

WTTC calls for action to maintain Europe's Travel & Tourism competitiveness

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Long term planning with communities at the centre; increasing resilience by preparing for crises; and transitioning to a seamless traveller journey through the use of technology have been highlighted during the World Travel & Tourism Council's (WTTC) first Europe Leaders Forum as three critical areas for action in order to ensure Europe's Travel & Tourism sector maintains competitiveness.

The first WTTC Europe Leaders Forum takes place today in Lisbon, Portugal, hosted by Turismo de Portugal and the Portuguese Ministry of Tourism.

In her opening address to the 150 leaders present, WTTC President & CEO, Gloria Guevara said, "Travel & Tourism accounts for 10.4% of the world's GDP and 1 in 10 jobs and has consistently outperformed the economy as a whole. Here in Europe, which attracts over half of global international arrivals, Travel & Tourism contributes 9.9% to GDP and in 2017 the sector grew more than twice as fast as the rest of the economy. IATA is forecasting an additional 1.5 billion passengers a year in Europe by 2036.

"The challenge for the future is to ensure that growth is maintained and is sustainable, providing benefits for local communities, be they in large cities or remote rural areas, and ensuring a great experience for the traveller."

Guevara highlighted three areas of opportunity for Europe :

1. Growth needs to be sustainable, planned for the long term and with communities at the centre of planning, to ensure that growth is inclusive and positively benefits the people of Europe.
2. Crisis preparedness, where destinations and the private sector work together to learn from previous experience and ensure an integrated approach to dealing with crises such as extreme weather events, health pandemics and terrorism.
3. Improve efficiency and travel security through the use of technologies such as biometrics, which put a seamless traveller journey at the centre and expand capacity to capitalize on growth opportunities.

"WTTC calls for action in these areas so that Europe maintains competitiveness and maximises future job creation through Travel & Tourism. Europe is a large and important tourism market but it is important that its leaders do not take this for granted. WTTC is delighted to pledge our support to European T&T in this journey," added Guevara.

WTTC's Europe Leaders Forum is the first in a series of regional events to take place in 2018 and attracted over 150 leaders from across the region including HE Manuel Caldeira Cabra, Minister of Economy, Portugal, HE Ana Godinho, Secretary of State for Tourism, Portugal, HE Elena Kountoura, Minister of Tourism of Greece, Peter Fankhauser, CEO of Thomas Cook, Gianni Onorato, CEO of MSC Cruises, and Kike Sarasola, President & Founder, Room Mate Hotels & BeMate.com.

Gloria Guevara congratulated host country Portugal on impressive growth and a focus on investment and long term planning: "Portugal is a great example of one of Europe's mature yet growing destinations. Last year tourism contributed 17% of Portugal's economy and supported 1 in 5 jobs. Travel & Tourism grew three times faster than the country's economy as a whole. The focus on investment, as showcased by the 'Invest in Portugal' programme and long term planning evidenced in the country's Tourism Strategy 2027, shows the Portuguese government's commitment to our sector and I am delighted that we have been able to showcase that through our first WTTC Europe Leaders Forum.

I would like to thank Portuguese Minister of Economy, Manuel Caldeira Cabral, Secretary of State for Tourism, Ana Godinho and Luis Araujo, President of Turismo de Portugal for hosting us in the beautiful city of Lisbon."

Destination stewardship, crisis preparedness and travel security will be explored in more depth during WTTC's Global Summit will take place in Seville, Spain on 3-4 April 2019.