

3rd Meeting of the AIVP - MedCruise Working Group on Cruises and Port Cities.

On Thursday, 31 March 2022 AIVP and MedCruise held the third meeting of the joint **Working Group on Cruises and Port Cities** that, thanks to its 25 members covering 10 countries around the world, represents a unique cooperation practice in the field of port-city relations. As for the previous meeting, Silvia Coppolino Director of the MedCruise BoD, and José Sanchez Director of Agenda AIVP 2030, co-hosted the online rendez-vous. The meeting also counted with the moderation of Aimilia Papachristou, general secretary of MedCruise.

This third meeting was dedicated to “*Communication and Engagement with Stakeholders*”, a topic that follows the main subjects already identified and agreed by the WG members during the Kick-off, as a shared pathway for the sustainable development of cruises and port cities.

The WG counted on the participation of the **United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO)**, a very special Institutional guest strongly desired by the WG as an external but highly valuable support for the activities of the members. During the meeting, after an insightful recorded presentation by **Prof. Alessandra Priante**, *Director for Europe at UNWTO*, the conversational floor was taken by **Ms Nina Kušar**, Project Specialist at the UNWTO attending the virtual meeting.

Both the presentations by the UNWTO depicted a global overview of the current state of tourism, sustainable tourism practices, and new ideas for cruises and port cities, providing detailed info on data, statistics and current perspectives that still remain uncertain due to the Ukraine and Russia’s war. Prof. Priante noted that in January 2022, the tourism industry worldwide experienced a significant rebound, as international arrivals more than doubled over 2020 and 2021. However, UNWTO still observes a negative figure of -67% when compared to previous years, mainly 2019. Regarding Europe, this figure accounts to -53% when compared to 2019. She pointed out that today, the main cause of uncertainty is the Ukraine - Russia’s war which has created another disruption. UNWTO has evaluated that Ukraine and Russia’s international tourism spending accounted for 3% of the world total, which means that this 3% will be lost in 2022.

Prof. Priante stated that for UNWTO, Sustainability, together with innovation, is a key pillar for recovery. Because of this, UNWTO initiated a series of actions especially targeting climate change and the contribution of tourism to achieve carbon neutrality, recognising its capacity to generate a carbon footprint. Among these efforts is the Glasgow Declaration, presented during the last COP 26 in the UK. The Declaration is an urgent global call for commitment to a decade of climate action in tourism. The

commitment is to cut global tourism emissions by at least half over the next decade and reach Net Zero emissions as soon as possible before 2050.

Ms Nina Kušar recalled the UNWTO document Sustainable Cruise Tourism Development Strategies – Tackling the Challenges in Itinerary Design in South-East Asia and informed that in June 2021, **UNWTO has initiated the process of setting up a research and monitoring centre for coastal and maritime tourism in the Eastern Mediterranean.** This centre aims to gather and provide up to date data on the sustainability issues in coastal and maritime tourism and support the exchange between the different stakeholders, public and private, and generally promote cooperation among them.

The meeting was actively participated by the internal members of the WG - Port of Helsinki, Finland and Port of Venice, Italy - who gave their contribution and left their comments, thus animating the floor with feedback and real case histories on how to “*Communicate and Engage with Stakeholders*”. The members highlighted the importance of developing new communication strategies fostering better understanding and cooperation between all involved stakeholders in port cities hosting cruises. This is key to guarantee a correct coordination for sustainable tourism strategies, taking into consideration the local perception of sustainable development.

The next meeting of the WG (10 May 2022) will be focused on “RESILIENCE & SUSTAINABILITY” and will be held as a hybrid meeting combining a live (in person) participation in Tangier – for those attending the 17th AIVP World Conference Cities & Ports (11-13 May) - and a virtual audience experience.