

## **Jobs, Education and Training: Together, Tourism and Transport Can Deliver a Better future for Europe**

*By UNWTO Secretary General, Zurab Pololikashvili and European Union Commissioner for Transport, Adina Vălean*

The pandemic hit tourism harder than perhaps any other sector. In Europe, **global tourism's biggest region since records began**, travel was brought to a near-complete standstill. Now, as the sector's restart has begun, there is every sign that it will continue to consolidate its status as the world's tourism leader. Indeed, according to the latest UNWTO data, **international arrivals were up by 126% over the first nine months of 2022** when compared to the previous year and reached 81% of pre-pandemic levels. Moreover, of the estimated 700 million international arrivals recorded worldwide for that period, some **477 million were welcomed by European destinations, around 68% of the global total**.

Digging deeper into the data, we see that Europe's tourism rebound is being driven by strong demand for regional or intra-regional travel. Research has found that, as a result of the pandemic, European travellers prefer to holiday closer to home, and heightened levels of insecurity coupled with economic uncertainty are only likely to reinforce this preference. At the same time, we have seen a post-pandemic shift in consumer behaviour towards **more eco-friendly or sustainable tourism experiences**. Young people have become increasingly aware of the impact of their travels and determined to keep their footprints as low as possible.

The restart of tourism, therefore, presents us with a unique moment to seize opportunity from crisis. In Europe, as in every global region, now is the time to capitalize on such shifts in behaviour and direct our sector on a different path, one that leads to a more sustainable and resilient future. Again, the demand among consumers is there. So too is the determination of both businesses and destinations themselves: interest in the **Glasgow Declaration on Climate Action in Tourism**, launched at COP26 last year, has been highly encouraging, with some of the biggest names in European travel among the 700-plus parties to have signed up over the past year alone.

But this is not enough. In the case of transport – unsurprisingly the single biggest part of tourism's carbon footprint – joined-up thinking and strong political and economic support are needed if we are to both speed up and scale our shift to greater sustainability. The **DiscoverEU initiative** is an effective example of what's possible. The project has succeeded in promoting smart travel, most notably through incentivizing people to

choose the most sustainable mode of transport for their journey. And again, young people have been among the most enthusiastic users of DiscoverEU. The responsible travellers of tomorrow are being made today.

In order to replicate the success of this initiative across the European tourism landscape, the sector needs both political support as well as the correct amount of proper, well-targeted investments. We also need to see small enterprises supported through attractive business environments and innovative funding models, thereby giving them the tools and the space, they need to make a real impact.

But we cannot just focus on investing in technology or infrastructure. It's also essential to invest in tourism's biggest asset – people. When the pandemic hit and travel came to a halt, many workers left the sector. And not all of them have returned. In recent months we have seen the consequences of this. The number of people employed in the air transport sector within the European Union dropped to the lowest level in almost 15 years. As a result, we saw sizeable bottlenecks at airports along with cancelled flights and other services during the peak summer season.

We need to work together – UNWTO, the European Commission, governments and employers – to make tourism an attractive sector to work in. That is, one that provides decent jobs, opportunities for women, for youth and for people living outside of big cities, and the possibility to grow professionally and develop skills that can be used either in tourism itself or in another field – because **tourism's capacity building provides skills for life**. And, finally, we need to make tourism's restart and transformation more inclusive. In the summer, UNWTO held our first **Global Youth Tourism Summit** in Italy, out of which came the **Sorrento Call to Action**, a pledge by the next generation of travellers, of professionals and leaders, to accelerate the progress of recent years and to reimagine the tourism of tomorrow. The voices of young people must now be reflected in **Europe's Agenda for Tourism 2030**, to build a sector that works for people, planet, and peace.

### **Related links:**

[Tourism Recovery Accelerates to Reach 65% of Pre-Pandemic Levels](#)

[The Glasgow Declaration on Climate Action in Tourism](#)

[Sorrento Call to Action](#)

[TOURISM 4 SDGs](#)

[DiscoverEU](#)