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UNWTO in Europe

Overview of the evolution and the impact of the pandemic

1. To further deepen the information conveyed by the Secretary-General in his report the below section aims to provide some additional Europe specific information related to trends and tourism data.
2. As of 5 May 2022, 35 destinations around the world had lifted all COVID-19 travel restrictions according to the UNWTO-IATA Destination Tracker – Easy Travel. Most of these fully open destinations are in Europe: Republic of Moldova, Serbia, Switzerland, Bulgaria, Croatia, Kyrgyzstan, Greece, Albania, Lithuania, Slovenia, North Macedonia, Czech Republic, Sweden, Latvia, Poland, United Kingdom, Montenegro, Romania, Hungary, Ireland, Norway, Iceland and Liechtenstein.
3. Europe saw the strongest results by region in 2021 relative to 2020 with arrivals up 19% or 44 million more, on the back of robust results recorded in the summer season and the last quarter of 2021.
4. Europe welcomed 281 million international arrivals in 2021, 44 million more than the previous year. Yet, international arrivals remained 62% below 2019 levels.
5. Southern Mediterranean Europe (+57%) saw the best performance in 2021 over 2020 among world subregions, though arrivals remained 55% below pre-pandemic levels. Central and Eastern Europe also enjoyed a 16% increase in 2021, but figures were still 65% below 2019. By contrast, Western Europe (-10%) and Northern Europe (-26%) saw a decline in arrivals in 2021 over 2020. Compared to 2019, these subregions recorded decreases of 65% and 81% respectively.
6. In the EU-27, international arrivals increased 13% in 2021 over 2020, but remained 62% below 2019. The reopening of destinations, coupled with rising vaccination rates and the introduction of the EU Digital COVID Certificate, all contributed to the facilitation of travel within the EU and from outside the EU.
7. Europe saw a drop in direct tourism GDP from 4.3% in 2019 to 2.2% in 2020, as a percentage of GDP. Based on the region's results in 2021, it is estimated that Europe's direct tourism GDP increased to 2.6% in 2021.
8. Europe (+199%) continued to post the strongest results in January 2022 over 2021, though international arrivals were still around half of pre-pandemic levels (-53%). All subregions saw a strong rebound. The best results were recorded in Western Europe which saw almost four times more arrivals in January 2022 than in 2021, but 58% less than in 2019. Additionally, Southern and Mediterranean Europe (-41%) came closest to pre-pandemic levels.

A verbal update on international trends and outlook will be provided at the meeting.



Work of the UNWTO Regional Department of Europe (RDEU)

9. 2021 marked the year of the full and extended use of the European Digital Certificate, which was meant to facilitate safe and free movement inside the EU during the COVID-19 pandemic while countries progressively eased some of the travel restrictions.
10. The European Commission's 2021 European Year of Rail has further emphasized the need for a shift towards a more sustainable and smart means of transport, in line also with UNWTO's work and efforts manifested in the Glasgow Declaration on Climate Action in Tourism, launched in November 2021 on the occasion of COP26 UN Climate change conference.
11. In September 2021, the President of the European Commission announced the launch of the 2022 European Year of Youth initiative with the objective to build a better future for all young people that is greener, more inclusive and digital. The initiative and its core aim and objectives coincide with UNWTO's Global Youth Tourism Summit initiative which aims to empower youth to take active part in decision-making processes in the tourism sector.

The Regional Department for Europe, with the objective of providing the Members with the best and most immediate services during this time of crisis, recovery and restart, continued to concentrate on the following pillars, identified at the beginning of the pandemic:

A) Political outreach –official visits, diplomatic relations in Madrid and visits to Headquarters of high-level Officials

Supporting the UNWTO Secretary-General's efforts to provide crucial political support to the European Members in the form of mainstreaming tourism at the highest political level, by highlighting the importance of tourism for the socio-economic development of the countries with the objective of ensuring that, during this unprecedented COVID-19 outbreak, tourism receives the necessary attention and much needed governmental support and measures to mitigate the impact of the crisis. In this context, the Regional Department enhanced its efforts in calling for financial and political support for recovery measures aimed at tourism, and to include support for the sector in the wider recovery plans and actions of affected economies. Since July 2021, official visits were carried out at the highest-levels, starting from the Secretary-General, both in presential and virtual formats.

12. Official high-level visits of the Secretary-General:

- Portugal, from 8 to 10 July 2021, on the occasion of the Mayors' Forum, during which he met with the Minister of Economy and Digital Transition, the Secretary of State for Tourism and the Mayor of Porto.
- Bruges (Flanders, Belgium), from 31 October to 2 November 2021, on the occasion of the 6th UNWTO World Forum on Gastronomy Tourism, where he held meetings with the high-level officials of the region of Flanders and the city of Bruges.
- Barcelona, Spain, from 25 to 27 October 2021, on the occasion of the "Future of Tourism World Summit" and its Ministerial Session.
- Switzerland, meeting with the Secretary-General of the World Health Organization Dr. Tedros; Director General of IATA; Chairman/CEO of CLIA; State Secretariat for Economic Affairs SECO and Switzerland Tourism; visit to the Best Tourism Villages by UNWTO Gruyeres and official meeting with the Mayor of the village; and official meeting with the leaderships of the Swiss Education Group and Glion Institute of Higher Education (21-25 February 2022).
- Meetings of the Secretary-General with the Ambassadors of Azerbaijan, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Monaco, Turkey, Uzbekistan, Bulgaria, Turkmenistan, Lithuania, Greece, France, Republic of Moldova, Slovenia and Armenia.
- In-person meetings of the Secretary-General with the high-level national delegations of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Hungary, Republic of Moldova, Turkey, Uzbekistan, Portugal, Andorra, Russian Federation and Malta.



- High-level visit of the President of Bulgaria to the UNWTO Headquarters on 28 April 2022.

13. Official high-level visits of the Director of the Regional Department for Europe:

- Visit to San Marino and participation in the Executive presentation of the Territorial Tourism Table – Sustainable Tourism Development Project and bilateral meetings with the Capitani Reggenti, the Minister of Tourism, Posts, Cooperation and Expo and the Minister of Foreign Affairs, International Economic Cooperation and Telecommunications of San Marino, together with the Minister of Tourism of Italy (28-29 July 2021).
- 16th Bled Strategic Forum in Bled, Slovenia (1-2 September 2021);
- Velocity, world's largest cycling conference, in Lisbon, Portugal (6-9 September 2021);
- “A world for travel” in Evora, Portugal (16-17 September 2021); Estates general of European LGBTQ+ Tourism Conference (8 April 2022, Milan, Italy);
- BIT Tourism Fair (10 April 2022, Milan, Italy).

14. The Deputy Director for Europe participated in the European Youth Event 2021, Strasbourg, France (7-9 October 2021);

15. To further support various events and tourism fairs organized by the European Member States, both the Secretary-General and the Regional Director for Europe provided video messages or participated virtually in:

- Central and South Asia: Regional connectivity. Challenges and opportunities Conference in Khiva, Uzbekistan (15-16 July 2021);
- International Forum on Agrotourism Development in Tajikistan” and “International Festival of Dushanbe – the ECO Tourism Capital” in Dushanbe, Tajikistan (29-30 August 2021);
- OTDYKH Leisure Fair, Russian Federation (7-9 September 2021); Eastern Economic Forum in Vladivostok, Russian Federation (2-4 September 2021);
- 1st Grand Regional Tourism Forum on “Development of tourism in new reality by joint efforts. Kyrgyzstan 2021” in Osh, Kyrgyzstan (26-27 September 2021);
- Virtual Commonwealth Youth Parliament 2021 – Travel and Tourism Committee, (20 October 2021);
- Commonwealth Travel Hub International Tourism Forum (10-11 November 2021, St. Petersburg, Russian Federation);
- Tech Driven Travel Industry event, organised by Lithuania at EXPO 2020 (12 January 2022, Dubai, UAE);
- Blue Economy Forum held in Greece (22 February 2022);
- 30th anniversary of Uzbekistan's joining UN family (2 March 2022);
- ITB Berlin panel on Challenges & Solutions in the Medical & Health Tourism Sector in Post Pandemic (9 March 2022);
- Conference of the Presidents of the Parliamentary Commissions of the National Assembly of France (virtual, 21 March 2022);
- International Conference on Innovation and Tourism - Project INOVA ALGARVE 2.0 (29 March 2022);
- AIVP-MedCruise Working Group (31 March 2022);
- 3rd Wine Tourism Conference - "Peloponnese: A journey through Wine and Time" (1-3 April 2022, Nemea and Mantinea, Greece);
- 5th International Rural Tourism Congress (27-30 April 2022, Cavtat and Dubrovnik, Croatia).



16. Dialogue with Non-Members States: The RDEU continued to enhance the dialogue with the European Non-Member States, namely with Belgium, Estonia, Finland, Iceland, Ireland, Latvia, Luxembourg, Norway, Sweden, United Kingdom, and others, on the matter of their potential membership in or re-joining the Organization.

B) Enhanced cooperation with the international community

17. Further enhancing the strong partnership with the European Union, in the context of the Slovenian and the French Presidencies of the Council of the European Union, the Secretary-General participated virtually in the Informal Meeting of Tourism Ministers and provided a video message for the 20th European Tourism Forum in Slovenia (16-17 November 2021) and participated in the Informal Conference on Tourism Ministers the European Union (Dijon, France, 18 March 2022).
18. In addition, the RDEU coordinated UNWTO's participation and contribution to the co-creation of the Transition pathway for Tourism report presented by the European Commission (February 2022) and lead UNWTO's efforts to foster close collaboration on common policy approaches and to ensure a more strategic framework for cooperation at all levels between the European Commission, European Parliament, Committee of the Regions and the UNWTO.
19. Cooperation with the international financial institutions (through the actions of TECO and other Regional Departments) such as the World Bank, Asian Development Bank, European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD), South-South Cooperation Assistance Fund (SSCAF) and other institutions, such as the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO), United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), United Nations Environmental Programme (UNEP) and Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) and others, has been further strengthened and discussions have accelerated to address specific recovery needs of individual countries in the Region of Europe.
20. The RDEU continues to represent UNWTO in the BSEC Working Group on Tourism and provides political and technical support for the preparation of BSEC COVID-19 tourism protocols.
21. The RDEU further enhanced its cooperation with the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), following the initiative for the landmark Memorandum of Understanding and its action plan signed in September 2020. The following activities took place or are planned during 2022:
 - A joint event “The Taste of Sustainability: A virtual coffee on Agritourism, Food and Better Life” was organized (3 March 2022) together with FAO Brussels and with the technical support of FAO GIAHS team, with the aim of raising awareness of the importance to develop and promote sustainable agritourism by tapping into the potential of innovative solutions, public-private partnerships, as well as farmers, youth and women engagement.
 - A joint publication was published on the Mountain Partnership and dissemination event is planned in Aspen in September, 2022.
 - On the Best Tourism Villages (BTV), we are joining forces in the scientific committee for selecting the BTV villages and plan to synergize with FAO's 1000 Digital Villages.
 - The Global Youth Tourism Summit (GYTS), scheduled to take place from 27 June to 3 July 2022, will incorporate the World Food Forum. FAO's DG has been invited as keynote speaker at the simulation of UNWTO GA during GYTS.
 - Collaboration on joint events in Europe (1st ever joint conference at the 67th Meeting of the Commission for Europe in Yerevan, Armenia, 1-3 June 2022), SIDS (possible joint conference in the Maldives, at the end of June 2022), and Caribbean countries.
 - Discussions are taking place regarding various ideas related to the Hand in Hand Initiative and others, possibly resulting in concrete joint projects.



22. As in 2020, in 2021 RDEU continued to enhance the institutional virtual presence and cooperation with the UN Brussels Team on strategic topics related to the implementation of the Agenda 2030 and the SDGs, especially within the context of the MFF of the European Union, its political agenda and the European Green Deal.

C) Strengthened relations for better services

With the aim of improving the flow of information and improving the service to its Members during these exceptional times, the Regional Department of Europe carried out a series of initiatives:

23. *Bilateral meetings with Focal Points*: a round of bilateral virtual meetings with the Focal Points of the Members in the region was continued. This provided a valuable insight in the situation, determined the main challenges and priorities during the recovery process.
24. *Focused bilateral meetings with relevant stakeholders in Member States*: supporting innovation, education, investments, sustainable development of tourism, market intelligence and competitiveness in the interested Member States.
25. *Training survey*: a training survey related to the human workforce development and training needs of its Members was launched in April 2022.
26. *Diptychs – Member States’ infographics*: visual presentation of the most relevant tourism data and initiatives in each Member State, including matching priorities, and detailed talking points. *EuropeConnect*: The RDEU continues to offer Members in the region an exclusive online platform that enables them to instantly share content, events, and documents, while allowing the Department to create better and stronger links with the Members and update them with the latest UNWTO activities and resources.
27. *Knowledge Hub Platform*: an internal departmental tool and database for the collection of structured historical and current information (political, tourism policy level and economic) regarding the European members.
28. *Technical assistance*: UNWTO in cooperation and with assistance of the International Financial Institutions continues to implement different projects aiming at tourism recovery and tourism advancement in the region of Europe:
 - UNWTO/EBRD collaboration to support COVID-19 Tourism Recovery: Croatia (2021-2022), Georgia (2021-2022), Greece (2021-2022), Montenegro (2021-2022), Turkey (2021-2022), and Uzbekistan (2021-2022),
 - Kyrgyz Republic and Kazakhstan: Common Health and Safety Protocols and Standards along the Almaty-Bishkek Economic Corridor (ADB, 2021-2022),
 - Kyrgyz Republic and Kazakhstan: Common Accommodation Classification System along the Almaty-Bishkek Economic Corridor (ADB, 2021),
 - Tajikistan: Sustainable Tourism Development Project (ADB, 2020-2022/2023),
 - Greece: Providing Tourism Recovery Technical Assistance on Marketing and Promotion to Skiathos Island (Municipality of Skiathos, 2021-2022),
 - Republic of Moldova: Empowering Young Women: Sustainable Livelihoods through Tourism (Estonian Development Corporation, 2020-2022),
 - Uzbekistan: COVID-19 Tourism Recovery Technical Assistance (UNWTO/China South-South Cooperation Assistance Fund, 2021-2022/2023).
29. *Measuring the Sustainability of Tourism*: Five European countries (Austria, Germany, Italy, Sweden and Netherlands) have been implementing or have completed respective pilot projects as well as implementing pilot expansions together with follow-up work.
30. *Global Youth Tourism Summit (GYTS)*: is a global series of international events (1st edition to be held on 27 June - 3 July 2022, Sorrento (Italy)) where children and youth will develop, share and discuss their innovative ideas, vision and proposals for the future of sustainable tourism within the global framework of the UN Agenda 2030 and 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDG). The road to Sorrento is marked with the organization of preparatory



webinars for the participants with engagement of high-level speakers, international celebrities and UNWTO Personnel (operational departments): 2 February 2022: Launch webinar + Tourism for sustainable development, 17 February 2022: SDG Game, 3 March 2022: Gastronomy & Culture, 6 April 2022: Innovation, 5 May 2022: Speak out!, 10 May 2022: Climate Action.

D) Human workforce and skills development

31. To support Member States in providing training and learning opportunities, for tourism students and professionals alike, the Director of the Regional Department for Europe participated in over 100 fairs, webinars, interviews and other public appearances (Armenia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, France, Germany, Greece, Italy, Lithuania, Portugal, Russian Federation, Slovenia, Spain).
32. Further, the renewal of the traineeship agreement with the InHolland University (Netherlands), the signature of the traineeship agreement with the Hungarian Tourism Agency and with the University of Debrecen and with Bella Vista Institute of Higher Education (Switzerland) recognize the importance of promoting training and capacity building for human resources. These will provide excellent training opportunities for young graduates and a chance to experience first-hand how UNWTO works and implements its activities. A similar traineeship agreement is being finalized with Azerbaijan, which is also sending a 2nd official on loan to the Organization starting from October 2022.
33. Moreover, the finalization and signature of the Cooperation Agreement with the Bella Vista Institute of Higher Education regarding the creation of an Education and Training Hub under the name "International Centre associated to the UNWTO Academy in Switzerland" (December 2021), will provide governments, destinations and businesses with the right tourism human capital to meet current and future market demands and, ultimately, enhance levels of competitiveness and sustainability across the sector.

Collaboration with the private sector

34. RDEU continued to enhance its collaboration with the private sector, leading to the signature of various Memoranda of Understanding, namely with UEFA, MSC Cruises and European Cyclist Federation.
35. Further, 17 new European Affiliate Members have joined the Affiliate Members Programme (ASICOTUR – Asociación Internacional para la Cooperación Turística (Spain), Asociación para la Protección del Patrimonio Gastronómico (Spain), Avangreen Energy Solutions S.A. (Spain), Business Association of Georgia (Georgia), CEOE – Confederación Española de Organizaciones Empresariales (Spain), Club Atlético de Madrid (Spain), Costa Crociere S.p.a. (Italy), Gastronomic Association of Georgia (Georgia), GIATA – Gesellschaft zur Entwicklung und Vermarktung Interaktiver Tourismusanwendungen mbH (Germany), International Foundation of Sport, Tourism and Youth (Georgia), Madrid Cultura y Turismo S.A.U. (Spain), MSC Cruises (Switzerland), PKF Hospitality Group (Austria), RECEVIN – Réseau Européen des Villes du Vin (Portugal), Saint Petersburg Convention Bureau (Russian Federation), SPET – Turismo de Tenerife (Spain), UNAUTO VTC (Spain).
36. Sponsorships for the support of the Global Youth Tourism Summit activities were secured (Over 200.000 EUR from: Bella Vista Institute of Higher Education, Azerbaijan Tourism Board, Hilton, MSC, Mastercard, Qatar Foundation, Ferrero and the Global Tourism Economy Research Center - GTERC).

Institutional matters and activities (taking place in the Europe region)

37. General Assembly

- The 24th session of UNWTO General Assembly (30 November - 3 December 2021) took place in Madrid (Spain) and included the appointment of the Secretary-General for a second term upon the recommendation of the 115th session of the Executive Council. Moreover, Uzbekistan was elected to host the 25th session of the UNWTO General Assembly in Samarkand (Uzbekistan) in 2023.



38. *Executive Council:*

- The 114th (30 November 2021) and the 115th (3 December 2021) sessions of the Executive Council gathered on both occasions in Madrid, Spain, with high level participants (level of Ministers, State-Secretaries, Deputy Ministers and Chairs among other dignitaries) from all European countries. The 115th session also marked the re-election of the Secretary-General for another term in office.

39. *Second Emergency Session of the Executive Council and First Extraordinary Session of the UNWTO General Assembly:*

- The Second Emergency Session of the Executive Council (8 March 2022) took place in Madrid (Spain) and decided to call for an extraordinary session of the General Assembly to consider the suspension of the membership of the Russian Federation.
- During the First Extraordinary Session of the UNWTO General Assembly (27 April 2022) the Russian Federation was suspended from UNWTO, losing with immediate effect its rights and privileges as part of the United Nations specialized agency while at the same time the country also announced its withdrawal from the Organization.

40. *International Code for the Protection of Tourists:* in the framework of the 24th session of UNWTO General Assembly on 30 November 2021, an induction session "Towards an International Code for the Protection of Tourists" was organized by the Secretariat with the objective to enhance the knowledge and share additional information with the Members regarding the Code.

41. *Online Education Committee:* Greece and Portugal continued their mandates as members of the committee and Andorra was following the deliberations as Observer. Portugal acts as co-chair of the committee.

42. *The UNWTO Students Leagues:* provides students with a platform that empowers and motivates them, by giving them real-time knowledge on our sector and experience by working on creating innovative and sustainable solutions for the challenges that the sector is facing. In 2021, over 700 students from around the world presented innovative sustainable solutions for pressing matters such as the Plastics Pollution and Rural Development.

In 2022, the following European countries have expressed their interest to launch a National Students League: Andorra, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Israel, Spain, Switzerland, Tajikistan, Turkey, and Uzbekistan.

43. *Best Tourism Villages Initiative (BTV):* a pilot initiative was launched on 26 May 2021 to advance the role of tourism as a tool for rural development. The awarded villages were announced on the occasion of the 24th session of UNWTO General Assembly:

- 17 Best Tourism Villages: Austria, Cyprus, Greece, Italy, Portugal (2 villages), Serbia, Slovenia (2 villages), Spain (2 villages), Switzerland (3 villages), Turkey (2 villages) and Russian Federation
- 12 upgrade villages (Andorra, Azerbaijan, Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Greece, Hungary, Montenegro (2 villages), Serbia, Slovenia, and Spain

The 2nd edition of the BTV was launched in March 2022.

44. *International Network of Sustainable Observatories (INSTO):* Barcelona Tourism Observatory (2022) and the Mallorca Sustainable Tourism Observatory (2021) joined the growing number of observatories around the globe and will work to generate more and better evidence of the economic, environmental, and social impacts that tourism has on the destinations. This will further facilitate the decision-making process and ensure that tourism can continue to be a tool for sustainable development."

45. *DataLab:* UNWTO and European Travel Commission (ETC) have been collaborating in the development of the UNWTO-ETC DataLab Initiative. The creation of the DataLab network was officially on the 30th of May.

46. *Membership fee honouring:* 97% in 2021, 88,64% **to date** in 2022.



Overview of the 2022 Programme of Work of the Regional Department for Europe

47. Europe remains a region that hosts numerous UNWTO events and serves as a role-model in terms of tourism recovery and for the introduction of the most innovative best practices and sharing experience and know-how.
48. RDEU continues to prioritize the following strategic priorities: sustainability and MST, education, innovation, MICE, rural and cultural tourism development. The following additional areas of interest for the Members have been identified: youth tourism, coastal and maritime tourism, events and business tourism, sports tourism, shopping and luxury tourism, health and spa tourism. In 2022 Europe will host the following events:
- Global Youth Tourism Summit (27 June – 3 July 2022, Sorrento, Italy)
 - 6th UNWTO Global Conference on Wine Tourism (20-21 September 2022, Alba, Italy)
 - 3rd UNWTO Mayors Forum for Sustainable Urban Tourism (20-21 October 2022, Madrid Spain)
 - Innovation and Technology Conference (2-3 November 2022 (TBC), Tel Aviv, Israel)
 - Smart Destinations Conference (23-25 November 2022, Valencia, Spain)
 - Global Tourism Education Summit (December 2022 (TBC), Greece)

