

ETC CALLS FOR HARMONISED EUROPEAN APPROACH TO TRAVEL RESTRICTIONS AS TOURISM CONFIDENCE SINKS TO A RECORD LOW

- **High intention among Europeans to travel again; however, lack of coordinated response delaying sector's recovery**

Brussels, 13 August 2020: The European Travel Commission (ETC) is calling on EU governments to better coordinate their COVID-19 recovery efforts by adopting a harmonised approach to lifting or reinstalling restrictions and safety measures, as tourism confidence plummets to a record low across the continent. Taking into account the latest epidemiological developments across Europe, ETC also insists that any potential new measures should be local and science-based, avoiding imposing blanket country bans or quarantines, and should be communicated to travellers well before their travel dates.

While many Europeans are keen to travel again and enjoy summer 2020, they don't have the confidence to book a trip given the lack of clarity around border barriers, availability of transportation, along with the health and safety protocols in their chosen destination. New data from Sojern, who collects and analyses travel intent data from thousands of airline and hotel partners from around the world, highlights that despite most restrictions in Europe being lifted in mid-June, European tourism is showing very slow recovery. Sojern, working with ETC, analysed search and booking data across three aspects of the European tourism market – domestic travel, travel between European countries and international trips to Europe.

Domestic travel: European interest for domestic travel, as expressed in flight searches and bookings, remained very low in July 2020 with year-over-year drops of -37% and a massive -67% respectively. While the current situation does not look encouraging with actual flight bookings being very low, an upward trend in searches for domestic flights has been recorded in the second half of July, which is indicative of people's enthusiasm to travel within their countries, meaning it is now more critical than ever for a coherent coordinated EU response.

Intra-European travel: The first two weeks of July saw a slight increase in air bookings (+6%) for intra-European travel when compared to June. However, as the month progressed, this positive trend faded with flight bookings dropping again. Similarly, searches picked-up only slightly. These fluctuations demonstrate people's simultaneous eagerness and hesitation about travelling in these uncertain times. The longer this uncertainty surrounding travel rules and restrictions between countries continue, the harder it will be for consumers to regain travel confidence and for the industry to see a stable recovery.

International travel in Europe: Global searches and air bookings to Europe are also well below last year's levels for July at -67% and -72% respectively, with Sojern's data clearly showing that this downward trend has been almost flatlining since May. Searches from overseas consumers for travel to Europe declined by 4% between the first and the last week of July, which may be taken, partially, as a signal of weakening interest. This trend is a further illustration that the rebound of long-haul travel will take considerable time, as well as concerted effort from industry and regulators alike.

Responding to these alarming numbers, ETC Executive Director Eduardo Santander, said: *"As we have been warning for several months, effectively coordinating and aligning responses to the evolving epidemiological situation at both EU and national level is the only solution to saving the travel sector in Europe. Nonetheless, there has instead been a very fragmented picture with inconsistent and constantly changing national approaches. This data clearly shows that significant*

work still needs to be done when it comes to harmonising the approach that member states are taking, before any recovery is feasible.”

Proving the importance of tourism recovery as a catalyst for European economic revival, the latest WTTC research shows that every 2.7% increase in travel flows would generate or bring back one million jobs in the sector. Harmonising the inconsistent patchwork of COVID-19 rules and travel advice in Europe could lead to an increase in travellers by 27%, recreating 10 million jobs in travel across the EU.

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[Note to editors](#)

The European Travel Commission is an association of National Tourism Organisations (NTOs). It was created in 1948 to promote Europe as a tourist destination to the long-haul markets outside of Europe, originally in the USA and later in Canada, Latin America and Asia. It currently has 33 member NTOs, including 7 from outside the European Union. Europe is the world's no. 1 tourist destination with 742 million international arrivals in 2019 and more than 50% of the market share of worldwide tourism. For more information, please visit www.etc-corporate.org.

Sojern (www.sojern.com) provides digital marketing solutions for the travel industry. Powered by artificial intelligence and built on more than a decade spent analysing traveller intent data, Sojern activates multi-channel branding and performance marketing solutions to drive direct demand. More than 10,000 hotels, attractions, tourism boards and travel marketers rely on Sojern to engage and convert travellers around the world.