

ENAT President's Message

Looking forward to the Recovery of Tourism in 2021

Dear Friends,

Let me begin with a warm welcome to all the ENAT Members who have continued their membership or who have joined as new Associate Members under the fee-waiver scheme which we offered last year as a way of off-setting the economic hardship brought by COVID-19. We are glad to see we now have almost 250 members, with many organisations registering several of their staff to take advantage of the online information and networking possibilities. Your support is really important to us and we look forward to building a stronger community with you in the coming months and years.

Today is the celebration of Father's Day in many countries. In two days, Spring will start. We all hoped that we could enjoy these two events finally free from the COVID nightmare. Yet it is not so or at least it is too early to consider ourselves outside the risks and the consequences of the Pandemic.

We continue to hold our conferences and meetings online but we start to hear words and plans of a near future when Tourism will re-open, resuming its important place in the economy, fostering social integration in the world, and the new 'post-pandemic' era will begin.

Within this perspective we see many international organisations issuing policy directives, highlighting strategies to better grasp the opportunity of a return to normality.

In these contexts, visitors with disabilities and those with other access requirements must not be left behind in the reconstruction of the tourism services, so that they will be able to participate on an equal basis with everybody.

Proposals on how to face the demand of this huge but still underserved market have been published by the [UN World Tourism Organisation last December](#): practical suggestions and behavioural hints to make the journeys of people with specific access requirements both comfortable and safe.

ENAT, UNWTO and the Spanish Fundación ONCE have just signed the renewal of our Memorandum of Understanding and we will soon start to cooperate on a work plan to identify all the necessary actions to support and improve the post-COVID development of Tourism for All.

The European Tourism Manifesto alliance, in which ENAT participates, has released a paper in February 2021 "[Exit strategy – Preparing to restart Travel and Tourism](#)" where the

alliance calls for the development of a concrete EU roadmap to restart travel and tourism. Such a roadmap should be developed by the EU in close cooperation with industry and social partners. ENAT is now participating in the new [#Tourism4Recovery campaign](#) launched on 1st March, with the goal of raising awareness of the devastating impact of the COVID-19 crisis on European tourism and showcasing how investment in sustainable tourism can be a key driver for the EU's recovery.

These are important steps towards concrete actions in the field of Tourism and a productive use of all the resources which will be applied to the many tasks of the Next Generation EU funding programme in the coming years.

Let us not forget the global figures on travel and tourism: in 2019 the sector's total contribution to GDP was 9.25 trillion US Dollars, providing employment for hundreds of millions of people. Many small businesses and livelihoods have been devastated during the past year and it is vital that governments must when allocating funds to the necessary actions for recovery from the critical impact that COVID has had on our societies.

ENAT is working very hard, as usual, to involve the Tourism sector worldwide towards an even better understanding of the importance of Tourism for All and the benefits that an improved offer could bring to the restart of tourism activities. There has been a strong uptake of [ENAT's free online Accessible Tourism training courses](#) in the past year and we continue to develop new, free self-study and vocational training resources with our members and international partners thanks to the EU ERASMUS+ programme.

The COVID lockdowns have been - and could still be - in this period of travel bans, the occasion and the opportunity to reconsider the tourism offer by investing in comfort, health and safety, with an emphasis on inclusion for everybody. This will surely give payback to the industry and have a positive influence on maintaining jobs and possibly increasing employability in the sector.

Annagrazia Laura

Rome, 19 March 2021