3 PILLARS TO SAVE EU TOURISM: SAFETY, SUSTAINABILITY, AND DATA

Ensuring a safe and fluid tourism experience, promoting greener vacations and moving towards data-driven tourism are the three points of action that those responsible for the tourism portfolios of the European Union (EU) countries consider key in the medium-term future and in the context of the pandemic.

Those are the main conclusions published by the organizers of the European Tourism Convention. **During the meeting, one of the EU tourism priorities agreed for the coming months is to guarantee the safety of tourists**, for which it is necessary for the Member States to have a coordinated approach to the risks derived from COVID-19, limiting lockdowns and harmonizing data collection.

Also, to alleviate the effects of future crises, it was proposed to strengthen cooperation to establish new innovative and intelligent EU tourism services and offers, create resilience, and adapt to changing consumer demand, prioritizing quality over quantity.

Greener Tourism

However, one of the most prominent goals for the next ten to twenty years is to adapt tourism activity to decarbonize (minimizing carbon footprint) tourist destinations in order to create greener vacations.

For this, EU tourism officials propose the creation of a 'new Marshall Plan' to help finance the transition of tourism towards sustainability and adaptation to climate change, as well as redoubling the commitments to meet the objectives of the European Green Deal.

In this regard, Spanish Minister of Industry, Trade and Tourism, María Reyes Maroto, said that European tourism "must ensure that it remains aligned with the changes that take place in our societies", adding that the use of renewable energy and the "rational" use of resources are "core ideas in which EU tourism must work to be at the level that European citizens are going to demand," she concluded.

Dario Franceshini, Minister of Cultural Heritage, Activities and Tourism of Italy, also said that, given the importance of tourism for the Mediterranean country (13% of GDP), they will allocate "a considerable part" of European funding to support the industry while "respecting the European priorities of digital transformation and ecological transition."

Innovation and Data

Another one of the priorities set for the medium-term should be to provide innovation capabilities, financial instruments and legal frameworks to small and medium enterprises (SMEs), as well as organization management and destination marketing.

"Strengthening our efforts for digital transformation, adopting sustainable production and consumption patterns, and improving and retraining the tourism workforce, while ensuring jobs and supporting tourism SMEs are difficult goals to achieve," said Harry Theoharis, Minister of Tourism

of Greece, but it is also "the right way to go," he added.

Another priority is to work on proper harmonized tools to exchange tourism-relevant data and make use of it for a smart and sustainable recovery of the industry.

"While Europe is important for tourism, tourism is crucial for Europe," said Jean-Baptiste Lemoyne, French Secretary of State to the Minister for Europe and Foreign Affairs.

"Without human ties, political structures weaken, EU tourism is one of the factors that unite Europe," Lemoyne concluded.

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