

Press Release

9 April 2024

Travel and tourism industry unites to tackle climate change

Association representatives from the European travel and tourism sector (business and leisure) met in Rhodes, Greece, to sign a landmark declaration promising decisive action towards more sustainable travel and tourism. The joint declaration will serve as a roadmap to foster collaboration and help tourism reach its sustainability goals. Today, more than ever, the industry is committing to prioritise decarbonisation, enhance collaboration, and engage with policymakers in meaningful dialogue.

With the EU elections just around the corner, we call on decision-makers to keep travel and tourism high on the political agenda and create dedicated budget lines for sustainable tourism initiatives. The declaration seeks to propel the travel and tourism industry towards a more resilient and sustainable future, while advocating for policy support at the European level.

Key commitments from the declaration include:

1. **Decarbonisation:** Implement comprehensive climate action plans at organisational level to minimise environmental impact.
2. **Consolidating pledges:** Reaffirm and strengthen pledges to achieve decarbonisation targets by 2050, as endorsed in the Glasgow and Toulouse Declarations.
3. **Catalysing industry:** Foster a culture of awareness and responsibility, by sharing best practices and providing expertise to advance decarbonisation efforts.
4. **Supporting SMEs:** Assist small and medium-sized enterprises in adapting to climate challenges and accessing funding opportunities for decarbonisation initiatives.
5. **Education and training:** Support initiatives to upskill and reskill the workforce and tackle sustainable skill gaps.
6. **Collaboration:** Commit to regular meetings to assess progress and strengthen collaboration among stakeholders, and shape a viable regulatory landscape with European and national policymakers.

Mr Kyriakos Mitsotakis, Prime Minister of Greece, stated:

“Thank you for inviting me to what I consider a very important event and the signing of an important declaration to the extent that it brings together so many associations and representatives of the tourism industry to highlight what indeed is the most critical issue that tourism is facing today.”

“I’m also very happy that this event takes place on the island of Rhodes because we all remember very well that Rhodes was hit very hard last summer by a very substantial wildfire, but it also managed to recover incredibly quickly. I think this is testimony not just to the reaction of the state, the regional government, the municipality, but also to the way the tourism industry and the community of Rhodes came together to support visitors.”

* Founded in 1980, European Regions Airline Association (ERA) is a non-profit trade association representing over 55 airlines plus around 150 other companies involved in European air transport, and is the only association that bring together the entire spectrum of companies involved in European aviation. The association supports and defends the airline industry in providing safe, efficient and sustainable air connectivity to all regions of Europe. By lobbying European regulatory bodies on policy matters, ERA promotes and protects social responsibility, environmental sustainability and the development of regional economies and local communities.

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Mr George Hatzimarkos, Governor of South Aegean Region, commented:

“On this historic day, European travel and tourism associations gather to discuss how the industry can act for a more sustainable and resilient future. It is a great honour for the South Aegean Region to be at the centre of the dialogue.”

Montserrat Barriga, Director General of European Regions Airline Association (ERA) added:

“Aviation plays a crucial role in providing much needed regional connectivity enabling economic and social development to regions whose economies rely on tourism. As our industry faces increased political and public pressure to decarbonise, and to become more environmentally sustainable, it’s imperative that industry and policymakers collaborate to find suitable solutions to benefit the environment, the industry, the consumers and the regions.”

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[1] The following organisations endorse this joint declaration: A4E, ACI Europe, CLIA, ECTAA, EEIA, ERA, HOTREC, IAAPA, IRU, Ruraltour.

