

Statement of the Czech Republic on the occasion of
the European Tourism Convention, 12 October 2020

What are the main challenges for European tourism in the next 10 – 20 years?

What investment priorities are necessary for the sustainable recovery and resilience of the EU tourism ecosystem?

The COVID-19 pandemic has seriously hit the ecosystem of tourism and travelling in the EU. It is obvious that the recovery will require 2-3 years, maybe even more. Firstly domestic travelling will recover, secondly travelling between neighbouring countries will be stabilised and thirdly international travelling will recover.

When the epidemiological situation improves, it is crucial to give travellers a sense of security so that even in the situation when many security and health restrictions (tests, sanitation, hygiene restrictions etc.) may prevail for some time, it is still possible and enjoyable to travel. More than ever, tourists will have to think about insurance before travelling.

Service suppliers, including the transport and hotel sector, museums, castles, wineries, guides etc. will have to comply with new standards and regulations of customer safety. They will have to adjust the operation of their business to the changes in customer demand. All this is very costly and will put a heavy burden on service suppliers.

The governments must react adequately with their policies and strategies as well as with laws, regulations and investment plans. The governments should even more collaborate with stakeholders and destination management organisations. At the same time we should stimulate the demand (we did it successfully in the Czech Republic with e.g. the spa tourism) and mitigate negative economic impact of the COVID-19 on businesses and workers by providing various fiscal and social interventions (e.g. tax reliefs, subsidies, support measures).

We appreciate certain steps that have been taken at the EU level, e.g. the State aid Temporary Framework.

Tourism plays an important role in the economies of EU MS. For example, in the Czech Republic, tourism is an important sector of the national economy and one of the tools of regional development. Tourism accounts in the long term for 3 % of the Czech Republic's GDP, providing 240,000 direct jobs (4.5 % of total employment) and total revenues of almost € 13 billion.

In the coming years, the Czech Republic, as well as other countries, will be challenged to cope quickly with the COVID-19 pandemic and achieve tourist arrival and overnight stays numbers comparable to previous years, before the pandemic. We would like to revive tourism, but not at the cost of overloading traditional tourist destinations. It is important that tourism becomes a normal part of people's lives again without posing a safety or health risk.

In order to successfully revitalise tourism in the coming years, it will be important for European countries to establish common criteria for risk identification, uniform rules for arrivals and departures from risk areas and structured information on travel restrictions. Building the trust between travellers and tourism operators (entrepreneurs), coordinated access to information on

travel restrictions and access to credible information is now important for the future development of tourism.

The current situation can be also seen as an opportunity to address structural problems and long-term challenges. Recovery efforts at all levels should support measures to offer tourism services, both through the development of tourism infrastructure (digitisation, innovation, green technologies, traffic management) and through the promotion of tourism services (quality improvement) as well as employment support in tourism.

Gradually, in all European countries we are trying to do our best to revive tourism. Development over the next 10 to 20 years will depend largely on how the epidemiological situation in each country continues to develop and whether further waves of the pandemic can be prevented in the next decade.

In the first few years, an important economic issue is to ensure business' liquidity and the recovery of the tourism industry. This shall be reflected in an activity set-up at the EU level. Due to the onset of the second wave and the expected restriction of travel to third countries, the Czech Republic will in the short run focus its activities on cooperation and promotion mainly with European countries.

EU coordination framework for travel restrictions is essential for a successful start to the next decade, providing common criteria for fully aligned risk assessments and the related mapping of EU / EEA countries and the United Kingdom.

The main issue should be sustainable tourism, also it is very important to maintain the authenticity of tourism products for visitors, high quality of services, all with regards to the country's natural, cultural and intangible heritage.

In terms of investment plans, for the resilience of tourism, we must focus in the coming years on reducing the negative environmental impacts associated with consumption and invest in the development of more environmentally friendly and "greener" forms of tourism, e.g. completion of high-speed rail network, regeneration of brownfields for tourist infrastructure, development of 5G network etc. Digitization will be important for the implementation of these activities, which will enable the development of tourism while maintaining the quality of life of local people. Combination of public resources and private capital could be seen as an attractive opportunity for the tourism investment climate.

Future tourism policies should focus on topics such as quality, innovation, smart technologies and digitisation, sustainable and green tourism, sustainable accessibility and smart mobility, safety (hygiene compliance), tourism research, statistical development and traffic management.

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