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For a safe and coordinated relaunch of European tourism

The tourism sector plays a central role in European societies. It is a driver for the wellbeing of citizens, contributing to social cohesion, employment and economic growth. Tourism accounts for more than 10% of the EU's GDP and provides 12% of its jobs. It is one of our strongest ambassadors, promoting European culture and identity at home and abroad.

The COVID-19 crisis has led to serious socio-economic consequences for this valuable industry. With restrictions gradually being lifted, the tourism industry, its workers and millions of businesses – small, medium and large - are emerging into a new harsh reality. We cannot afford to let this sector continue to suffer.

This is why we socialist and democratic ministers of tourism, call for a common and coordinated European response. Together, we must relaunch tourism, guaranteeing the health and safety of tourists coming into our countries, and the local populations welcoming them.

- We believe that it is necessary to have a coordinated and non-discriminatory European approach as borders between Member States are gradually reopening. Flights and cross-country trips between European countries and regions, which can guarantee occupational safety and health standards, must be allowed again. We call for common European processes to prevail over bilateral agreements between countries, especially when discussing the reopening of our borders to non-EU nationals.
- In order to regain public trust in the tourism sector to deliver quality and safe services, we believe it is necessary to harmonise safety rules at European level. Because the propagation of the COVID-19 virus is similar everywhere, all Member States must apply the same safety standards and measures. Having common European rules guarantees the safety of both workers and tourists and it will help avoid a second wave of the virus and to guarantee a safe and seamless travel.
- Guaranteeing strong consumer protection and stabilising the aviation and tourism sectors go hand in hand. We want to encourage the take-up of vouchers or rescheduling in case of Covid-related holiday cancellations while at the same time maintaining the right to reimbursement after a reasonable lapse of time, should



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consumers not be willing or able to use a voucher. In this difficult time, domestic measures for supporting enterprises and national consumers protection schemes play a strategic role in maintaining both, the functionality of the businesses and passenger rights. To move to a more uniform scheme throughout Europe, national guarantee funds, used to secure customers' rights in case of business insolvency, can serve as a model for the establishment of a similar instrument at the European level.

- We call for the European instrument for temporary Support to mitigate Unemployment Risks in an Emergency (SURE), spearheaded by Commissioners Paolo Gentiloni and Nicolas Schmit, to be implemented as soon as possible. This plan, together with other new initiatives such as REACT-EU, will help ensure the rights of workers and drive forward the recovery of the tourism sector. Additionally, special attention must be given to individuals working in the tourism sector who either lost their job or cannot find seasonal work during the summer. It is important to look into upskilling their competences, notably language skills, in order to boost their employability and personal development.
- We believe that islands and other peripheral areas which are almost exclusively dependent on tourism revenues must be given special attention. We must guarantee that these regions and the communities relying on tourism are not left out and that financial aid is provided to help their recovery in these difficult times. To this end, the new recovery instrument, Next Generation EU, must ensure that at least 20% of its budget is allocated to the tourism sector.
- We believe the European Union must launch a large communication and promotion campaign aimed at increasing the visibility of Europe as a tourist destination. Ahead of the busiest period of the year for the tourism sector, it is vital to reaffirm that Europe remains a safe and attractive place for tourists worldwide.

We resolve to take these proposals forward in the coming days and weeks. When it comes to longer term goals, we will continue to ensure the sustainability of the European tourism sector and its social, economic and environmental dimensions. This will build up the trust for travel and tourism at European level, protecting workers and consumers, and helping one of the pillars of the European economy – tourism.

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