

[OFFICIAL STATEMENT]

ASCAME calls to unify travel protocols to help the recovery of the Mediterranean Tourism sector

Barcelona, 31st of May 2021 – ASCAME, the Association of Mediterranean Chambers of Commerce and Industry, asks Mediterranean, European and global institutions to agree on a unified set of travel protocols to help accelerate the regional recovery of the industry and retain the millions of jobs that have been lost during the pandemic.

Tourism demand can return to pre-COVID-19 levels before the end of 2021 and bring much-needed relief to the industry if border restrictions and health protocols are eased and vaccine distribution is ramped up further globally. The question is how we can navigate the next six months, and if we can do it right (as vaccination has increased, there is an equitable rollout, testing regimes have been simplified and costs are lower). All this leads to the theory that, by the end of the year, we will be back in business at summer scale.

The Association claims there is still a lot to be done to make travelling during the pandemic easier for tourists, such as by simplifying PCR tests, making test results available quickly and having a clear set of travel protocols in various destinations.

For this reason, ASCAME calls on Mediterranean, European and global institutions to come to an agreement on travel protocols that promote job creation and the recovery of the key Mediterranean economic sectors. If the different regions and international institutions initiate their own protocols and travel pass conditions, the tourism sector's recovery will continue to struggle without a unified plan.

The Mediterranean tourism sector is a major job creator. In fact, the Mediterranean is the world's leading tourism area with nearly 400 million tourists: it accounts for 32% of all international tourist arrivals and 30% of global tourism revenues. It accounts for 13% of exports, 23% of the service sector and employs over 20 million people. In the Mediterranean,

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tourism is a driving force for growth and can also be an engine for economic recovery, as it can lead to job creation and cover the need for external financing due to increased foreign inflows. This capacity to draw in other sectors and its collateral benefits have multiplier effects.

The tourism sector has experienced spectacular growth in the last 70 years. Its drawbacks, if poorly managed, cannot distract us from the great opportunities it offers if well managed. Because of its transversal nature, it impacts on 70 other economic activities, representing 10% of GDP and 10% of employment.

The General Coordinator of ASCAME, Anwar Zibaoui, highlights that “the pandemic is an unprecedented opportunity to reconfigure the sector and ensure not only its growth but also its sustainability, with inclusion and accountability as priorities”.

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