

# Disparities in a Digitalising (Post-Covid) world

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## Special Session Proposal

### **Assessing tourism sustainability and resilience: New data, methods and tools**

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#### **Abstract**

The EU is one of the most prominent tourism destinations worldwide due to its natural richness and diversity, cultural heritage and economic importance, drawing hundreds of millions of international visitors yearly. According to some estimates, the travel and tourism sector accounted for about 10% of the EU's GDP and employment (direct, indirect and induced contribution) in 2019. However, the economic role of tourism is even more substantial in some EU countries and regions. In addition, tourism plays an important social and cultural role for both residents and tourists, by promoting well-being and various forms of exchange.

In the years before the COVID-19 pandemic, the tourism sector observed a large expansion in Europe thanks to overall economic growth and new travel and accommodation players (e.g., low cost carriers, sharing economy, and booking platforms) which made travel and tourism easier and more affordable. This has created both positive and negative impacts in a range of areas (e.g. employment, housing market, environment, etc.), raising issues related to economic, social and environmental sustainability. Following the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, tourism was one of the most negatively affected sectors by the mobility and other restrictions put in place by national authorities to contain it, creating a massive economic downturn. This has led to a debate around past and future sustainability in view of a sustained recovery. As a response to such challenges, the EU is promoting the green and digital transition of the tourism ecosystem, with concrete milestones

until 2030, with the objective of achieving higher sustainability and resilience of the tourism activity.

In a time of intense and rapid transformations, and to monitor and support the transition towards a more sustainable and resilient tourism, detailed, up-to-date, and meaningful information concerning the tourism ecosystem and activity is essential. Such information should cover various aspects of tourism, its environmental and socio-economic impacts, vulnerabilities, and capacities and at different geographical scales. However, many relevant indicators still lack proper definition, development or the adequate underlying data to be calculated. While many public and private international organizations collect and publish data on tourism, such data are often dispersed, are not easily accessible and comparable, or lack the sufficient granularity.

This special session seeks novel contributions (data, methods, or tools) to assess the resilience and sustainability of the tourism activity. The key research question is: What makes tourism sustainable and resilient and how can that be measured?