

Reply to Call for Evidence on EU Sustainable Tourism Strategy

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Introduction

Pearle*-Live Performance Europe, representing over 13,000 organisations and companies in the music, performing arts, and live events sectors, welcomes the opportunity to contribute to the call for evidence on the forthcoming EU Sustainable Tourism Strategy.

As a European employers' association and active participant in the European sectoral social dialogue, Pearle* recognises the crucial role of tourism for the EU economy and its strong synergies with culture. Tourism and culture are interdependent sectors: cultural institutions and live events are significant drivers of tourism, while tourism contributes to the vitality and resilience of cultural ecosystems. A forward-looking strategy that places sustainability, resilience and innovation at its core will therefore also strengthen Europe's cultural offer, enhance community wellbeing, and reinforce the EU's position as a global destination.

Pearle* is part of the EU Tourism manifesto group¹ that was set up about ten years ago to call for more attention to a wide range of aspects related to tourism. For the new Mandate 2024-2029, the European Tourism Manifesto calls for a strategic reset with four priorities: Decarbonisation; EU Vision & Strategy; Connectivity & Borders; Innovation & Adaptation.

Below are our comments on the call for evidence.

Comments

1) As a general principle, tourism must actively contribute to the well-being and resilience of host communities. This requires the involvement of local actors in decision-making and the channelling of targeted funding to reinforce social and public infrastructure. Community-driven tourism initiatives, such as local food production, cooperatives, social innovation and culture and heritage projects, play a key role in ensuring inclusive and sustainable development.

¹ <https://tourismmanifesto.eu/>

2) While the strategy rightly acknowledges Europe's rich heritage, it should also explicitly recognise cultural events, including concerts, theatre performances, festivals, parades and live happenings, as essential enablers of tourism. These events generate direct and indirect tourism flows, create substantial synergies with the hospitality and transport sectors, and showcase Europe's cultural vibrancy. To maximise their impact, stronger collaboration is needed between tourism destinations and event organisers, including joint promotion and communication, training of employees by destination organisations, and better coordination of policies at the EU, national and local levels.

3) According to market research, music tourism in Europe is expected to grow by 18,8% between 2025 and 2030, whilst it represented a market size of \$ 29,652 million. In 2024, for example, a survey found that 18% of Germans and 10% of Spaniards went abroad to attend a concert or festival. Whilst we currently need to rely on global market surveys, a more granular data collection by Eurostat on the motivation of tourists to visit Europe is needed to develop better evidence-based and targeted policies. This can be reflected both in cultural and tourism statistics.

4) We also strongly support the EU's goal of digital transition. More particularly, the EU can support and advance the development of user-friendly and interoperable interfaces that connect tourism platforms with cultural agenda applications. This would enable visitors to access comprehensive information on cultural offers, make more informed choices, and support the sustainable distribution of visitor flows.

5) Investment in digital and green skills for tourism and cultural professionals is equally important to strengthen innovation and resilience, to increase employability, cross-sectoral employment opportunities and skills development

6) Tourism must be accessible to all. To achieve this, EU-wide guidance schemes, exchanges of best practices and structured cooperation with equality bodies should be supported to ensure inclusivity across tourism and cultural offers.

7) A good and well-functioning tourism relies on good functioning visa policies and travel infrastructure. This requires both international artists to be able to take part in European festivals, concerts and events, as well as third-country national visitors to easily and smoothly process travel authorisation (ETIAS) and Schengen visa requirements. In addition, it requires harmonised airline policies and well-functioning rail infrastructure.

8) It is essential to foster collaboration and knowledge-sharing across the tourism ecosystem. Peer-learning mechanisms, clusters for innovation co-creation, pilot projects and the exchange of best practices should be promoted. The EU Tourism Platform should be further strengthened as a tool to enhance information-sharing across Member States, regional and local authorities, destination management organisations and with the involvement of cultural operators. Although good collaboration already exists between culture and tourism in large metropolises or specific areas, there is still a large opportunity for joint promotion that is

underdeveloped⁸. It is essential to foster collaboration and knowledge-sharing across the tourism ecosystem. Peer-learning mechanisms, clusters for innovation co-creation, pilot projects and the exchange of best practices should be promoted. The EU Tourism Platform should be further strengthened as a tool to enhance information-sharing across Member States, regional and local authorities, destination management organisations and with the involvement of cultural operators. Although good collaboration already exists between culture and tourism in large metropolises or specific areas, there is still a large opportunity for joint promotion that is underdeveloped.

9) Lifting barriers to funding, such as for music or cultural activities, allows the development of innovative forms of tourism. This funding can be for promotion, for increasing opportunities for specific groups, or attracting tourism to specific destinations such as rural areas or other urban neighbourhoods.

Conclusion

Pearle* encourages the European Commission to ensure that the EU Sustainable Tourism Strategy reflects the synergies between tourism and culture, and explicitly recognises cultural events as essential tourism drivers and a powerful tool in destination marketing. Moreover, culture as a whole expresses the character of a place and helps to shape a brand that makes a difference in attracting tourists. In this sense, sustainable tourism is also a matter of strategic destination branding

A strategy that promotes community wellbeing, invests in digital innovation, supports workforce upskilling, and guarantees inclusiveness will not only strengthen the resilience of the tourism sector but also reinforce Europe's cultural ecosystem and global attractiveness.

Pearle* stands ready to contribute to further dialogue, especially with regard to the EU Tourism platform and to provide expertise from the live performance sector in the implementation of this important initiative.