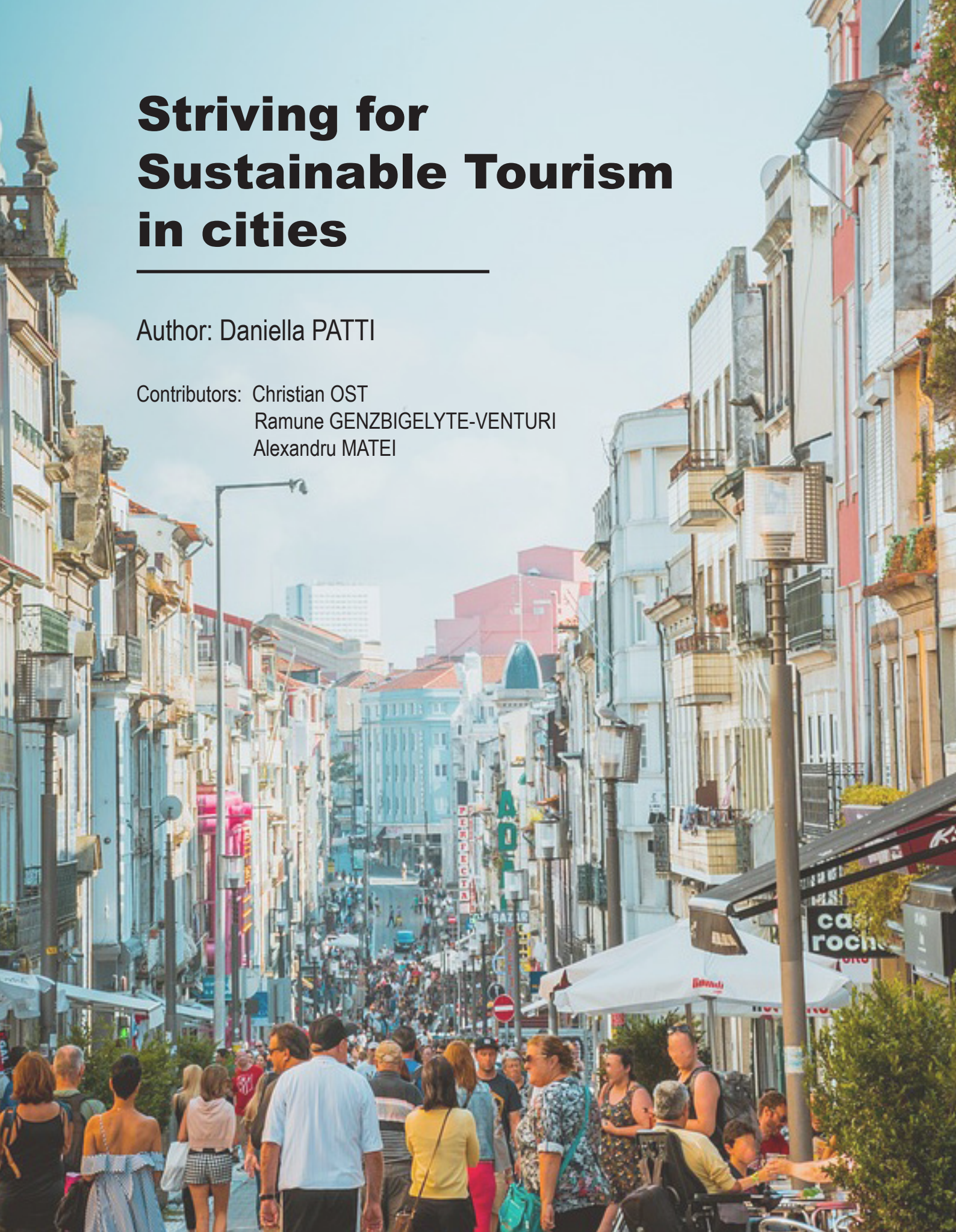


Striving for Sustainable Tourism in cities

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Co-funded by
the European Union

This publication is supported by the European Urban Initiative, which receives EU funding to provide support to the Urban Agenda for the EU on behalf of the European Commission for the period 2021-2027.



Contents

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Prepared: April 2024

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What Sustainable Tourism in cities stands for

Within the framework of the Urban Agenda for the EU on Sustainable Tourism Partnership, a series of events and workshops were carried out and this report aims at providing an overview to better identify the key elements to be addressed in the proposed action plan.

Sustainable tourism takes full account of its current and future **economic, social and environmental resources and impacts**, addressing the needs of visitors, the industry, the environment and host communities in an integrated way. Furthermore, it refers to the **environmental, economic, and socio-cultural aspects of tourism development**, and that a suitable balance must be established between these three dimensions to guarantee its long-term sustainability.¹

This means that sustainable tourism is developed and maintained in a specific territory in such a manner and at such a scale that it remains viable over a very long period while safeguarding the Earth's life-support system (and its planetary boundaries) and the social foundation of the territory on which the

welfare of current and future generations depends.² In fact, sustainable tourism maximises the benefits to local communities, minimises negative social or environmental impacts, and helps local people conserve fragile cultures and habitats or species.³

In order to achieve sustainable tourism in Europe, addressing culture is probably one of the best drivers, as the concentration of museums, cultural activities, tangible and intangible cultural heritage provides a powerful opportunity for local development. As cultural and heritage values are the perfect binder between European countries which share the same history, the same commitment to democracy and human rights allow tourism to become sustainable when people care about the preservation of their culture and heritage values.

The global importance of sustainable tourism in cities is expressed in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development⁴, which aims at devising and implementing by 2030 policies to promote sustainable tourism that creates jobs and promotes local culture and products (target 8.9).

At a European level, the Transition Pathway for Tourism⁵ was published in 2022. This plan, co-created with actors of the tourism ecosystem, identifies challenges, objectives and key actions

² Fennell, David A.; Cooper, Chris (2020). Sustainable Tourism: Principles, Contexts and Practices. Bristol, Blue Ridge Summit: Multilingual Matters. pp. 198, 234.

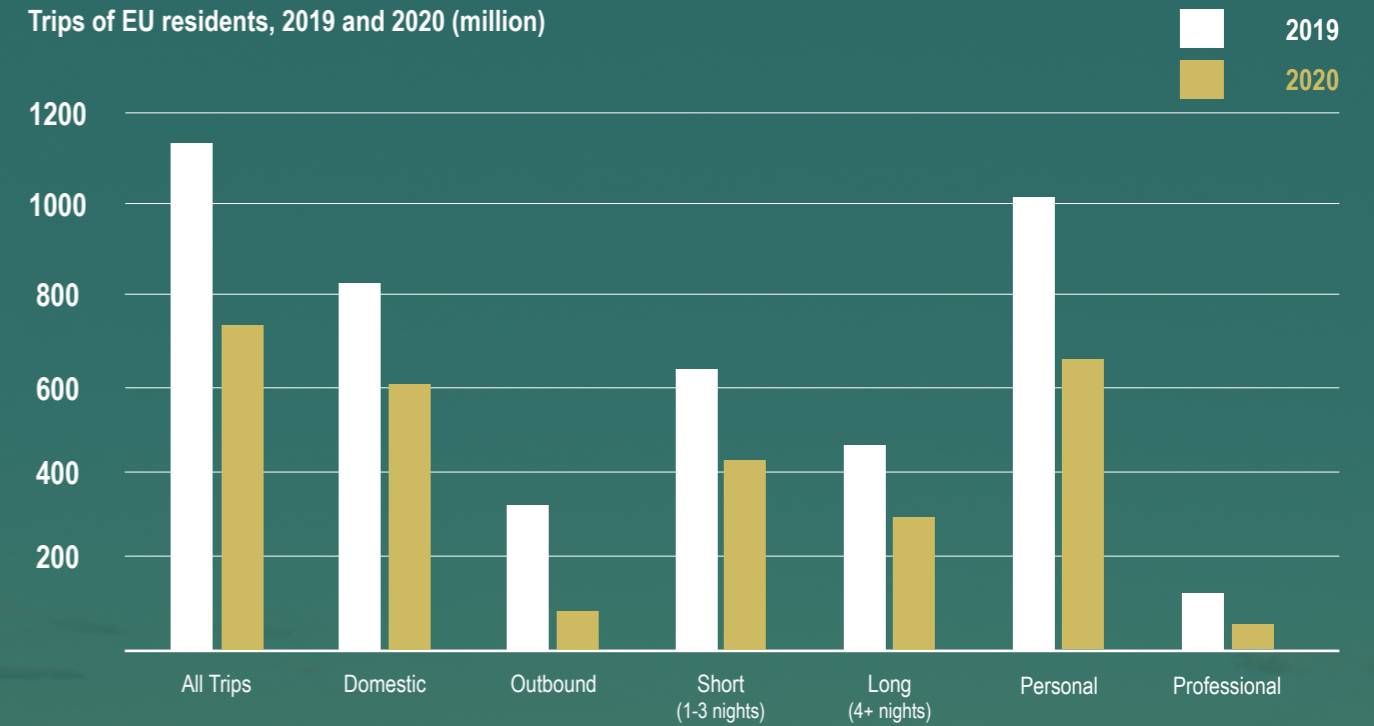
³ Han, Heesup (2021). "Consumer behavior and environmental sustainability in tourism and hospitality: a review of theories, concepts, and latest research". Journal of Sustainable Tourism. 29 (7): 1021–1042.

⁴ <https://www.unwto.org/tourism-in-2030-agenda>

⁵ https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/ip_22_850

¹ UNEP, UNWTO, 2005: 11-12. Making Tourism More Sustainable – A Guide for Policy Makers).

Trips of EU residents, 2019 and 2020 (million)



Source: Eurostat, https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=Tourism_statistics_-_impact_of_Covid-19_on_trips_of_Europeans#:~:text=While%20in%20the%20year%20before,article%20on%20Participation%20in%20tourism.

with concrete targets to achieve the green and digital transition and long-term resilience of the tourism ecosystem. Such efforts in the Transition Pathway in combination with the European Agenda for Tourism 2030⁶, with the Member States Council Conclusions, will support the pathway with a concrete multi-annual plan of actions, strengthened by; the collection of best practice in the pledges to the pathway.

In this context, the work carried out by the Sustainable Tourism Partnership of the Urban Agenda for the EU allows to develop key actions that address such challenges through a multi-

⁶ European Agenda for Tourism 2030: <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2022/12/01/new-european-agenda-for-tourism/>

stakeholder lens, developed by the diversity of its components ranging from cities, regions, NGOs and private sector as well as the European Commission itself. In this respects, a detailed analysis and suggestions for potential actions are provided by the Ex-Ante Assessment document for Sustainable Tourism carried out by European Urban Initiative (EUI) as a preparatory step in launching the Sustainable Tourism Partnership.⁷

As a result of the Covid-19 pandemic the fragility of the tourism industry has greatly emerged. Tourism is, in fact, one of the sectors most affected by the Covid-19 pandemic, where from a starting value of

⁷ <https://www.urbanagenda.urban-initiative.eu/sites/default/files/2022-10/EAA%20Report%20Sustainable%20Tourism.pdf>

€572 billion in 2019, the number of nights spent in tourist accommodation establishments in Europe decreased by 51 % between 2019 and 2020, only increasing by 28% in 2021, reaching nearly two thirds of the pre-pandemic levels.⁸ From 9.5% of the average contribution to the EU GDP and 22.6 million jobs in 2019, in 2020 EU tourism had lost 70% of revenues and up to 11 million jobs were at risk. Employment gap in tourism ecosystem is a big challenge, emphasized by the Covid crisis: today tourism ecosystem employs ca.19 mln people, but about 1 mln vacancies remain unfilled.

With the political, economic and environmental circumstances becoming more unstable over the past years, especially as a result of the Russia's war in Ukraine and the subsequent increase in energy prices, combined with the inflation, and extreme weather conditions, the recovery of the tourism sector remains fragile and has had to adapt and become more resilient to the fast evolving circumstances. Amongst the main changes have been the inbound tourism to Europe, stimulated also by an increase in the number of people that afford to travel, especially from Asia⁹, an increased attractiveness of Central and Eastern European countries and the void left by Russian tourists in many European cities. This situation developed in the face of a broader set of challenges, including seasonality, unequal geographical distribution, under- or over-utilisation of infrastructure, services and resources, green and digital transition and

8 Further information: https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=Tourism_statistics_-_impact_of_Covid-19_on_trips_of_Europeans#:~:text=While%20in%20the%20year%20before,article%20on%20Participation%20in%20tourism

9 Further data available in reports from European Travel Commission: <https://etc-corporate.org/news/europe-tourism-displays-a-strong-rebound-but-remains-uneven-across-the-regions/>

the fast changing expectations and demands of consumers.

Within this context of uncertainty, sustainable, innovative and resilient tourism may be a key opportunity to ensure a sustainable regional and local development, balancing the economic, social and environmental needs of local communities. Yet key attention points should go towards preserving micro, small and medium enterprises of the tourism sector, which make up 99% of tourism business fabric currently counting up to 2.3 million businesses employing an estimated 12.3 million people¹⁰, which in times of economic pressure have already had a strong contraction. For this reason, a financial support towards them would help preserving these businesses from being bought up by larger enterprises, which often are not locally based and therefore provide a limited added value despite the possibility of advancing investment capital. Furthermore, it necessary to provide businesses in the sector, whether hotels, restaurants or tour operators, with digital instruments and innovative marketing ideas to be visible on the market. The social and environmental impacts of tourism need to be carefully calibrated with local communities as this will allow for a more resilient approach to be developed. Tourism sector needs to find a balance and be beneficial both for the visitors but also for the locals.

Last but not least, reflections on the impacts tourism has on the local territories and communities, bring to light how vulnerable some destinations can become when they end up with a socio-economic structure dependent on tourism. This became obvious at a larger scale during the Covid-19 health pandemic. Therefore, any re-think

10 <https://www.europarl.europa.eu/factsheets/en/sheet/126/tourism#:~:text=The%20EU%27s%20tourism%20industry%20in.an%20estimated%2012.3%20million%20people>

of the tourism sector, at any scale, needs to remind local authorities that diversification of their social-economic activities are beneficial. Moreover, for those places facing problems, they should remember tourism cannot be a panacea for every issue.¹¹

The importance of developing a sustainable approach towards tourism derive from the awareness that whilst balanced tourism has a positive impact to the host communities, to the regional development, including job creation, cultural heritage preservation and interpretation, wildlife preservation, landscape restoration, the negative impacts to a destination include 'economic leakage'¹², damage to the natural environment and overcrowding to name a few.

Therefore, it can hereby be stated that Sustainable Tourism represents for urban territories an opportunity to increase European cultural values, through the exchange of knowledge and experiences as well as providing a sustainable economic and environmental asset for local communities to thrive.

The solution to achieve this goal has to be complex, including a new governance approach, involving multiple stakeholders at all levels. Despite the fact that the global political, economic and social conditions are currently not always fully supporting this vision, it is due time to take action to improve the outreach of Sustainable Tourism.

11 Policy Recommendations for the Integration of Cultural and Natural Heritage (CNH) within Research and Innovation Strategies for Smart Specialisation (RIS3/4) <https://www.ruritage.eu/wp-content/uploads/fv-contest/c1/Ruritage-Policy-Recommendations-www-pages.pdf?t=1641901585>

12 "Economic leakage, also known as "tourism leakage" is when revenue generated by tourism is lost to other countries' economies. Instead, that revenue "leaks" out to other economies. Tourism leakage happens when tourist dollars go toward businesses and companies that aren't local to the place being visited. In many countries around the world, foreign and international corporations may be the only entities that have the capital to invest in tourism facilities like hotels and resorts." <https://pinatravels.org/what-is-economic-leakage-in-tourism/#:~:text=What%20is%20economic%20leakage%20in%20tourism%3F%2%A0>

Perspectives and proposed solutions

Sustainable tourism requires an integrated approach towards **the creation of a balanced development**, where **competitiveness and resilience** is achieved through **green and digital transformation, including social needs, adequate skills and capacity** and takes into account **host communities' needs**.

As already outlined in the Orientation Paper¹³ (of the Sustainable Tourism UAEU Partnership), there is a need to ensure the well-being of residents, namely by providing infrastructure and services that benefit both residents and visitors as well as the need for action regarding skills¹⁴ in tourism, with a special focus on digital skills and on the up-skilling and re-

13 [https://www.urbanagenda.urban-initiative.eu/sites/default/files/2023-06/Sustainable%20Tourism Orientation%20Paper.pdf](https://www.urbanagenda.urban-initiative.eu/sites/default/files/2023-06/Sustainable%20Tourism%20Orientation%20Paper.pdf)

14 Have a look at the EUI Newsletter exploring the topic of Skills https://05g64.mjt.lu/nl3/EK2ovwXpLh2_Ht-1nFVkaA?m=AWcAADZ6U-cAAc3Gu-YAAKmbytAAAY-CrpGYAmw0TAB3nqgBIsnBAW91SmX-wRrS5H-s9K396r0gAcaT0&b=bf32d89c&e=b14c2f81&x=Rmz-f5AOYYiJZZRuPKct1dhMyNwu0lpRcDzpb_jxqRi8

skilling¹⁵ on sustainability.

A key focus within the Orientation Paper is provided by three key elements: environment, development and unbalanced growth.



The suggested solutions hereby presented are the result of a workshop session carried out by the Urban Agenda for EU Partnership on Sustainable Tourism during the European Week of Cities and Regions, where a stakeholder workshop¹⁶ was carried out to discuss the proposed actions and enrich perspectives.

In particular, key note speeches were provided by Prof. Christian Ost¹⁷ and Ramune Genazbigelyte Venturi.¹⁸ Prof. Ost highlighted the importance in terms of environmental impact of the tourism industry, suggesting the increase of circular economy for adaptive reuse of cultural heritage with

15 “Upskilling definition: When an employee undertakes learning to expand their existing skill set, that learning is known as upskilling. These additional skills enhance the worker’s performance in their current role, potentially advancing them along their career path.
Reskilling definition: Employee reskilling involves learning new skills outside of the worker’s existing skillset. These skills are often closely adjacent to their current function, but may sometimes be geared toward a different path entirely.” <https://learning.linkedin.com/resources/upskilling-and-reskilling/upskilling-reskilling>

16 Nourishing Europe’s Values with Sustainable Tourism <https://regions-and-cities.europa.eu/programme/2023/sessions/5627>

17 Professor ICHEC Brussels Management School Environment – environmental impact of the tourism industry

18 Tourism and Textiles Unit, DG GROW of the European Commission

innovative financing, governance, and sustainable business models, examples from such an approach may be found in the CLIC¹⁹ and Open Heritage²⁰ project.

In respects to the contribution of tourism to urban sociocultural and economic development, particular attention may be posed towards placemaking and urban resilience through a portfolio of cultural capital, diversification of assets, and integration in an economic landscape, making reference to the UNESCO recommendation on Historic urban landscape²¹.

Finally, to counteract the unbalanced growth deriving from the congestion of tourism flows in cities, it is fundamental to reconsider tourism, empowering local entrepreneurship and capacity-building as well as enhancing visitor’s experience with new technologies, such as in the case of the BE.CULTOUR project²².

Ramune Genazbigelyte Venturi highlighted how the Transition Pathway for Tourism²³, published in 2022, is a collaborative result highlighting shared

19 CLIC was a project whose overarching goal is to identify evaluation tools to test, implement, validate and share innovative “circular” financing, business and governance models for systemic adaptive reuse of cultural heritage and landscape: www.clicproject.eu

20 Open Heritage was a project funded by the EU Commission under the Horizon 2020 framework, which identified governance and financial models for community-driven adaptive reuse of heritage: <http://openheritage.eu>

21 <https://whc.unesco.org/en/hul/>

22 The BE.CULTOUR approach is to think out of the box to reconsider tourism, empower stakeholders and build capacity on subject: <https://becultour.eu>

23 https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/ip_22_850

goals and actions, an effort to share information and good practice amongst tourism stakeholders. The Transition Pathway aims at implementing a wide range of measures, especially connected towards investing in circularity to improve energy and water use efficiency, reduce waste and pollution, and at the same time to better meet the increasing demand for sustainable tourism, as well as enhancing data sharing practices to allow for new innovative tourism services and improve the sustainable management of destinations. Finally, the pathway aims at investing in skills to ensure the availability of qualified workforce and attractive careers in the ecosystem.

Based on these discussions, we hereby identify a number of transversal elements that are fundamental for addressing priorities towards Sustainable Tourism, especially taking into account environmental and digital transition, which are fundamental lenses to look at change in the tourism sector and identify potential solutions to the current challenges.

Diversifying tourism offer in time and space

Many destinations are affected by the phenomenon of seasonality, entailing high fluctuations that bring overcrowding, high prices, inadequate infrastructure and overwhelmed services in peak seasons, as well as a lack of services and job opportunities in low seasons.

Therefore a first key factor is understanding the main characteristics of this phenomenon, which can be natural, related climate conditions, or institutional, such as public and school holidays, and therefore predictable and possibly counterbalanced through a thorough and regular analysis of data.

A key action towards seasonality is addressing post-pandemic changes in tourism markets by providing the diversification of tourism products, and extending the geographic outreach of the tourism offer, especially according to seasonality.

For this, the key elements are **time (when?)**, **space (where?)** and **type of activities (what?)**²⁴.

In terms of time, this means planning all year around, allowing to redistribute the flows throughout the months and therefore reducing seasonality.

²⁴ JRC, 2023, <https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/6185be71-faab-11ed-a05c-01aa75ed71a1/language-en>

There is also an increasing attention posed towards all days of the week and the time planning between day and night tourism, therefore addressing night economy. Also extending the stay, targeting return tourists is a potential solution for more sustainable tourism. In terms of space, this means the use of territory at different scales, the use of public spaces and carefully planning areas for touristic use. This will allow to avoid the emergence of unsustainable crowds of visitors and redistribution of the pedestrian and motorised traffic.

The diversification of the activities allows to expand the tourism offer and generate added value from more local values by activating different existing assets that cater to a wider audience.

Approximately 1.3 billion people, about 16% of the global population, is currently experience significant

Bruxelles, Belgium

To manage tourist flows more sustainably, the tourism board of the city promotes 'MIXITY walks' to encourage visitors to explore all 16 districts of Bruxelles. The programme was complemented by promotional campaigns showing the diverse offerings of different neighbourhoods, such as shopping, food, history, and a bike map with eight cycling routes that encourages visitors to discover the region's hidden gems.

Read more: <https://visit.brussels/en/lists/mixity-walks-discover-brussels-neighbourhoods>

Tallin, Estonia

In 2017 the city carried out a campaign with Lonely Planet to promote off season tourism in winter. As a result, more than 60,000 people visited the pages of Tallinn and Estonia during this campaign and more than 3 million users were reached through social media. The campaign succeeded in promoting a number of events, such as the Black Nights Film Festival and the Tallinn Music Week as well as the Christmas fair in the Town Hall Square of Tallinn to give tourists a reason to visit the city in the low season.

Read more: <https://www.tallinn.ee/eng/investor/Uudis-VisitTallinn-s-Lonely-Planet-campaign-ranked-second-best-tourism-campaign-of-the-year>

Florence, Italy

The FeelFlorence APP as best practice of IT tools based on data analysis to balance tourist flows and improve the user experience can be taken as inspiration. FeelFlorence is an innovative application that allow tourists and residents to better enjoy the city in a more sustainable way and to better manage tourist/city users flows through push notifications.

Feel Florence suggests unusual itineraries in the city, in the neighbourhoods and in the metropolitan area, to bring tourists closer to local experiences and to get to know the city and its typical features better, promoting a form of sustainable cultural tourism and offering also a tool to stay updated on events and initiatives. In light of the Covid-19 safety measures, this APP, initially designed to respond to the challenge of overcrowded destinations, takes on particular importance in terms of managing flows in relation to health needs and maintaining social distancing.

Read more: https://ec.europa.eu/futurium/en/system/files/ged/master_final_action_plan_culture_cultural_heritage_v2.pdf

London, United Kingdom

The Evening and Night-time Economy Strategy, Vision and Action Plan provides an ambitious, integrated, and deliverable plan for this iconic part of the West End of London between the hours of 6pm and 6am. It sets out how the area can meet its full potential and become more inclusive, safe, accessible, attractive, and dynamic for those who work, visit, live, invest and run businesses here.

Read more: <https://holba.london/wp-content/uploads/2023/04/ENTE-ACTION-PLAN-04.04.23.pdf>



Tourism for all

Approximately 1.3 billion people, about 16% of the global population, is currently experience significant disability according to the WHO²⁵, yet persons with disabilities still face considerable barriers. These include inaccessible sites, infrastructure, services and products, and discriminatory practices, amongst other challenges. Therefore accessibility for all to tourism facilities, products, and services should be a central part of any sustainable tourism policy. It is, in fact, also a legal obligation, given that all Member States and the EU are state parties of the United Nations Convention of the Rights of the Persons with Disabilities.²⁶ Not only is this a human rights matter, but also a relevant opportunity to diversify business offers and tap into a huge market potential.

The concept of “Accessible Tourism”²⁷ refers to the prevention and elimination of barriers, including through the adaptation of environments and of tourism products and services so as to enable access, use and enjoyment by all users on an equal basis, under the principles of Universal Design²⁸. “Accessible Tourism” is tourism and travel that is accessible to all people, with disabilities

25 World Health Organization (WHO, 2023): <https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/disability-and-health>

26 United Nations Convention of the Rights of the Persons with Disabilities: <https://www.un.org/disabilities/documents/convention/convoptprot-e.pdf>

27 https://single-market-economy.ec.europa.eu/sec-tors/tourism/eu-funding-and-businesses/funded-projects/accessible-tourism_en

28 Publication by the World Tourism Organisation on Accessible Tourism: <https://webunwto.s3-eu-west-1.amazonaws.com/2019-08/turismoaccessiblewebenok.pdf>

or not, including those with mobility, hearing, sight, cognitive, or intellectual and psychosocial disabilities, older persons and those with temporary disabilities”²⁹.

Accessibility is a wide concept that encompasses many dimensions from the physical dimension to transport, information and communication and access to services and products. Ensuring that destinations and tourism activity remains barrier free for travellers and visitors regardless of age, cultural background or disability, requires continuous efforts on different levels and collaboration amongst all relevant stakeholders.

Therefore it is fundamental to address first of all the access to services: providing information on accessible facilities, services, equipment rentals and tourist attractions, ensuring the possibility of booking services and related websites, as well as training professional staff to be capable of informing and advising about accessibility issues. This includes also services that are multilingual and digitally available in accessible formats. Another issue is related to the available infrastructure, which must be barrier free especially in accessible airports and transfer facilities and services, as well as in streets, transport services and accessible hotel rooms, restaurants, shops, toilets and public places.

Finally an increased awareness and communication about sustainable tourism is fundamental, as reviews of the tourist segment and stories do encourage travel.

29 Takayama Declaration - Appendix, UNESCAP, 2009: http://www.accessibletourism.org/resources/takayama_declaration_top-e-fin_171209.pdf



Vilnius, Lithuania

Experience Vilnius Beyond Sight campaign calls attention to accessible tourism. The video invites sighted people to step into the shoes of blind people living in our community and experience the city from their perspective. It is a challenge for everyone with sight, to stop relying on sight, to ‘turn it off’ and get to know the city without it. It can be so timid, it is sight and visual experiences that we rely on the most, but it is liberating. The campaign gives voice to the often overlooked community of the blind or partially sighted. Invites to dialogue, how much we can learn from each other. It invites the blind to share their experiences, and the sighted to listen. The video invites sighted people to step into the shoes of blind people living in our community and experience the city from their perspective. It is a challenge for everyone with sight, to stop relying on sight, to ‘turn it off’ and get to know the city without it. It can be so timid, it is sight and visual experiences that we rely on the most, but it is liberating. The campaign gives voice to the often overlooked community of the blind or partially sighted. Invites to dialogue, how much we can learn from each other. It invites the blind to share their experiences, and the sighted to listen.

Read more: https://ec.europa.eu/futurium/en/system/files/ged/master_final_action_plan_culture_cultural_heritage_v2.pdf



Bordeaux, France

Bordeaux Tourism and Handicap certified routes are accessible for those with mobility or hearing disabilities, and four map displays for the visually impaired have been installed. The Bordeaux Tourist Office has also developed a dedicated guide for those with disabilities and contains all the services available to people with reduced mobility. The guide is regularly updated, considering the feedback and needs of users. Additionally, the ‘City and Handicap’ task force has helped to make major cultural events such as the Bordeaux Wine Festival and the Bordeaux River Festival accessible for visitors with special needs.

Read more: <https://www.bordeaux-tourism.co.uk/accessibility>



Athens, Greece

In 2020 Athens implemented an initiative called “**The Great Walk of Athens**” that transformed streets into walking and biking paths in areas heavily utilised by cars. The pilot phase of a long-term redevelopment program, the Grand Walk generated wide discussion about urban infrastructure as a public good. Helping residents participate in the design of public spaces helps raise awareness of streets that need to serve many different purposes and populations with differing privileges and abilities.

Read more: <https://news.gtp.gr/2020/07/17/grand-walk-of-athens-project-enhance-citys-tourism-identity/>



Venice, Italy

The city introduced an itinerary without barriers to explore and experience Venice specifically designed for wheelchair users. These itineraries take the visitor throughout the city along specifically designed and accessible routes for wheelchair users offer suggestions on visiting the city despite the obstacles that it's the city with all its bridges entail. These routes and itineraries have been designed by the Office for the Elimination of Architectural Barriers of the Municipality of Venice and have been created in collaboration with resident with limited mobility living in the city.

Read more: <https://holba.london/wp-content/uploads/2023/04/ENTE-ACTION-PLAN-04.04.23.pdf>

Short-term rentals

Over the past ten years there has been an increase in the use of digital platforms in the tourism sector, such as Booking.com or Airbnb, creating an acceleration of international and domestic tourists in many cities. In 2022, almost 597 million nights were booked via collaborative economy platforms – Paris was the most popular city.³⁰ Despite the sector started as a niche, today digital platforms have become the most common option for tourists, reason why there is a wide consensus amongst experts and policymakers that the rapid expansion of this industry has decisively contributed to exacerbating the housing crisis in Europe and elsewhere. As part of the Urban Agenda for the EU on Culture and Cultural Heritage partnership³¹, an action was pursued as a study by URBACT³² on the legal bottlenecks in terms of EU regulation and to deliver the findings of the study conducted with a selected sample of cities of varying sizes across Europe. In doing so, the study outlines potential perspectives for a sustainable management of tourism and of short-term holiday rental platforms more specifically.

An important advancement in the topic has been that in November 2023 the Council and the European Parliament have reached a provisional agreement on a draft regulation on data collection

³⁰ [Short-stay accommodation offered via online collaborative economy platforms - Statistics Explained \(europa.eu\)](#)

³¹ <https://www.urbanagenda.urban-initiative.eu/partnerships/culture-heritage>

³² Culture and Cultural Heritage Thematic Partnership's Action Plans, Action 1 on "Regulating short-term rental platform in cities": https://urbact.eu/sites/default/files/2023-03/short-term-rental-study_may-2022.pdf

and sharing for short-term accommodation rental services.³³ This proposal for a regulation aims at enhancing transparency in the field of short-term accommodation rentals and helping public authorities regulate this increasingly important part of the tourism sector.³⁴

Finally, **a key element is the involvement of local communities in engaging to create awareness as well as to provide solutions locally, which will allow the local context to be more resilient towards aggressive tourism.**

³³ <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2023/11/16/tourism-council-and-parliament-reach-a-deal-to-bring-more-transparency-to-short-term-accommodation-rentals/>

³⁴ <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2023/11/16/tourism-council-and-parliament-reach-a-deal-to-bring-more-transparency-to-short-term-accommodation-rentals/>



Amsterdam, The Netherlands

The Amsterdam Municipality's Housing Department enforces its tourism regulations by scraping data from various platforms to gain a better understanding of the impact of these platforms on housing. In fact, Amsterdam was the first municipality to make an agreement with Airbnb to limit their activities to 60 days per year for each available apartment. In cooperation with the municipality, Fairbnb, a spinoff of the Waag Institute has been working on a fair vacation rental platform based on a commons-oriented sharing system that helps channeling tourism revenues into local economies and community values.

Read more: <https://urbact.eu/articles/digital-cities-amsterdams-ecosystem-cooperation>



Poveriglia, Italy

The association Poveglia per Tutti has been fighting to reclaim Poveglia, one of the many islands scattered across the Venetian lagoon, and make it a public place for the Venetian community to enjoy rather than yet another tourist resort. Historically, resident Venetians have always seen the southern lagoon as some sort of an urban park. In the past 15-20 years, at least 5 of the 6 islands forming the small archipelago lying behind Giudecca have been privatised. Step by step, public spaces started to disappear. The last one is Poveglia, which is why there is so much local attention towards it.

Read more: <https://cooperativecity.org/2019/07/23/protecting-common-assets-from-privatisation-poveglia-per-tutti-in-venice/>

Socially responsible tourism

Socially responsible tourism means travellers use their money both directly and indirectly, as a tool for conservation, poverty alleviation, and economic support, respecting local people and the local environment in each place they visit.

In order to minimise negative economic, environmental and social impact it is necessary to generate greater social and economic benefits for local people and enhance the well-being of host communities, improve working conditions and access to the industry. Special attention should be paid towards vulnerable groups due to their gender, racial or ethnic origin, religion or belief, disability, age or sexual orientation, economic background or place of residence, allowing them to access the labour market as a means of empowerment. This approach also entails positive contributions to the conservation of natural and cultural heritage, to the maintenance of the world's diversity as well as providing more enjoyable experiences for tourists through more meaningful connections with local people, and a greater understanding of local cultural, social and environmental issues.

The cultural awareness around sustainable tourism is still not very widespread, as people travelling are not always aware of the impact on the cities they visit. In fact, the choice for accommodation can have an impact on the local housing and labour market. In the past years there has been an increase in hotels and restaurants catering for tourists through a socially sustainable scheme, which creates local jobs, trains vulnerable people or creates social welfare services or cultural events, while not stressing the local housing market.

For this reason the role of **social economy and social innovation** in sustainable tourism allow to ensure **greater participation of local communities, improve access to employment and training, reinvest profits into the local economy, and empower groups to tell their own story.**

Athens, Greece

The Welcommon Hostel is a former refugee shelter turned into a hub for social inclusion and environmental education in Athens. Run by the social cooperative Anemos Ananeosis, Welcommon uses tourism revenues to invest in social activities. The highest floors of the building are used as a hostel while the lower floors have a lot of space available for workshops, conferences and events. Welcommon promotes social innovation, greenovation and circular economy, supporting the social inclusion of refugees, news distribution, and climate protection.

Read more: <https://cooperativecity.org/2019/06/10/welcommon-hostel-sustainable-tourism-and-social-cultural-activities-for-the-promotion-of-social-innovation/>

In Our Shoes Walking Tours in Dublin, Ireland

In Our Shoes Walking Tours is an award-winning walking tour social enterprise, training local unemployed people within Dublin 8 as walking tour guides - in one of Ireland's most visited parts of Dublin. The guides lead guests off the beaten track, through local history & folklore, across famous & hidden landmarks and through high streets & back laneways. The free annual training courses help local community members to become social history walking guides of their local community.

Read more: <https://inourshoeswalkingtours.ie/>

Meet the Locals

The platform Meet the Locals is powered by the West Sweden Tourism Board and aims to contribute to sustainable and meaningful visits in the territory, by helping visitors meet and interact with local citizens. People from the area can propose an experience for which visitors can contact them. These range from short hikes, cycling, horse-drawn carriage tours, garden exploration, music listening to simply tea drinking. Although the experience can involve some costs, the aim is not the transform these in a business but to facilitate positive contact between locals and visitors.

Read more: <https://meetthelocals.se/en/locals/>

Lisbon, Portugal

Largo Residencias is a cooperative hotel and hostel that employs people who come from chronic poverty and serves as a reference point for cultural events and the discussion about the future of the Intendente neighbourhood.

Largo Residencias is a hotel, hostel and artist-in-residence and café in Lisbon's fast-changing Intendente neighbourhood. Run by a cooperative, Largo aims at connecting the area's past and future: it serves as a community hub for many of the area's residents and initiatives, and develops projects to support the cultural and social inclusion of the neighbourhood's precarious inhabitants. The organisation also employs people who come from chronic poverty and serves as a reference point for cultural events and the discussion about the future of the Intendente neighbourhood.

Read more: <https://cooperativecity.org/2017/08/04/largo-residencias/>



To conclude, some transversal remarks are connected to the awareness and community based dimensions around sustainable tourism. In fact, there is an issue concerning **the impact** of tourism especially in relation to **the behaviour of people**, for which the development of **climate action campaigns and communication strategies** may be particularly relevant.

Furthermore, the development of **community engagement** especially connected to the **involvement of local citizens** may be valuable in order to create a local awareness and pride of the cultural and touristic values.

For example, the Ecomuseo Casilino³⁵ is an open-air, community-conceived museum in Eastern Rome, operating beyond the standard notion of a walled institution and committed to collect cultural resources, based on what local communities consider as such.

Next Steps

The detailed Integrated Action Plan of the Urban Agenda for the EU on Sustainable Tourism Partnership will be published by the end of 2024, providing solutions and explaining actions to be taken to implement a sustainable approach towards tourism in urban territories. If you are a stakeholder working in the sector, a City or Regional Authority or simply a committed European citizen who cares about sustainable tourism, we encourage you to offer your feedback during the consultation period, which will be launched in the first part of 2024 on the official channels.³⁶

Meanwhile feel free to reach out to the partnership coordinators and exchange knowledge and insights!

³⁵ <https://cooperativecity.org/2019/04/18/ecomuseo-casilino-an-open-air-museum-in-the-eastern-periphery-of-rome/>

³⁶ UAEU website: <https://www.urbanagenda.urban-initiative.eu/urban-agenda-eu>



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