

117th Executive Council Policy Debate

SMEs and Talent: Transforming Tourism

Tourism has been one of the sector's most affected by COVID-19. The impact has been particularly acute among Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSEs) which are the backbone of the sector and have seen existing challenges in the areas of liquidity and financing, human resources or digitalization accelerated by the pandemic.

Representing around 80% of all businesses in tourism worldwide, and in some G20 economies as much as 98%, MSEs are vital for the sector's competitiveness, job creation and transition to a more sustainable model. Supporting SMEs as agents of transformation in tourism will lead the way towards a more inclusive, resilient and sustainable sector. The importance of digitalization for SMEs needs to be accelerated for economic recovery of the tourism sector by supporting SMEs to unleash digital technologies to create jobs and enhance future resilience in the linkages of the tourism value chain post COVID-19.

At the same time, as recovery consolidates workforce challenges have become more evident as the pandemic also accelerated a series of shifts happening in the world of work, adequate new skills, education, and training. Tourism businesses previously faced some challenges filling jobs that were sometimes perceived as being low-wage and low-skilled, with little chance of career advancement or steady employment; with pandemic shutdowns, laid-off employees in the tourism appear to be moving into other sectors, leaving many tourism jobs unfilled. Indeed, the increasing challenges related to the attraction and retention of talent in tourism mean the sector needs to promote value-added jobs, improve job-related conditions, including life-work balance, tackle inequalities and focus on career development especially for women, youth and people in vulnerable situations.

Challenges identified by G20 economies^[1] in the Guidelines developed by UNWTO and the G20 Tourism Working Group under the G20 Indonesian Presidency, include:

For MSMEs

- Lack of access to finance
- Lack of access to market intelligence
- Market uncertainty
- The volatility of the working force
- Changing consumer trends and needs
- Low level of innovation
- Need to strengthen sustainability-orientation and developing new sustainable product

For talent development

- Need to review national policies and strategies to ensure adequate human capital in tourism
- Increase level of skills and qualification
- Improve the attractiveness of the tourism sector
- Support labour and skills upgrades through digitization
- Improve business adoption of new technologies and leveraging of new trends and meeting new consumer needs
- Up-skill workers and incentivize employers to hire and retain workers.

Additional information: [G20 Bali Guidelines for Strengthening Communities and MSME as Tourism Transformation Agents: A People-centred Recovery.](#)

Programme

Master of Ceremonies: Faïçal Tadlaoui, Director General, Radio Factory

10:00 – 10:15 Opening remarks and Call to Action for SMEs

- H.E. Fatim-Zahra Ammor, Minister of Tourism, Handicraft, and Social and Solidarity Economy of the Kingdom of Morocco
- H.E. Zurab Pololikashvili, Secretary-General, World Tourism Organization (UNWTO)

10:15 – 11:05 Talent - Panel discussion

Moderation: Sandra Carvao, Director of Market Intelligence and Competitiveness, UNWTO

- H.E. Özgül Özkan Yavuz, Deputy Minister, Ministry of Culture and Tourism, Türkiye
- Hamid Bentahar, President of the Regional Tourism Council (CNT), CEO of the Accor Gestion Maroc group, Senator of the Mediterranean Tourism Foundation
- Miguel Sanz, Director General, Tourespaña, Spain
- Cantal Bakker, CEO, Pikala
- Fabrice Castellorizios, General Manager, Radisson Blu
- Carlos Díez de la Lastra, CEO, Les Roches Global
- John Lohr, Director of Strategic Partnerships and Innovation, Hosco

11:05 – 11:10 Enhancing economic opportunities & Decent Work

- Alette van Leur, Director of the Sectoral Policies Department (SECTOR), International Labour Office (ILO) (*video participation*)

11:15 – 12:05 SMEs & Digital Futures Panel Discussion

Moderation and Presentation of the Digital Futures Programme: Ms. Natalia Bayona, Director of Innovation, Education Investment, UNWTO

- H.E. Siandou Fofana, Minister of Tourism, Cote d'Ivoire
- Nasser Ali Qaedi, CEO, Bahrain Tourism and Exhibition Authority
- Imad Barrakad, Chairman and CEO, Moroccan Agency for Tourism Development (SMIT)
- Bruno Delmas, CEO, Elloha
- Manuel Marin, Cofounder, Livall & CEO Livall Europe
- Nicola Villa, Executive Vice President, Strategic Growth Global Lead, Government Engagement Mastercard

12:05 – 12:30 **Closing Remarks and Announcement of the Agreement with the kingdom of Morocco: UNWTO Digital Futures Pledge for Moroccan SMEs and Launch of the Moroccan Startup Competition Signing Ceremony**

- H.E. Fatim-Zahra Ammor, Minister of Tourism Minister of Tourism, Handicraft, and Social and Solidarity Economy of the Kingdom of Morocco
- Imad Barrakad, Chairman and CEO, Moroccan Agency for Tourism Development (SMIT)
- H.E. Zurab Pololikashvili, Secretary-General, World Tourism Organization (UNWTO)

-Closing-