

JOINT DECLARATION

EU TOURISM: RESILIENCE IN THE CLIMATE CRISIS ERA



Rhodes, 9 April 2024

The travel and tourism industry stands as a cornerstone of global connectivity, promoting cultural exchange, knowledge transfer and social cohesion through shared experiences and soft power. In Europe alone, the travel (business and leisure) and tourism sector significantly contributes to economic vitality, acting as a key driver of growth and prosperity. In 2022, it accounted for almost 9% of the EU's GDP, providing close to 22 million jobs, generating over €380 billion in spending by international visitors and more than €800 billion in spending by domestic visitors¹.

Despite this positive impact, the travel and tourism industry is neither immune to, nor unaware of the challenges posed by climate change. Severe environmental impacts such as rising sea levels, extreme weather events, and habitat destruction threaten the very resources tourism relies on. These challenges not only endanger livelihoods within local communities but also undermine the benefits that locals and destinations derive from travel and tourism, casting a shadow over the industry's long-term viability.

In response to these pressing challenges, the travel and tourism industry recognises an undeniable opportunity to embrace a more sustainable approach. Acknowledging this imperative, private sector stakeholders commit to taking decisive actions to minimise adverse effects and maximise positive contributions. Through these commitments, we aim to pave the way for a more sustainable and resilient future for the industry and the communities it serves.

We also take the opportunity to call on EU decision-makers, ahead of the EU elections, to take action and support the sector to reach its goals.

¹World Travel and Tourism Council

Private sector organisations from the European travel and tourism industry meet in Rhodes, Greece, to sign this declaration and commit to:

1. Prioritising the decarbonisation of the travel and tourism industry by defining and implementing a climate action plan at organisational level.
2. Reaffirming and strengthening our commitments to work towards decarbonisation by 2050, as exemplified by the signing of the Glasgow Declaration² and the Toulouse Declaration³.
3. Acting as catalysts for the industry by fostering a culture of awareness and responsibility, actively disseminating insights and best practices regarding climate actions, providing expertise for the effective implementation of climate initiatives, creating essential tools and providing comprehensive guidance to advance our shared commitment to decarbonise the industry.
4. Assisting the industry, particularly the multitude of small and medium-sized enterprises constituting 99% of the tourism ecosystem, in adapting to the challenges posed by climate change and evolving regulatory requirements. Exploring funding opportunities for decarbonisation initiatives, such as EU funds, grants and subsidies.
5. Supporting initiatives aimed at training and up/reskilling of the workforce to tackle sustainable skills gaps in the tourism ecosystem both for the current workforce and new entrants, in line with the commitments expressed in the Pact for Skills in Tourism.
6. Strengthening the collaboration between private travel and tourism stakeholders by committing to meet in the same format, in 2025 and consecutive years, and assessing the progress towards achieving the objectives outlined in this joint declaration.
7. Engaging with European and national policy-makers in shaping a regulatory landscape that tackles the climate emergency, while safeguarding the viability of enterprises, prioritising adaptation efforts, and ensuring that no one is left behind in our pursuit of decarbonisation efforts.

To this end, we call on:

- The European Commission and Member States to maintain a stable and permanent dialogue with travel and tourism industry stakeholders.
- EU Member States to formalise the meeting of Tourism Ministers and State Secretaries during each Council presidency addressing the issue of climate change in relation to travel and tourism. The meetings should involve private tourism stakeholders.
- The European Parliament to establish a permanent Tourism Task Force. This Task Force should remain open to receiving frequent input from external stakeholders on the consequences of climate change on destinations.
- EU decision-makers to create a specific budget line dedicated to tourism, offering direct funding possibilities for the travel and tourism sector to invest in the sustainable transition. At the same time, the sector should continue benefiting from all different budget lines (e.g., cohesion fund or CAP by ring-fencing a budget dedicated to the travel and tourism industry).

²Glasgow Declaration - Climate Action in Tourism

³Toulouse Declaration - Future Sustainability and Decarbonisation of Aviation

⁴Pact for Skills

The organisations mentioned below endorse this joint declaration.

- Airlines for Europe (A4E)
- Airport Council International (ACI EUROPE)
- Cruise Lines International Association (CLIA)
- European Travel Agents' and Tour Operators' Association (ECTAA)
- European Exhibition Industry Alliance (EEIA)
- European Regions Airline Association (ERA)
- European Association of Hotels, Restaurants and Cafés (HOTREC)
- The Global Association for the Attractions Industry (IAAPA)
- International Road Transport Union (IRU)
- European Federation of Rural Tourism (Ruraltour)

