The Global Education Forum Puts a Spotlight on the Future of Tourism

The UNWTO General Assembly looked to the future with a focus on tourism education and training. The Global Education Forum brought together Ministers, employers, educators and learners to address the biggest challenges and opportunities for advancing training across every part of the sector.

A priority for global tourism

According to data analysed by UNWTO, the majority of the global tourism workforce are young people, many of them without further training or qualifications. At the same time, existing tourism education centres and programmes prioritise hospitality, with UNWTO aiming to fill the gaps and deliver courses and other trainings to allow students to gain knowledge of every part of the diverse sector. Opening the Forum, UNWTO Executive Director Natalia Bayona made clear the opportunities and challenges: Tourism is the top employer of youth: over 50% of its workers aged 25 years old or less¹, while around 882,000 tourism jobs² per year will require vocational training by 2030.

Ministers of Tourism from Andorra, Bahrain, Guatemala, the Philippines and Zambia brought their expert insights to a high-level Debate on Policies to Foster Innovation & Education for Current and Future Generations. Challenges highlighted included the high turnover of tourism staff in comparison to other economic sectors and the lack of tourism as a subject in schools in most education systems. The discussion explored opportunities for shaping new policies, effective instruments, and global partnerships to support inclusive and sustainable tourism development while addressing the skill gap and creating value-added jobs.

UNWTO presents the Education Toolkit for the incorporation of tourism as a subject in high schools

Within the Education Forum, UNWTO presented the Education Toolkit, a guide of recommendations for helping all actors involved on education in the introduction of tourism as a subject of the secondary school curricula with the ultimate goal of attracting and cultivating the right talent for the tourism sector.

¹ ILO (2013 United Nations (s.f.), OECD (2023)
² ILO (2022)
The UNWTO Education Toolkit offers an overview of the current status of high schools and vocational education training worldwide, it also gives recommendations derived from the contributions of UNWTO member states, non-member states and academic partners and it also presents successful case studies of integrating tourism education and training in public and private schools. In addition, it includes a comprehensive overview of the benefits, with specialized curricula provided by UNWTO's academic partners: the Cambridge Assessment International Education, American Hotel & Lodging Educational Institute (AHLEI), and the International Baccalaureate Organization (IBO).

Also at the Forum, participants were given an overview of the recently inaugurated Tourism Academy in Samarkand in collaboration with UNWTO, a key outcome of the country's strong partnership with UNWTO.

**UNWTO – HSLU Bachelor of Science in International Sustainable Tourism**

During Bayona’s keynote speech, she also presented the flexible three-year BSc in International Sustainable Tourism that UNWTO and the Swiss public university of Lucerne for Applied Sciences and Arts (HSLU) have developed to empower the future-oriented transformation of the entire tourism sector. This unique initiative will be the first time that UNWTO has been actively involved in an undergraduate programme, with modules that include a variety of UN-related topics, such as UN Diplomacy & Tourism and Global UNWTO Missions & Initiatives, and deliberately embeds the UN’s values and global goals throughout the courses. The first cohort of the programme will commence in fall 2024 with a first year in Madrid, followed by a remote year and a third last year in Switzerland.

**Ulysses Prize for Tourism Education**

In a fitting culmination to the Global Education Forum, Dr. Bao Jigang was honoured with the prestigious Ulysses Prize, a testament to his remarkable contributions to the field of tourism. Awarded as the 16th laureate of this esteemed accolade bestowed by UNWTO for outstanding achievements in the creation and dissemination of knowledge within the realm of tourism, Dr. Bao’s illustrious career stands as a shining example of his invaluable impact. Throughout his distinguished academic journey, he has played a pivotal role in catalysing the growth of domestic tourism, in his homely of the People’s Republic of China, elevating its scale and significance as a premier global tourism destination.

**Related Links**

UNWTO Education Toolkit for the incorporation of tourism as a subject in high schools

AHLEI – Hospitality and Tourism Management Curriculum Brochure

Cambridge International – Travel and Tourism Curriculum Brochure

UNWTO – HSLU Bachelor of Science in Sustainable Tourism:
Bachelor of Science in International Sustainable Tourism | UNWTO