

## EUROPE'S TOURISM LEADERS GATHER IN RECORD ATTENDANCE TO DISCUSS GEOPOLITICAL AND SUSTAINABILITY CHALLENGES

- Issues addressed include impacts for European destinations driven from the ongoing pandemic, conflict in Ukraine and inflation
- ETC keeps sustainability front of mind with trailblazing *Industry Forum on Sustainable Tourism Practices*
- Ukraine's tourism agency attends latest ETC General Meeting to shine light on the devastating impact of the Russo-Ukrainian war on Ukraine's travel sector

**Brussels/ Ljubljana, 20 May 2022:** The heads of Europe's national tourism boards convened in Ljubljana, Slovenia on 18-20 May 2022 for the 103rd General Meeting of the European Travel Commission (ETC). This meeting, which was hosted by the Slovenian Tourist Board, brought together CEOs of national tourism authorities (NTOs) from across Europe and ETC associate members from private industry to discuss the state of play for Europe's tourism sector and risks facing its restart following the pandemic. The meeting had a record participation, seeing 31 of its 34 members in attendance.

The event took place ahead of the summer period, which will prove critical to the recovery of the European tourism sector following the detrimental impact of Covid-19. ETC's own research on "Monitoring Sentiment for Domestic and Intra-European Travel – Wave 11" suggests there is cause for optimism with 77% of Europeans having travel plans between April and September 2022. Over half (56%) of them plan to visit another European country, while 31% choose domestic travel.

Despite feeling upbeat about strong prospects of recovery this summer, delegates could not ignore new challenges facing Europe's travel sector including global inflation and the ongoing Russo-Ukrainian conflict. Mariana Oleskiv, Chairperson of the State Agency for Tourism Development of Ukraine (SATD), attended the General Meeting as an honorary guest online. She reported on the devastating impact of the Russo-Ukrainian war on Ukraine's travel sector. European NTOs reiterated their solidarity with Ukraine and in a show of support invited Ukraine's tourism agency to be the 35<sup>th</sup> member of ETC, offering a complimentary membership for three years. This commitment, taken unanimously and with a standing ovation, will see ETC support SATD with access to all its resources, research data and best practices to help it plan its recovery after the war. Additionally, ETC and its members have pledged to share the work SATD is doing for the sector in Ukraine.

### ETC Keeps Sustainability on the Agenda Amid Competing Crises

Although immediate geo-political risks were rightly front of mind, ETC ensured sustainability remained on the agenda with attendees taking part in ETC's trailblazing *Industry Forum on Sustainable Tourism Practices*. Embedding sustainable practices in tourism has long been a priority for NTOs, and ETC is determined for it to remain a core focus in the sector amidst competing crises including the ongoing pandemic, rising energy prices, and the war in Ukraine.

The forum was devoted to discussing how to keep encouraging businesses to focus on a sustainable and green transition despite these challenges. Peter Jordan, Head of Insights at Toposophy, was joined by speakers from Business Finland and Scottish Enterprise to present the different practical approaches they have taken in developing sustainability toolkits and decarbonisation plans for mobilising tourism business communities in their countries.

Long-time pioneers in the field of sustainable tourism, the Slovenian Tourist Board also took the opportunity to showcase its vision for sustainable tourism, focusing on the development of a balanced green boutique tourism of higher quality, with a cultural identity and a local character. Ilona Stermecki, Acting Director of the Slovenian Tourist Board presented Slovenia's decade long commitment to sustainable tourism and the positive effects of the Green Scheme of Slovenian Tourism (GSST). The GSST is a key platform for the development of green tourism and the implementation of sustainable projects in Slovenian tourism.

**Commenting on the General Meeting, ETC President Luís Araújo stated:** "National tourist authorities throughout Europe are right to be hopeful about the resurgence in tourism predicted for this summer. However, it would be remiss of them to turn a blind eye to challenges on the horizon. It has been encouraging to see the brightest minds in the sector come together to strategise on the geopolitical and environmental issues that will impact us for the months and years ahead. It is also symbolic that we are hosting our discussion on sustainability in Slovenia, which has been at the forefront of the green transition in

*European tourism. I would like to thank the Slovenian Tourist Board for its great hospitality in hosting this meeting and showcasing their sustainability practices first hand."*

**Ilona Stermecki, Acting Director of the Slovenian Tourist Board commented:** *"The Green Scheme of Slovenian Tourism has done a lot in raising awareness that sustainability is the only correct way to develop tourism and an all-encompassing system that affects various segments of society and many industries thanks to its multiplicative nature. Today, as much as 90% of all Slovenian tourist arrivals are generated by Slovenian Green destinations. Coordinated action in all areas is required to contribute to the further development of boutique, genuine, connecting tourism. Of course, it will require us to work even more sustainably, in a connected, high-quality, innovative way together with our European partners and the European Travel Commission"*.

**ENDS**

#### **[Note to editors](#)**

The **European Travel Commission** (ETC) represents the national tourism organisations of Europe. Established in 1948, ETC's mission is to strengthen the sustainable development of Europe as a tourist destination and to promote Europe in third markets. Its 35-member tourism boards work together to build the value of tourism for all the diverse European destinations through cooperation in sharing best practice, market intelligence and promotion. For more information, visit [www.etc-corporate.org](http://www.etc-corporate.org) and follow [@ETC\\_Corporate](https://twitter.com/ETC_Corporate).

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