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NOTE

From:	General Secretariat of the Council
To:	Permanent Representatives Committee/Council
No. prev. doc.:	8328/21
Subject:	<i>Preparation of the Competitiveness Council on 27 May 2021</i> Conclusions on Tourism in Europe for the next decade: sustainable, resilient, digital, global and social <i>Approval</i>

1. Tourism is a cross-cutting economic and social activity with a wide-ranging impact on regions' economic growth, employment and social and environmental sustainable development, which contributes to the preservation and promotion of European values and cultural heritage.
2. The aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic provides an occasion for the EU to exchange good practices and reinforce cooperation and coordination in the framework of a future European Agenda for Tourism.
3. In order to seize this opportunity, and taking into account the context of the economic recovery and present and future challenges of the digital and green transitions, the Presidency prepared draft Council conclusions on "Tourism in Europe for the next decade: sustainable, resilient, digital, global and social".

4. The Working Party on Competitiveness and Growth (Tourism) discussed the draft Council conclusions at informal meetings by videoconference on 18 January, 16 March, 23 April and 5 May 2021. The text now meets with the agreement of all delegations as set out in the Annex.
 5. The Permanent Representatives Committee is invited to confirm the consensus reached at Working Party level on the text set out in the Annex and submit the draft conclusions for adoption by the Council (Competitiveness) at its session on 27 May 2021.
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DRAFT COUNCIL CONCLUSIONS on TOURISM IN EUROPE FOR THE NEXT DECADE: SUSTAINABLE, RESILIENT, DIGITAL, GLOBAL AND SOCIAL

THE COUNCIL OF THE EUROPEAN UNION,

- Having regard to the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU), and in particular Article 195 thereof,
- With due regard to the respective spheres of competence of the Member States and the Union, as well as the principles of subsidiarity and proportionality,
- Recalling the importance of the principle of the free movement of persons and services, as established in the Treaties,

HAVING IN MIND

- The communication from the Commission on "Europe, the world's No 1 tourist destination – a new political framework for tourism in Europe" of June 2010¹ and the Council conclusions of October 2010 on this communication²;
- The Council conclusions on "The competitiveness of the tourism sector as a driver for sustainable growth, jobs and social cohesion in the EU for the next decade" of 27 May 2019³;
- The communications from the Commission on "The European Green Deal" of 11 December 2019⁴ and on "Sustainable Europe Investment Plan - European Green Deal Investment Plan" of 14 January 2020⁵;

¹ 11883/10

² 14944/10

³ 9707/19

⁴ 15051/19 and 15051/19 ADD1

⁵ 5269/20

- The communications from the Commission on “A New Industrial Strategy for Europe” of 10 March 2020, which introduced the industrial ecosystems approach, one of which is the tourism ecosystem, and its update of 5 May 2021⁶, as well as "Europe's moment: Repair and Prepare for the Next Generation" of 27 May 2020 and "A European strategy for data" of 19 February 2020 and the European Skills Agenda for sustainable competitiveness, social fairness and resilience of 1 July 2020;
- The communication from the Commission on "Tourism and transport in 2020 and beyond"⁷ and the related Tourism and Transport package of 13 May 2020, the "European Parliament resolution on transport and tourism in 2020 and beyond" of 19 June 2020⁸, the "European Parliament resolution on establishing an EU strategy for sustainable tourism" of 25 March 2021⁹ and the opinion of the European Economic and Social Committee on tourism and transport in 2020 and beyond;
- The Council conclusions on "Shaping Europe's Digital Future" of 9 June 2020¹⁰;
- The communication from the Commission "2030 Digital Compass: the European way for the Digital Decade" of 9 March 2021¹¹;
- The Council conclusions on how to deepen the EU single market for a strong recovery and a competitive, sustainable Europe of 21 September 2020¹²;
- The Council conclusions on "A recovery advancing the transition towards a more dynamic, resilient and competitive European industry" of 16 November 2020¹³;

⁶ COM(2021) 350 final

⁷ 6874/20

⁸ https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/TA-9-2020-0169_EN.html

⁹ https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/TA-9-2021-0109_EN.pdf

¹⁰ 8711/20

¹¹ 6974/1/21

¹² 10698/20

¹³ 13004/20

- The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development Goals adopted by the United Nations General Assembly and the Paris Agreement ratified within the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change;

TAKING INTO ACCOUNT that:

- a) tourism is a cross-cutting economic and social activity with a wide-ranging impact on regions' economic growth, employment and social and environmental sustainable development, which contributes to the preservation and promotion of European values and cultural heritage;
- b) tourism ecosystem employs around 20.3 million people in the EU, and that in 2019, the last year before the severe impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the economy, accounted for 9.5% of the EU's GDP, with a 7% value of overall EU exports. With the pandemic revenues of some sub-sectors dropped by up to 80% of net value and around 11 million jobs in the EU have already been impacted in the tourism ecosystem in 2020¹⁴;
- c) due to the COVID-19 crisis, the tourism ecosystem has the highest investment needs among the 14 industrial ecosystems defined by the European Commission and the lowest confidence indicator;
- d) the value chains in the tourism ecosystem are complex. Tourism is essentially a horizontal activity that depends on and influences several sectors and the success of the tourism industry lies in the synergies and sound interaction between them. Disruptions along the value chains may lead to significant losses for all stakeholders;

¹⁴ Commission Staff Working Document, Identifying Europe's recovery needs, SWD(2020) 98: https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/info/files/economy-finance/assessment_of_economic_and_investment_needs.pdf

- e) the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic provides an occasion for the EU to exchange good practices and reinforce cooperation and coordination in the framework of a European Agenda for Tourism;
- f) tourism and travel need transparent information and clear criteria on conditions and cross-border mobility as well as appropriate digital and interoperable tools to facilitate mobility so that travellers can make informed choices, allowing the industry to adapt and implement compliant measures, in particular during health crises;
- g) stakeholders and all relevant players of the tourism ecosystem at all levels should be committed to accelerating and implementing the measures and actions that make the ecosystem more sustainable and reduce its environmental impact;
- h) following the COVID-19 pandemic, consumers, as well as future generations, may have a different approach to travel and tourism experience and the supply side could act as driver of the anticipated changes in consumption and actively promote more sustainable behaviour on the demand side;

THE COUNCIL OF THE EUROPEAN UNION,

1. HIGHLIGHTS the importance of regular cooperation and exchanges of best practices between Member States on sustainable and responsible tourism policies. This is of particular relevance to build resilience and ensure agility in the context of future crisis management.
2. STRESSES the positive contribution of sustainable and responsible tourism, respecting natural, social and cultural resources and values and the well-being of local communities, particularly those in less developed areas, those undergoing structural changes and remote areas such as the EU outermost regions.

3. URGES the EU and its Member States to move towards a collective and well-coordinated response to the current pandemic and possible future crises (pandemic or otherwise) with a common cohesive approach, deepened cooperation and coordination, including supporting the development of voluntary standards for health and safety protocols by tourism services and establishments.
4. UNDERLINES the need for a well-functioning, strong and resilient EU Single Market for the development and promotion of tourism.
5. STRESSES the importance of addressing the needs and potential of tourism SMEs and micro-enterprises as drivers for social and economic convergence contributing to a balanced regional development and job creation.
6. HIGHLIGHTS the importance of quality education and skills development, with a focus on young people and gender equality, without neglecting lifelong learning processes and resources; encourages student and professional exchanges as well as the acquisition of training, competences and digital skills by tourism professionals at all levels, where the ongoing work towards a Pact for Skills in tourism should be further pursued through public-private partnerships.
7. IDENTIFIES tourism as one of the industrial ecosystems where further measures are needed to contribute to the quality of life and the development, improvement and promotion of tourism products and services with due regard to all three dimensions of sustainability: economic, social and environmental. Those include the transition towards climate neutrality by improving resource efficiency, waste and water management to minimize the environmental impact, respecting cultural heritage, new employment opportunities, sustainable construction and modernisation of tourism and public infrastructure, transport, digital transformation, telecommunication, as well as innovative financial products and services.

8. RECOGNISES that city tourism, business travel, the events sector and the industry of Meetings, Incentives, Conventions, and Exhibitions (MICE) are an increasingly important part of the tourism ecosystem; the future of these sectors and all other sectors will need to be part of a medium and long-term EU Agenda for Tourism.
9. ENCOURAGES Member States to develop sustainable, responsible and resilient tourism policies and strategies, based on sound evidence and on the monitoring of the impact on global, national and regional levels, including on:
 - a) driving towards a sustainable and responsible tourism and business conduct;
 - b) improving connectivity and multi-modal sustainable travel, taking into account cross-border, rural, insular, peripheral and depopulated areas-, as well as outermost regions;
 - c) promoting the sustainable coastal and maritime tourism as part of the tourism ecosystem and of the blue economy, and their successful functioning depends on health maritime environment and strong cooperation between authorities and maritime sector's stakeholders;
 - d) promoting new technologies, digitalisation, ICT and data-sharing to enhance the performance of tourism businesses, the value of tourism destinations, understand and meet growing and emerging needs of tourism consumers and adapt to their uses and practices, enrich the end-to-end tourist experience, improve tourism development planning and the smart management of tourism flows, as well as provide seamless travel, easier communication and integrated tourism development;
 - e) encouraging European wide dialogue and exchange of best practice among Member States to develop innovative approaches, including in smart tourism, for the balanced management of growing tourism flows into European destinations.

10. RECOMMENDS that Member States share their vision, ideas and potential projects on how the tourism ecosystem can contribute to achieving the European Green Deal objectives, aligned with the Paris Agreement and the Sustainable Development Goals of the Agenda 2030, and in line with the principles of just transition, by implementing innovative instruments to modernise tourism business models and destination management and take further steps on the road to decarbonisation, more resource efficiency and promotion of circular economy in tourism.
11. EMPHASIZES the importance of the digital transformation of tourism and that tourism can play a relevant role within the EU Digital Single Market and the common European Data spaces initiatives, such as Artificial Intelligence and big data issues, aligned with the EU data strategy, and ensuring that the European Digital Innovation Hubs network contribute to the digitalisation needs of tourism related SMEs.
12. ENSURES that the EU identifies and makes smart use of existing funding opportunities under the Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF) and the Next Generation EU, in order to support the short-, medium- and long-term recovery of the tourism ecosystem and to make it more resilient and support its green and digital transitions.
13. INVITES the Commission and Member States, in participation with relevant stakeholders, to design a European Agenda for Tourism 2030/2050, underpinned by shared priorities and action plans, recognising the differences between Member States, based on a foresight that addresses the key strategic challenges to drive the green and digital transitions of the tourism ecosystem and strengthen its competitiveness, resilience, and sustainability to present a first outline of the Agenda by the end of 2021.

14. INVITES the Commission to:

- i) reflect tourism in relevant EU policies and ensure they coherently encourage sustainable and responsible tourism in respect of the Sustainable Development Goals, natural, cultural resources and values and local communities, thus contributing to the quality of life and to regional added value;
- ii) launch as soon as possible, and at the latest by September 2021, a comprehensive overview of current funding sources for tourism in the MFF 2021-2027 and the Next Generation EU to facilitate access to information to the public authorities and stakeholders;
- iii) apply its industrial ecosystem approach to tourism and develop together with Member States a specific approach within the existing framework that supports the tourism ecosystem, in particular SMEs, and destinations in their green and digital transitions, as soon as possible;
- iv) in order to maintain Europe as the world's leading tourist destination in terms of value, quality, sustainability and innovation, work with Member States, destinations, industry and stakeholders to launch new tools to encourage European destinations to adopt a more intelligent, informed and sustainable approach to tourism planning and management based on consumers trends, dynamic monitoring and indicators;
- v) work with the Member States and relevant international organizations to jointly design an EU Tourism Dashboard, as an EU flagship tool for the tourism ecosystem. For this purpose, INVITES the Commission to work with Member States' experts to present a first outline by the end of 2021.
