

EBRD and UNWTO Facilitate Tourism Recovery in Greece

- EBRD and UNWTO joined forces with the Ministry of Tourism in Greece to support tourism recovery
- Four key recovery projects were implemented and completed
- Focus on economic recovery, marketing, and institutional strengthening

UNWTO and the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) have successfully worked alongside the Greek Government to help the country's tourism sector recover from the impacts of the pandemic.

As part of a wider effort to boost resilience and accelerate recovery in the wake of the worst crisis in the history of tourism, the Bank selected several areas of UNWTO's **"COVID-19 Tourism Recovery Technical Assistance Package"** to implement in Greece. This package was built around three main pillars of intervention: economic recovery, marketing and promotion, and institutional strengthening and building resilience.

Four projects of critical importance for the tourism sector at the time were selected and implemented in partnership with the Ministry of Tourism of Greece, namely:

1. **Measurement of COVID-19's impact and development of monitoring guidelines:** Within this project, tourism data needs were aligned between the Bank of Greece, the Hellenic Statistical Authority, and the Ministry of Tourism. Ten areas of intervention were identified, along with 25 actions for improvement of monitoring, and training was provided to seven representatives from the Ministry of Tourism, the Bank of Greece and the Hellenic Statistical Authorities.
2. **Preparation of a roadmap to support tourism MSMEs and job retention:** The project included reviewing the existing support measures for MSMEs, interviewing tourism national associations, MSMEs, and professionals, and designing a seven-action roadmap. Moreover, 41 tourism professionals, travel agencies, hotels, and secondary accommodation establishments were trained on a range of topics, including digital marketing tools, HR management, analysing tourism data to identify opportunities, and improving the quality of services and the overall tourist experience.

3. **Updating the Tourism Marketing Strategy:** Key international and domestic markets trends were analysed both during and post-pandemic. Six areas of intervention were identified, and the passenger survey questionnaires of the Athens International Airport and the 14 regional airports operated by Fraport have been updated to measure newly selected indicators. The strategy was also presented at a seminar with the foreign offices of the Greek National Tourism Organisation, in collaboration with its headquarters.
4. **Development of a Tourism Crisis Management Plan:** The first such plan for the Ministry of Tourism, identifying various types of crises, outlining concrete response mechanisms, roles, and processes, and introducing a case study simulation.

Along with the UNWTO and EBRD teams working on the project, a team of experts in crisis management, statistics, marketing, and MSMEs was brought in to spearhead the implementation, transfer knowledge and work closely with the Ministry of Tourism and stakeholders for the delivery of the project activities envisaged.

Recovery Package Delivers Results

As a leading destination, both within Europe and worldwide, Greece has consistently maintained its relevance in the global tourism market and emerged resilient during the long-lasting financial and economic crisis of the past decade. In the context of the pandemic, Greece then managed to sustain and increase the contribution of its tourism sector to its national economy and was one of the first European countries to reopen to international visitors in the aftermath of the pandemic.

Looking ahead, the work done under the Tourism Recovery Technical Assistance Package will enable the Ministry of Tourism to monitor closely the performance of the sector and systematically respond to and address any crises that might occur affecting the tourism sector of Greece. EBRD continues to support the Greek tourism sector through **targeted investments or financing that promote sustainable and inclusive tourism** and enhance youth employment and backward linkages with local economies. UNWTO remains active in Greece to support the tourism development of local destinations through projects on the ground while strengthening the close and continuous collaboration with the country.

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