



Brussels, 12 December 2024
(OR. en)

16806/24

TOUR 27

NOTE

From:	Presidency
To:	Delegations
Subject:	Summary of the achievements of the Hungarian Presidency of the Council of the European Union in the field of tourism

Delegations will find in the annex a note prepared by the Presidency in the field of tourism.

The objective of this note is to provide a summary of the work and activities carried out under the Hungarian Presidency in the second half of 2024 in the field of tourism at European level.

This note also aims to become a forward-looking document, likely to constitute a longer-term value-added contribution for the new European Commission

A. SUMMARY OF THE ACHIEVEMENTS OF THE HUNGARIAN PRESIDENCY OF THE COUNCIL OF THE EUROPEAN UNION IN THE FIELD OF TOURISM

The Hungarian Presidency organized and contributed to the following events and activities between July and the end of December 2024 around the cross-cutting theme of tourism. The Presidency's program focused on two key priorities: (1) **Data driven tourism and digitalization to enhance competitiveness of the sector** – also by **supporting the implementation of the Short-term Rentals Regulation** (“STR Regulation”), and (2) **continuing the work of previous Council Presidencies by keeping tourism high on the European agenda by promoting the most relevant issues of the sector** – such as the effects of climate change, the future of the sector in the context of artificial intelligence, tackling the labour shortage, and steering the revision of the Package Travel Directive. The Hungarian Presidency aimed to provide a long-term added value for the upcoming EU’s Sustainable Tourism Strategy announced by the Commission.

1. **Europe-China Tourism Dialogue 3-5 July in Budapest.** In view of the slow recovery of one of Europe's largest tourism sending markets after Covid and the need for dialogue between European and Chinese stakeholders, the Hungarian Presidency, together with the European Travel Commission (ETC) and the Hangzhou-based World Tourism Alliance (WTA), organised a unique conference with side-events as an overture of the Presidency semester. Representatives and experts from more than 30 European countries plus China took part in the discussions about the most important, current issues and progress of Chinese and European tourism.

The following takeaways have been outlined:

- (1) increasing demand for high quality markets from Chinese tourists;
- (2) increasing sensitivity to safety which is now in their top 3 travel criteria;
- (3) preferring city breaks and experiences close to nature and gastronomy;
- (4) restoring air traffic between the two regions to pre-pandemic levels is still a priority;
- (5) cultural exchanges between China and Europe are essential;
- (6) the use of digital solutions and innovative marketing tools will also be essential.

According to the forecast of the European Travel Commission a 32% annual increase in the number of Chinese trips to Europe are expected between 2023 and 2028.

2. **Director Generals Meeting back to back with the 23rd European Tourism Forum, 12 November 2024, Budapest.** The Hungarian Presidency aimed at continuing the work of the Trio-Presidency by keeping tourism high on the European agenda. Therefore, the Presidency invited the leaders of National Tourism Organizations and Ministries to Budapest for a high-level meeting to hold an open discussion preceding the 23rd European Tourism Forum. The representatives of the Member States addresses key relevant issues currently affecting tourism and shared best practices to promote policies that will boost the competitiveness and sustainability of the tourism ecosystem. The EU delegations also exchanged views on ways to improve climate change adaptation as it affects all Member States, and the issue of overtourism. The majority of Member States agreed on using the term unbalanced tourism because tackling the challenges of some overwhelmed destinations is mostly a matter of better management. Sustainable tourism strategies and the involvement of local communities were highlighted when the heads of national tourist offices shared good examples of how to strengthen the resilience and future-proofing of tourism through innovation and data-driven solutions. Moreover, the high-level representatives welcomed the new Commission structure associating for the first time Sustainable Transport and Tourism, as well as the announcement to deliver a new Sustainable Strategy for Tourism. In this respect, they contributed with preliminary ideas to this project, such as:

- (1) the need for a dedicated funding for tourism at European level;
- (2) provide support to make progress on the transition towards a green, digital and sustainable ecosystem;
- (3) fostering innovation by dedicated funding (e.g. for tech-companies);
- (4) improve the environment for entrepreneurs by diminishing administrative burdens;
- (5) considering a broader view of the ecosystem (tourism, culture, heritage and MICE);
- (6) direct communication between the Commission and the National Tourism Offices;
- (7) strengthening the positive reputation of tourism in communication.

As an outcome of the high-level meeting, the Presidency decided to circulate a survey supporting the Commission in the co-creation of the new Sustainable Tourism Strategy with the added value of the Member States.

3. **23rd European Tourism Forum Budapest, 13 November, Budapest.** At the European Tourism Forum (ETF) on 13 November, 150 leaders, policy-makers and stakeholders from 25 Member States, representatives from European institutions (European Commission, European Parliament), global organizations (UN Tourism and WTTC), European umbrella organizations (ETC, HOTREC, EFFAT, Ruraltour) the sector's largest technology providers (Amadeus, Forward Keys, Data Appeal, EU Travel Tech, iUrban, AnySolution, PwC), tourism researchers (Oxford Economics, EU COM JRC, Sustainia, Edinburgh Futures Institute), local stakeholders, government agencies (Visit Malta, Turismo de Portugal, Österreich Werbung, Business Helsinki, Tourism Directorate of Slovenia) and academic experts (Breda University) sought answers to the common challenges faced by the industry. The participants discussed data-driven tourism in support of sustainability, the prudent use of artificial intelligence in marketing and statistics, and measures to tackle staff shortages. Some of their main findings were:
- (1) training the AI properly is key;
 - (2) standardized database and algorithms are needed;
 - (3) the aim is to develop a consistent system that can also provide real-time data;
 - (4) in the field of employment there is a demand for flexibility and better working conditions;
 - (5) upskilling and reskilling are part of the solution for staff shortages;
 - (6) there is a great potential in young generations, but motivation is crucial.
4. **28th Danube River Conference, 25-27 November, Budapest.** 350 participants from 12 EU countries from the shipping and tourism sector gathered in Budapest to learn about artificial intelligence, visitor management, technological innovations and sustainable concepts for river navigation. The Hungarian Presidency supported the yearly conference, under the motto of: "River shipping on the upswing: optimism and growth in dynamic times". Technology and sustainability were emphasized in a recent study focusing on the decarbonization of cruise ships and the customer-side perspective of sustainability in river shipping. This perspective is increasingly central to decision-making among river shipping customers. The Danube River, spanning nearly 3,000 km and connecting ten countries, serves around 115 million Europeans, highlighting the need for close international cooperation in tourism-related shipping efforts.

5. **Supporting the implementation of the STR Regulation - Regulation (EU) 2024/1028** of the European Parliament and of the Council of 11 April 2024 on data collection and sharing relating to short-term accommodation rental services and amending Regulation (EU) 2018/1724. The Hungarian Presidency secured two important goals: Supporting the Commission in setting up the Coordination Group (CG), as referred to in Article 6 of the Regulation, composed of the National Coordinators of the MSs and chaired by the Commission, and to map the preparedness of Member States to the implementation. To reach these goals, the Presidency circulated a targeted questionnaire and held several workshops. Based on the survey monitoring the state of play, the Presidency paved the way for the kick-start of the CG. The first workshop (14 October) aimed to build a bridge between the administrative and the technical pillars required to interact during the implementation of the STR Regulation, the second one (20 November) presented the position paper developed at the initiative of Ireland with the support of several MSs (AT, HR, LT, NL) to outline some emerging issues as the STR Prototype is being developed. The first meeting of the National Coordinators was held on 12 December 2024.

6. **Steering the revision of the Package Travel Directive (PTD) - Directive (EU) 2015/2302** of the European Parliament and of the Council of 25 November 2015 on package travel and linked travel arrangements, amending Regulation (EC) No 2006/2004 and Directive 2011/83/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council and repealing Council Directive 90/314/EEC.

The Presidency decided to consult to the tourism experts concerning the ongoing negotiations about the PTD in the Working Party (WP) on Consumer Protection and Information. The Presidency prepared 6 compromise texts with a view to reaching a general approach.

7. **Five meetings of the Competitiveness and Growth (Tourism) Working Group**

1. 15 July:

- presentation of the **Presidency priorities** and program, information on the **Europe-China Tourism Dialogue** 3-5 July, Budapest;
- **Climate change risk management** – Tourism-related aspects and solidarity mechanisms

2. 23 September:

- information on the **tourism dimension of the passenger mobility package, passengers' rights;**
 - presentation of **Entry Exit System /Etias**
 - preliminary outcomes of HU PRES survey on **STR implementation**
3. 14 October
- information on **Tourism Transition Pathway Stakeholder Platform**
 - a pilot project by the COM on “**Supporting sustainability and resilience at EU destinations**”
 - negotiations on the review of the **Package Travel Directive**
4. 20 November:
- Second **Stock-Taking Report on the Tourism Transition Pathway**
 - information on the **Meeting of General Directors of tourism** 12 November and **European Tourism Forum** 13 November, Budapest
5. 12 December:
- **assessment and future for tourism** for the next institutional cycle.

B. PERSPECTIVES IN THE FIELD OF TOURISM AT EU LEVEL FOR THE NEXT INSTITUTIONAL CYCLE

Contextual elements

The growing importance of the sector is reflected in the appointment of a dedicated European Commissioner for Sustainable Transport and Tourism in the newly established Commission, and the intention to maintain Europe as the number one destination in the world. The Commission has committed to developing a new strategy for sustainable tourism, supporting the industry and preserving the well-being of local communities. The Hungarian Presidency has been working throughout the semester to gather input on priorities from Member States to help shaping the future strategy of tourism in Europe. In particular, the Presidency circulated a survey among the delegates in the Council Working Party with the following question: What actions taken at EU level could bring added value and make a difference for a more sustainable and competitive tourism ecosystem? The result of this survey represent a valuable input for the Commission.

Another survey was also launched by the Presidency following the request of the Commission regarding the future revision of the current framework of tourism statistics, which should be modernised in order to gain a more accurate view on the sector.

Conclusions

The Hungarian Presidency encourages the European Commission and the upcoming Presidencies to:

- **Ensure that tourism remains a priority for the European Commission in the upcoming mandate**, it is essential to adopt a collaborative and supportive approach. The Commission can facilitate coordination among Member States at various levels, from ministerial discussions to Working Group engagements.

Actively engage in shaping the future of the tourism industry, it is important to focus on collaboration and shared goals across various tourism-related topics. This includes working together on the development of a new sustainable European Strategy, supporting the implementation of Short-Term Rentals Regulation, fostering digitalization (balanced data-driven industry), and addressing labour shortages. Our common goal is to make a more resilient and more competitive ecosystem on the long run