

COUNTRIES DISCUSS CORONA CORRIDOR TO SAVE TOURISM



On May 13, the European Commission agreed on recommendations to gradually reopen borders following the de-escalation plan with one industry in mind: tourism. From its Brussels headquarters, the EC spoke of the summer season as “crucial” for what it considers an endangered industry and calls for countries reaching the so-called phase 2 to coordinate actions in order to save tourism season.

Some have already taken note, such as Croatia and the Czech Republic. The two Slavic countries discuss setting up a ‘corona corridor’, a kind of future tourist corridor that would connect the two countries by air, allowing the Czechs to spend the summer holidays on Croatian beaches and Croatians to visit the monumental Prague. Croatia is looking to expand this plan to as many countries with health security as possible, and the Czech Republic would extend it to Slovakia.

At the moment, Croatia is the country that has made the most progress in negotiations, which include Slovenia, Germany, Austria, Italy and Hungary. The Czech Republic has also had a good number of negotiations. Both countries, like their neighbors Hungary and Slovakia, have begun with the de-escalation plans since the end of April and report small numbers of coronavirus cases.

Strategies to Save Tourism

Gari Cappelli, Croatian Minister of Tourism, explained that, so far in 2020, the country has seen arrivals drop by 70% compared to previous years. The Croatian government’s goal is to generate “between 20 and 30% of the tourism revenue generated last year”. In 2019, tourism revenues in Croatia reached 10.5 billion euros from international receipts and 1.5 billion from domestic tourism.

Cappelli admits that sanitary measures haven’t been revealed yet and experts of the Croatian Government are working on “what exactly the future tourist corridors will need”. In the case of the Czech Republic, “the first country to show interest [in the plan]”, epidemiologists from both countries are in talks to agree on “what measures should be taken to travel, stay in Croatia and return to the country safely after the holidays.”

However, the Croatian Minister of Tourism does not dare to make a forecast on how many ‘corona corridors’ and of what type can be expected in the EU, neither on whether the country can serve as an example to others such as Italy or Germany, but he does remind that in the meetings between tourism ministers in the EU, it was agreed to “develop specific procedures and regulations for the tourism and travel industry”. In doing so, “all countries could be prepared to control all aspects of the tourism industry recovery, including the worst affected countries in Europe,” he said.

In recent months, Croatia has implemented new internal measures for the industry, which accounts for more than 10% of GDP, such as an extension on tourist and specific taxes, as well as financing programs to improve the liquidity for companies as a means to preserve jobs. According to Cappelli, “the Croatian Government will continue to introduce short and long-term measures to guarantee the stability of the tourism industry so that everyone is prepared as pandemic measures are lifted.”

For its part, the Ministry of Regional Development of the Czech Republic explained that it is in talks with several countries to “exchange information on security and restrictive measures” in order to define the circumstances in which tourism could resume, “as long as the outbreak is completely under control”.

The Czech Republic is in talks with Juan González-Barba, Secretary of State for the European Union, and Ales Chmelar, Czech Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs for European Affairs, in which the main subject was a “coordinated de-escalation” with tourism in mind. Still, the Czech government plans to open borders in July. **If anything, the Croatian “corridor” would only open with the Slavic neighboring countries.**

The Ministry of Transport, Construction and Regional Development of the Slovak Republic also had few to say in this regard, and refused to make any assessment without real scientific reports. Even so, corona corridors “would be welcome if they were two-way,” sources said, and not just Slovak citizens visiting other countries, but also increasing tourist arrivals in Slovakia.

Date: 2020-05-18

Article link:

<https://www.tourism-review.com/countries-explore-the-corona-corridor-to-save-tourism-news11537>