

Touristic cities calling for balanced urban tourism

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European Alliance on
Balanced Urban Tourism



Tourism: benefits & impacts

- Driver of economic growth and added value in our domestic economies
- Social interactions and exchanges; deeper understanding of cultures and acceptance
- Pride in sharing our treasures & legacy and promoting our European identities.

But in the meantime, tourism impacts the inhabitants and places tourist visits as well. In our popular cities we see worrying developments:

- Degradation of local infrastructures and the environment
- Imbalance of our local economies
- Disturbance of the social environment
- Decline of the liveability and visitors experience



Why it all started

2023: city visits between Amsterdam, Barcelona, Bruges, Florence, and Prague

March 2024: meeting in Amsterdam with Barcelona, Bruges, Florence, Prague, Eurocities and UNESCO

- A **common concern** for the impact of growing tourism on the liveability of urban areas and the ability to preserve UNESCO World Heritage-sites
- Wish to cooperate and exchange around the topic **balanced urban tourism**
- Need to **raise our voices** together

European Alliance on Balanced Urban Tourism was born!



Political dimension

Our local governments more and more confronted with local protests and demonstrations. Recent data from the EU Tourism Dashboard confirms that:

- Southern coastal regions and many capital regions are the EU's travel hotspots
- Our cities are receiving visitor volumes that can place considerable strain on our local communities
- Record numbers of overnights stays

Challenging crossroad: local residents want to decrease the volume of tourists traveling to their countries, but this volume is growing rapidly.

An **unbalanced rollercoaster** and we cities are eagerly looking forward to a **smoother ride!**



Alliance in development & goals

All together we set our goals which are the following:

1. Knowledge exchange program (digital sessions)
2. Initiating own research projects
3. Advocacy on EU level for being the voice of local authorities on Balanced Urban Tourism

We are still an Alliance in development and open to other cities which feel the need to join.

- Partners**
- EUROCITIES
 - UNWTO
 - UNESCO
 - Urban Agenda Partnership for Sustainable Tourism
 - OWHC
 - European Cities Alliance on STR



Research project: local retail & monoculturalization

In close cooperation with Eurocities and the Urban Agenda Partnership on Sustainable Tourism we set out a comparative case study research

- 38 cities filled in a survey
- 12 cities will be interviewed

How does the influx of visitors influence the local retail environment in cities?

The aim of this research is to:

- Identify challenges
- Key issues
- Explore potential solutions through a shared approach among participating cities

Results to be expected in July



Key messages

- Tourism must be **in balance with urban life**; we need policies and investments that contributes to the liveability of our cities and the preservation of our heritage
- Our cities are not a commercial product to earn money from but **an ecosystem to participate in** where **quality of life** for residents and visitors has the priority; the tourism sector should reduce its environmental footprint
- Reduction of the footprint of travel choices to and from our urban regions to improve the liveability
- We need measures to **protect** our (traditional) **local retail**, entrepreneurs and crafts that provide rich local and cultural encounters for our visitors and that benefits our residents
- Development of **shared European indicators** to measure the economic, environmental and social impact of tourism



How?

Policies and investments to:

- Secure accessible housing and responsible real estate development
- Maintain essential public services and amenities for residents
- Promote the geographic and seasonal spread and responsible behaviour of tourists
- Support private companies in tourism in transforming their business models

More pilots/experiments in legislation

More tools and flexibility that allows cities to regulate excess of (tourist) shops, permits for boats, coaches, city tours etc.

Sustainable Transport

Targeted investments and laws on European and national level for the transition from road and aviation to rail; replace short-haul flights, cars and coaches by more and faster inter European trainlines.

More research

Cooperation with JRC, OECD, UN Tourism, UNESCO to get a better understanding of unbalanced tourism

Invitation to collaborate

Tackling tourism's complex challenges demands coordinated action between local, national, and EU authorities. A balanced approach to tourism must be firmly embedded at **every level of governance and across the global tourism sector**.

Transition Pathway for Tourism & new European Strategy on Sustainable Tourism are excellent opportunities to obtain a more balanced urban tourism approach. We also advocate for a **dedicated budget line for Sustainable Tourism** in the next Multi Annual Financial Framework.

We count on your support to protect the habitability, heritage, and vibrancy of our city centres. We are ready to work together and explore concrete ways to advance a more balanced approach to urban tourism. And we are willing to take our responsibility to help other cities in avoiding an unbalanced tourism model.



Thank you!

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