

EUROPEAN TOURISM SECTOR DEMANDS URGENT SUPPORTIVE MEASURES TO REDUCE DEVASTATING IMPACT OF COVID-19

The European Tourism Manifesto alliance, the voice of the European travel and tourism sector, has issued the following statement on the implementation of urgent measures to limit the COVID-19 outbreak's impact on the sector.

The effects of the outbreak are already being felt throughout the global economy. Economic activity has dropped, and all evidence points towards a significant downturn in areas affected by the virus. The tourism and travel sector is particularly hit. Millions of jobs are currently at stake, while many small and medium enterprises (SMEs) risk closing their business. Support for tourism must be a priority in the crisis response, recovery plans and actions of affected economies.

The European Tourism Manifesto alliance welcomes the immediate response presented by the European Commission on 13th March to mitigate the socio-economic impact of the COVID-19 outbreak. We call for immediate implementation of these measures, which should be reinforced by additional instruments focused on the tourism sector. Action is required now to strengthen the resilience of the sector in the long run and prepare the ground for a swift recovery from this unprecedented crisis.

The European Tourism Manifesto alliance calls upon the European Commission and national governments to swiftly implement the following urgent measures:

- Temporary state aid for the tourism and travel sector from national governments
- Fast and easy access to short- and medium-term loans to overcome liquidity shortages, including funds made available by the EU through the Corona Response Investment Initiative
- Fiscal relief (both at source market and destination level), starting with SMEs and extending to economic operators of all sizes
- Protection of workers from unemployment and loss of income (short-time work schemes, upskilling and reskilling programmes) and support for self-employed tourism stakeholders
- Fast launch of the European Unemployment Reinsurance Scheme
- Deferment of fiscal and social contributions
- Immediate passing of temporary airport slots waiver
- Support action for the wider field of culture (arts and heritage)
- Better coordination between national authorities in terms of alignment of travel advice to affected regions and requirements on travellers returning from those areas.

In order to guarantee a full-speed recovery in the aftermath of the crisis, we call for the implementation of the additional following measures:

- Simplification of visa rules for long-haul markets
- Reducing or waiving travellers' taxes (passenger duties, city taxes, etc.)
- Supporting destinations, by increasing their budgets for promotion, marketing and product development purposes as soon as they are ready to welcome visitors again.