

UNWTO Welcomes EU Support and Urges Europe to Lead the Way in Tourism's Restart

Madrid, Spain, 30 March 2021 – Only with strong and coordinated political action can Europe reopen to tourism in time for the peak summer season. The World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) has again stressed the importance of collaboration as it welcomed European Commission Vice-President Margaritis Schinas to Madrid for a high-level meeting focused on the joined-up response to the ongoing crisis, and on advancing plans for tourism's vital restart.

As the latest data shows an 85% fall in tourist arrivals across Europe at the start of 2021, UNWTO has noted **Europe can set a global example** by restarting the sector. Given tourism's huge socio-economic importance, the benefits that will accompany the return of tourism in time for the peak European season will be felt well outside of the sector itself. This **heightened relevance of tourism** was reflected in the visit of the highest-level European Union delegation to UNWTO headquarters to date. Meeting with the Vice-President, UNWTO Secretary-General Zurab Pololikashvili further emphasised the need for harmonized protocols and digital solutions to make safe international travel possible.

UNWTO has congratulated the European Commission for taking the lead and advancing plans to launch its **Digital Green Pass**, recognizing its potential to restart tourism in a number of destinations. At the same time, the UNWTO leadership also credited the Commission's intentions to support national recovery and resilience plans, as well as the recent launch of the 'Re-Open EU' website and mobile app, both of which effectively complement UNWTO's own global #RestartTourism campaign.

Tourism for economic and social wellbeing

Secretary-General Pololikashvili said: "Across Europe, millions of people and businesses are depending on the right decisions to be made so that tourism can restart. Today's visit of Vice-President Margaritis Schinas is testament to the importance of tourism to economic and social wellbeing across the European Union. Now more than ever, tourism needs strong political support and joined-up action. Harmonized travel and health rules are essential to restore confidence and restart tourism."

Vice-President Margaritis Schinas adds: "With vaccinations and better management of the crisis, there is no doubt this summer will be better than last. Reopening borders will have an impact beyond tourism. It will drive Europe's overall recovery. And Europe will

not return on its own. Europe is part of the world and we are ready find a way that the European Green Pass works with solutions provided by countries or groups of countries from outside the EU.”

Strong, ongoing collaboration

UNWTO has been working closely with the European institutions since the start of the pandemic. The UNWTO World Tourism Barometer and Travel Restrictions Report provide **trusted data to guide the European Commission’s response**, as well as the policies of individual EU Member States. In Madrid, Vice-President Schinas was advised of the progress UNWTO is making towards establishing a first International Code for the Protection of Tourists, a vital step towards restoring confidence in travel.

The Vice-President also signalled his availability to participate in the next meeting of UNWTO’s Global Tourism Crisis Committee, a cross-sector body established at the start of the crisis and now focusing on **resuming safe international travel**, restoring confidence and ensuring tourism businesses the liquidity they need to survive and protect jobs. In recognition of his long-standing contributions to European tourism and his recognition of the importance of the sector to the European Way of Life, Secretary-General Pololikashvili presented Vice-President Schinas with a plaque to commemorate his visit to the UNWTO headquarters.

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