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Implementation Measures of EU Strategy for Sustainable Tourism

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ABSTRACT

All over Europe it became clear that tourism is a cross-cutting economic activity with a wide-ranging impact on the environment and climate and on the EU´s economy as a whole. The tourism industry directly or indirectly employs 27 million people which accounts for 11.2% of total EU employment and helps to promote a positive regional development and contribute to the conservation of biodiversity, social welfare and economic security of local communities.

As tourism and transport industries were among those most affected by Covid-19, as a result to restriction on travel, as a way to control the spreading of virus, it was clear that measures will be stronger as a part of a coordinated EU strategy.

In this study we will approach the EU legislation that has been approved to create a common frame work for essential and non-essential travel, enabling the industry to adapt and apply compliant hygiene measures and the implementation in EU member states.

Only by providing the EU and its Member States with a factual overview and data for policymakers, they will feel enable to devise informed strategies, based on collected and analysed tourism data.

Keywords: Tourism, Sustainability, Strategy, Health.

1. **INTRODUCTION**

The Treaty of Lisbon has shown the importance of tourism in EU development by introducing in article 195 the importance of its institutional framework of the Union.

This enshrinement enables the Union to act at European level by responding to the common challenges of the industry, providing for the establishment and adaptation of a

business environment that paves the way for the economic and social development of destinations while fully complying with and showing due regard for the principle of subsidiarity and the competence of Member States.

We became aware that tourism is a cross-cutting economic activity with a wide-ranging impact on the environment and climate and on the EU´s economy as a whole, in particular on the regions´s economic growth, employment and social and sustainable development.

The tourism value chain in one of Europe´s main industrial ecosystems identified by the Commission and whereas it is complex and made up of the four closely linked, key vectors of transport, accommodation,experience and intermediation as the success of the industry lies in the degree of influence between these four vectors.

To provide a sustainable tourism strategy we need to be aware of climate change by contributing to 8% of global CO_2 emissions as well as the tourism encompasses to a great diversity of services and professions and the need to support the maintenance of small and medium sized enterprises that will promote employment and wealth regions that depend mostly on tourism services.

However, the excellent situation that we had stumbled into a hurricane with Covid 19 arrival. The tourism and transport industries were among those most affected by COVID-19 while travels almost stopped as the only way to avoid the spread of virus and contain this pandemic situation.

Recent studies reported that at least six million jobs are at risk in the EU, such as seasonal workers and those in vulnerable situations. There were many restrictions on travel which lead to continue to hit global and European tourism hard, with the latest data from the United Nations World Tourism Organizations (UNWTO) showing a 70% fall in international tourism arrivals in 2020.

This scenario has defined a deep new economic and social crisis and all European countries became aware that article 195 of The TFEU provides that the Union coordinate and complement action of the member states in tourism. It became clear that the Member States face common challenges and opportunities in the tourism sector, such as crisis prevention and management, progress towards the digital and green transaction, socioeconomic and environmental sustainability, quality job creation, professional skilling and training of workers and support to small and medium entreprises.

Experts on tourism policies stated that the development of the Trans-European Transport Network and its connections with urban, local and coastal areas that will play a crucial role in providing sustainable, alternative and flexible transport solutions for travel and tourism.

The European Year of Rail should represent an ideal framework for initiatives to enhance sustainable tourism in order to increase the attractiveness of tourism destinations.

In this study we intend to approach the measures that have been taken to recover this economic sector, so important to sustain the maintenance of small and medium companies that provide touristic services.

2. **MEASURES TO BE TAKEN**

The stresses that the COVID-19 outbroke paralysed the EU tourism sector, putting its ecosystem under unprecedent pressure, especially in light of the second and third wave of the pandemic.

Member States felt the need to implement, without further delay, common and coordinated criteria and safe travel, as adopted by the Council in its recommendation on a coordinated approach to the restriction of free movement, while facilitating the deployment of the EU Passanger Locator Form, digitally where possible, with full respect for data protection rules.

Of course, no rules intend to overcome and destroy the spirit established by the European Regulation on Personal Data but will have to find a way to maintain the interoperable and anonymized tracking, to set common hygiene criteria at the main transport hubs.

The only way to control the spread of this pandemic disease will have to sacrifice some data as sick persons will have to be reached and controlled in their movements to make sure there will be some control over their recover and to make restrictions to their movement as the virus tends to mutate and create new ways to survive in different continents and environment, making it more difficult to control the arise of new brads and more dangerous ones.

Member States took notice of the danger brought by intercontinental flights that were forbidden for some time, only allowed for security reasons and to deport residents that were already allowed to go back home.

One of the main measures taken was taken by The European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control to monitor and continue to publish, in a timely manner, the colour coded map of Union countries and regions, with a view to offering travellers and businesses a coordinated and efficient response. To assure this information, the press has been called to promote and disseminate the map through national Broadcasters to ensure that it also reaches citizens and prevent as much travels as possible.

One of the four Freedom Rights brought by the European Union had to be compromised, forbidding citizens to cross borders without control when it comes to EU citizens and borders were back to police control, either by road, airports, trains and ships.

Some citizens became very angry as they state that this circulation freedom should not suffer any restrictions but this scenario was impossible as thousands or millions of Europeans travel through Union countries but sometimes have travelled to other even

more dangerous areas, like it is happening now in India and Brazil, with death rates arising and no control over this pandemic virus.

However, it has been adopted in EU Member States, the Commission recommendation on COVID-19 testing strategies, to establish a common and non-discriminatory EU Health Safety Protocol for testing before departure, including rapid testing technologies, PCR tests and others, and at the same time, quarantine should remain an instrument of last resort and its duration reduced to a minimum number of days, harmonized throughout the Union.

In EU Member States theses measures have been successfully implemented, with a very good coordination, as all countries asked for PCR and rapid tests before travels, a prevention on non essential travels, that low the number of passengers in airport, railway stations and other ways os transport and numbers of disease has been lower than in other regions that took fewer measures or none.

One of the best measures that has been approved as a matter of priority is the definition and implementation of a quick vaccination plan as scientific studies have been proving that the only way to control this disease is by vaccination, as well as hygienic measures like the use of mask, social distance and control of number of persons standing at the same time.

In some EU countries the vaccination has been difficult, such as Bulgaria and Latvia, not for the lack of vaccines but the trust of people in their results.

Maybe the information about the importance and sustained reduction of hospitalization and death dued to vaccination has not been cleared out to citizens very well and fear has prevailed .

One measure that has been discussed is the introduction of an EU hygiene seal or creation of Vaccination Passport, developed jointly by ECDC and the Member States to promote the economic activities as it states that those citizens have been vaccinated and the danger od spreading disease will be low.

Some countries were against this legal instrument as they state that vaccination is an not compulsory and creates a discrimination system.

The analysis of this statement is wrong, from our point of view, as it will be not forbidden for non vaccinated citizens to travel to other regions, but will have to maintain the PCR testing and the quarantine done to prevent the status quo that we are living in.

There were some obstacles but as we are approaching summer, the Commission stated that this measure, combined with other demands like the use of masks and social distance maybe adequate to promote safe holidays that have been wished by all citizens.

People all over Europe feel he need to travel aboard, to meet new countries, new food, new cultures and this period of time has had a big impact on mental health, arising depression, anxiety and fear as families remain apart, with no physical contact, that will arise the fear.

It became clear that the implementation of a preparatory action denominated as European crisis management mechanism for tourism is very important, not only to design a plan to

get over this pandemic crisis but also to cope with future crises to help tourist destinations as they will have a prevention plan, contingency measures and preparedness plans and actions to stand before other pandemic crisis that may come to life.

Maybe one good measure could be the creation of a Directorate dealing specially with tourism with an adequate funding to promote the coordination with regional institutions and have the opportunity to a sustainable tourism, defining new policies and limits to avoid the problems that were arising of overcrowded places and the loss of identity of some destinations.

This measure could come up as a European Agency for Tourism that can be responsible for providing the EU and Member States with factual overview and data policymakers as it becomes clear that data and its knowledge is the only weapon we have against pandemic crisis, in order to coordinate measures that took individually will have no strength.

This agency would be responsible to interconnect good practices in order to make informed decisions and to promote Europe as a new brand, with new attractions and destinations unknow that can be able to develop certain regions with wonderful traditions and structures that still remain out of touristic guides.

Of course, this agency must respect the right of local authorities to regulate against the harmful impacts of overtourism as these local citizens and structures become aware of economic, environment and social impact of total liberalism measures that will overcrowd some destinations.

This pandemic crisis maybe a good opportunity to redesign and redefine tourism, appealing to prioritise the use of most sustainable means of transport, with a smaller carbon footprint, as countries are recalled to have modern, safe and sustainable transport infrastructure in order to facilitate travel across the EU.

Another important measure to be taken would be the establishment of a single platform for the creation of digital innovation literacy programmes for senior executives and the promotion of new skills as the globalization as shown that digital platforms are the only way to make companies survive.

This digital platform could also promote the reskilling of the existing workforce in the tourism sector, with a specific focus on digital skills and innovative technologies.

As we haven seen during this pandemic time that we are living in, only companies that were able to adapt to digital contents and offers survived, even with major difficulties. There is an urgent need to adjust and rethink our ways of living, of working and connect with others.

Some things that seemed important in our daily life have lost their importance as we came aware that our life is short, that we can be bitten by a virus and make a balance of our life time on earth and awake to our ignorance, our clusters and experiences become more important as well as memories created by travelling to different places and dealing with different cultures and ways of thinking and living,

After this pandemic crisis, those who will have the means to travel and discover the world will do it, knowing that the real value of things has changed and treasuring every hour and every minute on earth.

We believe that this time will create the opportunity to develop tourism in some countries and continents, discovering new experiences and places unknow till now. So, the tourism sector must enforce digital skills, reskill workforce to deliver the best services and promote great experiences and memories, knowing that the best publicity we can have is by spreading the word from satisfied clients.

Some comments made on platforms as Trip Advisor may be very personal but reflect the experience that the persona has had and are mostly reliable.

CONCLUSIONS:

The COVID-19 pandemic and the resulting crisis have shown the urgency of doing more at European level by rethinking the strategy to rebuild a sector that is one of the main contribution to EU Member States national budget.

The Union has to build a common framework for essential and non-essential travel, with clear and transparent criteria, to provide informed choices for the identification of danger and risk areas and application of colour code to identify those more affected by the virus.

The border control has become one of the tools used to avoid the spread of disease by demanding PCR tests and rapid ones as well as the track of people in their destinations to quarantine measures.

The information of European citizens either by press or other means contributed to build a conscience of the danger of this virus, which we know so little of, either consequences or mutations and to prevent more deaths and severe illness by using masks and avoid physical contact as well as maintain distance.

The vaccination seam to be the only way out of this pandemic crisis and at this level European Member States, not at same stage, have made a effort to gather citizens and promote massive vaccination campaigns, that have been successful.

This summer, with the opening of European frontiers we will be testing the efficiency of this campaigns and hope for the best.

Planning the future of the tourism industry is an imperative for the present moment, Evaluating trends and demand dynamics, the options for consumer travellers and the transition to models that consider a cleaner economy must be the Union´s priorities for the next decade.

One priority is to create new and fresh legislation that will establish a framework more able to cope with future crises and enabling it to provide more effectively targeted solutions, achieving a balance between consumer rights and business sustainability.

It´s important to reach new balances between our daily life, the need to travel, get experiences and preserve environment, have new strategies to maintain our cultural heritage and identity which are the great appealing of some countries but, at the same time, avoid massive tourism that will destroy the singularity of places and its authenticity. This pandemic crises created a opportunity for reflection and change of attitudes and behaviour, as well as better planning and frameworks.

We believe that this chance will be taken by EU Member States and that tourism will grow better and sustainable, and that all EU institutions will work together to implement the use of article 195º of Lisbon Treaty, coordinating the European strategy and economic support that will be needed for tourism sector to survive,

The creation of a digital health passport in the Union will be crucial to recover the confidence that destinations will be safe places, occupied with citizens already protected by vaccines that are the main support to get over this pandemic crises.

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