

II

*(Information)*INFORMATION FROM EUROPEAN UNION INSTITUTIONS, BODIES, OFFICES
AND AGENCIES

EUROPEAN COMMISSION

COMMUNICATION FROM THE COMMISSION

**Towards a Common European Tourism Data Space: boosting data sharing and innovation across the
tourism ecosystem**

(2023/C 263/01)

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	<i>Page</i>
1. INTRODUCTION	2
1.1. A data space serving all stakeholders in the tourism ecosystem	2
1.2. The challenges of sharing tourism-related information	4
1.3. Objective of the common European data space for tourism	5
2. KEY ENABLERS FOR THE COMMON EUROPEAN DATA SPACE FOR TOURISM	7
2.1. Governance	7
2.2. Semantics for interoperability	8
2.3. Technical standards for interoperability	9
2.4. The role of the private sector	9
2.5. Support for SMEs in the transition towards a data space	10
2.6. Support for destinations in the transition towards a data space	10
2.7. Testing a use case for the tourism data space	11
3. NEXT STEPS TOWARDS THE COMMON EUROPEAN TOURISM DATA SPACE	12
4. CONCLUSION	13

1. INTRODUCTION

This Communication presents the journey towards the common European data space for tourism, which involves all stakeholders in the tourism ecosystem: Member States, local and regional authorities, and the private sector as well as the EU institutions.

The data space provides the tourism ecosystem with a key tool in supporting its transition towards more sustainability and deeper digitalisation, as foreseen in the Transition Pathway for Tourism ⁽¹⁾ (2022), and in full alignment with the European strategy for data (2020) ⁽²⁾.

The European strategy for data introduced common European data spaces in key economic sectors and domains of public interest ⁽³⁾ as essential policy developments to empower both public and private sectors with the value of data, for the benefit of the European economy and society. The Council Conclusions of 25 March 2021 ⁽⁴⁾ supported the development of the data spaces. By combining legislative, policy and funding measures, the data strategy aims at creating a single European data space, a genuine single market for data where information can flow across sectors and borders and be shared and used to boost innovation.

In line with this, in June 2022 the Communication from the Commission on the Conference on the Future of the EU mentioned both the tourism and the mobility data spaces as ‘new areas of action to consider’ for the EU to embrace a digital transformation.

Tourism is particularly sensitive to the opportunities of a European single market for data because it is a sector thriving on users’ experiences, which are varied and constantly evolving. As a result, it is a versatile sector when it comes to data, both generated and shared. Private and public actors alike understand that information is key and are showing a great interest in data, but with varying degrees of maturity, understanding and skills to untap the potential of information, which is highly diverse, fragmented, and often dormant in silos. A common European data space will provide the ecosystem with more quality data to be shared, used and accessed by more stakeholders, which will feed into innovative services and solutions.

In the tourism sector there is reluctance on behalf of business and destinations to share data without a guarantee of reciprocity and an understanding on how data might be reused, by whom and for which purpose. The administrative burdens associated with new practices also weigh heavily on small organisations. The common European data space for tourism does not aim at regulating data sharing in the sector. It also does not set obligations for data providers or users to collect specific data. The common European data space for tourism aims at increasing data sharing and reuse in the sector by shaping a data governance model, based on the respect of existing EU and national legislation on data, which will increase fairness by making sure that all the stakeholders involved benefit from the new value created by more data being shared and used. Furthermore, thanks to the development of technical and interoperable infrastructures, this data space will benefit from data being shared in other data spaces.

The Transition Pathway for Tourism introduced the need for a ‘technical implementation for tourism data space’ (Topic 14). Endorsed by the Council Conclusions of 1 December 2022, where Member States set out a European Agenda for Tourism 2030 ⁽⁵⁾, the Transition Pathway for Tourism is currently in its co-implementation phase, and this Communication details how it means to progress towards a data space for tourism.

1.1. A data space serving all stakeholders in the tourism ecosystem

By growing organically, in small steps proportionate to the voluntary involvement and the needs of the tourism stakeholders, the common European data space for tourism will allow datasets to be shared with broader audiences, and will allow users (such as business intermediaries, destination managers, tourism service providers, and innovative data

⁽¹⁾ Transition pathway for tourism published today (europa.eu)

⁽²⁾ COM(2020) 66 final.

⁽³⁾ The European data strategy of February 2020 announced the creation of data spaces in 10 strategic fields: health, agriculture, manufacturing, energy, mobility, financial, public administration, skills, the European Open Science Cloud and the crosscutting key priority of meeting the Green Deal objectives.

⁽⁴⁾ 250321-vtc-euco-statement-en.pdf (europa.eu)

⁽⁵⁾ Competitiveness Council (Internal market and industry) - Concilium (europa.eu)

analysis SMEs) to access information from more diverse sources. The European Commission supports Member States and all stakeholders in the development of a common European data space that serves all parties, which is the responsibility of the tourism ecosystem as a whole.

Public authorities in Member States, at national and local level, will be affected positively by the interoperability framework set up by a common European data space for tourism, as demonstrated by their request to the European Commission ⁽⁶⁾ for a tool to monitor the green and digital transitions and resilience of the tourism ecosystem, and which resulted in the EU Tourism Dashboard developed by the Joint Research Centre of the European Commission. In several instances, Member States (Austria, Italy, Spain, Slovenia, Greece) are also developing their own national data spaces. The Commission welcomes these initiatives and looks to building synergies among them to develop EU standards and models for data sharing, in full respect of existing EU and national legislation and EU principles (see 2.1).

The data space for tourism needs to support SMEs. SMEs account for almost all enterprises in tourism (99,9 %); 91 % of these SMEs are micro-enterprises ⁽⁷⁾. Small stakeholders, such as restaurants and family hotels for example, lack the time, skills and resources to search and access data useful for tourism strategy and management, in particular when it is created by different providers, presented and governed in various manners. A single reference point for data availability can help businesses, such as hotels and restaurants, or travel operators, improve and innovate their services based on updated, high quality information, particularly if it is accompanied by support measures (see 2.5) or services. An example of how this can play out is outlined in the box below.

SMEs and larger companies providing data analytics services to business and other actors have an immediate interest in relying on an organised pool for data sharing and accessing information from different sources and sectors. Similarly, SMEs specialising in AI tools would benefit by untapping new tools to personalise tourism services based on available offer and other types of information. The tourism data space will directly support their data-based services.

The same challenges are shared by Destination Management Organisations (DMOs). The role of DMOs (who can be private bodies, or national, regional, or local authorities) is progressively evolving from a marketing role towards that of management and planning of sustainable offers for travellers, with lasting economic and social benefits also for the resident community at large. Fulfilling this role requires a wealth of information, such as data from transport companies, urban services and cultural departments, public and private organisers of events, even information on the tourism offer and on the political priorities of regional authorities and neighbouring regions, to name but a few examples.

In their role, DMOs may also be data collector and holders; as such, a common European data space for tourism, on the basis of existing and upcoming EU legislation on data (see 1.3), can support them in making a better, and more interoperable use of the data they collect, and not just in gaining access to more information. As an example, DMOs and public authorities across the EU could make available key monitoring information on tourism on local level thereby showcasing key features of the destination, and their progress on the green and digital transition.

Concrete example of the benefits provided by data sharing to business and DMOs

A small agency, or tour operator, may need to prepare an offer for potential customers based on the accommodation capacity of a territory, which may include cities, and more remote rural destinations. Across regions or between municipalities, however, different destinations, even of a similar size, define accommodation capacity in different ways. One defines it as number of nights, the other as number of beds. One may include short-term rentals options, the other may only provide hotel information. Or, they may have different definitions of points of interest or events of interest, based on the choice and strategy of local DMOs. By offering meta-data descriptions, ideally based on existing harmonised concepts and definitions, taxonomies and classifications and geospatial disaggregation already applied in official statistics, a data space could ensure that the same definition is adopted by all data sets and sources, so the travel agent connected, or relying on external support for data analysis, can estimate their offer accurately.

⁽⁶⁾ <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/media/49960/st08881-en21.pdf>

⁽⁷⁾ Annual Report on European SMEs, 20 June 2022.

As natural partners to a data space, national and Union level statistical bodies play a pivotal role, making official statistics available free of charge, supporting the interoperability within and across statistical domains, and enabling the reuse of the existing data for the production of innovative or enhanced official statistics, possibly supporting regulatory reporting needs.

A better, more personalised, and more sustainable tourism offer, accompanied by consistent support policy measures at national, regional and local level, is key for Europe to remain the most visited tourism destination in the world in an innovative and sustainable manner, and, as explained below in more details, the tourism data space can facilitate this outcome. Data can help identify, measure and improve the impact of tourism on sustainability. Examples include data on hotels' energy consumption, renewable energy certificates, water consumption and wastewater processing. Or, agro-food traceability tools can support local supply chains, thereby lowering the environmental impact of the restoration sector while supporting rural tourism. Another example of the benefits of sharing data across domains and sectors is the interoperability between the European tourism data space and European health data space. Sharing electronic health data can be extremely helpful for both the traveller and the host country to plan and propose adequate healthcare support.

As such, the benefits provided by enhanced data sharing would impact the market as a whole, including large platforms which are the primary data holders of tourism-related commercial data.

1.2. The challenges of sharing tourism-related information

The tourism sector faces three specific challenges regarding data sharing, which need to be tackled by the key enablers of the common European data space for tourism (see paragraph 2):

1. *Interoperability of data*

Designing, managing, and offering a tourism experience, for decision-making or innovation purposes, requires a variety of non-personal data. A distinctive feature of the tourism sector is that any data domain could potentially be useful to set up a tourism experience (i.e. mobility, energy, environment, cultural heritage, urban planning, health, etc), albeit with key sets of non-personal data being of particular interest to operators. Extensive consultations of stakeholders carried out by the European Commission between 2021 and 2023 have identified datasets particularly relevant for the operators (depending on the use case and the purpose of data collection): accommodation availability and demand; travelling opportunities and demand; environmental and social impact of tourism; and offer and market trends. The key challenge is therefore to share and compare information from different sources, avoiding overlaps and duplicates to the best possible extent, within a framework of interoperability that is shared with other sectoral data. If possible, standards could be explored that are already in use and spread across stakeholders (see 2.3).

2. *Access to data*

The EU tourism ecosystem does not count on a common market platform: offers are modelled and catalogued both by private operators and by public authorities at national, regional and local levels creating a diverse, rich, and multilingual landscape, and bookings are managed both through platforms (large and small) and independently by providers. While the common EU tourism data space does not act as a market operator (i.e. it will not allow nor centralise bookings), it may offer operators searchability tools for information (see 2.2).

3. *Provision of data by public and private stakeholders*

Data can be open (such as schedules, traffic, and weather information, as an example, or data extracted from web browsing), but it can also be private, commercial, and sensitive. To the extent personal data are shared, all stakeholders must comply with the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) ⁽⁸⁾. As regards commercial data, which comprises the bulk of information related to bookings, travelling, web searches and payments, it is held by a small number of large actors, who need to be included in the discussion about rules governing data access within the data space.

⁽⁸⁾ Regulation (EU) 2016/679 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 27 April 2016 on the protection of natural persons with regard to the processing of personal data and on the free movement of such data, and repealing Directive 95/46/EC (General Data Protection Regulation) (OJ L 119, 4.5.2016, p. 1).

The principle of the value of data should be balanced by a governance model that gives immediate access to data to the best possible extent. This requires the joint effort of all stakeholders, with the provision that the tourism data space should not be used as a marketplace for advertising samples of privately held packages. The primary goal of the data space is to support all stakeholders in the ecosystem in a fair and inclusive manner.

The potential of an effective space for data flow is directly related to the participation of as many stakeholders as possible, not only as users, but also as data providers. As such, incentives could be explored for large private operators to share their information, or parts of it, on the common European data space. As an example, beyond the principle of data altruism ⁽⁹⁾ as defined in the Data Governance Act, these incentives can take the form of agreed access conditions: different sharing schemes and models, limited or applicable to given data sets, which can change over time; given days of the week, quarters, or other time period; and/or available for a fee or as a combination of open and pay-for non-personal data. This is work-in-progress, which needs to count on both a concerted effort, and the shared understanding that a balance must be found between transparency of rules, and respect of commercial interests ⁽¹⁰⁾. However, in line with the proposal for the Data Act, this should not affect the access to and use of information in the data space for the production of official statistics.

Additionally, producing data streams is time and resource consuming. SMEs and smaller DMOs, as well as public authorities, would find it cumbersome to adopt interoperability standards for data sets already in place. As such, solutions need to be explored to lighten the administrative burden on smaller public and private operators.

1.3. Objective of the common European data space for tourism

The objective of the data space for tourism is to combine technical standards for interoperability with a governance structure which invites and allows public and private stakeholders to join efforts to increase data sharing across data domains, as well as across sectoral data spaces, and data use in the sector. This, in turn, may greatly benefit the tourism ecosystem and support specific objectives, such as:

- fostering innovation in the sector for business and for DMOs in creating, improving and personalizing services and offers, through access to more quality information, which is not only shared but also easier to find;
- supporting public authorities in making decisions for the sustainability of their tourism offer, marketing and management based on a variety of relevant data;
- supporting specialised companies in providing better services to the market in terms of data analysis, indexes, and market trends;
- allowing SMEs or small DMOs to share their data and information related to services and offer to an EU-wide data sharing framework;
- improving the availability of data sources for producing statistical information for policy makers, for businesses or for public interest, fostering integrating with and enhancing of existing official statistics.

Following the adoption of the European Strategy for data, the European Commission set out key design principles and features for all common sectoral data spaces in the Staff Working Document on Common European Data Spaces (2022) ⁽¹¹⁾: data control, respect of EU rules and values, technical data infrastructure, governance, interoperability, and openness.

⁽⁹⁾ Data altruism policy is related to voluntary sharing of data, under no compensation whatsoever, for objective of general interest, for the common good.

⁽¹⁰⁾ The Horizon Europe programme includes an obligation for project beneficiaries to openly share data underpinning the research results. This allows for the possibility for the project beneficiaries to define publishable and confidential data for legitimate commercial interests; lessons could be learnt on how these beneficiaries have been incentivised to share data openly, and how their commercial rights are respected. Overall, with international interoperability agreements and practices already in place, scientific data sharing could provide useful learnings for the development of industrial ecosystem data spaces.

⁽¹¹⁾ Staff working document on data spaces | Shaping Europe's digital future (europa.eu)

The Data Governance Act ⁽¹²⁾ and the proposal for the Data Act ⁽¹³⁾ (adopted by the European Commission in February 2022) support these design principles by elaborating on a set of EU common approaches to establish trust and ensuring fairness among stakeholders as regards the effectiveness of sharing data.

The Data Governance Act aims to foster the availability of data for use by increasing trust in data intermediaries and by strengthening data-sharing mechanisms across the EU, and, among others, also sets the goal to create EU-wide common, interoperable data spaces in strategic sectors aimed at overcoming legal and technical barriers to data sharing.

The proposal for the Data Act aims to ensure a fair allocation of value in the data economy and to facilitate the use of and access to data generated by connected objects, especially when contributing to the data generation. The Data Act foresees dedicated tools to facilitate interoperability, including within and between data spaces. It sets out essential requirements concerning various elements relevant for the data spaces, including a mandate to ask standardisation organisations to develop harmonized standards.

The General Data Protection Regulation lays down rules relating to the protection of natural persons with regards to the processing of personal data and rules relating the free movement of personal data. The GDPR provides for general conditions that must be respected when personal data are collected, shared and re-used.

In addition, further to the Directive on open data and the re-use of public sector information ⁽¹⁴⁾, the European Commission laid down a list of specific high-value datasets (HVDs) and the arrangements for their publication and re-use ⁽¹⁵⁾. Some of this data (geospatial, Earth observation and environment, meteorological, mobility) can be relevant for developing or monitoring tourism services and policies.

The Interoperable Europe Policy fosters interoperability of data within and across data spaces, by encouraging legal, operational and technical/semantic alignments, through the use of for example reference architectures, semantic tools, data models and APIs. Several of these solutions will also become part of the Data Spaces Support Centre's toolbox and will also be discussed in the European Data Innovation Board (see below). The proposal for the Interoperable Europe Act ⁽¹⁶⁾ will strengthen interoperability by further encouraging the use of these interoperability solutions, which should help the tourism data space benefit from data coming from different sources.

This architecture, under which data sharing is shaped, provides essential support to the tourism sector as it lays out clear rules for both EU and non-EU data providers and operators. Data sharing is also the object of a number of key sectoral legislative initiatives with a clear and strong impact on the tourism sector.

The proposed Regulation on short-term accommodation rentals (STR) ⁽¹⁷⁾ allows competent authorities to share STR activity data with 'entities or persons carrying out scientific research, analytical activities or developing new business models'.

In the EU-wide Multimodal Travel Information Services (MMTIS) Delegated Regulation ⁽¹⁸⁾ make information data accessible on National Access Points. This obligation applies for scheduled transport in all modes (urban public transport, rail, air, ferries) as well as alternative modes (such as car sharing, rental pooling), and individual means of transport, such as cycling. Data should only be made accessible when it exists in a digital format. The data in scope of the obligation include: information data on timetables, standard prices, location of stations (access nodes) and certain infrastructure data (including for cycling).

⁽¹²⁾ Regulation (EU) 2022/868 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 30 May 2022 on European data governance and amending Regulation (EU) 2018/1724 (Data Governance Act) (OJ L 152, 3.6.2022, p. 1).

⁽¹³⁾ https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/ip_22_1113

⁽¹⁴⁾ Directive (EU) 2019/1024 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 20 June 2019 on open data and the re-use of public sector information (OJ L 172, 26.6.2019, p. 56).

⁽¹⁵⁾ Commission Implementing Regulation (EU) 2023/138 of 21 December 2022 laying down a list of specific high-value datasets and the arrangements for their publication and re-use (OJ L 19, 20.1.2023, p. 43).

⁽¹⁶⁾ COM/2022/720 final EUR-Lex - 52022PC0720 - EN - EUR-Lex (europa.eu)

⁽¹⁷⁾ COM_2022_571_1_EN_ACT_part1_v7.pdf (europa.eu).

⁽¹⁸⁾ Commission Delegated Regulation (EU) 2017/1926 of 31 May 2017 supplementing Directive 2010/40/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council with regard to the provision of EU-wide multimodal travel information services (OJ L 272, 21.10.2017, p. 1). The Delegated Regulation is under revision to extend this obligation to real time information (for all modes of transport) e.g. real time information on disruption of a train.

As regards data to develop services that can facilitate booking and payment, the new initiative on Multimodal Digital Mobility Services (MDMS) ⁽¹⁹⁾ will create sharing obligations which, as is the case with MMTIS, will translate into the tourism data space. The proposal will look at obligations for certain operators to enter into agreement with third parties. This is to ensure that online ticket services can facilitate multimodality, by enabling passengers to compare and access offers in an easy and transparent way.

The EU Regulation on platform-to-business relations (P2B Regulation) ⁽²⁰⁾ aims to ensure a fair, transparent and predictable treatment of business users by online intermediation services.

The common European data space for tourism aims at incorporating these requirements and principles, to avoid fragmented implementation by stakeholders. The added value of a common European data space for tourism will also lie in the support from the European Commission and other bodies. While a one-size fits all approach cannot meet the specific needs of each vertical sector or domain, it will, however, be key to identify cross-sector commonalities and to develop, where possible, common concepts, models and building blocks that can be used across various sectors or domains. As mentioned, commonalities and synergies are particularly relevant for the tourism sector. The European Data Innovation Board (EDIB), established by the Data Governance Act, will issue guidelines, identify the relevant standards and interoperability requirements for cross-sector data sharing. The Data Space Support Centre (DSSC), a project funded by the Digital Europe Programme (DEP), will cooperate with EDIB on the work on the common European data spaces and will be tasked with coordinating all relevant actions on those.

2. KEY ENABLERS FOR THE COMMON EUROPEAN DATA SPACE FOR TOURISM

In a complex ecosystem such as tourism, where useful information comes from different domains and sectors, and the economic actors are almost exclusively SMEs, with vast data domains held by few large platforms, enabling data sharing requires the combination and the balance of a number of factors.

This challenge is being addressed by two Coordination and Support Actions (CSA) funded under DEP in 2022 ⁽²¹⁾. The CSAs gather two public-private consortia with the objective of providing the European Commission with an updated map of relevant public and private initiatives, an in-depth analysis of the key enablers of a data space for tourism, and, importantly, a blueprint for its deployment. Working in synergy, the two CSAs run from November 2022 to November 2023, and will set the ground for the work on the tourism data space building on the existing framework for European statistics on tourism. They will add substantial information to all aspects related to the context and the governance of the common European tourism data space, and the following steps for its development.

By supporting this work and earmarking an additional EUR 8 million in the 2023-2024 DEP Work Programme, the European Commission is committed to working in partnership with public and private actors of the tourism ecosystem to gather from them the needs of the market and the sector, both in terms of data sharing framework, and of the pace with which to put it in place.

2.1. Governance

The governance of the tourism data space will determine how the key enablers for interoperability will be implemented and interact with each other, with the objective of ensuring that data is accessed, shared and used in a lawful, fair, transparent, proportionate and non-discriminatory way. To model it, the two Coordination and Support Actions funded by DEP will take into account the existing guidelines both at EU and national level, from public and private actors. This will be done within the remit of both the European Strategy for data, and of the Transition Pathway for Tourism.

⁽¹⁹⁾ <https://ec.europa.eu/info/law/better-regulation/have-your-say/initiatives/13133-Multimodal-digital-mobility-services>

⁽²⁰⁾ Regulation (EU) 2019/1150 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 20 June 2019 on promoting fairness and transparency for business users of online intermediation services (OJ L 186, 11.7.2019, p. 57).). This applies, as an example, to changes to terms and conditions, data access, how rankings are organised, the grounds for suspension or termination of the use of a platform and the reasons for using price parity clauses.

⁽²¹⁾ DATES – European Tourism Data Space (tourismdataspace-csa.eu) and Home - Data Space for Tourism (DSFT) (modul.ac.at)

In 2022, the European Commission set out key design principles and features for all common sectoral data spaces: ⁽²²⁾ data control, respect of EU rules and values, technical data infrastructure, governance, interoperability, openness and cybersecurity ⁽²³⁾. Additionally, the Code of Conduct on data sharing in tourism (2023), elaborated by private stakeholders with the support of the European Commission (see 2.4), sets out a list of specific principles to take into account in a data sharing agreement: data usage rights, value of data and remuneration, intellectual property, transparency principles with security, liability, privacy and data protection ⁽²⁴⁾ and ethics.

The Transition Pathway for Tourism identifies actions at EU, national and regional level to support data sharing in the sector:

- Build trust between relevant tourism stakeholders and provide strategic support on how to effectively use mutually beneficial data sharing partnerships in the tourism industry. [Topics 9, 14, 15]
- Support tourism businesses to innovate, improve and expand their services and authorities/destinations manage tourism flows better, based on more easily available tourism-relevant data from diverse sources. [Topics 10, 14, 15, 16]
- Facilitate the research and innovation in the tourism ecosystem towards more environmentally friendly services, by making data available for different types of actors, including consumers. [Topics 13, 15, 26]

The informal Commission expert group Together for EU Tourism (T4T) ⁽²⁵⁾, comprising experts from the public and private sector, assists the Commission in implementing these actions, namely, in the preparation of policy initiatives, in supporting the cooperation of all stakeholders in the ecosystem as regards the implementation of legislation, actions, programmes and policies, and in bringing about an exchange of good practices. In particular, the subgroup working on the digital transition of the tourism sector will monitor and support the implementation of all actions related to data sharing and the digitalisation of the sector, contributing to the stocktaking exercise on an annual basis.

At the same time, given that competence for tourism policy and management lies at national level, and in some Member States at regional level, or both, the European Commission, national and regional governments as well as private stakeholders need to jointly work to support its development. The new implementing instrument called European Digital Infrastructure Consortia (EDIC) could provide the solution for deploying and operating the Common European tourism data space. Based on the new opportunities provided by the Digital Decade Policy Programme 2030 ⁽²⁶⁾, Member States could also explore the potential of setting up an EDIC for the creation and management of the common European tourism data space.

2.2. Semantics for interoperability

Common data models and vocabularies are needed to achieve minimal interoperability. Administrations and agencies on a national, regional, and local level, who aggregate and build services around tourism data, are all facing the same challenges, while seeing the same opportunities in regard to semantics. National statistics institutes and Eurostat have commonly agreed definitions for official statistics. However, the adoption of these definitions by other tourism stakeholders is not an automatism.

Expressing ‘capacity’ of accommodation is an example, as it might be described by how many individuals a hotel can host, whereas another provider interprets the figure in regard to how many beds are offered. This example highlights the need to clarify the definitions and boundaries of key concepts commonly used by the tourism sector, to support any data sharing

⁽²²⁾ Staff working document on data spaces | Shaping Europe's digital future (europa.eu)

⁽²³⁾ In line with the Declaration on European Digital Rights and Principles | Shaping Europe's digital future (europa.eu)

⁽²⁴⁾ For the purpose of specifying the application of the GDPR to the tourism sector, future privacy and data protection Codes of Conduct must be developed in line with Article 40 of the GDPR.

⁽²⁵⁾ Register of Commission expert groups and other similar entities (europa.eu)

⁽²⁶⁾ Decision (EU) 2022/2481 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 14 December 2022 establishing the Digital Decade Policy Programme 2030 (OJ L 323, 19.12.2022, p. 4).

initiative of private and public actors. Not only should models and definitions aligned; as a user-oriented service, tourism needs to use definitions respectful of multilingualism requirements in the EU: while content is provided in the user's language, meta-data and classification, helpful to find content, need to be adapted to the user's language to provide better user experience and avoid discrimination.

As such, common data model(s) at European level, like, for example, existing data models to share information about passenger transport, would be highly valuable. The exact scope of the model(s) is to be defined by the preparatory work in 2023 (see paragraph 3), but the approach should be pragmatic and build upon existing specifications ⁽²⁷⁾. The creation of guidelines and support on how to implement this model to guarantee the compliance of various actors at different levels is also key. The role of the Data Space Support Centre will be of the essence in this sense.

2.3. Technical standards for interoperability

The Data Space Support Centre is working towards identifying common technical standards, taking into account the existing initiatives and regulatory framework and the work of standardisation development organisations. All data spaces will also benefit from Simpl, the middleware that will enable cloud-to-edge federations and support all major data initiatives funded by the European Commission, which is in the process of being launched ⁽²⁸⁾.

To note that the Data Act will empower the Commission to intervene where lack of standards will be identified. The Communication from the Commission An EU Strategy on Standardisation: setting global standards in support of a resilient, green and digital EU single market ⁽²⁹⁾ emphasises the direct relation between the success of European actors in standardisation at international level and Europe's competitiveness, technological sovereignty, and protection of EU values. One of the priority areas identified is 'data standards enhancing data interoperability, data sharing and data re-use in support of the Common European Data Spaces'.

The European Statistical System, the partnership between Eurostat and national statistical authorities, developed and maintain a systematic framework for the development, production and dissemination of European statistics on tourism, laid down in Regulation (EU) 692/2011 ⁽³⁰⁾. Because of the use of joint classification, taxonomies across statistical domains, guaranteeing semantic interoperability, data on capacity and occupancy of tourist accommodation or data on characteristics of tourism trips can be combined with other areas of statistics, creating meaningful indicators. Additionally, a set of technical standards for sharing accommodation data with the private sector, namely with international online platforms, has already been set up by Eurostat ⁽³¹⁾.

2.4. The role of the private sector

The common European data space for tourism will be born into a thriving market for services. Businesses and data intermediaries provide a crucial service to the EU tourism ecosystem and show great interest in a common European data space. Some platforms are already sharing sets of their accommodation data with Eurostat, on a voluntary and regular basis, for the purpose of producing European statistics.

The private sector is working towards non-personal data sharing agreements which can generate privately-owned data spaces in the tourism sector. The European Commission welcomes these initiatives and commits to support them with the objective to ensure that synergies are drawn between them and the common EU tourism data space. The online stakeholder support platform for tourism of the European Commission, operational in 2024, will be instrumental to this effort (see paragraph 3).

⁽²⁷⁾ Such as the lessons learned on how to build specifications for the common EU Green Deal data space prepared by the Joint Research Centre: <https://publications.jrc.ec.europa.eu/repository/handle/JRC126319> which, to a large extent, are valid also for the tourism data space.

⁽²⁸⁾ Simpl: cloud-to-edge federations and data spaces made simple | Shaping Europe's digital future (europa.eu)

⁽²⁹⁾ COM/2022/31 final EUR-Lex - 52022DC0031 - EN - EUR-Lex (europa.eu)

⁽³⁰⁾ Regulation (EU) No 692/2011 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 6 July 2011 concerning European statistics on tourism and repealing Council Directive 95/57/EC (OJ L 192, 22.7.2011, p. 17).

⁽³¹⁾ Also, the Regulation (EC) No 223/2009 (as amended), defining the current modalities for European Statistical system, is under revision, and aims at better integrating privately held data.

Developed by a group of stakeholders at EU level and adopted in March 2023, the Code of Conduct for data sharing in tourism ⁽³²⁾ aims at supporting trust between stakeholders – mostly SMEs – wishing to draw contractual agreements to share information, as well as providing general guidance, with examples and a checklist for stakeholders interested in sharing data, on how to build mutually beneficial data sharing relationships in tourism. The European Commission invites European tourism actors to publicly commit to the guidelines.

The private sector can also play a key role in complementing the common EU tourism data space, principally by providing SMEs and destinations with user-friendly tools. These can take the form of a platform, an app, or pay-for analytics and business support services, bridging the gap between the framework for interoperability set out at EU level, and the need for immediate, uncomplicated use and re-use of data.

2.5. Support for SMEs in the transition towards a data space

As announced in the Communication ‘The SME Strategy for a Sustainable and Digital Europe’ ⁽³³⁾ and in line with the EU strategy for data, the European Commission provides support to SMEs across sectors through the Digital Innovation Hubs and the European Enterprise Network (EEN), working in synergy.

European Digital Innovation Hubs (EDIH) ⁽³⁴⁾ are one-stop-shops supporting companies and public sector organisations in responding to digital challenges and becoming more competitive. The EDIHs provide access to technical expertise and give SMEs the opportunity to test solutions before an investment needs to be made. EDIHs provide financing advice, training and skills development in a user-friendly and targeted manner. Some EDIHs are specialised on tourism, but through the network all of them have the ability to help SMEs make use of infrastructures and initiatives like the common European data spaces.

The Enterprise Europe Network Sector Group Tourism (SGT) is composed by 61 members from 23 different countries, collaborating on a steady basis to support the tourism ecosystems in their territories. The objective of the SGT is to support and increase the SMEs competitiveness and resilience by providing high quality advice and supporting their internationalisation. The focus is on EU funding possibilities, technology transfer and business opportunities supported by specific targeted communication and promotion activities. Digitalisation is one of its focus activities, and within this broad spectrum the SGT supports ambitious growth-oriented SMEs access information and make the best possible use of it.

2.6. Support for destinations in the transition towards a data space

Destinations (as cities, rural communities or broader territories) are complex players who need to integrate tourism management into their urban and local planning, to ensure that the impact of tourist flows is not only beneficial to residents, but also sustainable for both the community and the environment. Several initiatives carried out by the Commission can have a positive impact on the availability of useful information for tourism management and development, and the Commission will ensure that synergies are maintained across networks for the digital transition of the public sector to be consistent. The stakeholder collaboration platform, which the Commission will launch in 2024 to support the co-implementation of the Tourism Transition Pathway, will offer a single entry point for all information useful to tourism stakeholders as regards EU and national policies and measures, as well as for the exchange of good practices.

By the same token, these avenues of direct cooperation across destinations and between destinations and the Commission will guarantee that local specificities and requirements be taken into account in the development of the common EU tourism data space:

- The Minimal Interoperability Mechanisms developed by and for cities and communities in the living-in.eu movement ⁽³⁵⁾ can provide important support to the common European data space for tourism, as they tackle interoperability solutions for these ecosystems;

⁽³²⁾ Key European tourism stakeholders co-sign a Code of Conduct on data sharing in tourism - ETC Corporate - ETC Corporate (etc-corporate.org)

⁽³³⁾ Communication COM/2020/103: An SME Strategy for a sustainable and digital Europe | Knowledge for policy (europa.eu)

⁽³⁴⁾ Information for SMEs | European Digital Innovation Hubs Network (europa.eu)

⁽³⁵⁾ Join us in building the European way of Digital Transformation for 300 million Europeans | Living in EU (living-in.eu)

- Intelligent Cities Challenge ⁽³⁶⁾ is a European Commission initiative supporting European cities towards the green and digital transition of their local economies, based on networking, exchange of good practices, experts support and the activation of the private sector.
- The Urban Agenda for the EU ⁽³⁷⁾ will also earmark funds to support tourism in urban destinations, with a particular focus on the sustainability of the offer. A new partnership on sustainable tourism under the Urban Agenda for the EU ⁽³⁸⁾, launched in December 2022, can also propose concrete actions on improving digital services of urban destinations.
- The official portal of EU data ⁽³⁹⁾ gathers all public information regarding EU laws, publications, procurement notices, and any other form of open data. It is a database which can be of support to all sectoral data spaces.
- The Tourism Flagship ⁽⁴⁰⁾ under the Technical Support Instrument 2022 edition ⁽⁴¹⁾ is supporting 7 Member States ⁽⁴²⁾ in strengthening their tourism statistics and data framework, by building capacities on data sharing and integration, by closing the implementation gap of the Tourism Satellite Account statistical framework, including guidance to enable the use of alternative data sources, by integrating sustainability indicators into tourism statistics for improved management of destinations, and by promoting digitalisation of tourism SMEs.

An EU Competence Centre to support data management in tourism destinations is also under development. The knowledge hub will support destinations in developing and implementing data-driven management as well as data-sharing competences and strategies. The EU Competence Centre should be operational in 2024.

2.7. Testing a use case for the tourism data space

In light of the need to establish a trustworthy environment for data sharing among all the parties involved, and in consideration of the importance of testing the enablers for interoperability to transform them into the building blocks of the tourism data space, the European Commission, in cooperation with Member States and private stakeholders, sets up a test action aiming to prepare the ground for the tourism data space.

The action should apply the key enablers (technical standards and governance model) identified by the preparatory actions funded under DEP, aligning them with the technical standards developed by Eurostat for accommodation data: it will showcase the value of the tourism data space for the sector by applying and testing the interoperability standards and the business model for sharing data identified by the Coordination and Support Actions. The test action is set up on a purely voluntary basis and represents a practical example of the preparation of the tourism data space.

Public authorities, both at national and regional level, Eurostat, and relevant European Commission services will be involved, together with private partners specialised in data management, in ensuring that the approach will serve the preparatory work of the common European data space for tourism as well as of the framework for data sharing envisaged by the Short-Term Rentals Regulation proposal.

The Commission aims at ensuring that the approach is realistic and inclusive, and the exercise useful to EU stakeholders – both those participating in the action, as well as SMEs and DMOs. As such, the test will focus on a use case of interaction between different data domains, including short term rental and accommodation.

By its expected completion (Q1 2025), the initiative will have integrated the outcomes of the Coordination and Support Actions preparing the tourism data space, for a solid first step towards a fully-fledged common European data space for tourism.

⁽³⁶⁾ Home | Intelligent Cities Challenge

⁽³⁷⁾ Inforegio - The Urban Agenda for the EU (europa.eu)

⁽³⁸⁾ Sustainable Tourism | EUI (urban-initiative.eu)

⁽³⁹⁾ The official portal for European data | data.europa.eu

⁽⁴⁰⁾ Technical Support Instrument 2022: 'Support the tourism ecosystem: towards a more sustainable, resilient and digital tourism'

⁽⁴¹⁾ Technical Support Instrument (TSI) (europa.eu)

⁽⁴²⁾ Italy, Croatia, Spain, Slovenia, Portugal, Malta and Greece.

3. NEXT STEPS TOWARDS THE COMMON EUROPEAN TOURISM DATA SPACE

Phase 1: now until Q4 2023

- The two Coordination and Support Actions (CSA) funded under DEP in 2022 will provide the Commission with an updated map of relevant public and private initiatives, an in-depth analysis of the key enablers of a data space for tourism, with recommendations for a governance model and technical standards, and a blueprint for the deployment of the data space.
- At the same time, the European Commission will gather, on a voluntary basis, a working group to test a use case as a first application of the findings from the CSAs. In this first phase, the working group will set the focus of the experimentation, including the specific need for use and re-use of data, and its working methodology.
- Building on the initiatives at national level, and in synergy with the work of the Data Space Support Centre, discussions should start between the European Commission and the Member States on the possibility to set up an EDIC to manage the common European data space for tourism.
- The EU Competence Centre to support data management in tourism destinations should be launched by a consortium of public and private stakeholders, with a competence on data analytics, to provide support to destinations in developing and implementing data-driven management as well as data-sharing strategies within the framework of the development of a common European data space for tourism.
- Stakeholders have a number of tools at their disposal to engage with the process of building a data space tailored to the requirements of the industry, as described above. Industry organisations should begin promoting the opportunities and uses of a tourism data space among their members, as well as the principles laid out in the Code of Conduct for data sharing in tourism.

Phase 2: Q1 2024 until Q1 2025

- The use case working group set up by the European Commission will aim to apply the deliverables of the CSAs to the use case selected in phase 1, aligning them with the technical specifications developed by Eurostat in their agreement for sharing accommodation data with the private sector.
- Member States can contribute by exploring the possibility of setting up an EDIC for the management of the common European data space for tourism. A follow-up action to the CSAs should be operational under DEP, aiming at building the infrastructure of the common European data space for tourism (36 months).
- To further advance the co-implementation of the Tourism Transition Pathway, the European Commission will launch a stakeholder collaboration platform as a user-friendly entry point for the stakeholders to access actively updated information and links to official and community resources relevant for the transition pathway actions; to find constantly updated knowledge on ongoing projects, activities and events relevant for the transition pathway actions; to provide means to connect with and work together with the members of the stakeholder community, and to search or be alerted about topical current funding and learning opportunities or other developments. The platform will pool and update the mapping of initiatives related to data-sharing in tourism.
- Stakeholders are encouraged to actively engage with the platform, as well as with the initiatives that the informal Commission expert group T4T will offer to organise, as related to data sharing and management.

Phase 3: 2025 and beyond

In the future, the tourism ecosystem in Europe should count on a deeper understanding of the opportunities offered by data sharing. The ongoing initiatives and the short-term actions foreseen at Commission level and from the industry provide an opportunity to interested stakeholders to engage in the deployment of the tourism data space.

Additionally, an EDIC of Member States could be a solution for the management of the common European data space for tourism. Preparatory and deployment work under DEP is expected to have advanced enough for an infrastructure to be designed, which, in cooperation with the Data Spaces Support Centre, may define unique identifiers for tourism items at aggregated level, agree on common key meta-data elements (semantic rules), and integrate technical interoperability rules in a consistent manner with other EU level data spaces.

Additional funding under DEP will be made available for the period 2025-2027. The amount of such additional funding should be in line with the progress made and further funding needs.

4. CONCLUSION

The European Commission is fully committed to support a space where tourism-related data flows in full respect of EU principles of fairness, accessibility, security and privacy. This will align first and foremost with the EU strategy for data. It will also be in line with the upskilling and re-skilling efforts carried forth in the Pact for Skills ⁽⁴³⁾.

The data space will not be born in a vacuum: it will occupy a gap in the data market for tourism where access needs to be increased, made more consistent and particularly supported for SMEs and destinations, which are the breathing force of an ecosystem key to the EU economy, for boosting re-use of data and generate innovative services and economic value.

This approach towards building a common European data space for tourism needs to be both progressive and solid. It aims at setting up a framework, which meets the needs of the ecosystem and the market and is also anchored into the broader interoperability framework of sectoral data spaces at EU level. For this ambition to come to fruition, the European Commission encourages all relevant actors to engage in data sharing within the common European data space for tourism, not only to improve the wealth of data that it can provide, but also to shape it together for the benefit of all.

⁽⁴³⁾ Homepage of Pact for skills (europa.eu)