**Follow up to the European Parliament non-legislative resolution on establishing an EU strategy for sustainable tourism**

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**3. Date of adoption of the resolution:** 25 March 2021

**4. Competent Parliamentary Committee:** Committee on Transport and Tourism

(TRAN)

**5. Brief analysis/ assessment of the resolution and requests made in it:**

The resolution proposes an establishment of an EU strategy for sustainable tourism, in particular considering significant impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on the tourism ecosystem, the urgency to recover a more resilient tourism ecosystem and in view of the long- term goals of digital and green transition and the new reality. The resolution calls on the Commission to act on a great number of issues, linking several of them to other EU policies.

Four main directions are proposed towards establishing an EU strategy for sustainable tourism: (1) rebuilding the industry with pandemic response plans; (2) refocusing governance policy within the framework of the Union; (3) strengthening industry initiatives for sustainable, responsible and smart tourism; (4) planning the future of the industry and the changes that will take place on the demand side and that may require adaptation of the offering. Among the notable long-term goals proposed, are the establishment of an EU Tourism Agency and a European Tourism Union aiming at coherent EU actions for tourism.

**6. Response to the requests and overview of the action taken, or intended to be taken, by the Commission:**

*N.B. Presentation follows the order of the paragraphs of the resolution. When relevant, paragraphs are grouped together.*

The resolution calls on the Commission to:

Under sub-heading ***Rebuild: COVID-19 impact response plans* (paragraphs 1-14)**

*(1) fully acknowledge the importance of the tourism industry, to fully integrate it into European and national development plans, to enhance the quality of its offer, to make it more sustainable and accessible for all, and to launch long-overdue public and private investment in the digitalisation and overall modernisation of the sector;*

The Commission recognizes the importance of tourism for the EU economy, employment, regional and social cohesion by identifying the tourism ecosystem in the EU Industrial Strategy as one of the 14 ecosystems1, which also identifies a transition pathway for tourism as an essential collaborative tool for the transformation; by mobilising emergency support to tourism during the pandemic crisis (business liquidity, preserving employment, facilitating a

1 <https://ec.europa.eu/info/strategy/priorities-2019-2024/europe-fit-digital-age/european-industrial-strategy_en>

coordinated approach across the EU on travel restrictions, health and safety measures2) and through unprecedented support for the inclusive and sustainable recovery, resilience and transformation of the ecosystem along green and digital pathway (NextGenerationEU and the Multiannual Financial Framework 2021-2027).

*(3) calls for the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (ECDC) to monitor and continue to publish, in a timely manner, the colour coded map of Union countries and regions, including islands – where sufficient information is available – with a view to offering travellers and businesses a coordinated and efficient response;*

The ECDC will continue to publish and regularly update the colour-coded map of EU Member States, based on national data.

*(5) develop as a matter of priority a common vaccination certificate and a system of mutual recognition of vaccination procedures for medical purposes, which should be rolled out in parallel with the distribution of vaccines, while preserving individuals’ rights to privacy and data protection*;

On 14 June 2021, the Parliament and the Council adopted Regulation (EU) 2021/953 establishing the EU Digital COVID Certificate3. This regulation aims to facilitate free movement within the EU during the COVID-19 pandemic by establishing a common framework for the issuance, verification and acceptance of interoperable certificates on COVID-19 vaccination, testing and recovery. This allows EU citizens exercising their right to free movement to demonstrate that they fulfil public health requirements imposed by the Member State of destination. The regulation also aims to ensure that restrictions of free movement currently in place to limit the spread of COVID-19 can be lifted in a coordinated manner. Apart from vaccination certificates, the “EU Digital COVID Certificate” also covers documents certifying a negative test result for SARS-CoV-2 infection and documents certifying that the person concerned has recovered from a previous infection. This allows persons who are not vaccinated to benefit from such an interoperable framework as well, facilitating their free movement.

*(6) present a mobile application (ref. Re-open EU) in order to better disseminate the information, and to continue providing real-time information on the status of borders and on transport and tourism services available in EU countries, including information on public health and safety measures and other relevant information;*

The Commission has already developed a mobile application for its Re-Open EU-portal which is providing real-time information on the status of borders and on transport and tourism services available in EU countries, including information on public health and safety measures and other relevant information. The Re-Open EU mobile app is available in both Google Play and Apple App Store since December 2020. The Commission intends to operate both the portal and the app as long as the pandemic is ongoing.

*(7) launch a dedicated EU communication campaign on travel and tourism through an ‘EU Tourism Brand’ aimed at promoting EU travel and rebuilding citizens’ confidence in travel and tourism during COVID-19*;

2 Coronavirus Response Investment Initiative (CRII), Support to mitigate Unemployment Risks in an Emergency (SURE), Temporary State Aid framework, as well as supporting sustainable and inclusive recovery under the NextGenerationEU (including REACT EU) and Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF) 2021-2027.

3 <http://data.europa.eu/eli/reg/2021/953/oj>

In order to support the restart of the EU tourism ecosystem, the EU co-funded various campaigns promoting Europe as a safe destination. These campaigns are developed and implemented by the European Travel Commission (ETC) thanks to an EU ad hoc grant. The first campaign focused on intra-EU tourism ahead of the summer 2020, with the support of Euronews. A new general interest campaign called ‘Open-up to Europe’ is scheduled for end May 2021, with the support of 32 destinations (at national, region and city level) and travel brands. Other campaigns promoting Destination Europe are conducted on long haul markets in order to keep it on the minds of North Americans and Chinese travellers in particular. The European Year of Rail 2021 is also an opportunity to focus on this sustainable, specific travel mode to promote sustainable EU destinations.

*(8) introduce a common colour coding system and common criteria for travel to third countries through mutual recognition of comparable protective measures against COVID-19 across all modes of travel, but above all in the aviation and maritime sectors*;

The Council adopted on 30 June 2020, on a proposal by the Commission, the Council Recommendation (EU) 2020/912 on the temporary restriction on non-essential travel into the EU and the possible lifting of such restriction. It was amended on 20 May 2021 by Council Recommendation (EU) 2021/816. The latest revision introduced three major changes: (i) where Member States accept proof of vaccination in order to waive travel restrictions to limit the spread of COVID-19, Member States should in principle lift the temporary restriction on non-essential travel to the EU with regard to travellers from third countries who are fully vaccinated (at least 14 days before arrival) with a vaccine approved by the EU or WHO to enter the EU for non-essential travel, taking into account, on a case-by-case basis, reciprocity granted to the EU+ area; (ii) the 14-day notification rate threshold for third countries to be included in Annex I was raised to 75 cases per 100.000 population; and (iii) the emergency brake was established for Member States to be able to take action quickly in the light of new variants. In addition, the ECDC is to provide a regular mapping of variants in third countries. While not working with a colour-system, the recommendation sets out clear and objective criteria and thresholds to decide for which third countries the current restriction on non- essential travel into the EU should be lifted. These third countries are included in Annex I of the Council Recommendation. This list is reviewed by the Council every two weeks, and if need be amended, to take into account the epidemiological developments in these countries.

*(8) establish an early alert system that warns tourists through new technologies in a user- friendly way about any potential health threats in a third country destination;*

This information is monitored and provided to citizens through Member State Government portals, normally maintained by the relevant Ministries of Foreign Affairs. There are currently no plans to duplicate this work at EU level.

*(9) introduce an EU hygiene certification seal, which should be developed jointly by the ECDC and the Member States and should certify touristic activities, ensuring compliance with minimum hygiene standards for the prevention and control of the COVID-19 virus and other possible infections;*

The Commission has invited the European Committee for Standardisation (CEN) to prepare a standardisation document as a basis for health and safety protocols for the hospitality sector. It is based on a protocol prepared at the International Standardisation Union (ISO) and is complemented with a visual identity, as well as other additions in a CEN Workshop Agreement (CWA). It was published in mid May 2021. The Commission is already in close cooperation with Member States in order to support implementation with the help of national administrations.

*(10) take specific action in relation to European regions in which tourism accounts for a more substantial share of their GDP as well as to islands and outermost regions*; *stresses, in this context, that financial support from EU Funds distributed in the Member States in connection with the COVID-19 pandemic is not always reaching those tourism operators who are in urgent need of direct funding in order to continue and maintain their economic activities;*

Actions and investments in the area of tourism are eligible for EU support under the Cohesion policy Funds (e.g. the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF)) and can be financed under the national recovery and resilience plans implementing the Recovery and Resilience Facility. The legal basis for these Funds set the rules for the support of economic operators executed by the Member States.

*(11) encourage Member States to temporarily set reduced VAT rates on travel and tourism services, accompanied by a special stimulus package for all micro enterprises and SMEs for the 2020-2024 period, in order to minimise the number of bankruptcies and preserve jobs and workers’ rights in the European tourism industry, while utilising investments to foster the transition towards a more digital and sustainable tourism ecosystem*;

REACT-EU extends the crisis-response and crisis-repair measures delivered through the coronavirus response investment initiative (CRII) and the coronavirus response investment initiative plus (CRII+), and constitutes a bridge to the long-term recovery plan. The programme supports investment projects that foster crisis-repair capacities and contribute to a green, digital and resilient recovery of the economy, including support for maintaining jobs, short-time work schemes and support for the self-employed. It can also support job creation and youth employment measures, healthcare systems and the provision of working capital and investment support for small and medium-sized enterprises.

Support for tourism SMEs (small and medium sized enterprises) transition to green and digital path is available under several EU programmes. In order to facilitate the access to EU funding for tourism, the online “Guide on EU funding for tourism” is operational since May 20214.

Moreover, under EU VAT rules, the Member States have the possibility to apply reduced rates (no less than 5%) to specific goods or services, including certain hospitality and other tourism-related services. Hence, the Member States are already able to apply what they consider as the most appropriate VAT (Value Added Tax) rates in support of the tourism sector. Indeed, some Member States have decided to reduce the VAT rate for such services for a limited period of time, to help companies restoring their financial position after a year with very low revenues.

*(13) implement the adopted preparatory action ‘a European crisis management mechanism for tourism’, jointly with Parliament, with a view to being ready to cope with future crises to help tourist destinations establish crisis prevention plans, contingency measures and preparedness plans and actions*;

Already in the initial implementability assessment communicated to the Parliament last spring, the Commission did not find it possible to establish a crisis management mechanism with a means of a preparatory action. There are crisis management structures, horizontal ones, already in place, such as the integrated political crisis response (IPCR) at EU level. Therefore, the Commission has proposed to allocate the budget of this preparatory action to the Single Market Programme, where the funds will be used to support the resilience of EU tourism

4 <https://ec.europa.eu/growth/sectors/tourism/funding-guide_en>

ecosystem. The Commission intends to map tourism governance in response to the COVID-

19 pandemic, to set up a platform for technical assistance to destinations to strengthen their governance for crisis preparedness and management. With part of the budget we will reinforce the grant support to tourism SMEs, building their capacities to carry out the green and digital transition.

*(14) regularly inform and cooperate with Parliament about the preparatory work and progress made in the development of pilot projects and preparatory actions and to keep the parliamentary committee responsible and the MEPs who initiated the projects involved in the process;*

The Commission reports on the progress made in the development of pilot projects and preparatory actions both in writing and in the context of the regular exchange of views upon invitation of the Parliament, in particular the TRAN Committee.

Under sub-heading ***Refocus: governance policy within the Union framework***

**(paragraphs 15-23)**

*(15) establish a new governance model between the EU Institutions, strengthening the organisational, financial and human resources structure by setting up a dedicated Directorate dealing specifically with tourism, backed by adequate funding, with a view to taking an integrated and efficient approach to tourism, supporting the relaunch of tourism in European regions and helping businesses to implement the measures needed to achieve key objectives in the areas of sustainability and innovation, and increasing their competitiveness and attractiveness*;

The Commission service responsible for Internal Market, Industry, Entrepreneurship and SMEs (DG GROW) has a directorate dedicated to tourism and the proximity ecosystem. The Commission implements EU policies in synergy and coherence across its services and departments. It supports the idea of close cooperation among the EU Institutions in particular on the competitiveness and twin green and digital transition of the tourism ecosystem.

*(17) a discussion to be initiated at the Conference on the Future of Europe on helping tourism to become a shared competence of the EU, rather than a complementary competence as is currently the case; calls on the Commission, therefore, to start making full use of the Treaties to develop a comprehensive European tourism policy towards the creation of the European Tourism Union*;

The Commission expects the Conference on the Future of Europe to be an important forum for debate on the future of the European economy, including tourism and other industrial ecosystems.

*(19) create an EU mechanism to monitor the provision of support to micro enterprises and SMEs, focusing on liquidity and delivering EU added value and transparency in order to increase the ability of those enterprises to access and use EU funds to facilitate the modernisation and implementation of innovative and sustainable projects, ensuring accountability and administrative simplification;*

(See paragraph 11 on “Guide on EU funding for tourism”)

With the updated EU Industrial Strategy, the Commission has published a first Annual Single Market Report5, which analyses the resilience of the Single Market. It looks at the impact of the pandemic and the public policy measures to counteract it, on the functioning of the Single Market and on European companies, including SMEs. The report also takes a detailed look at

5 <https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/default/files/swd-annual-single-market-report-2021_en.pdf>

the impact of the crisis across 14 industrial ecosystems. It shows that the impact of the crisis has been uneven among ecosystems - with tourism, mobility, textiles and cultural & creative ecosystems hardest hit.

*(20) present an action plan in 2021 and to develop, in a timely manner, an EU strategy for sustainable and strategic tourism aligned with the Digital Agenda, the Green Deal and the UN Sustainable Development Goals, replacing the strategy from 2010, in order to maintain Europe’s standing as a leading destination; the EP recalls that in drawing up this strategy there must be a consultation of professionals in the tourism sector*;

In the update of the New Industrial Strategy6 the Commission announced the co-creation, in close cooperation with industry, public authorities, social partners and other stakeholders, of a transition pathway for tourism ecosystem. The Commission services have prepared a Staff Working Document to outline possible scenarios for a transition pathway for a more resilient, sustainable and innovative tourism ecosystem. The document was published and a targeted consultation with stakeholders was launched on 21 June7. The Commission is also working with Member States to set out a European Tourism Agenda.

*(22) update the EU funding support guide and to include therein a link to a national contact point that facilitates access to information for micro enterprises and SMEs, by means of a one-stop shop or online tool with the assistance and guidance of the Member States, whenever needed; raise awareness of this guide among companies and SMEs in the tourism sector;*

(See paragraph 11)

In order to facilitate the access to EU funding for tourism, the online “Guide on EU funding for tourism” has been launched in May. This online guide highlights the wide range of EU funding included in the new budget, Multiannual Financial Framework 2021-2027 and NextGenerationEU, moving towards a more sustainable, inclusive and digital EU. The guide will help tourism enterprises to find the appropriate funding according to their needs. It contains hyperlinks to the relevant EU funds’ websites and to call for proposals, as well as concrete project examples funded by previous EU programming period, for inspiration.

*(23) set up a European Agency for Tourism in the next MFF and to devise a short-term solution by creating a tourism department in one of the existing executive agencies, in particular the Executive Agency for SMEs (EASME) or the upcoming Health and Digital Executive Agency*;

The Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF) for 2021-2027 has been adopted last December. It is therefore too early to discuss what should be included in the next MFF. However the Commission is fully committed to support the Tourism ecosystem in the short, medium and long term. Already last year in the Communication “Tourism and transport in

2020 and beyond”, the Commission announced its intention to work together with EU institutions, the industry, regions and cities and stakeholders towards a sustainable, innovative and resilient European tourism ecosystem (‘European Agenda for Tourism 2050’). In the recently adopted Communication “Updating the 2020 New Industrial Strategy” indicating that it will co-create, in partnership with industry, public authorities, social partners and other stakeholders, a transition pathways for the tourism ecosystem.

Currently, EISMEA (European Innovation Council and SME Executive Agency) (former

EASME - Executive Agency for Small and Medium-sized Enterprises) implements a number

6 <https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/default/files/communication-industrial-strategy-update-2020_en.pdf>

7 Document: <https://ec.europa.eu/docsroom/documents/45977>

Survey: [https://ec](https://ec.europa.eu/eusurvey/runner/TourismTransitionPathway).europa.eu/eusurvey/runner/TourismTransitionPathway

of projects supporting tourism SMEs under former COSME programme (the EU programme for the Competitiveness of Enterprises and Small and Medium-sized Enterprises) and will continue under the Single Market programmes, in particular focusing in their green and digital transition as well as long-term resilience.

Furthermore, the Commission recalls that a large part of the EU budgetary support to tourism is taking place through the national plans financed from the Structural and Investment Funds (2014-2020) and the Cohesion policy Funds (2021-2027). Those Funds are under shared management and therefore not managed by the executive agency. Among the spending programmes in direct management, we have no spending programme focused on tourism and therefore there is no sufficient budget to manage to justify the creation of an executive agency devoted to tourism.

Under sub-heading ***Strengthen: transition to sustainable, responsible and smart tourism***

**(paragraphs 24-54)**

*(25) swiftly develop a roadmap for sustainable tourism that includes innovative measures to reduce the climate and environmental footprint of the sector by developing more sustainable forms of tourism, diversifying the offer, boosting new initiatives for cooperation and developing new digital services*;

See paragraph 20: the Commission is working closely with the Member States to advance towards the European Tourism Agenda. In this spirit, the Council Conclusions on Tourism were adopted by the Council on 27 May. As announced in the EU Industrial Strategy update, the process to co-create a transition pathway for the tourism ecosystem was launched on 21

June and will be finalised in collaboration with industry, public authorities, social partners and other stakeholders.

*(28) bring the European Tourism Indicators System (ETIS) into operation, to equip it with a permanent governance structure and to introduce it in tourism destinations, with static indicators and real-time data for their management and evaluation, in partnership with regions*;

The Commission has launched work with the Joint Research Centre on the Tourism development dashboard, as an integrative tool with four main pillars, of which one is dedicated to sustainability. This sustainability pillar will be populated with comparable benchmarks, both static and dynamic. These benchmarks at sustainability key performance indicators (KPIs) formed based on the lessons learnt from ETIS together with the new possibilities from big data. The objective is to provide dynamic data solution for today’s needs to support the development of tourism towards green, digital and socio-economically resilient goals.

*(29) examine the barriers to obtaining the Ecolabel and to expand its scope to other tourism services, as a complement to the EU Eco-Management and Audit Scheme (EMAS) for tourism, and to establish mechanisms to support those certification schemes and to promote tourism operators that have obtained those schemes*;

The Commission is preparing a communication campaign on EU Ecolabel for Tourist Accommodation and is already working with several tourism associations, tourism operators and on-line platforms to increase uptake, awareness and visibility of the EU Ecolabel for tourist accommodations, as the barriers to increase uptake have been identified as the lack of return on the investment to get the label.

An EU Workshop on EU Ecolabel for Tourism Accommodations was organised on 21

January. A dedicated working group is being established within the EU Ecolabelling Board.

The Commission is working with its services to promote EU Ecolabel Tourist Accommodations to staff travelling on mission and to participants of meetings in Brussels, at the same time working with relevant associations in Belgium to improve the offer.

The possibility to expand the scope of the current criteria will be assessed during the revision of the criteria that is expected to start end 2022/ beginning of 2023.

*(31) setting up the Tourism Sustainability Group and calls on the Tourism Sustainability Group to resume its work and to revise the 2012 European Charter for Sustainable and Responsible Tourism as a means to encourage participation and the adoption of good practices at national, regional and local levels*;

(See paragraph 20)

*(33) asks Eurostat to establish a frame of reference for the collection of data relating to sustainability, overtourism, undertourism and criteria on working conditions and calls for Regulation (EU) No 692/2011 to be updated;*

At the end of 2020, Eurostat started – in close cooperation with the Member States’ statistical authorities – a process to assess the relevance of the current legal framework for European statistics on tourism, with a view to updating and modernising it. This process may also address aspects related to measuring the sustainability of tourism. Eurostat actively participates in the UN World Tourism Organisation working group of experts to establish a statistical framework for measuring the sustainability of tourism (SF-MST). This is work-in- progress. Furthermore, Eurostat ensures consistency of MST with the statistical standard System of Environmental-Economic Accounting (SEEA), which the EU and the rest of the world use to produce statistical accounts for water, air and energy.

*(34) incorporate tourism in the governance framework for common data spaces and to better regulate the activity of online booking platforms and online travel intermediaries, enabling tourism businesses to fully commit to innovation and digitalisation, as the latter are crucial for modernising the entire sector and for developing new services and a broader, high-quality offer; promote data pooling for tourism and regional incubators and accelerators for tourism enterprises, harnessing research and innovation to help the many SMEs in the sector collect, process and utilise the data they produce and enable them to fully benefit from the data economy and implement sustainable solutions*;

Digitalisation and data-driven technologies are reshaping the way we produce, consume and live, and the benefits also concern the tourism sector, as the latest technologies offer more efficient and inclusive models. Adopted in February 2020, the Data Strategy plans the rollout of the common European data spaces in strategic sectors and areas of public interest, combining data governance and investments in data infrastructures. These investments would cover the necessary data infrastructures, data-sharing tools, architectures and governance mechanisms for thriving data sharing. Once adopted by the co-legislators, the Data Governance Act will offer to tourism and all other related sectors a framework that will unlock the value of data voluntarily made available by data holders for reuse. The availability of data for use will be fostered by increasing trust in data intermediaries and by strengthening data sharing mechanisms in the EU.

Finally, to the extent that the online booking platforms and online travel intermediaries constitute intermediary services or gatekeepers within the meaning of the proposals for a Digital Services Act or a Digital Markets Act respectively, once adopted by the co-legislators these instruments will contribute to ensuring a level playing field, fostering innovation and competitiveness of the sector while imposing proportionate obligations for the better protection of users.

(37*) respect the right of local authorities to regulate against the harmful impacts of overtourism;*

The Commission is fully aware of concerns over the effects of “overtourism” and issues with affordability of housing on local communities, in particular in touristic cities, and the need for local authorities to address those concerns. As announced in the SME Strategy (COM(2020)

103 final), the Commission will explore a possible initiative focusing on short-term accommodation rental services (the largest collaborative economy sector) to promote the balanced and responsible development of the collaborative economy, in full respect of public interest objectives, such as ensuring the availability of housing and protecting urban environments. The nature and form of any initiative will depend on the outcome of ongoing preparatory work, which will determine whether and how these issues should be addressed at European level.

*(40) improve the European railway network (link to Eurpean Year of Rail*);

The Commission fully shares the view that the European Year of Rail is an excellent opportunity to create public awareness of rail’s potential role in the development of sustainable tourism in Europe. This is a specific objective of the Year, included under Article 2 (i) of Decision (EU) 2020/2228 on a European Year of Rail (2021). Sustainable rail tourism is covered in the Year’s programme of events and activities. Key examples include the Best European Rail Tourism Campaign 2021 (co-organised by the European Travel Commission and EURAIL), UIC’s “My Secret Rail Spots” photo competition and the Special European Greenways Award (organised by the European Greenways Association).

Together with the activities of the Year, the Commission is already working on several initiatives (legislative and non-legislative) to boost European rail transport, as identified in the Action Plan of the Sustainable and Smart Mobility Strategy. The Year is a unique occasion to gather the input of stakeholders and citizens in this exercise and build political and social momentum behind these initiatives.

Finally, the Commission thanks the European Parliament for its support to the DiscoverEU initiative, which will officially join the Erasmus+ programme as of this year. The 2021 edition will be linked to the European Year of Rail and will aim at inspiring a change in the attitude of 18 years old about rail travelling. The Commission is planning several actions in relation to the European Year of Rail, such as virtual activities organised by e-influencers to stress the benefits of rail travel for young people, or meet-ups in locations relevant for the Year. The photo/ video competition on the European Youth Portal will also focus on the European Year of Rail as a theme and DiscoverEU will also partner with the Europalia arts festival.

*(44) explore possible synergies with EuroVelo and its 17 corridors, notably by increasing financial support, in order to promote cycling tourism in Europe; encourage the reconversion of disused railway lines, including by supporting bike-train projects, and to actively support bike-train intermodality*;

The Commission welcomes the intention of many Member States to include in their national Recovery and Resilience Plans investments and reforms in favour of the development of cycling infrastructure, including long-distance ones, and the promotion of active mobility and sustainable modes of transport in general. The Recovery and Resilience Facility supports green and digital transition and can finance measures to support sustainable transport solutions, also actions supporting modernization and sustainability of the tourism sector.

*(45) propose a new European inclusive tourism scheme following the model of the Calypso initiative, enabling vulnerable social groups to use national tourist vouchers in associated establishments in other Member States which also offer a social tourism programme to their citizens*;

The Strategy for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities 2021-2030 indicates that the Commission will launch a European resource centre AccessibleEU to increase coherence in accessibility policies and facilitate access to relevant knowledge. Among the work of the resource centre is to develop tools and standards aiming to facilitate implementation of EU law. Furthermore, EU-level action will also include further work on standardisation and technical specifications. In addition, the Access City Award has stimulated a coherent, cross- sectoral approach going beyond the minimum standards set by law.

*(46) present the results of the Smart Tourism Destinations pilot project and outline how it intends to implement the scheme, linking innovation with the protection of UNESCO and nature sites and traditional local specialities and centres of culture;*

The Smart Tourism Destination Pilot project has kicked off in April 2021, and will finalise its deliverables in 2023. The project will be instrumental in providing policy makers at all levels with the understanding of the needs, trends, opportunities and challenges tourist destinations need to manage and strategize data. This will be achieved with a study, ready by the first quarter of 2022, as well as through concrete tools for cities to target their specific needs: an EU Guide for data on tourism destinations, a Toolkit, and a set of Recommendations for policy action. These findings will be publicly available as soon as ready. In addition, the pilot project will set up a community of practice among interested destinations, to foster mutual understanding, networking, and exchange of ideas and good practices.

*(47) make the European Capital of Smart Tourism a permanent project with broader and fairer criteria, thereby benefiting the local economy and local supply chains*;

The third edition of the European Capital of Smart Tourism, looking for the 2022 most outstanding performer under all four of the categories considered (accessibility, sustainability, digitalisation, cultural heritage and creativity), has been launched on April 22, and it was open to cities with a population of more than 100000 inhabitants in Member States and in the third countries participating in the COSME programme.

*(49) present the results on the 14 actions which make up the Strategy for Coastal and Maritime Tourism, which can be used to channel financing to infrastructure (ports and marinas), logistical and operational support, waste prevention and the use of renewable energy; take measures to support the cruise industry, which continues to be severely damaged by the COVID-19 pandemic, and to facilitate its operational restart, while respecting social and environmental standards; develop initiatives for nautical and coastal tourism with regard to the recognition of skipper qualifications, VAT rules on boats, marinas and anchorages, to tackle seasonality and promote cross-border routes, such as a network of routes for nautical tourism, and to make public the state of play of the pilot project: charter of good practices for sustainable cruise tourism*;

The Commission is currently implementing a Preparatory Action to prepare a Charter of good practices for sustainable cruise tourism, which will help the sector to recover and restart in a sustainable way. The draft charter will be discussed and possibly endorsed in a dialogue between regional and local authorities, ports, the industry, stakeholders and civil society on the occasion of the second Pan-European Cruise dialogue in March 2022.

The Commission recognises that cruise industry has always been on the forefront of introducing new more environmentally friendly technologies into shipping. In this context, the

EU's Smart and Sustainable Mobility Strategy foresees the creation of an enabling environment to improve the energy efficiency and reduce emissions of all vessels, in particular through the partnerships that could be put in place under Horizon Europe (such

‘Zero Emission Waterborne Transport’ and ‘Clean Hydrogen’). The FuelEU Maritime initiative will also boost the production and uptake of sustainable maritime fuels and help the industry to address the challenge of de-carbonisation.

*(51) include local actors that work in rural and coastal areas in income diversification initiatives through the creation of tourism products, services or experiences, in the design of new initiatives and the search for synergies between existing ones*;

Commission agrees with the call to include local actors that work in rural areas in income diversification, but also including profit and non-profit actors including the social economy sector. Rural development Local Action Groups (LAGs) deliver rural diversification. Local actors working in coastal areas are included in diversification through Community-led local development, implemented by the fisheries local action groups (FLAGs) that aim at diversification of activities including tourism and gastronomy8.

Under sub-heading ***Rethink: planning the future of the tourism industry* (paragraphs 55-**

**77)**

*(56) present an analysis in the first semester of 2021 on the requests received from each Member State for State aid schemes for the tourism industry and on EU financing used to tackle the effects of COVID-19, including the applicability of the SURE programme*;

By 23 April 2021, the Commission has adopted 145 decisions9 approving 176 measures aimed at supporting specifically the tourism, hospitality, transport and related sectors. These measures were adopted as a response to the COVID-19 outbreak. In particular, 75 decisions adopted aim at supporting tourism, hospitality and related sectors while 70 decisions aim at supporting the transport sector (transport in general, airlines, airports, ports). On this basis, the amount of around EUR 70.8 billion of State aid approved aim at supporting tourism and transport so far (best estimate10). This figure is equivalent to the 2.34% of the total State aid approved in response to the COVID-19 outbreak. Approximately EUR 30 billion of the budget specifically allocated to the tourism and transport sectors have been approved as *ad hoc* measures.

Aside from schemes specifically targeting the tourism industry, by 23 April 2021, the Commission has also adopted 192 decisions approving 253 national measures open to all sectors, from which tourism operators can also benefit. On this basis, the amount of approximately EUR 2.85 trillion of total state aid has been approved so far for measures without specific sectorial scope. The total budget allocated in response to the Covid-19 outbreak allocated through general measures is 94.05%. Member States that have put such

8 Multiple examples of such action along the EU’s coasts can be found through a thematic search of Good Practices via the website of FARNET: <https://webgate.ec.europa.eu/fpfis/cms/farnet2/on-the-ground_en> Here is one example: [https://webgate.ec.europa.eu/fpfis/cms/farnet2/on-the-ground/good-practice/](https://webgate.ec.europa.eu/fpfis/cms/farnet2/on-the-ground/good-practice/projects/salina-greens-farming-organic-salicornia-abandoned-salt-marshes_en) [projects/salina-greens-farming-organic-salicornia-abandoned-salt-marshes\_en](https://webgate.ec.europa.eu/fpfis/cms/farnet2/on-the-ground/good-practice/projects/salina-greens-farming-organic-salicornia-abandoned-salt-marshes_en)

9 The decisions are published at the website of the Directorate General for Competition:

<https://ec.europa.eu/competition/elojade/isef/index.cfm?fuseaction=dsp_result&policy_area_id=3>

10 For some measures adopted under the Temporary Framework, it is not necessary to indicate a budget, which is why the figures included are best estimates based on budgets approved in State aid decisions and other

available figures, e.g. mentioned in public communications by national authorities, and in official information communicated by the national authorities. Moreover, some measures address multiple sectors. It

is thus not possible to disentangle the exact amount for each of the involved sectors.

umbrella schemes into effect are: Germany, Denmark, Spain, France, Hungary, Ireland, Italy and Slovenia.

The Member States have transparency obligations by which, within 12 months from the moment of granting, their national authorities publish on the comprehensive national State aid website or Commission’s IT tool11 relevant information on each individual aid above EUR100 000 granted under each measure.

*(56) consolidate and extend SURE until the end of 2022 in view of the socioeconomic difficulties the Member States are facing*;

SURE is a crucial element of the EU’s comprehensive strategy to protect citizens and mitigate the severely negative socio-economic consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic. Under Council Regulation (EU) 2020/67212, the Commission needs to forward to the European Parliament, the Council, the Economic and Financial Committee and the Employment Committee a report on the use of financial assistance, including outstanding amounts and the applicable repayment schedule under the SURE Instrument, and on the continuation of the exceptional occurrences that justify the application of this regulation. The first such report was published on 22 March 202113. The report showed that SURE has contributed to mitigating the impact of the pandemic on unemployment, which has risen by significantly less than during the global financial crisis. The future review reports on SURE implementation will follow every six months for as long as SURE remains available and will provide further opportunities to take stock of the experience with SURE. SURE is available until the end of December 2022. During this period, financial assistance can be made available by means of a Council implementing decision adopted on the basis of a proposal from the Commission. Under SURE, there is still over EUR 5 billion available to help Member States to support workers regardless of the sector of the economic activity, thus also in the tourism sector.

*(57) address the situation of workers in the tourism sector affected by the COVID-19 crisis and to consider the possibility of establishing a European framework, within the action plan for the European Pillar of Social Rights, across the industry’s entire value chain, in close cooperation with social partners and businesses, through a constructive dialogue on the working conditions in the sector, which is characterised by seasonality and part-time and atypical forms of employment*;

The situation of seasonal workers was addressed in the Commission Communication on seasonal workers in the EU in the context of the COVID-19 outbreak, published on 16 July

2020. This document provides guidance to national authorities, labour inspectorates and social partners to guarantee the rights, health and safety of seasonal workers, and to ensure that seasonal workers are aware of their rights.

Social dialogue at EU as well as at national level is important to improve working conditions and to accompany structural change and adapt the economy in the post COVID-19 era. Therefore, under its prerogative budget lines dedicated to social dialogue, the Commission

11 This obligation refers to information required in Annex III to Commission Regulation (EU) No 651/2014, Annex III to Commission Regulation (EU) No 702/2014 and Annex III to Commission Regulation (EU) No

1388/2014. This information is published at the website of the Directorate General for Competition under

the identification number of each case: [https://ec.europa.eu/competition/elojade/isef/index.cfm?](https://ec.europa.eu/competition/elojade/isef/index.cfm?fuseaction=dsp_result&policy_area_id=3)

[fuseaction=dsp\_result&policy\_area\_id=3](https://ec.europa.eu/competition/elojade/isef/index.cfm?fuseaction=dsp_result&policy_area_id=3)

12 OJ L 159, 20.5.2020, p. 1

13 Report on the European instrument for temporary support to mitigate unemployment risks in an emergency (SURE) following the COVID-19 outbreak pursuant to Article 14 of Council Regulation (EU) 2020/672. SURE: Taking Stock After Six Months [https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/info/files/economy-finance/](https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/info/files/economy-finance/com2021_148_en_act_part1_v6.pdf)

[com2021\_148\_en\_act\_part1\_v6.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/info/files/economy-finance/com2021_148_en_act_part1_v6.pdf)

supports social partners’ capacity building, allowing social partners to develop the necessary knowledge to address and improve working conditions. The Commission supports sectoral social dialogue by organising the meetings of the 43 Sectoral Social Dialogue Committees at EU level including the Committee on HORECA, which deals, among others, with various issues related to tourism. In addition, the Commission organizes dedicated hearings with European social partners, where they can give input to EU policies in the realm of social and employment policies and in particular working conditions.

*(58) together with the European Investment Bank, establish sufficient dedicated support for the decarbonisation of the tourism sector, for digitalisation and for innovative projects, and the conditions of access for micro enterprises and SMEs to InvestEU, so that new skills can be acquired and more quality jobs created*;

*(60) propose new programmes to support innovation in the tourism sector through design thinking; support the best practices currently employed by national, regional and local authorities, the transition to seamless intermodality in transport, and the development of through-ticketing for rail travel*;

Support for green and digital transformation, innovation of tourism businesses and destinations is available under several EU Funds. See point 11 on the guide on EU funding for tourism.

*(61) introduce the e-visa, along with the travel visa and other measures that allow visitors to enter the Union lawfully*;

The 2021 Work Programme of the European Commission foresees the presentation of a proposal at the end of this year regarding the digitalization of visa procedures. It is expected to significantly help tourism restart and recovery.

*(64) submit a proposal on geographical indications for non-agricultural products, not least in the light of the outcome of the 2014 public consultation, which showed that this recognition, in the form of the immediate identification of a product with a territory, would boost the tourism industry;*

In its November 2020 [Intellectual Property (IP) Action Plan the Commission announced that](https://ec.europa.eu/docsroom/documents/43845) it will on the basis of a thorough impact assessment of its potential costs and benefits, consider the feasibility of creating an efficient and transparent EU GI (geographical indications) protection system for non-agricultural products. On 30 November 2020, the Commission published an [Inception Impact Assessment on GI protection at EU level for non-](https://ec.europa.eu/info/law/better-regulation/have-your-say/initiatives/12778-Geographical-indication-protection-at-EU-level-for-non-agricultural-products/F1414138) [agricultural products. The Commission services are currently working on an impact](https://ec.europa.eu/info/law/better-regulation/have-your-say/initiatives/12778-Geographical-indication-protection-at-EU-level-for-non-agricultural-products/F1414138) assessment on the appropriateness of proposing the establishment of an EU geographical indication protection system for non-agricultural products. Within this framework, an 8 months ‘study on control and enforcement rules of geographical indications for non- agricultural products’ has been launched in January 2021. Other aspects involve various consultations with stakeholders including an [open public consultation launched in April and](https://ec.europa.eu/info/law/better-regulation/have-your-say/initiatives/12778-Geographical-indication-protection-at-EU-level-for-non-agricultural-products/public-consultation_en) open until 22 July.

*(65) promote artistic and traditional craft professions, which exemplify the excellence of products made in Europe as an expression of the identity and traditions of European territories, including in the context of the tourism industry, through official recognition as part of European cultural heritage*;

The European Skills Agenda recognises businesses need workers with the skills required to master the green and digital transitions, and people need to be able to get the right education and training to thrive in life, including the artistic and traditional craft professions. The

European Skills Agenda puts the industrial strategy into practice by pursuing a shift in upskilling (improving existing skills) and reskilling (training in new skills) of the industrial workforce. Part of this is testing the feasibility of a new industry-academia initiative focusing on companies’ needs. This initiative aims to give university students real-world business experience by asking multinational teams to solve specific challenges within a company's research and development department. First results are expected by mid-2021.

The European Pact for Skills was launched by Commissioners Schmit and Breton on 10

November 2020. It is a shared engagement and approach to mobilise all stakeholders to invest in skills. The Pact aims to build large-scale multi-stakeholder “skills partnerships” addressing the needs of the 14 industrial ecosystems identified in the EU Industrial Strategy. The Cultural and Creative Industries are one of these ecosystems. To build on this Pact for skills, thematic roundtables took place, including a successful one on the Cultural and Creative Industries.

Sustainable cultural tourism has strong ties and associations with the Cultural and Creative Industries. There are many EU funded projects examining the artistic and traditional craft professions. An example is INCREAS (Innovation and Creative Solutions for Cultural Heritage), which is co-funded by the Commission – Directorate-General for Education, Youth, Sport and Culture. Its aim is to contribute to identify certain skills needs for built Cultural Heritage, to map innovative projects within the Cultural Heritage Sector and to create a EU-Competence Centre for Practical Architectural Conservation in the Charterhouse Mauerbach. It creates a strong sector combining built cultural heritage and Cultural and Creative Industries, in order to increase employment opportunities and foster the idea of sustainable cultural heritage in Europe. Another recent example is the CHARTER project (“Cultural Heritage Actions to Refine Training, Education and Roles”), funded by Erasmus+ under the Blueprint Call for Skills Sectorial Alliance on Cultural Heritage. It aims to build the first ever methodology enabling the heritage sector to assess, design and produce a holistically integrated sectorial skills strategy. Its main goal is to identify and bridge the skills gaps between the educational and the occupational worlds, by developing a matrix mapping skills and competences in the heritage sector. A good example of a Creative Europe funded project is MADE IN which was recently completed. It is a research, design and heritage initiative that encourages collaboration and knowledge exchange between traditional craftsmen and contemporary designers.

*(66) evaluate and, if necessary, to review the Package Travel Directive and to unblock the negotiations in the Council on the revision of Regulation (EC) No 261/2004 on air passenger rights to take account of the effects of the recent crisis, prevent future legal uncertainty and ensure the protection of consumer rights*;

While the unblock of the negotiations on the revision of Regulation (EC) No 261/2004 on air passenger rights is in the hands of the Council and remains a priority, the Commission, as announced in its Sustainable and Smart Mobility Strategy (SSMS) (action 64), will assess the options and propose, if appropriate, an adequate financial protection scheme to protect passengers against the risk of a liquidity crisis or an insolvency regarding the reimbursement of tickets and their repatriation. In addition, the Commission has committed to propose a revision of the Air Services Regulation (action 59 of the Action Plan annexed to the SSMS). In this context, the Commission will inter alia assess further measures to improve the financial resilience of air carriers.

The Commission’s report14 on the Package Travel Directive (PTD) of 26 February 2021 provides an overview of the application of the PTD during the past two and a half years. It addresses its transposition by the Member States and its strengths and weaknesses, including challenges that have emerged in the context of the Thomas Cook bankruptcy and the Covid-

19 pandemic.

As announced in its New Consumer Agenda15 for 2020-2025 and confirmed by the report of

26 February 2021, the Commission will carry out by 2022 a deeper analysis into whether the current regulatory framework for package travel, including as regards insolvency protection, is still fully up to the task of ensuring robust and comprehensive consumer protection taking into account also developments in the field of passenger rights.

The Commission will assess how the high level of consumer protection provided by the PTD can be ensured and how the rights of consumers can be effectively enforced at all times and how a fairer sharing of the burden among economic operators along the value chain could contribute to this objective.

The COVID-19 pandemic highlighted the different levels of consumer protection in relation to package travel as compared to stand-alone transport services and issues in the relationship between package organisers and, for instance, air carriers. Overall, more coherent approach could enhance the level of consumer protection and bring more clarity and a fairer burden- sharing amongst travel businesses. The in-depth analysis of the PTD will take into account the review of the passenger rights regulatory framework announced in the Sustainable and Smart Mobility Strategy16.

*(66) analyse the possibility of strengthening the insolvency protection provisions by adding a prevention approach to support companies and SMEs at an earlier stage and in order to protect workers in the event of systemic shocks and/or insolvency*;

It is to be noted that the Directive on Restructuring and Insolvency17 obliges Member States to establish effective and transparent mechanisms that help companies (mainly SMEs) to detect in due time circumstances that could give rise to a likelihood of insolvency and that gives them actual advice on how to overcome this difficulties. The directive is currently being transposed by the Member States.

*(67) establish a European travel guarantee scheme, based on the experience of the COVID-19 crisis and similar schemes in the Member States, in order to secure financial liquidity for companies and guarantee refunds for travellers as well as repatriation costs, together with fair compensation for any damages incurred in the event of bankruptcy*;

The in-depth analysis of the PTD will also cover the question of whether the level of harmonisation is appropriate, for instance with regard to insolvency protection.

14 Report from the Commission to the European Parliament and the Council on the application of Directive (EU) 2015/2302 of the European Parliament and of the Council on package travel and linked travel arrangements (COM(2021) 90 final).

15 Communication of the Commission to the European Parliament and the Council on New Consumer Agenda

- Strengthening consumer resilience for sustainable recovery (COM(2020) 696 final).

16 Sustainable and Smart Mobility Strategy – putting European transport on track for the future (COM(2020)

789 final), actions 63 and 64.

17 Directive (EU) 2019/1023 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 20 June 2019 on preventive restructuring frameworks, on discharge of debt and disqualifications, and on measures to increase the efficiency of procedures concerning restructuring, insolvency and discharge of debt, and amending Directive

(EU) 2017/1132 (Directive on restructuring and insolvency) OJ L 172, 26.6.2019, p. 18–55.

As noted in the report on the application of the PTD18, some business stakeholders and authorities have expressed concerns that it may be increasingly difficult to find appropriate insolvency protection providers that are willing and capable to cover the risks related to the bankruptcy of a big organiser, especially during peak season. Relatively few travel guarantee funds and insurance companies provide insolvency protection. It has been reported that banks were no longer providing security for organisers and that also some of the already relatively few insurance companies offering insolvency protection are pulling out of the market (e.g. in Austria19 and Belgium20). It is therefore important to find a solid system that effectively protects travellers against the risk of insolvency. Ideas brought forward to address different challenges include multiple security providers for one organiser, or the setting up of a pan-EU guarantee fund as a kind of re-insurance for the first- line guarantors. Further analysis in this respect is required.

In its resolution in reaction to the bankruptcy of Thomas Cook21, the European Parliament acknowledged the effective repatriation and did not raise any concerns in respect of the PTD. In this context, the Parliament nevertheless repeated its request to extend insolvency protection to seat-only flights in the framework of the revision of the Air Passenger Rights Regulation 261/2004. The insolvency of an airline can affect travellers, tour operators and intermediaries. For example, if a package travel contract with a flight component is cancelled in accordance with the PTD, the organiser may have to refund the traveller the full price irrespective of whether he still holds the money or will be able to recover it from the airline. The call from a number of stakeholders representing travel businesses and consumers for the introduction of mandatory insolvency protection to be provided by airlines has become louder in the context of the COVID-19 crisis. The Aviation Roundtable Report on the Recovery of European Aviation (November 2020) acknowledges that this crisis has shown that passengers feel they may find themselves unprotected in case of insolvency of airlines and suggests that the impact of airline insolvency protection could be further analysed22.

Thus, in the scope of the planned analysis, the Commission will also assess whether the differences between the PTD and the passenger rights regulations as regards insolvency protection and cancellation rights are justified or if the rules should be more aligned and whether specific rules for situations like COVID-19 should be proposed, with the objective to better protect consumers. Other methods of reducing the exposure of travellers to an organiser’s insolvency, e.g. introducing alternatives to the prevailing prepayment model, could also be evaluated.

*(68) establish a single platform for the creation of digital innovation literacy programmes for the senior executives of micro enterprises and SMEs, giving them the skills they need to optimise their wealth-creating potential; develop an EU roadmap to upskill workers in the sector, including an EU financing scheme to this end; evaluate options for harmonising the rules and legislation, as skills and qualifications are not always harmonised between countries and there is a lack of mutual recognition*;

The European Skills Agenda has put forward the tourism sector as priority sector to explore the possibility of joining the Pact for Skills. For this the sector can base itself on an ongoing

18 See section 4.2.2. of the report (COM(2021) 90 final)

19 See recital 7 of the Commission Decision of 4.2.2021 in State aid case SA.60521, <https://ec.europa.eu/competition/elojade/isef/case_details.cfm?proc_code=3_SA_60521>

20 See minutes of the 4th meeting of the PTD stakeholder expert group (24.11.2020)

21 European Parliament resolution of 24 October 2019 on the negative impact of the bankruptcy of Thomas

Cook on EU tourism ([2019/2854(RSP)),](https://oeil.secure.europarl.europa.eu/oeil/popups/ficheprocedure.do?lang=en&reference=2019/2854(RSP)) [https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/B-9-2019-](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/B-9-2019-0120_EN.pdf)

[0120\_EN.pdf](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/B-9-2019-0120_EN.pdf)

22 [https://a4e.eu/wp-content/uploads/aviation-round-table-report-16-11-2020.pdf, page](https://a4e.eu/wp-content/uploads/aviation-round-table-report-16-11-2020.pdf) 10

Erasmus+ Blueprint Alliance for sectoral skills cooperation, which has already developed a sectoral skills strategy or roadmap. Commissioners Breton and Schmit held a roundtable with the sector that discussed and provided top-level political momentum and prepared the ground for the development of partnerships that should join the Pact on skills.

With the view to foster synergies the EU does not foresee a dedicated financing scheme for tourism, but many EU financing instruments such as the ESF+, the JTF, or the RRF. The

‘Pact for Skills support services’ will facilitate access to information about these instruments to stakeholders, including from the tourism sector. An online guide on EU funding for the tourism sector is already operational since May23.

The Skills Agenda for Europe is supporting digital skills for all and at all levels, workers and management, including digital crash courses for SMEs and the “Digital Volunteers” programme to upskill the current SME workforce in digital areas, as already announced in the EU SME strategy. A pilot programme of ‘Digital Volunteers’ was launched in April 2021 with large companies that will send digitally skilled employees for a limited period of time to SMEs. These Digital Volunteers-Mentors will help SMEs in their digitalisation process, allowing transfer of knowledge and skills and thus benefiting the whole ecosystem. Crash courses for SME employees will be supported by the Digital Europe Programme and will allow SME employees to gain proficiency in key strategic technologies. SME employees will also benefit from the recently launched Digital Skills & Jobs Platform. The Platform provides open access to a wide variety of high-quality information and resources to everyone interested in the broad topic of digital skills. Its smart search and filtering functions help users, including SME owners or employees, find what they need and connect with whom they need. With relevant, up-to-date content and dynamic, collaborative spaces, the platform caters to the needs of all users independently of their level of expertise. The Commission will also support and interlink SME intermediaries, such as clusters, the Enterprise Europe Network and Digital Innovation Hubs to help upskill staff of SMEs, including management.

The Commission initiative on Centres of Vocational Excellence (CoVE) are intended to be world-class reference points for training in specific areas (which may include tourism) for both initial training of young people as well as for continuing up-skilling and re-skilling of adults. These centres act as catalysts for local business investment, supporting European and regional innovation and smart specialisation strategies by ensuring supply of high quality skilled workers through flexible and timely offer of training for the skills needs of companies, including SMEs. They support entrepreneurial initiatives of their learners (incubators), as well as act as knowledge and innovation hubs for SMEs.

*(70) work together with associations in the sector and to use best practices to issue recommendations and provide financial support for the organisation of trade tourism events, fairs, congresses and tourism related to artistic and entertainment events, such as concerts and festivals*;

The Commission services are in regular contacts with the main European professional associations, starting with EEIA (European Exhibition Industry Alliance), to identify their needs and determine what could be done at EU level.

*(71) analyse the lack of mutual recognition in the sector of professional tour guides in order to ascertain where the Union can make the requisite improvements*;

Directive 2005/36/EC guarantees the recognition of professional qualifications throughout the

EU. The directive offers the possibility to tourist guides who are fully qualified in one

23 <https://ec.europa.eu/growth/sectors/tourism/support-business_en>

Member State to exercise their professional activities in another Member State where the profession is regulated as to the qualifications. To do so, the host Member State may require the tourist guide to undergo a compensation measure (an aptitude test or an adaptation period) if there are substantial differences between the training required in that Member State and the one actually followed. In the cases of temporary services provisions, tourist guides may exercise their professional activities in another Member State on the basis of a declaration.

*(72-73) work to facilitate the possible wider implementation and recognition of the European disability card scheme; actively drive the ongoing development of the International Organisation for Standardisation standard on accessible tourism services and to ensure its swift and correct implementation once adopted, while also ensuring that service providers respect the relevant accessibility standards already in place or in the process of implementation and provide information on the accessibility of their services; propose a standardised method for collating interactive feedback on the accessibility of destinations by enterprises and tourists and to promote its use to the tourism sector as a whole*;

The Commission would like to scale up the EU Disability Card system into all the Member States to facilitate enjoyment of free movement by persons with disabilities. Therefore it is proposing as a flagship initiative in the Strategy for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

2021-2030 the following: “The Commission will propose creating a European Disability Card by end of 2023 with a view to be recognised in all Member States. It will build on the experience of the ongoing EU Disability Card pilot project in eight Member States and upon the European parking card for persons with disabilities.”

As regards training, the Recast Rail Passenger Rights Regulation obliges rail undertakings and rail infrastructure managing undertakings to provide to their staff dealing with PRM (passengers with reduced mobility) assistance targeted disability-related training, in order to know how to meet the needs of PRM. Regular refresher training courses are also foreseen. Also staff, working at the station or on board trains, who deal directly with the travelling public has to receive training and regular refresher training courses to raise awareness of the needs of PRM.

The Recast Rail Passenger Rights Regulation will make for passengers, including PRM easier to enforce their rights as passengers: they will be able to submit their compensation and reimbursement request in an EU wide standardised form, which will be also be accessible for PRM.

The Recast Rail Passenger Rights Regulation stipulates that information on the accessibility of stations, access conditions to rolling stock and available services and facilities shall be presented to PRM in an accessible format.

*(74) consider the special characteristics and additional constraints of the outermost regions when formulating and assessing the impact of tourism legislation, in accordance with Article*

*349 of the TFEU, as those regions rely heavily on tourism for their economic, social and cultural development; take into consideration the climate and digital transition in the outermost regions;*

The Commission is aware of the specificities of the outermost regions and their specific constraints further aggravated by the COVID-19 crisis. Many outermost regions rely heavily on the tourism sector and are particularly affected by the reduction of air passengers, rising unemployment and decreasing GDP rates. The Corona Response Investment Initiatives (CRII and CRII+) have already helped Member States by providing liquidity to sectors such as tourism, health and SMEs. The Commission has commissioned a study on the impact of the COVID-19 crisis on the outermost regions and will assess carefully the preliminary findings

to be finalised in autumn 2021. The Commission has enshrined the outermost regions’ specificities in over 20 pieces of legislation for EU financing instruments for the Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF) period 2021-2027, offering unprecedented opportunities for the outermost regions to capitalise on their unique assets. The Commission will also adapt its strategic approach to the outermost regions with a new Communication due in 2022, taking into account the COVID-19 impact.

*(75) pay particular attention to mountainous regions, islands and insular regions and rural areas and underlines the importance of well-structured institutional cooperation with all interested regional actors, as well as the Committee of the Regions; ensure mobility in territories suffering from double and triple insularity, given the abrupt decline in supply.*

The Commission shares the views of the Parliament and supports the areas listed. Particular importance is devoted to the EU rural areas: they are home to 134 million people and cover

84% of the EU territory.