
Towards Sustainable Tourism in the Maritime and Coastal Regions of Europe

Perspectives on the recovery from the Covid-19 crisis and beyond

07.07.2020 – 09:15-12:15 CEST

Welcome addresses

Tonino Picula, MEP Chair of the Intergroup, welcomed the participants to the first online webinar of Searica and remarked the unprecedented situation that Europe and the world is facing after months of restrictions and lockdown measures to contain the spread of COVID-19, with millions of jobs at stake in the European Union. He stressed the opportunity to rethink and re-shuffle the tourism ecosystem towards a much-needed sustainability, also through adequate financial support. He also recalled the requests of the European Parliament (EP) in its [Resolution](#) on tourism and transport of 15 June and welcomed the Commission proposal to organise a European tourism summit as first step to the development of a new “European Agenda for Tourism 2050”.

Eleni Marianou, Secretary General of the CPMR, highlighted the long-standing close cooperation of the CPMR and the EP. She stressed the impact of the crisis in the CPMR regions together with the need for ambition in the recovery and the important role that regions have in the implementation of EU policies and the use of funds. Recovery must be smart and green. Ms Marianou remarked the urgency of conveying budgetary resources in particular in support of the recovery of the tourism sector, in a way that can also allow regions to directly manage part of the resources, with the benefits of a real impact on the ground. Regions need to be associated to the definition of the National Recovery plans. They also have lot to offer and capitalize from the direct implementation of their own policies and EU projects regarding sustainable tourism. The CPMR has proudly supported and signed the 13 principles of the [Future of Tourism coalition](#) to create common ground for a model of tourism that places destination needs and communities at its centre.

Session 1 – The Impact of the COVID 19-crisis on the coastal and maritime tourism sector

Vangelis Meimarakis, MEP Vice-Chair of the Intergroup responsible for Tourism and the Mediterranean, opened the first session dedicated to the impact of the COVID-19 crisis on the coastal and maritime tourism sector stressing that tourism is one of the most important sector of the economy of the EU, as in the case of the Mediterranean islands and territories.

Manos Konsolas, Greek Vice Minister for tourism, reported the difficult situation that the tourism and related sectors are facing in his country, accounting for around 30% of direct and indirect jobs. He also stressed the specificities of insular areas and called for EU specific measures and dedicated financial instruments for the most fragile and impacted territories, with a view to preserve jobs and competitiveness while moving towards increased sustainability.

Cláudia Monteiro de Aguiar, MEP Vice-Chair of the Intergroup responsible for Outermost Regions, presented the work done by the European Parliament and the initiatives of the [Task Force on Tourism](#) of the TRAN Committee in

support of a “Marshall plan on tourism”, with the proposal of dedicated funding, short-term financial support for businesses and a long-term strategy for tourism and the blue economy.

Francois Alfonsi, MEP Vice-Chair of the Intergroup, remarked the difficult situation faced by communities on islands, highly dependent on tourism and related sectors, such as transport. He stressed the risk of economic collapse due to the prospects of massive unemployment and mass emigration from insular areas, as also highlighted in the call for urgent measures signed by eleven MEPs representing islands and addressed to the EU Commission.

Milosz Momot, Deputy Head of Unit at DG GROW, EU Commission, reported the alarming estimations for unemployment, with one third of jobs in the tourism sector currently at stake due to the Covid-19 containment measures. He then presented the measures and initiatives of the Commission to preserve jobs while ensuring safe conditions for travellers and workers. The Next Generation EU and reinforced MFF as proposed by the EU Commission on 27 May include massive investments that can benefit the tourism ecosystem, to be implemented through national plans coordinated at the EU level.

Session 2 – Towards the recovery of the maritime and coastal tourism sector: measures, instruments and tools

Jeremy Sampson, CEO of the Travel Foundation, co-organizer of the webinar, opened the second session with a keynote speech on the future of tourism. He remarked the pre-existing and new challenges in the management of tourism, as well as the opportunities for recovery. He stressed the need to involve local communities and make a thorough assessment of all direct and indirect costs and benefits associated with tourism activities. He also presented the recently formed Future of Tourism Coalition, 6 global NGOs that have set out [13 guiding principles](#) for the future of tourism which any new European strategy can adopt and align to.

Giovanni Ruggieri, President of the Observatory on Tourism for Islands Economy (OTIE) agreed on the importance of including local communities in the decision-making process at the national and European level and gave the floor to the representatives of the CPMR Geographical Commission asking to share their experiences and views on the instruments and tools for recovery.

Marie-Antoniette Maupertuis, Executive Coucillor for European Affairs of Corsica, Member of the Committee of the Regions and President of the Tourism Agency of Corsica intervened for the CPMR Islands Commission, remarking the need for urgent actions in support of local and regional policies. She also presented some concrete proposals made by Corsica and other European islands, such as, inter alia, a green sanitary passport to find a balance between sanitary and economic needs and restore traveller’s trust.

Paula Fernandez Viaña, Regional Minister for the Presidency and External Action of Cantabria and Member of the Committee of the Regions, presented the activities of the CPMR Atlantic Arc Commission Working Group on sustainable tourism, created in 2012 with the objective of reinforcing cooperation among regions in the Atlantic area which is now being renewed. She stressed the need for a tourism strategy for recovery oriented to sustainability and digitalisation, in line with the Resolution on Travel and Tourism recently adopted by the European Parliament.

George Alexakis, Vice governor of Crete and CPMR Vice-President in charge of maritime affairs, and leader of the CPMR Intermediterranean Commission Task Force on Tourism, emphasised the need for solidarity and for a common approach for the recovery of economic activities, including tourism. He then reported the difficult situation of Crete,

highly dependent on tourism and related sectors and called for a revamped political agenda for the Mediterranean recalling some of the [works](#) carried by the IMC, including its political agenda on sustainable tourism and recent work on the impact of the crisis.

Levan Tsulaia, Executive Director of the Samegrelo-Zemo Svaneti DMO, Georgia, intervened for the CPMR Balkan and Black Sea Commission, reporting the negative economic estimations for 2020 and beyond. He remarked the many challenges that Georgia is facing in the touristic sector, after witnessing a significant and constant growth in the past years, with around four million visitors in 2019.

Giovanni Ruggieri commented on the need for greater cooperation between the Union and third countries, whose economies are deeply interlinked and gave the floor to **Marie Linde**, Deputy CEO of the Tourist Board of West Sweden, member region of the CPMR North Sea Commission. Ms Linde presented a concrete initiative implemented by the WS Tourist Board in support of the companies operating in the tourism sector, with the organisation of a professional online training of eight weeks and around 300 participants, with different modules dedicated for instance to hosting, events, promotion, social media, personal development.

Christopher Imbsen, Director of Destination Stewardship at the World Travel & Tourism Council (WTTC), presented key data and estimates for international and European tourism and called for a coordinated action when lifting coronavirus containment measures. He also provided examples on how companies and destinations are reacting to the crisis, for instance through the development of Safe Travel protocols.

Mr Ruggieri asked **Patrick Torrent**, President of the Network of European regions for competitive and sustainable tourism (NECSTouR) his view on the way to recovery. Mr Torrent underlined the need for immediate action and presented the pillars for sustainable tourism of tomorrow: Smart destinations, Sociocultural balance, Skills and talent, Safety and resilience, Statistics and measurability. NECSTouR, member of the [European Tourism Manifesto Alliance](#), will continue to promote regional cooperation through measures and projects in support of sustainable and competitive tourism.

Tayeb Masbahi, Vice president of Oriental Region, Morocco intervened from the audience remarking the strategic role of the South Mediterranean regions for international and European tourism as well as the importance of close cooperation in facing common challenges.

Cláudia Monteiro de Aguiar concluded the session stressing the need for unity and close cooperation between the EU, national and regional levels in the definition and implementation of a much needed plan for tourism.

Davide Strangis, Executive Director of the CPMR, closed the meeting recalling the main messages raised during the webinar towards a smart and sustainable recovery of the tourism sector. The views expressed during the sessions intend to contribute to the tourism convention proposed by the EC for the autumn 2020 and to further reflections and events that SEARICA ITG, the CPMR and other key partners will organize in the next few months.