

Together for EU Tourism



“Weathering the storm: the evolution of European tourism in a changing climate”

18 October 2024 | Online

Webinar Summary

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Introduction

Scope and objectives of the webinar



Target audience

All tourism sector stakeholders, including T4T experts, representatives from the tourism industry, national, regional and local authorities, destination management organizations, academia, and NGOs.

Scope and objectives

The objective of the webinar was to raise awareness among destinations and businesses about the impacts of climate change on European tourism patterns, presenting concrete examples of affected destinations, and sharing effective strategies and adaptation practices.

Discussion topics:

1. **Trends and climate hotspots in Europe**, providing an overview of global climate changes and their impact on tourism, and a discussion on the various types of destinations
2. **Best practices and needs from destinations**, discussing challenges and needs that destinations are facing, such as global warming, heat waves in urban areas, drought and water scarcity, and coastal erosion.

The webinar aimed at providing a comprehensive understanding of how climate change is reshaping tourism flows and highlighting effective adaptation strategies for tourism stakeholders. By bringing together experts, practitioners, and affected stakeholders, the webinar sought to foster a collaborative approach to addressing the challenges posed by climate change in the tourism sector

Agenda

10:00 - 10:05	Welcome and introduction Moderator: Ruxandra Adam, Head of Tourism and Events department, Timis County Council
10:05 - 10:40	Trends and Climate Hotspots in Europe <ul style="list-style-type: none">• EU supporting tourism resilience in the face of climate challenges, Ramune Genzbigelyte-Venturi, Policy officer for Tourism, European Commission, DG GROW• The state of tourism climate action in Europe, Jeremy Smith, Independent Expert in Tourism Climate Action• The Climate Challenge: European Tourism's Journey to Adaptation, Teodora Marinska, COO, European Travel Commission
10:40 - 11:25	Case studies: Best practices and needs from destinations <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Global Warming - Adaptation in Mountain Destinations, Valentina Scigliano, Marketing Manager for the Maira Valley Tourist Consortium (Italy)• Heat Waves in Urban Areas - Urban Adaptation Projects, Luís Filipe Dias, Senior Technician, Lisbon City Council (Portugal)• Coastal Erosion: Adaptation in Coastal Destinations, Noëlle Verhage, Project Manager / Researcher, Research Centre Coastal Tourism (the Netherlands)
11:25 - 11:40	Coffee break
11:40 - 12:15	Interactive session and Q&A
12:15 - 12:30	Closing remarks and next steps <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Ruxandra Adam, Head of Tourism and Events department, Timis County Council• Dr. Ralf Pastleitner, TUI Group and Chair of the T4T Green Subgroup

Speakers

Moderation:



Ruxandra Adam,
Head of tourism
development
and events department,
Timis County Council and
T4T Green Subgroup



Ramune Genzbigelyte-
Venturi,
Policy officer for Tourism,
European Commission,
DG GROW



Jeremy Smith,
Independent
Expert in Tourism Climate
Action



Teodora Marinska,
COO, European Travel
Commission



Valentina Scigliano,
Marketing Manager for
the Maira Valley Tourist
Consortium



Luís Filipe Dias,
Senior Technician,
Lisbon City Council



Noëlle Verhage,
Project Manager /
Researcher, Research
Centre Coastal Tourism



Dr. Ralf Pastleitner,
TUI Group and Chair of
the T4T Green Subgroup

Webinar in numbers



306 Registrations



191 Participants

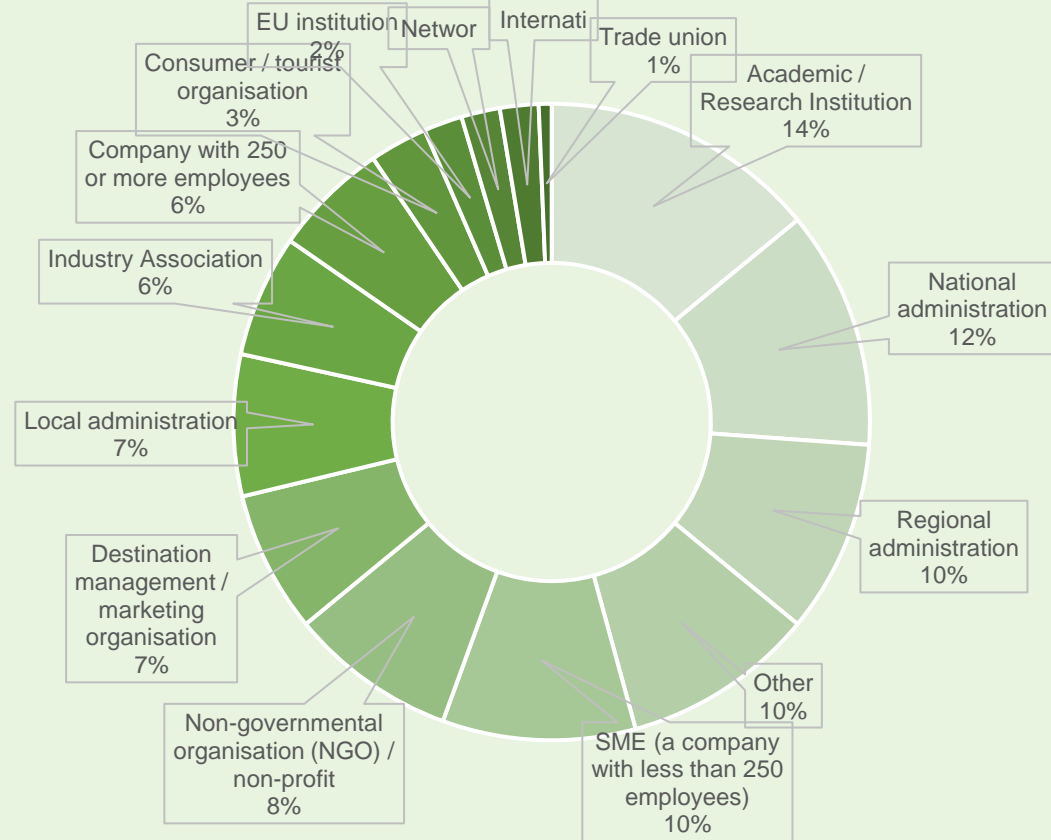


Participants from **25 EU MS** and **5 non-EU** countries



7 Speakers

Participants' Organisations



Results of the post-webinar survey



Over **91,4%** of the respondents were very satisfied/satisfied with the webinar.



All respondents found that the webinar provided useful information, with **85,7%** of them considering it as extremely useful/useful.



94,3% of the respondents feel that they have obtained a better understanding and knowledge of the topic after attending.

Key discussion points (1/4)

Representatives from the European Commission / DG GROW, Tourism Declares a Climate Emergency, European Travel Commission, Maira Valley Tourist Consortium, Lisbon City Council, and the Research Centre Coastal Tourism discussed the following:

1

Session 1: Trends and Climate Hotspots in Europe

- **DG GROW** presented how the European Commission supports tourism destinations in the face of climate challenges. The EU is committed to becoming climate-neutral by 2050, while leaving no one behind and in order to achieve this goal, it has made efforts through mitigation, adaptation and solidarity actions, which include the European Green Deal, the European Climate Pact, the EU Mission on adaptation to climate change, the Satellite Earth Observation component of the EU Space Programme, and Climate – ADAPT the European Climate Adaptation platform, as well as the activation of the EU Civil Protection Mechanism for coordinated assistance when it comes to natural, human-induced, health-related or other disasters.
- In March 2024, European experts led by the European Environmental Agency produced the first European Climate Risk Assessment covering macro aspects and discussing different sectors, one of which is the tourism sector. In this report there are key implications highlighted for tourism, such as thermal comfort and availability of water and natural resources, which affect areas and destinations. Last year, JRC produced a study on the Regional Impact of climate change on tourism demand in European regions, assessing data from 269 regions over a 20-year monthly timespan and simulating the impacts of future climate change on tourism demand for 4 warming levels. It is important for tourism destinations to keep in mind these projections and adapt their marketing and preparedness.
- The Commission's President highlighted already the need to step up EU work on climate resilience and preparedness. The EC will work towards a European Civil Defence Mechanism and a European Climate Adaptation plan and aim at strengthening Europe's water security with a new European Water Resilience Strategy.
- **Jeremy Smith** shared his insights about the state of tourism climate action in Europe, by presenting the latest progress in tourism climate action across the continent and highlighting some of the frontrunner initiatives and collaborations, the continuing challenges facing the industry and ideas for how it might address them.
- The Glasgow Declaration on Climate Action in Tourism has grown to become the largest collaboration and commitment on climate action that the tourism industry is engaged with. Over 850 signatories from around the world are making one shared commitment, to develop a strategic approach to their tourism by developing a climate action plan and publicly share what they will do. As part of the Glasgow declaration's commitments, all signatories commit that their path will focus on five pathways: Measure – Decarbonise – Regenerate – Collaborate – Finance. In January 2024, UN Tourism published the first progress report, reviewing all 250 published climate action plans to assess the progress made and what are the challenges that remain.

Key discussion points (2/4)

1

Session 1: Trends and Climate Hotspots in Europe (cont.)

- In Measurement, the diversity of tourism operators makes alignment difficult and there is a lack of agreement over responsibility for value chain emissions, and a lack of focus on measuring climate risk or need for adaptation. Examples of progress are 1) Visit Finland calculator free for the members of the Sustainable Travel Finland Programme, 2) Room2 Hotel using bedrooms as Climate Living Labs, 3) National Tourism Organisation of Norway calculator enabling comparison of the emissions from different source markets and 4) Murmuration use of satellite imagery to support destinations measuring climate risks
- In Decarbonisation, the main challenges are the lack of focus on selecting decarbonisation actions according to impact criteria and the lack of engagement with the aviation sector. Examples of progress are 1) West Sweden's focus on visitor demographics, 2) Canaries' platform with a catalogue of 200+ measures, and 3) Copenhagen's CopenPay rewards to visitors for low-carbon behavior.
- In Regeneration, there is a lack of understanding of connections between human and ecosystem health and a lack of focus on the importance of adaptation. Examples of progress are 1) Canary Islands connecting tourism businesses to regeneration projects, 2) Helsinki's ResQ scheme connecting visitors and locals to hotels and restaurants with surplus food, and 3) Hohe Tauern connecting visitor and local wellbeing with preservation of nature
- The **European Travel Commission** presented the possible effects of climate change on tourism demand in Europe based on the latest studies of the issue, giving also a glimpse into travellers' attitude towards climate change and Tourism and highlighted some best practice examples on destinations that have adopted climate change adaptation measures and strategies.
- ETC's latest research on European travellers' attitudes shows that pleasant weather conditions are the second most important criteria when choosing a destination and when it comes to travellers outside Europe, there is a similar trend with 31% considering stable weather conditions as the most important criteria for choosing their destination. Further, ETC's online reputation tracker shows that it not the weather induced crisis per se, but actually how adequately the authorities and tourism destinations handle it, with the keyword being Preparation and Adaptation of the destination and its tourism businesses for the effects of climate change.
- Three examples on how destinations can take responsibility of our impact presented: 1) The road to climate-neutral tourism in the Netherlands, showcasing how a destination management body can be a pioneer on a journey towards net-zero, 2) The Eco-Efficiency Index of Visit Finland comparing expenditure to the carbon footprint of visitors based on their origin market, and 3) The paper developed by Slovenia and University of Maribor stressing the need for tourism to be involved in broader national climate change adaptation strategy.

Key discussion points (3/4)

2

Session 2: Best practices and needs from destinations

- **Global warming: Adaptation in Mountain Destinations best practice was presented by Maira Valley Tourist Consortium** on Maira Valley, a slow and remote tourist destination of the Italian Alps. The history of how a remote Italian mountain territory grew to a sustainable tourism destination, far from the common routes and the mass tourism flows.
- The major sustainability aspects of Maira Valley include: slow tourism outdoor activities, no big and impacting infrastructures in place (such as ski lifts or resorts), smart architectural renovation, use of local products in the accommodation facilities and restaurants, development of a local distribution system of local food products, electric shuttle service to reach major tourism points, electric charging stations, use of high-altitude white roads only by non-motorised vehicles, cyclists and walkers
- The tourist tax introduced in the valley in 2019 allowed the consortium to finance fundamental activities for the destination, namely: the ordinary maintenance of the trail network, being the main tourism asset, the opening of tourist offices, and the promotion of the destination both in Italy and abroad.
- **Heat Waves in Urban Areas: Urban Adaptation best practice was presented by the Lisbon City Council.** Lisbon's City Council's strategy for climate change adaptation was outlined, with a particular focus on addressing the urban heat island effect through nature-based solutions. Drawing on recent climate projections and urban studies, the presentation showcased examples of how green infrastructure, increased vegetation and water retention strategies are being implemented to reduce urban temperatures. These nature based solutions include: reinforcement of tree planting, increase of green spaces, strengthening of the connectivity network and ecosystem services and investment in green solutions applied to green roofs, façades, courtyards, and underground constructions.
- In addition, the Interreg Euro-MED project COOL NOONS was highlighted, in which Lisbon serves as one of the pilot cities, with a focus on enhancing resilience and improving comfort for residents and tourists during the hottest hours.

Key discussion points (4/4)






2

Session 2: Best practices and needs from destinations (cont.)



- **Coastal Erosion: Adaptation in Coastal Destinations best practices** was presented by the Research Center Coastal Tourism. Climate change is an important issue in the Province of Zeeland in the Netherlands and during this presentation case studies of research projects focusing on a sustainable leisure sector were presented, as well as a collection of insights into the challenges posed by climate change, the risks faced within the leisure sector and the potential opportunities for climate adaptation and mitigation.
- The case studies from the Research Center Coastal Tourism presented were: 1) Innovation Acceleration Program: Future – Proof Leisure Sector Zeeland 2021 – 2023, providing a ‘map of opportunities’ for climate adaptation; 2) Sustainable Water Usage 2021-2023, aiming to reduce drinking water usage with three pilot companies participating; 3) Sustainable Energy Usage 2021-2023, green recreation innovation drivers, with one pilot company participating; 4) Climate resilience leisure sector, aiming to identify opportunities and barriers for interventions promoting a climate-resilient future for the sector; and 5) 3ST Speeding up Sustainability Skills in Tourism, aiming to collectively advance the tourism sector in the field of sustainability.

Conclusions and next steps

Conclusions

-  There is a need for a mindset change within the tourism sector to prioritise climate adaptation and mitigation
-  Destinations should keep in mind the long-term projections on potential impact of climate change on tourism demand, and adapt their strategies and preparedness
-  There is an emerging network of stakeholders innovating solutions, creating resources, connecting across supply chains and involving destinations and communities, all coming together to build on each other's successes and to learn from one another's challenges.
-  Preparation and adaptation of a destination and its tourism businesses for the effects of climate change is essential and to what we need to focus on going beyond just mitigation.
-  As global travel continues to grow, we need to address its environmental impact before it becomes increasingly urgent. The industry must transition towards sustainability. By investing in green infrastructure and promoting responsible travel practices, the industry can lead the way in creating a future where tourists and environment coexist in harmony.

Next steps

-  The T4T Expert subgroup for Green Transition will look into the decarbonization of the transport sector.
-  The T4T Green transition subgroup will be realigning the scope of work for 2025 while also continuing their targeted research and deep dives into topics around sustainable destination management and regenerative tourism.

Thank you!

The document has been prepared for the European Commission in the context of the project “Transition Pathway Stakeholder Support Platform: Implementation for Tourism Ecosystem” (the Project) in accordance with the signed contract No EISMEA/2022/OP/0018. This report reflects the views and results of the webinar discussion between the tourism stakeholders and do not necessarily represent the views of the European Commission. The action recommendations, however, do not necessarily represent the position or endorsement of all stakeholder groups nor the position of individual Member States or the European Commission.