ISTO's Contribution to the Transition Pathway for Tourism

BACKGROUND

In June 2021, the European Commission launched a process to co-create the **Transition Pathway for Tourism** as part of a request from the European Council to design a European Agenda for Tourism 2030/2050.

The process started with the publication of a working document, which was used to collect input and proposals among EU stakeholders. ISTO participated in this consultation through its European section (ISTO Europe) by providing input, as did 200 other stakeholders from 24 EU countries. Stakeholders responded to an online survey, which was structured around three main issues: a resilient and competitive EU tourism ecosystem; greener tourism destinations and services; and the digitalisation of tourism. ISTO was also invited to participate in two workshops, giving it the possibility to further develop its ideas and priorities.

This co-creation process concluded in January 2022, when DG GROW published its policy report **Transition Pathway for Tourism.**

MAIN RESULTS*

Among the 27 topics presented in the report, which is structured around five main chapters, two sets of topics must be underlined, as they reflect some of the most important proposals made by ISTO.

The first set of topics linked to ISTO's priorities comes under the chapter on "**Regulation and public governance"** and deal with the following issues:

- **Improving tourism statistics and indicators**

There is a strong need to transition from covering basic statistics on trips and overnight stays to collecting data on the social, environmental and economic impacts of tourism. This means not only revising data collection rules on tourism statistics, but also including elements on economic, social and environmental sustainability as well as sustainability indicators, on a destination level. These elements must be added to the harmonised tourism data collection framework. This also requires implementing an EU Tourism Dashboard in order to support the follow-up of different aspects at an EU level.

*Main results from the European Commission (EC) policy report "Transition Pathway for Tourism"

- **Developing or updating comprehensive tourism strategiess**

This item refers mainly to the importance of cooperation between all stakeholders. This would ensure that sustainable tourism generates positive net effects for the host communities located close to tourism destinations. This collaboration should include mechanisms monitoring the local impact of tourism. In this sense, key points include the importance of communities, their level of consideration at a local level, studying best practices on smart destination management, and promoting the development of Awards.

As we can see, these topics are directly linked to ISTO's initiatives. The **ISTO Awards**, for instance, aim to recognise ISTO members' excellence in actions, projects, programs, initiatives, and research projects that positively impact the tourism sector and inspire stakeholders to adopt best practices. Another example is ISTO's proposal to create an **Observatory on Social, Fair, and Sustainable Tourism**, using new indicators in line with the five main themes of ISTO's DNA: accessibility, environment, solidarity, fair business, and quality of life.

The **second set of topics** linked to ISTO's priorities comes under the chapter on "**Resilience**" and deals with the **social dimension of tourism.**

- **Fairness and equality in tourism jobs**

This means that tourism companies must offer stable and decent employment with fair and equal pay, full social security coverage, respects of workers' rights to organise and to bargain collectively, working contracts, and gender equality. In this respect, ISTO's proposal to consider the Social Economy Action Plan and collaborative digital platforms working to protect workers' rights and well-being was taken into consideration.

- **Enhancing accessible tourism services**

Accessibility for people with disabilities (87 million people have some form of disability in the EU) as well as seniors (in 2019, tourists over 55 years old already accounted for 41% of all overnight stays) is clearly mentioned. Accessible and inclusive tourism is a key in helping everyone to participate fully in society. Furthermore, increased demand for ecotourism services also raises the need to support more accessible nature tourism services and infrastructures.

Access to tourism for all is also a key point. This access could be boosted by off-season travel opportunities for unemployed, retired, or low-income people - taking into account that many families are unable to enjoy these options due to restrictions posed by school holidays.

Destinations should offer a variety of services for people with different budgets. They should also boost access to travel for all types of people and families, year-round. Service providers should ensure price diversity in their offer, allowing everyone to participate and, thus, contributing to tourism's green transition.

Residents' well-being is another key aspect. Indeed, tourism services should not be conducted and provided to visitors in ways that risk harming local environments, cultures, or populations. Key factors that may have harmful effects on the social sustainability of local destinations are the perceived negative direct impacts of visitors (crowding, nuisance, increased waste, degraded nature or buildings). Indirect impacts include higher prices, changes in housing markets, and access to business premises in city centres.

Residents' well-being is a key aspect to tourism's long-term sustainability. This is why destination-level tourism management should involve residents in planning and monitoring touristic activities and their impact. The Covid-19 crisis has demonstrated that more resilient business models can be built by providing services that benefit both residents and visitors.

- **Tourism services for visitors and residents alike**

This theme refers to the diversification and development of tourism services that benefit both residents and visitors, and that take into account different types of clients such as families and individuals or people with different religious, spiritual, or sexual orientations.

This theme also underscores the importance of fostering and supporting young Europeans' interest in travelling and discovering Europe's history and culture. This can take place through concrete personal experiences and exchanges. Initiatives include Discover EU, which plans to fund travel by rail throughout Europe for up to 700,000 young people between 2021 and 2027. Such projects allow young people to learn about Europe's nature, culture, and people.

- **Domestic Tourism, Social Policies and Programmes in Tourism**

Although it includes some references about domestic tourism and intra-EU tourism, the Transition Pathway for Tourism should include concrete goals and actions aiming to strengthen domestic and proximity tourism - not only as a post-crisis measure, but also as part of a structural policy at an EU and national level. It is a key tool for the three pillars of sustainability - particularly the social pillar, which is too often disregarded. In order to boost domestic and intra-EU tourism, we must share existing social policies and programmes in the tourism sector, as well as develop new ones. This would ensure that more EU citizens are able to enjoy travel and tourism.

- **Holiday Participation Monitoring**

Before the pandemic, less than 52% of EU citizens were able to go on holidays (four nights or more). Covid-19 has likely caused this participation rate to decrease sharply. As such, this issue must be taken into account. Its evolution must be measured on a regular basis and on a European level in order to better grasp the situation and its evolution according to different criteria (age groups, for instance). This proposal is also directly linked to the development of an **Observatory on Social, Fair and Sustainable Tourism**, as mentioned earlier.

- **Connection to EPSR**

DG GROW should connect this document policy with the European Pillars of Social Rights (EPSR). The EPSR, which aim to give citizens new and more effective rights, is based on three pillars: Equal Opportunities, Fair Working Conditions, Social Protection and Social Inclusion. These pillars, in turn, are broken down into 20 key principles. These principles should include aspects related to participation in leisure, tourism and holiday activities, which play a fundamental role in European citizens' quality of life.

- **Contribution to SDGs**

The sustainable development of Tourism for All in the EU should consider contributing more to the UN's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). It would also be necessary to measure its contribution to the SDGs and evaluate the impacts (quantitative and qualitative) of EU funding in programmes and projects. In this sense, ISTO has proposed to promote European Sustainable Tourism within the framework of its International Week of Fair and Sustainable Tourism for All.

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- **Initiatives for marginalised young people**

Despite some positive initiatives such as Discover EU, ISTO, through its latest advocacy paper called "Advocating for a Tourism and Mobility Policy for European Youth", proposes increasing actions' impact on young people through an "Erasmus Kids" programme, which would potentially reach Europe's population as a whole. This programme would unconditionally introduce younger generations to European mobility, while allowing them to experience the diversity of Europe's languages, cultures, and traditions.

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