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NOTE

From:	Presidency
To:	Delegations
Subject:	Draft Council Conclusions on tourism: Building a sustainable tourism for the future

Delegations will find attached a Presidency proposal for draft “Council conclusions on tourism: Building a sustainable tourism for the future”, with a view to the discussion by the Working Party on Competitiveness and Growth (Tourism) at its meeting on 4 February 2026.

DRAFT COUNCIL CONCLUSIONS on [TBD]: Building a sustainable tourism for the future

THE COUNCIL OF THE EUROPEAN UNION,

1. HAVING REGARD to Articles 6 and 195 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union, as regards the EU supporting, coordinating and supplementing the actions of Member States in the area of tourism, and with due regard to the respective spheres of competence of the Member States and the Union, as well as the principles of subsidiarity and proportionality.
2. RECALLING its conclusions of 1 December 2022 on the European Agenda for Tourism 2030¹ (hereafter “the Agenda”), the Transition Pathway for Tourism, and the relevant EU ministerial declarations, including the “Palma Declaration”.
3. [HAVING REGARD to the EU Sustainable Tourism Strategy of xx/xx/2026].
4. RECOGNISES the economic impact of tourism in the EU which represented in 2024 around 7% of its Gross Value Added², 10% of its jobs and 4.6 million businesses³, of which 99% are small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs).
5. RECOGNISES the cross-sectoral nature of tourism and the importance of effective multi-level governance in the Union, involving the Commission, Member States and, where appropriate, regional and local authorities, destination management organisations (DMOs) and other relevant actors, to ensure coherent implementation of agreed priorities, facilitate cooperation and exchange of good practices, and enhance coordination across relevant policy areas, while building on existing frameworks and instruments and avoiding unnecessary duplication.

¹ 15441/22.

² Eurostat.

³ Industrial Ecosystems Report.

6. WELCOMES the Report from the Commission to the Council on the Implementation of the Agenda of 16 December 2025⁴ (hereafter “the Report”), noting that according to the Report, implementation gaps persist across Member States and priority areas, particularly in workforce development, data application, multi-level coordination and governance, structural and financial support to SMEs, the integrated pursuit of the green and digital transitions, forward-looking strategic planning, crisis preparedness and resilience, climate change adaptation, and management of unbalanced tourism.
7. In line with the Report conclusions, CALLS for increased efforts for strengthening tourism governance and policy framework, as well as resource efficiency and social sustainability, data and strategy integration, crisis preparedness and response, support to entrepreneurs and SMEs, multi-stakeholder collaboration and the uptake of EU skills initiatives, including through improved access to relevant EU financial instruments and technical assistance for tourism SMEs and destinations.
8. RECOGNISES that geopolitical tensions, climate-related events, unbalanced tourism and persistent workforce shortages affect the sector and local communities in several destinations, including sudden disruptions to connectivity and shifts in demand and mobility.
9. UNDERLINES that tourism is a key driver of sustainable growth, employment, social cohesion and cultural exchange in the Union, including in rural, coastal, mountainous, outermost and less visited regions, nevertheless its development must safeguard the well-being of residents, preserve natural and cultural heritage and contribute to the Union’s climate neutrality, circular economy and digital transformation objectives.
10. HIGHLIGHTS that adequate, reliable and affordable year-round connectivity – including, rail, air and maritime links – is a precondition for tourism development and social cohesion, in particular for island and remote regions,

⁴ 17007/25.

11. STRESSES that sustainability and competitiveness of the Union's tourism ecosystem are mutually reinforcing, as sustainability-oriented investments, practices and initiatives – including resource efficiency, circularity, decarbonization, climate resilience – can ultimately reduce costs and risks, enhance productivity and quality, strengthen destination attractiveness and visitor experience, and improve resilience, while a competitive tourism sector is essential to deliver and sustain the investment capacity and innovation needed to implement the green and digital transitions.
12. UNDERLINES the Union's overarching objective of simplification of EU legislation to enhance competitiveness, reduce administrative burdens, and streamline processes for enterprises while safeguarding economic, social, and environmental goals and CALLS on the Commission to ensure that, in the preparation of new initiatives, coherence with existing legislative acts is ensured by avoiding overlaps, and the proposals are underpinned by appropriate impact assessments in accordance with the principles of better regulation.

Local Communities and Social Equity

13. ACKNOWLEDGES the growing challenge of unbalanced tourism, understood as both “overtourism” and “undertourism”, marked by spatial and seasonal concentration of tourist flows and investment, with pressure on certain destinations and missed opportunities elsewhere, including in rural, mountainous and remote areas and on islands.
14. STRESSES the importance of the Cohesion Policy, including relevant funds and programmes, to support sustainable and balanced tourism development, in line with territorial strategies and with particular attention to island, outermost and remote regions.

15. INVITES Member States to:

a) deepen their understanding of unbalanced tourism, by:

- i. systematically collecting, analysing and using data on spatial and seasonal concentration of tourist flows, investment, and tourism-related pressures and benefits at destination level;
- ii. correlating tourism patterns with housing pressures as recognised by the European Affordable Housing Action plan, published by the Commission in December 2025⁵, labour markets dynamics, environmental impacts and quality of life indicators for residents;

b) develop and implement national and regional policies for balanced tourism which:

- i. promote spatial and temporal redistribution of tourist flows, including towards rural, mountainous, island, remote and outermost regions, and less visited urban areas, as well as ensuring collaboration among all relevant actors;
- ii. support diversified local economies and resilient local tourism value chains and supply chains, to avoid tourism monocultures and excessive dependency on tourism-related employment and revenues;
- iii. encourage the use of relevant EU instruments and programmes, where appropriate, to support sustainable diversification and community benefits;

c) strengthen community involvement and social equity by:

- i. ensuring meaningful participation of local communities, including residents, micro-enterprises and SMEs, in the design, implementation and monitoring of tourism strategies;

⁵ 17011/25.

- ii. promoting responsible, regenerative and inclusive tourism models that share benefits fairly, respect local cultures and reduce negative externalities for residents;
- iii. making use of the results of Eurobarometer and other surveys to track citizens' perceptions, social acceptance of tourism and quality of life in destinations.

16. INVITES the Commission to:

- a) develop, in cooperation with Member States and stakeholders, Guidelines for addressing Unbalanced Tourism, building on the Palma Declaration and ongoing work on resilience and social sustainability;
- b) as part of the Guidelines, develop destination-level frameworks which:
 - i. define carrying capacity indicators, which cover environmental, social and economic dimensions;
 - ii. support active management of visitor pressure, particularly in hotspots and sensitive areas, including through reservation systems, access management and pricing mechanisms where appropriate;
 - iii. encourage product diversification, extension of the tourist season and promotion of less-known destinations, rural, remote and outermost regions;
- c) publish on the EU Tourism Platform statistical data gathered under the Tourism Statistics Regulation, surveys and best practices on balanced tourism.

Connectivity and Sustainable Mobility

- 17. RECOGNISES that reliable, affordable, frequent and year-round air, waterborne and land links are a key enabler for sustainable and balanced tourism, territorial cohesion and citizens' mobility, in particular for islands, outermost, rural, and remote regions.
- 18. STRESSES the importance of widely available sustainable mobility options in a multimodal system, which will help reduce transport's environmental impacts and ensure a seamless travel experience for tourists and residents.

19. HIGHLIGHTS the importance of accessibility of transportation modes for all passengers, including those with reduced mobility and disabilities.
20. INVITES Member States to:
- a) implement national, regional, and cross-border transport policies for balanced tourism which integrate sustainable mobility and infrastructure solutions that improve access to lesser-known destinations and address seasonality, in synergy with EU transport and connectivity policies, with particular attention to islands, outermost, rural, and remote regions;
 - b) promote sustainable, multimodal and cross-border connectivity links for tourism, including rail, buses, ferries and other public transport, as well as cycling, including last-mile solutions within destinations;
 - c) support the development of connectivity-related infrastructure (such as recharging infrastructure) and services that jointly benefit local communities and tourism flows, including digital services supporting seamless journeys;
 - d) collect and use data and indicators on accessibility and connectivity, including as regards seasonality, as part of national and regional tourism monitoring approaches;
 - e) undertake regional and thematic cooperation on facilitation of cross-border travel, also in relation to neighboring and third countries.
21. INVITES the Commission to:
- a) integrate Member States' tourism-related connectivity and accessibility needs, including insular, peripheral and remote connectivity needs, in EU transport policies and planning, including, as appropriate, TEN-T, aviation and maritime transport policies, in order to support territorial cohesion and balanced destination development;
 - b) work with the Member States to further develop, in the context of tourism-related monitoring work, on common approaches to data interoperability on accessibility and connectivity, including seasonality, and to promote their use in data-based policy making;
 - c) foster the development of multimodal travel information and services, and integrated ticketing solutions, including through interoperability and standardisation efforts;

- d) facilitate the exchange of good practices and cooperation among local, regional and national authorities aimed at improving the overall mobility experience of tourists at destination.

Green Transition and Climate Change

22. RECOGNISES that the tourism ecosystem is increasingly exposed to climate change and environmental degradation and may be adversely affected by extreme weather events, water stress, biodiversity loss and pollution.
23. STRESSES that accelerating mitigation and adaptation action, in line with the Union's climate and environmental objectives, is indispensable to safeguarding the long-term resilience, attractiveness and competitiveness of destinations and tourism enterprises.
24. INVITES Member States to:
- a) accelerate the green transition of tourism in line with the European Green Deal, climate objectives and circular economy policies by:
 - i. encouraging tourism companies, in particular SMEs, to adopt resource-efficient, low-carbon and circular business models;
 - ii. facilitating the integrated implementation of these models through support schemes;
 - iii. increasing the use of green public procurement in tourism-related public spending to stimulate demand for sustainable services;
 - iv. promoting the uptake of verified environmental management schemes, such as Ecolabel and EMAS, by tourism providers;
 - b) strengthen climate change adaptation in tourism policies by:
 - i. diversifying economic activities in tourist areas and promoting tourism models that are more resilient to the impacts of climate change;
 - ii. integrating climate change adaptation, disaster risk reduction and health considerations into tourism strategies and investment decisions;

- iii. addressing infrastructure needs such as water, energy, coastal protection, or transport, in tourist regions highly exposed to climate change-related risks;
 - iv. ensuring that adaptation measures contribute to environmental and social sustainability, and local benefits;
- c) establish concrete targets and measures to scale up the green transition of destinations and SMEs.

25. INVITES the Commission to:

- a) continue supporting research and innovation (R&I) projects and large-scale pilots on circular and sustainable tourism, notably through the LIFE programme, including in islands and outermost regions, and promote the replication of validated models through the Circular Cities and Regions Initiative and other instruments;
- b) support the development of a harmonised approach to assessing tourism's environmental footprint and related guidance for destinations and SMEs;
- c) enable and facilitate access by destinations and SMEs to relevant EU funding and support SMEs with technical assistance.

Digital Transformation, Data and Innovation

26. RECOGNISES that a robust European framework for tourism data and strategy integration, including a common interoperable data ecosystem and indicators, guidance on artificial intelligence, data-driven destination management and innovative travel-tech services, are strategic levers for competitiveness, sustainability and resilience of tourism.

27. INVITES Member States to:

- a) foster the effective use of digital tools by tourism SMEs and micro-enterprises, in line with the Digital Compass targets;

- b) systematically collect high quality real-time data, including, where relevant, data made available under the EU short-term rental data framework, analyse and use data on strategic planning, spatial and seasonal management of tourists flows, investment, and tourism-related pressures and benefits at destination level, also in a framework of cooperation and mutual learning;
- c) promote innovative and inclusive tourism services and data-driven destination management approaches, while respecting fundamental rights, privacy and data protection.

28. INVITES the Commission, in cooperation with Eurostat and national statistical authorities, to review and improve coverage of comparable tourism statistics from basic statistics on trips and overnight stays to data on the social, environmental and economic impacts of tourism, while improving timeliness and granularity.

29. INVITES the Commission, in cooperation with Member States, to:

a) accelerate the common European Data Space for tourism, including:

- i. the development of standards for data interoperability and governance to underpin evidence-based planning, monitoring and comparability across Member States;
- ii. further develop the EU Tourism Dashboard, the consolidation and promotion of the EU Tourism Platform as an integrated support platform, and developing governance options such as a European Digital Infrastructure Consortium;
- iii. provide capacity-building and advisory support for DMOs and local authorities to use data effectively;

b) strengthen a competitive and innovative tourism ecosystem in support of European digital sovereignty by:

- i. promoting networking between incubators, accelerators and tourism innovation hubs;
- ii. enabling a level playing field, including via effective implementation of relevant EU digital rules, where applicable, while addressing dependencies on non-EU travel-tech solutions;

- iii. ensuring that SMEs and start-ups can access EU funding, cascade funding and advisory services for digital investments.

30. INVITES the Commission, in cooperation with industry and other stakeholders, to:

- a) continue supporting R&I projects, testbeds and pilots on digital tools and services in tourism, including those that strengthen smart destinations, improve accessibility and enhance resilience;
- b) support an industry-led initiative to develop guidelines on the responsible and proficient use of AI in tourism, in line with the Apply AI Strategy, consistent with EU legislation and strategies.

Skills and Quality Employment

31. STRESSES that quality employment, adequate working conditions and skills development, in line with the Union of Skills and Quality Jobs Roadmap⁶, including through the EU Pact for Skills initiative and national and regional skills partnerships, are essential for the long-term competitiveness and resilience of the sector and are critical for addressing structural workforce and skills shortages, particularly in hospitality and tourism services, and making tourism careers more attractive, especially for young people.

32. INVITES Member States to:

- a) promote lifelong learning, upskilling and reskilling for tourism workers and job-seekers, with a particular focus on green, digital, entrepreneurial and intercultural competences;
- b) expand national and regional skills partnerships in tourism regions and strengthen the role of DMOs, regional and local authorities as skills multipliers;
- c) further develop skills intelligence and forecasting tools, including by leveraging the Tourism Data Space for employment and skills-related data;
- d) exchange good practices on seasonality management, career pathways, and worker retention, by improving the availability of comparable information on skills needs and job quality.

⁶ COM (2025) 944 final.

33. INVITES the Commission to:

- a) continue its work on the Pact for Skills, in particular the large-scale skills partnership for tourism and other related programmes for upskilling and reskilling;
- b) further develop skills intelligence and forecasting tools, including by leveraging the Tourism Data Space for employment and skills-related data;
- c) explore the feasibility of a European Tourism Skills Academy to support common standards, recognition and portability of skills as well as labour mobility;
- d) continue supporting EU-funded projects, such as Erasmus+, and pilot projects through ESF+ and other instruments supporting skills, that aim to implement training for all levels of skills at local and destination levels.

Resilience, Adaptive Management and Crisis Preparedness

34. EMPHASISES the need to strengthen crisis preparedness and response across the tourism ecosystem by:

- a) developing structured risk assessment and prevention, contingency planning and early-warning systems at local, regional, national and EU levels, building on existing EU projects;
- b) improving crisis communication, including accessible information in multiple languages and formats, taking into account the needs of vulnerable travelers;
- c) integrating crisis management, climate adaptation, safe and secure travel considerations and disaster risk reduction in tourism strategies and smart destination frameworks.

35. ENCOURAGES adaptive management of tourism by:

- a) using real-time data and monitoring systems to manage visitor flows and adjust measures in a targeted and proportionate manner;
- b) promoting diversification of tourism products such as slow and nature tourism, cultural tourism, business travel and MICE, enhancement of market segmentation and extension of the tourist season, to reduce vulnerability to shocks and unbalanced tourism;
- c) fostering cross-sector cooperation, with other policy areas such as transport, environment, culture, digital, health, to manage uncertainty and external shocks.

36. INVITES the Commission, in close cooperation with Member States to:
- a) support destinations, in particular DMOs, in building resilience and social sustainability, including through EU-funded projects and initiatives that generate replicable best practices, with a focus on local communities and the environment;
 - b) ensure that unbalanced tourism, crisis preparedness and climate adaptation receive reinforced attention and related funding programmes;
 - c) explore, building on existing mechanisms, the establishment of an EU tourism crisis coordination network/task force to facilitate preparedness and response.

Multi-Level Governance

37. RECOGNISES the importance of strong multi-level and multi-stakeholder governance, involving all relevant policy fields, including DMOs, local communities and other relevant actors.
38. UNDERLINES the importance of, where appropriate, cooperation with relevant international partners and organisations, for coherent and effective tourism strategies.
39. ACKNOWLEDGES the need to further strengthen governance for crisis preparedness, climate adaptation and resilience, and reduction of administrative burden, especially for SMEs, while avoiding duplication through the consolidation and alignment of existing governance frameworks, including, where relevant those supporting monitoring and reporting of progress towards the relevant goals of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.
40. EMPHASISES the need to enhance the visibility of Europe as a destination of destinations, while fully respecting the autonomy and richness of national and regional brands, ensuring equitable visibility of diverse destinations, including islands, outermost and remote regions.

41. INVITES Member States to:

- a) strengthen coordination between tourism and related policy fields such as transport, environment, regional development, digital, innovation, skills, education and culture policies, by applying a tourism perspective in relevant policy initiatives;
- b) strengthen the transnational dimension of tourism through cross-border, thematic or regional cooperation, including the development of clusters and, where appropriate, coordinate approaches in relevant international tourism fora;
- c) strengthen structured dialogue between national, regional and local authorities, DMOs and other relevant actors, to improve data collection, indicators, including, where appropriate, SDG-aligned indicator frameworks and reporting tools, strategy alignment and the implementation of sustainable tourism policies.

42. INVITES the Commission to:

- a) promote cross-sectoral cooperation across relevant EU policy domains such as transport, regional policy, environment, consumer protection, and culture, and streamlining of procedures, to create a coherent and favorable policy environment for tourism;
- b) strengthen the international dimension of the EU tourism ecosystem, as an element of the Union's external action and economic diplomacy, including by:
 - i. enhancing cooperation and structured exchanges with partner countries and regions of relevance for tourism and connectivity;
 - ii. engaging, as appropriate, in relevant international organisations and fora and their analytical and standard-setting work, including, the UN, the UN-Tourism, the OECD, and relevant G7/G20 tracks;
 - iii. supporting international cooperation on good practices exchange and comparability of tourism data and indicators, where appropriate in coordination with Member States.

- c) facilitate coherent EU-level tourism narratives and outreach, in a complementary manner to national and regional branding and promotional competences, by:
 - i. modernising the “Destination Europe” narrative and branding framework, in close collaboration with Member States;
 - ii. strengthening alignment between tourism narratives, sustainability objectives and broader EU policy priorities.

Monitoring and Follow-up

43. INVITES the Commission to:

- a) establish a coherent monitoring framework for the implementation of these conclusions, that builds on the existing methodologies used for stock-taking exercises on the Transition Pathway and the Agenda;
- b) propose a multi-annual EU Work plan with concrete actions for the Commission and Member States. The proposed actions and outputs should provide strategic guidance for following the progress of these conclusions;
- c) follow up on the co-implementation of these conclusions and report to the Council at least every 3 years.

44. INVITES tourism stakeholders to engage in the implementation of these conclusions in cooperation with the Commission and the Member States, raising awareness to their partners and customers and contribute with their expertise and experience, and disseminating the knowledge and outcomes achieved.
