrimination and proportionality, to provide clarity and predictability for European citizens and industry professionals. For this reason, I would like to express Italy's support for the Commission's proposal for a "Council Recommendation on a coordinated approach to restrictions on free movement in response to the Covid-19 Pandemic".

At the same time, I must reiterate that it is absolutely necessary to extend the Temporary Framework on State aid beyond 31 December 2020 and to amend it to reconsider its maximum limit of 800,000 Euros as many companies in the tourism sector have already reached the limit imposed. Furthermore, these companies should be exempted from the burden of having to prove that their losses are a direct consequence of the Covid-19 crisis, as it is evident that the health emergency has an immediate and direct impact on tourism.

Bearing in mind that in Italy tourism accounts for 13% of GDP and employs 15% of the workforce, it is our firm intention to allocate a considerable part of the National Recovery and Resilience Plan, financed by Next Generation EU funds, to support the



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whole sector, whilst respecting the European priorities of digital transformation and ecological transition.

To support a changing European tourism sector and foster competition in the coming years, with reference to financial resources, we intend to make use of various programs within the new Multi-annual Financial Framework, to encourage digitization, the use of

New technologies, green tourism and to boost SMEs, thereby promoting better territorial cohesion and social inclusion.

We are convinced that over the next decade it will be necessary to invest in physical and digital infrastructure. This will allow us to improve accessibility and connectivity thus making the tourist experience safe and seamless. The first part of this Conference will be focused on this topic.

We are sure that tourism can make a substantial contribution towards achieving the EU's ambitious climate and environmental objectives. We can support the growing trend of tourism to "slow" destinations and promote alternative itineraries, setting up services that have a low impact on ecosystems. Italy has long been encouraging tourism to rural villages and areas, opening up footpaths and recovering heritage railways.

Sustainability is at the core of all of this. We intend to continue promoting sustainable tourism with a view to protecting and enhancing our historical and art cities, including local communities, managing tourist flows and respecting the environment.

To this end, investment in human capital should not be neglected. The training of sector employees and the improvement of skills at all levels will also be crucial if tourism is to remain competitive over time, requiring the reorganization of structures and the innovation of processes.

I would like to end by wishing the Commission every success for the proposed initiative. I sincerely hope that all EU Member States will join in the collective effort to radically rethink the tourism sector so as to allow Europe to remain the first tourist destination in the world. This is a fundamental challenge and Italy is moving in this direction.