

INTERNATIONAL FORUM - EDUCATION, EMPLOYMENT AND TRAINING IN TOURISM

PRESIDENCY REPORT

The International Forum – Education, Employment and Training in Tourism organized by the Portuguese Presidency of the Council of the European Union took place on 21 January 2021, on a virtual platform.

This International Forum gathered governmental, European, public authorities and stakeholders on a debate about skills, training and education on the Tourism sector aiming to respond to digital and sustainable challenges, namely in a post-covid world.

Tourism is a sector that mobilizes people worldwide, it is an industry of the people and for the people, and many want the recovery of this essential asset in their lives. In the International Forum – Education, Employment and Training participated around 600 stakeholders, policy makers and other actors from different countries in an enriching debate, where there was an active exchange of questions and answers. In this forum, several hundred people were part of the discussion aiming a better qualification and education for the tourism of tomorrow.

Although this pandemic crisis has severely affected the sector, the speakers pointed that this is an unique opportunity to reinvent the future of tourism ecosystem. Innovation, digitalization and sustainability are key for transforming and reshaping tourism:

- Innovation as the capacity to transform existing processes in an exclusive experience for the consumer;
- Digitalization as an imminent process stimulated by the crisis, and
- Sustainable Recovery as an economic, social and environmental goal to Tourism ecosystem.

Tourism is based on people and the investment in qualifications and digital skills is crucial to ensure training at all levels of the sector's workforce.

The presentation made by the European Commission of the European initiative Pact for Skills gave some clues on how the EU and Member States could strengthen and stimulate education and training sector. The Pact for Skills initiative aims to facilitate access to the labour market through the promotion of a culture of lifelong learning for all professionals of the sector, building strong skills partnerships, monitorization of skills supply/demand and anticipating skills needs.

Also, it was emphasized the importance of strengthened cooperation within industry, public authorities, social partners, education and business providers and empowering professionals as requirements for a well prepared and qualified industry.

In the field of education and skills, public and private institutions are developing different approaches not only to provide proficient answers to students and professionals but also to respond to industry needs. In this context, increasing partnerships aiming to engage school knowledge and industry experience constitutes a contribute to a successful strategy for the sector.

From the exchange of ideas and different contributions on this Forum emerged several trends that will shape future Tourism ecosystem. These trends can be organized in four topics (skills; education institutions; industry; consumers):

Skills:

- Increased demand for employees with a digital or technical skillset, though human capital such as communication, cross-cultural awareness, languages, and empathy will remain an asset.
- Flexible working arrangements will likely be extended to cope with ambiguous demand.
- Reallocations to higher-demand functions or regions will be considered to minimize gaps.
- Intensification in reskilling and upskilling to create a more resilient workforce.

Education Institutions:

- Adopt blended learning environments.
- Implement new models of online training.
- Invest in upskilling, training and digital credentials.
- Redesign student's and professional's curriculum.
- Increase synergies with the industry stakeholders and government.

Industry:

- Increase cooperation between different stakeholders in order to respond to consumer needs. through a sustainable recovery strategy.
- Digitalization as a key resource for the sector.
- Teleworking will have an impact on the future of organizations.
- Flexible organizational models, processes and procedures.

Consumers:

- Digital technology has become a daily resource for consumers and an expectation for many tourist and travellers.
- Awareness of future generations concerning their impact on the planet and social responsibility is setting ambitious goals regarding green and digital transitions.
- Customer experience is a growing trend.
- Increasing interest with health and safety destinations.
- Rising concerns with cybersecurity and its impact in data protection.

Although different approaches were presented in this forum, it is largely pointed the need to develop strategies for the recovery and rebuild of the sector on a short / medium term but also on the unique opportunity to rethink tourism industry as a sustainable leader of change on a medium / long term.

In this forum the Portuguese Council's Presidency announced an Extraordinary Meeting of European Union Ministers, on March 1st, on a virtual format, which aims to debate the current status of Tourism in the European Union, the preparation of the next Spring/ Summer season and the financial and social recovery of the sector.

The Portuguese Presidency Team

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