

European Network of the Heads of Environment Protection Agencies (EPA Network) - Interest Group on Environment and Tourism (IGET)

POSITION PAPER

ENVIRONMENT AND TOURISM 2030-2050

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PREFACE

EPA NETWORK and IGET

The Network of the Heads of Environmental Protection Agencies (EPA Network) is a forum for strategic discussion on environmental issues of common concern for EPA Executives across Europe. The network functions as a platform for discussing emerging issues, especially those of international and global interest, where solutions require the gathering of collective knowledge and expertise.

The EPA Network represents 37 countries, and the Secretariat is hosted by the European Environment Agency (<https://epanet.eea.europa.eu/>). Members of the EPA Network exchange experiences to improve their work for the environment, share their knowledge and best practices via reports, guidelines, position papers, etc. and communicate those outputs and views. In short, the EPA Network is the voice of European environmental protection institutions.

The EPA Network works through ‘interest groups’ of experts who work together on specific emerging or urgent topics of international relevance in the field of environment.

In particular, in 2021, the **Interest Group on Environment and Tourism (IGET)** has been set up as a response to the COVID-19 pandemic, believing that the dramatic crisis of the tourism industry could be viewed as an opportunity to rethink the sector in a sustainable perspective. IGET is composed of experts from both national environmental protection agencies and national tourism authorities. IGET wants to turn the spotlight on the environmental aspects of tourism to enhance and encourage the development of a European sustainable tourism policy. IGET main mission is to ensure environmental protection is given priority consideration in all aspects of tourism policies, programmes and projects, while at the same time favouring the flourishing of the sector.

THE POLICY CONTEXT

On the 27th of May 2021 the Council of the European Union adopted conclusions on the topic “Tourism in Europe for the next decade: sustainable, resilient, digital, global and social”. The Council in its conclusions recommends Member States to share their vision, ideas and potential projects on how the tourism ecosystem can contribute to achieving the European Green Deal objectives; it also “invites the Commission and Member States, in participation with relevant stakeholders, to design a European Agenda for Tourism 2030/2050, underpinned by shared priorities and action plans, (...) to drive the green and digital transitions of the tourism ecosystem and strengthen its competitiveness, resilience, and sustainability (...)”.¹ Following Council’s recommendation, in January 2022 the European Commission published a report “Transition

¹ Council conclusions adopted by the Council at its 3797th meeting held on 27 May 2021. 8475/21

pathway for tourism”² as the result of a co-creation process started in June 2021 in order to help the transformation of the tourism ecosystem. The co-creation process aims to identify measures and outputs needed to accelerate the green and digital transitions and improve the resilience of the tourism ecosystem.

Being a key stakeholder, IGET/EPA Network can produce meaningful contributions and provide valuable inputs to support the European Commission co-creation process under development.

² “Transition Pathway for Tourism”, European Commission, 2022

IGET/EPA NETWORK PRIORITY ACTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The following seven priority actions have been identified by the Interest Group on Environment and Tourism relating to aspects of governance, circular economy, climate change, low carbon pathways and biodiversity conservation.

Action 1. Implement integrated environmental-tourism policies and consider opportunities provided by the EU GREEN DEAL for rethinking the tourism sector while reducing environmental risks of digitalization in the sector.

Recommendation 1: Tourism Institutions to develop and implement modern digital tools in tourism, in the spirit of a green and digital transition in the tourism sector.

Action 2. Avoid the negative effects of excessive tourism, which lead to increased congestion, pressures on infrastructure, increased demand for energy and water, environmental degradation, damage to historical sites and monuments, loss of identity and authenticity, the rising of the cost of living for local citizens and the growing of inequalities between them.

Recommendation 2: EU institutions and Member States to consider measures and initiatives to avoid the negative impact of excessive tourism on natural resources and preserve natural and cultural heritage.

Action 3. Build a European statistical governance framework to establish and measure the links between tourism and the environment. Developing an environmental monitoring data system integrating the current official statistics on tourism with sustainability approach, considering the environmental, social and economic dimensions.

Recommendation 3: EPAs work together with EEA, UNWTO, UNECE to give a contribution to the environmental pillar of sustainability, in order to have, at European scale, an harmonised approach on indicators and monitoring data.

Action 4. Promotion of circular economy in tourism by supporting all tourist services in working towards circular patterns to reduce their environmental footprint, in line with the EU Circular Economy Plan and EU Zero Pollution Action Plan.

Recommendation 4: Promote best practices and guidelines halving the amount of residual (non-recycled) waste by 2030, reducing food waste, single-use plastics, air pollutants, and water pollution while increasing water efficiency and sustainable transport.

Action 5. Increase the supply of climate-neutral products in the tourism industry through the use of clean energy, the reduction in the use and emissions of harmful chemicals and plastics, the use of rainwater and domestic wastewater reuse processes. Promote water circularity, that considerably reduce the demand for drinking water from supply networks, recycling of waste, and make the systems more systematically used.

Recommendation 5: Implement the climate-neutral paradigm until 2050, both from a climate mitigation and climate adaptation perspective, and integrate new adaptive solutions for tourist destinations at risk regarding sustainability and competitiveness through an innovative and creative rethinking of the tourist offer for new "tourist" experiences.

Action 6. Promote sustainable tourism e.g coastal and maritime tourism as part of resourceefficient, resilient and sustainable blue economies also involving citizens.

Recommendation 6: enhance the tourism opportunities by underpinning ecosystems in a sustainable way in the long term and the observation and conservation activities of the marine environment also through the participation and contribution of citizens.

Action 7. Optimise the relationship between tourism and conservation of biodiversity and nature by raising awareness on its interdependency with the quality of the natural environment.

Recommendation 7: Promote the tourism sector as a significant driver of action and a generator of resources for conservation to increase impetus to the development of sustainability generating benefits for the local communities.

IGET/EPA NETWORK COMMITMENTS

Based on the priority actions and recommendations as stated above, IGET/EPA NETWORK members commit to:

- Share the expertise and data of environmental monitoring, aiming at establishing harmonised comparable standards;
- Contribute to suggest the identification and planning of the production processes of basic data useful for monitoring the environmental dimension of sustainability of tourism and the environmental impacts generated or suffered by tourism (thus contributing to European statistical governance);
- Contribute to the debate on carrying capacity and on building knowledge based on existing proven tools and initiatives;
- Suggest eco-compatible actions/solutions for the tourism supply chain, including, sustainable transport, water efficiency, energy efficiency and greenhouse gases emissions reduction;
- Suggest innovative actions and new adaptive solutions for sustainable tourism and promote the sustainability of nature-based solutions in the tourism ecosystem;
- Suggest solutions to guarantee a transformation of the value chains of the tourism sector through multi-stakeholder cooperation, oriented to apply a circular approach capable of reducing the economic losses of the supply chain in consistency with European policies on circular economy and waste management;
- Support policy coordination actions in the implementation of the recovery and resilience plans, promoting an environmental sustainable tourist offer.