Tourist Well-Being and Infection Prevention and Control

Greece scale

ENI CBCMED
Cooperating across borders in the Mediterranean

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REGIONE AUTÒNOMA DE SARDIGNA
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Co-Evolve4BG

Analysis of Threats and Enabling Factors for Sustainable Tourism at Pilot Scale

Tourist well-being, infection prevention and control

Greece Scale

REGION OF EASTERN MACEDONIA & THRACE

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OVERVIEW

The present document was produced in the framework of **Co-Evolve4BG** project "*Co-evolution of coastal human activities & Med natural systems for sustainable tourism & Blue Growth in the Mediterranean*" in relation to Threats and Enabling Factors for maritime and coastal tourism development on a national scale" Co-funded by ENI CBC Med Programme (Grant Agreement A_B.4.4_0075).

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REVIEW

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I. Tourism and security issues

Tourism is one of the major contributors in many ways to the life of human population, such as creating revenues, jobs, supporting culture and entertainment, familiarising travellers with different customs and cultures. With the development of society and economy, the improvement of people's living standards and the increase in leisure time, the tourism industry grows rapidly. Although tourism industry was the fastest growing industry until 2019 and prior to Covid-19 pandemic there are many risks and issues that can significantly impact it (Bakar and Rosbi, 2020). These include:

- Political instability and unrest
- War
- Terrorism
- Criminal activities
- Economic Recession
- Epidemic diseases
- Natural disasters

The behaviour of the traveller 's in decision making concerning the destination he is going to visit will always be linked to the risks of the trip (Henderson, 2007). The history shows that 9/11 attacks, SARS, swine flu, Tsunami, Bali bombing, 26/11 Mumbai attacks over the past few years have vacillated the global tourism industry due to these crises and disasters. Rapid response to any incident of natural or man-made disaster results in cancellation of air/train tickets and hotel reservations, leading to stagnation and slowdown in the hospitality and tourism industry (Garg, 2010).

The safety and security of a destination influences travellers' "go/no go" decision and are vital to providing quality in tourism. More than any other economic activity, the success or failure of a tourism destination depends on being able to provide a safe and secure environment for visitors. Tourism risk perception is a quantitative assessment of tourism security (Ayob and Masron, 2014). Destination risk perception of tourists directly affects tourists purchase intention. Travel statistics from around the world clearly suggest that tourism demand decreases as the perception of risks associated with a destination increases the asymmetry of the objective existence of tourist safety information and the subjective perception of tourists determines that tourists are extremely sensitive to travel risks (Fan *et al.* 2016). Tourism risk perception can be summarized as cognitive psychology, consumer behaviour discipline and travel safety discipline. Correspondingly, the concept of "tourism risk perception" can also be divided into three views:

- Tourism risk perception is tourists' subjective feelings of the negative consequences or negative impact that may occur during travel.

- Tourism risk perception is tourists' objective evaluation of the negative consequences or negative impact that may occur during travel.
- Tourism risk perception is tourists' cognitive of exceeding the threshold portion of the negative consequences or negative impact that may occur during travel.

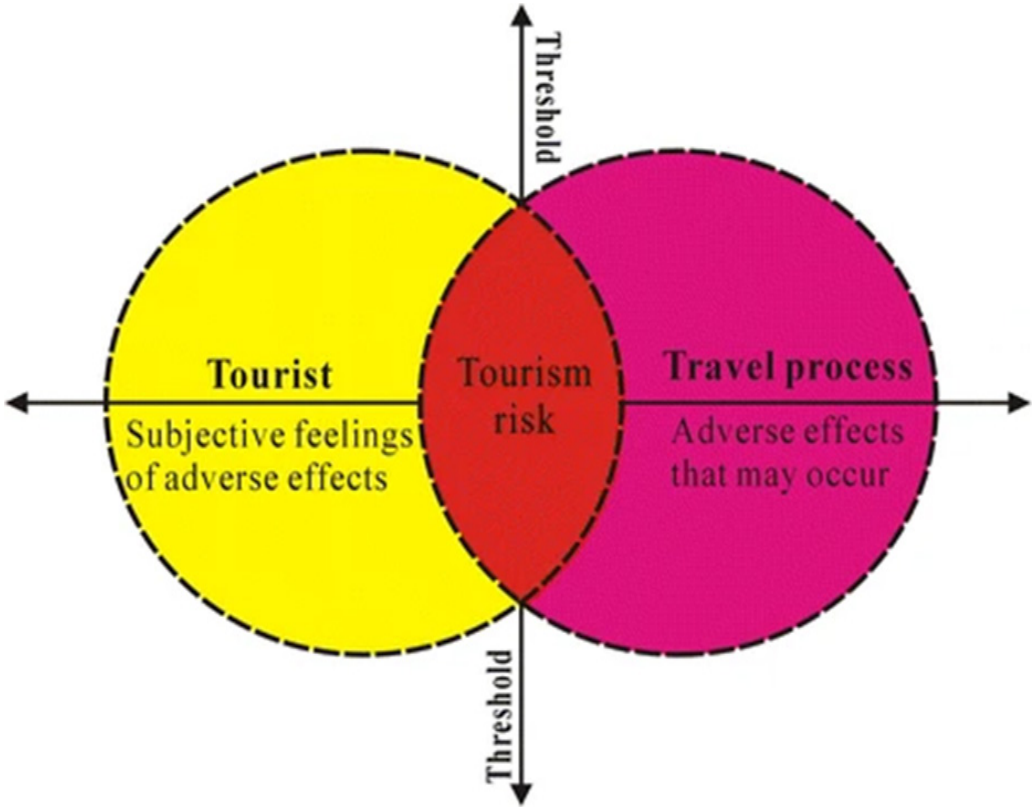

Figure 1. Three views of tourism risk perception concept (Fan *et al.* 2016)

There are two categories, namely demographic variables, and individual cognitive abilities. The former includes age, gender, educational experience, academic background, social status, geography, educational level, income, and social experience. The latter focuses on temperament, personality, emotions, outlook, values, cognitive and meta-cognitive and so on.

The objective factors affecting tourism risk perception mainly refer to negative consequences or negative impact that may occur during travel.

They can be summarized as multiple dimensions of tourism risk. These may include: (1) physical risk, (2) economic risk, (3) equipment risk, (4) social risk, (5) psychological risk, (6) time risk, (7) opportunity loss.

A common finding in tourism literature is that the presence of risk, no matter if real or perceived, influences the travel decision-making process dramatically. Destination choice is made based on certain constraints such as: (1) available time, (2) available budget, (3) physical distance, (4) destination image.

Many authors analysed risk perception of tourists and found that health, political instability, terrorism, strange food, cultural barriers, a nation's political and religious dogma, and crime were the main identified risk factors. Other researchers have concluded that natural disasters such as the tsunami in Southeast Asia and hurricanes in the Caribbean are one of the main risk factors affecting destination choice. Destination choice decision should be considered as a function based on information available from different sources. As a form of protective behaviour, travellers can alter their destination choices, modify their travel behaviour, or if they decide to continue with their travel plans, they tend to acquire more information. In this behaviour the role of Media, including the social media play an important role.

II. Tourism and health

II.1. An activity beneficial to well-being and health

The most obvious and potentially most important health benefit of travelling is stress reduction. Traveling can take you out of your daily routine and into new surroundings and experiences and this can reset your body and mind.

Even planning a trip can have a fantastic effect on the body – it boosts happiness and feels rewarding. Not only does travel reduce stress but it expands the mind. Meeting new people and adapting to new situations makes one more globally and culturally aware. This keeps the mind sharp, increases creativity and helps with personal growth.

When people return from a vacation feeling relaxed and refreshed, it is not just an emotional response to time away from work and day-to-day worries: they're experiencing some of the nourishing effects of traveling. Specifically, vacations have been shown to have a positive effect on health as follows:

- Taking vacations can lower men's risk of death by 21% and mortality from cardiovascular disease by 32%
- Among women, a lack of vacation is associated with a higher risk of heart disease and death from heart disease.
- Women who go on trips more frequently are less likely to become tense, depressed, or tired and are happier with their marriages.
- Vacationing improves your mood and reduces stress. It also can temporarily help boost productivity.
- People who travel more frequently are more satisfied with their physical health and well-being.
- Vacationing can increase creativity.
- Minimizes the risk for depression.
- Keeps stress levels at a minimum and boosts mental health.

To facilitate and maximise the positive health effects of tourism and travelling, the past two decades a new tourism product emerged, the wellness tourism. The Wellness Tourism Association defines wellness travel as: Travel that allows the traveller to maintain, enhance, or kick-start a healthy lifestyle, and support or increase one's sense of well-being. According to The Global Wellness Institute, wellness travel is growing twice as fast as regular travel, making it one of the fastest-growing areas of tourism.

There's a common misconception that wellness travel is reflective of a small group of elite and wealthy leisure tourists. Wellness travellers represent a diverse group of people with a broad range of health needs, interests and motivations. Wellness travel is driven by two types of travellers. On one hand, some people look to immersive wellness as the

sole purpose of a trip (think yoga retreat or a packaged spa vacation). These are planned itineraries that focus on healthy behaviours. With this type of travel, people usually have specific health outcomes they want to improve. Yet on the other hand, for some the intent of wellness-oriented travel is simply to participate in experiences that support overall health and well-being. According to the Wellness Tourism Association, most travellers fall into this category, those looking to incorporate wellness elements into their travel plans.

This pro-active approach to self-care would include doing things like: (1) walking tours, (2) hiking, biking and kayaking, (3) healthy eating, (3) spending time in nature, (4) giving back though "voluntourism" experiences, (5) sleeping enough, (7) resting and wellness activities, that improve relaxation.

II.2. An activity threatening well-being and health

Travelling can increase risks to personal health and well-being, and these risks should be understood when planning travel, particularly to unfamiliar, distant, or remote areas. Taking appropriate precautions before beginning a trip can reduce these risks and ensure a plan is in place if you are injured or suffer from another health condition when away from home.

Not only the parameters expressed in the first part, are related to the destination, and include (1) Political instability and unrest, (2) War, (3) Terrorism, (4) Criminal activities, (5) Economic Recession, (6) Epidemic diseases, (7) Natural disasters, can have severe impact on visitors' health, and wellness. The WHO indicates that travellers often experience abrupt and dramatic changes in environmental conditions, which may have detrimental effects on health and well-being (WHO Coronavirus (COVID-19) Dashboard, 2022). Travel may involve major changes in altitude, temperature and humidity, and exposure to microbes, animals, and insects. The negative impact of sudden changes in the environment can be minimized by taking simple precautions. Possible unpleasant and with negative impact risk for travellers include: (1) altitude changes, and respiratory capabilities, (2) heat and humidity, (3) ultraviolet radiation from the sun, (4) foodborne and waterborne health risks, (5) travellers' diarrhoea, (6) recreational waters, (7) animals and insects, (8) intestinal parasites.

Depending on the travel destination, travellers may be exposed to several infectious diseases; exposure depends on the presence of infectious agents in the area to be visited. The risk of becoming infected will vary according to the purpose of the trip and the itinerary within the area, the standards of accommodation, hygiene, and sanitation, as well as the behaviour of the traveller. In some instances, disease can be prevented by vaccination, but there are some infectious diseases, including some of the most important and most dangerous, for which no vaccines exist.

General precautions can greatly reduce the risk of exposure to infectious agents and should always be taken for visits to any destination where there is a significant risk of

exposure, regardless of whether any vaccinations or medication have been administered. The modes of transmission for different infectious diseases are outlined: (1) foodborne and waterborne diseases, (2) vector-borne diseases, (3) zoonoses (diseases transmitted by animals), (4) sexually transmitted diseases, (5) bloodborne diseases, (7) airborne diseases, (8) diseases transmitted via soil.

Moreover, Road traffic collisions are the most frequent cause of death among travellers. Risks associated with road crashes and violence are highest in low- and middle-income countries, where injury management systems may not be well developed. Worldwide, an estimated 1.2 million people are killed each year in road traffic crashes and as many as 50 million more are injured. Projections indicate that road traffic fatalities will be the fifth leading cause of death by the year 2030 unless urgent action is taken to address the issue. In many low- and middle-income countries, traffic laws are inadequately enforced. The traffic mix is often more complex than that in high-income countries and involves two-, three- and four-wheeled vehicles, animal-drawn vehicles and other conveyances, plus pedestrians, all sharing the same road space. The roads may be poorly constructed and maintained, road signs and lighting inadequate and driving habits poor. Travellers, both drivers and pedestrians, should be extremely attentive and careful on the roads.

III. Tourism and epidemics in Greece

III.1. Review of previous epidemics: little impact on tourism

Greece can be considered as an extremely safe destination concerning communicable disease. More specifically in the past decade 2010-2020 with the exception of Covid-19, only few outbreaks of infectious disease have been recorded, with minimum impact in the local population and no impact at all for travelers and the tourism sector in general. These outbreaks can be summarized as follows: (1) West Nile virus infection, (2) Malaria infections, (3) Measles outbreak, 2017-2018 (Jordà *et al.* 2022).

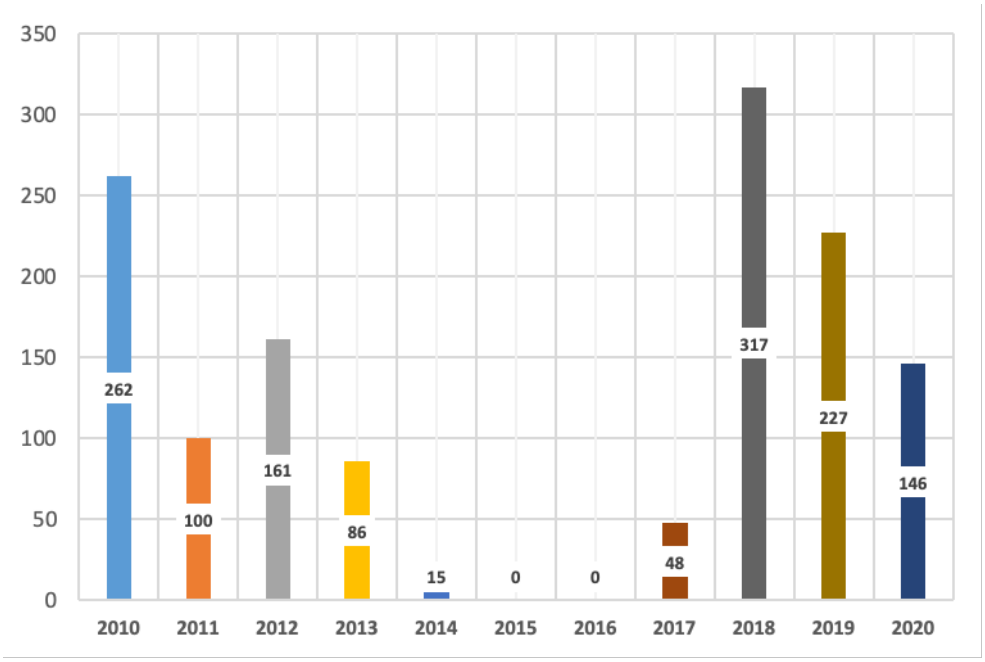

Figure 2. WNV infections diagnosed in Greece for the years 2010-2020 (EODY, 2022)

Figure 3. Map showing the probable Regional Units of exposure of reported cases with laboratory diagnosed WNV infections, Greece, 2020 (n=143)

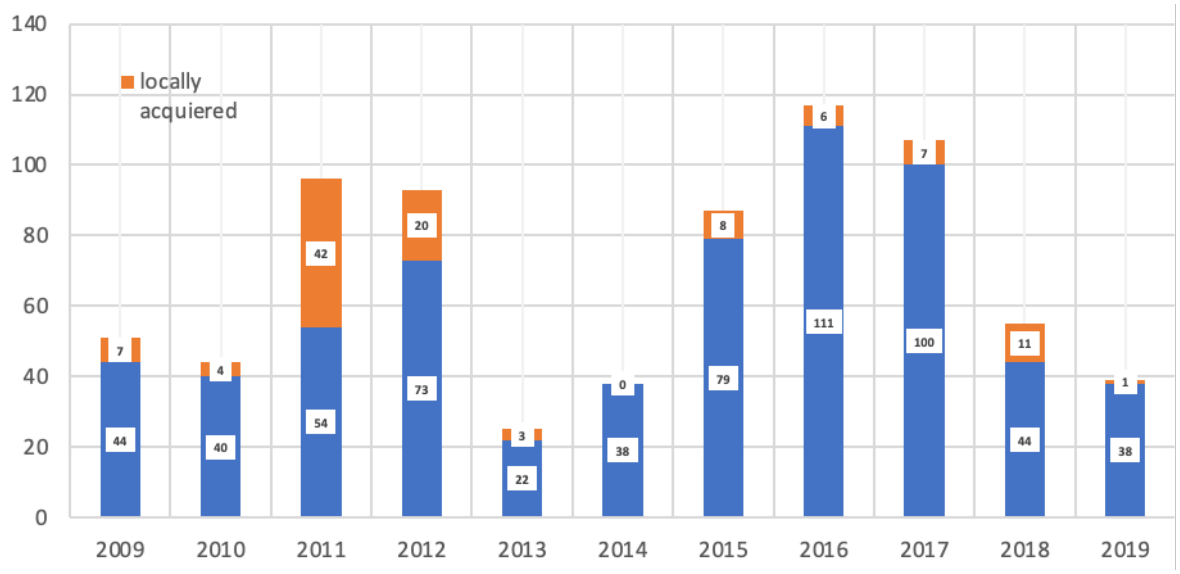

Figure 4. Reported malaria cases by year of symptom onset1 (for imported cases) or infection (for locally acquired cases) and by epidemiological case classification, for Greece, for the years 2009-2019, (EODY, 2022)

III.2. The time of Covid-19, an unprecedented collapse

The world is facing an unprecedented global health, social and economic emergency as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic (Jones and Comfort, 2020). Travel and tourism are among the most affected sectors with a massive fall in international demand amid global travel restrictions including many borders fully closed, to contain the virus. According to the latest issue of the UNWTO World Tourism Barometer, International tourist arrivals (overnight visitors) fell by 72% in January-October 2020 over the same period last year, curbed by slow virus containment, low traveler confidence and important restrictions on travel still in place, due to the COVID-19 pandemic (Gössling *et al.* 2020). The decline in the first ten months of the year represents 900 million fewer international tourist arrivals compared to the same period in 2019 and translates into a loss of US$ 935 billion in export revenues from international tourism, more than 10 times the loss in 2009 under the impact of the global economic crisis.

The coronavirus pandemic first appeared in Greece on February 26th, 2020. Following the confirmation of the first three cases in Greece, on February 27 all festivals in the country were initially cancelled, and by March 10 a total of 89 cases had been confirmed in the country, mainly related to people who had traveled to Italy and a group of pilgrims who had traveled to Israel and Egypt, as well as their close contacts. Health and state authorities issued precautionary guidelines and recommendations, while measures up to that point were taken locally and included the closure of schools and the suspension of cultural events in the affected areas (particularly Ilia, Achaea, and Zakynthos). However, on March 10th, 2021, due to the outbreak of the virus in different parts of the country and failure by many to comply with the restrictive measures, the government decided to gradually enact universal response measures.

Greece showed a remarkable resilience to the pandemic. In contrast to the generally negative climate that followed the virus's outbreak, the country demonstrated quick reflexes regarding managing the health crisis. The digitization of critical public administrative operations was accelerated, enhancing the state's modernization process and creating the base for the next day. At the same time, a significant part of Greek businesses, despite their digital deficit, successfully adapted techniques to confront the pandemic, like the remote working model and other digital solutions required, such as e-commerce.

Although the first wave of the pandemic did not have a serious effect, in terms of cases and deaths, the second wave which started in October and the third which started in January led to a significant increase in the total number of cases of illness and death.

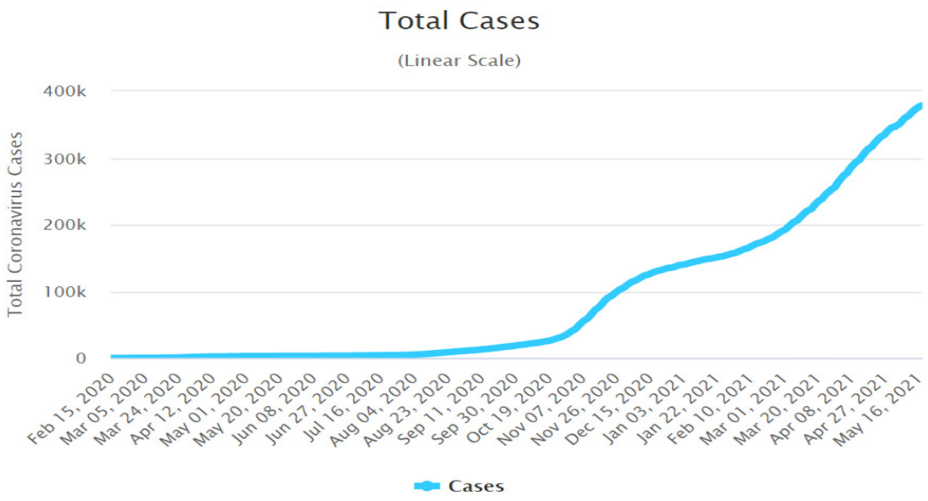

Figure 5. Daily new cases in Greece from Feb 2021 until 16th May 2021

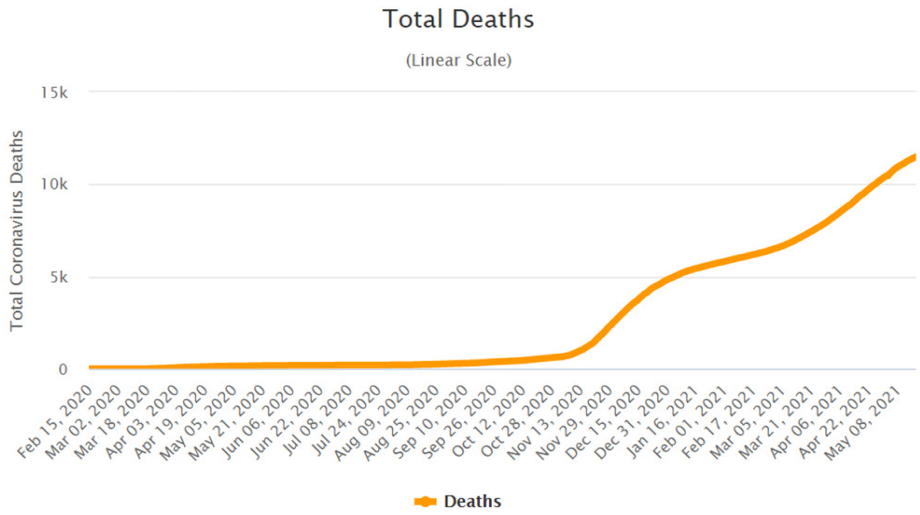

Figure 6. Total number of deaths in Greece from Feb 2021 until 8th May 2021

IV. The problems imposed by the Coronavirus crisis

According to the latest figures from the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO, 2020) was the worst year for global tourism, with international arrivals down -74% compared to 2019 (UNWTO, 2020). Destinations received 1.1 billion worldwide fewer international arrivals in 2020 compared to the previous year, due to unprecedented decline in demand and extensive travel restrictions (Sigala, 2020).

Typically, in 2019 the international travel arrivals amounted to 1.5 billion, while in 2020 only 381 million. According to the latest barometer of world tourism, the collapse of international travel corresponds to an estimated loss of 1.3 trillion dollars in export earnings, more than 11 times the loss recorded during the global financial crisis of 2009. The crisis has endangered between 100 and 120 million direct tourism jobs, any of which in small and medium-sized enterprises.

In Europe, a drop of -70%, recorded with 221 million arrivals: against 746 million in 2019. In Greece, a significant drop of -76.5% was recorded with only 7.4 million arrivals compared to 31.3 million in 2019.

Due to the evolving nature of the pandemic, many countries are still reintroducing stricter travel restrictions, including mandatory tests, quarantines and in some cases complete closure of borders, slowing down the recovery of international travel and tourism restart.

The measures taken globally to tackle the covid-19 pandemic have, unfortunately, continued to have social and economic implications for all areas of activity (Neuburger and Egger, 2021). As expected, these measures also affected the cruise industry worldwide, a sector in which Greece has shown significant performance in all previous years and had a promising future. Cruise statistics recorded for 2020 in 43 registered destinations in Greece show a significant decrease, amounting to 204 cruise ship arrivals (compared to 3 899 arrivals in 2019) and 66,874 visitor arrivals (compared to 5,537,500 arrivals in 2019).

At Piraeus port in 2020, 76 cruise ships arrived with 16 640 passengers compared to 622 cruise ships with 1,098,091 passengers for 2019, falling for the first time to second place under the port of Heraklion. In the port of Heraklion in 2020, 24 cruise ships with 19 998 passengers arrived compared to 204 cruise ships with 307,043 passengers for 2019 and was found in first class. In the other ports the passengers did not exceed 10 000, while the reduction of passengers in many cases amounted to 100%.

More specifically:

- Corfu: 10,448 passenger arrivals and 13 cruise ships from 767 thousand arrivals 420 cruise ships for 2019
- Rhodes: 8,334 passenger arrivals and 14 cruise ships from 308 thousand arrivals and 258 cruise ships for 2019

- Katakolo: 7,589 passenger arrivals and 10 cruise ships from 413 thousand arrivals and 199 cruise ships for 2019
- Mykonos: 914 passenger arrivals and 17 cruise ships from 787 thousand arrivals and 550 cruise ships for 2019

Finally, in the port of Santorini in 2020 only 3 cruise ships arrived with 131 passengers compared to 592 cruise ships in 2019 with 980,771 passengers.

In 2020, travel receipts decreased by -76.5% compared to 2019 and amounted to € 4.28 billion. This is due to the decrease in revenues from residents of EU-27 countries by -70.8%, which amounted to € 2.84 billion, as well as receipts from residents of non-EU-27 countries by -82.0%, amounting to € 1.43 billion.

More specifically, receipts from residents of euro area countries amounted to € 2.39 billion, down by 69.1%, while receipts from residents of EU-27 countries outside the Euro area decreased by -77.5% to € 451 million. In particular, receipts from Germany decreased by -61.6% to € 1.14 billion, while receipts from France decreased by -66.3% to € 367 million.

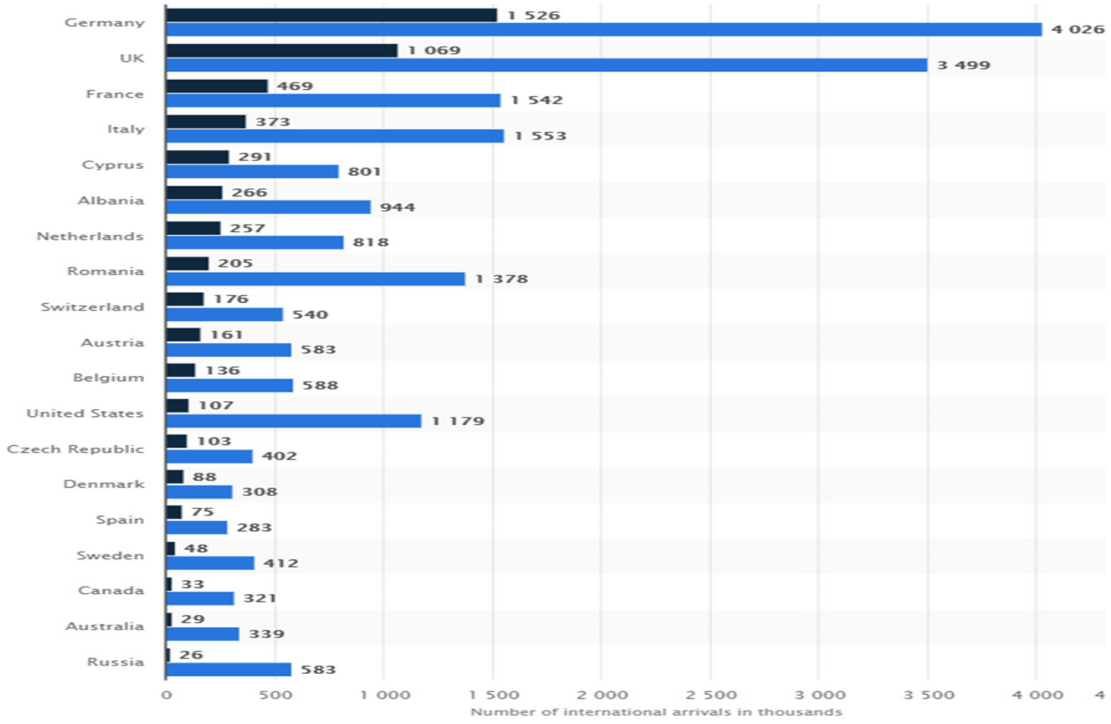

Figure 7. Leading inbound travel markets for Greece in 2019 and 2020, by number of arrivals, in thousands

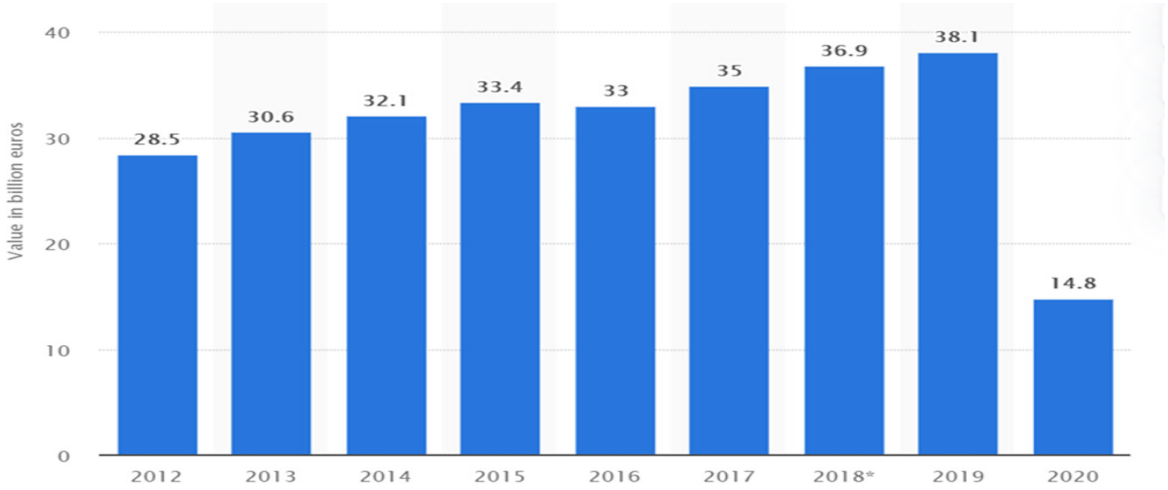

Figure 8. Tourism receipts in billion Euros, Greece, 2012 to 2020

V. Sanitary measures applied

V.1. Border closures and repatriation of tourists

During the first wave of the Covid-19 pandemic, Greece, while most EU countries imposed numerous restrictions on visitor and tourist arrivals, had a significant impact on the number of arrivals.

- Restrictions on flights from countries with high epidemic rates like Italy.
- Completion of a certain document called Passenger Location Form (PLF), which all people visiting Greece, had to fill 24 hours prior to their trip, which contained information on previous trips, transit flights as well as information on their stay in Greece (location, telephone number).
- Random testing during the arrivals (either PCR or Rapid Antigen Detection tests).
- Visitors were obligated to present a negative PCR test (72 hours, prior to their arrival).

More specifically from March 14th, 2020, all air traffic with Italy was banned. Furthermore, on March 16th, Greece closed its borders with Albania and North Macedonia, allowing only the transport of goods and the entry of Greek nationals and residents. The suspension of ferry services to and from Italy, air links to Spain, as well as the banning of all cruise ships and sailboats from docking in Greek ports were also decided.

On March 20th, Minister of Maritime Affairs and Insular Policy announced that only permanent residents and supply trucks would be allowed to travel to the Greek islands (see also section 1.2). Travelers were required to provide proof of permanent residence (via a tax certificate) on the island to which they wish to travel. People who were already on the islands and wished to leave were allowed to return to the mainland.

On March 22nd, the Greek government announced a ban on all nonessential transport and movement across the country. On April 7th, further restrictions on travel by sea, air, and land, until April 27th, were applied as part of the efforts to contain the spread of Covid-19 during Easter (see details in section 1.2) Area-specific lockdowns were also applied.

International flights were only allowed at Athens airport. All visitors were tested upon arrival and were required to stay overnight at a designated hotel. f the test was negative, passengers were required to self-isolate for 7 days. In the event of a positive result, passengers would self-isolate under supervision for 14 days. International flights to Athens and Greece's second-largest city of Thessaloniki resumed on June 15th. The list of countries was compiled based on their epidemiological profile and considering the announcements made by the European Aviation Safety Agency (EASA) and the relevant recommendations of the Infectious Diseases Committee.

From June 15th and until June 30th, 2020, flights from Albania and North Macedonia to Athens International Airport were only permitted for "essential travel". Arriving passengers were categorized in accordance with their origin in distinct groups as follows:

GROUP A: Austria, Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Germany, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Latvia, Lichtenstein, Lithuania, Luxemburg, Malta, Norway, Poland, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Switzerland.

GROUP B: Albania, Belgium, France, Italy, North Macedonia, Netherlands, Portugal, Spain, Sweden, other non-EU countries.

Passengers arriving at Athens International Airport originating from GROUP A were subject to random COVID-19 testing upon their arrival. Passengers arriving at Athens International Airport originating from GROUP B, either with a direct flight or through a country included in Group A, were subject to 100% Covid-19 testing upon their arrival. Passengers arriving at Thessaloniki Airport, were subject to 100% Covid-19 testing upon their arrival. All international passengers were provided, during check in or on board, with a Passenger Location Form, to be filled and provided to the authorities upon arrival. Tested passengers had to compulsory self-isolate in the address declared for 24 hours, until the testing outcome would become available. Connecting Passengers were subject to COVID-19 testing upon their arrival in Athens or Thessaloniki and were able to continue their trip to their destination, where they would self-isolate until the testing outcome became available. Furthermore, the Greek Government extended flight restrictions from/to UK and Turkey until June 29th, 2020. Foreign ferries were forbidden from docking at Greek ports, while pleasure boats were permitted with only crew aboard.

Regarding arrivals by land, they were permitted from Bulgaria as of June 15th, but remained banned for Turkey, Albania, and North Macedonia (except for absolutely necessary business trips). Those restrictions were lifted on July 1st for Albania and North Macedonia, while the situation with Turkey remained to be reviewed on June 30th.

From July 1st and onwards all visitors from air, land, or sea, were subject to tests rules upon arrival (see section I). Upon being tested, travelers would proceed to their destination. In the event of a positive result, they were placed on 14-day quarantine, with expenses covered by the Greek state.

Residents form EU+ countries were allowed to travel to Greece. EU+ consists of the European Union, the United Kingdom, Switzerland, Norway, Lichtenstein, and Iceland. Algeria, Australia, Canada, Georgia, Japan, Montenegro, Morocco, New Zealand, Rwanda, South Korea, Thailand, Tunisia, Uruguay, China subject to confirmation of reciprocity. Other countries citizens were allowed to travel to Greece only for essential travel. International flights were allowed into all airports in Greece. The ban has been extended until July 15th for direct flights from the UK and Sweden.

Amid the second wave of the Coronavirus outbreak, the Greek government announced on November 9th, that all foreigners seeking to enter the country must first present negative results of a PCR test, administered no more than 72 hours prior to the scheduled departure.

On December 14th, the Hellenic Civil Aviation Authority (HCAA) extended all travel restrictions for domestic and international flights previously announced, until January 7th, 2021. The authority also issued a new aviation directive informing that all travelers entering Greece on flights from abroad from December 18th will be required to enter a mandatory 3-day precautionary quarantine. Travelers from abroad, arriving from December 18th, 2020 until January 7th, 2021, will have to submit a negative COVID-19 test result (PCR) performed up to 72 hours before arrival in Greece and also take a rapid antigen COVID-19 test upon entry.

Moreover, all previously announced travel restrictions remained in place until January 7th, at midnight for international flights and until 6am for domestic flights. More specifically:

- The aviation directive concerning domestic commercial and general/business flights was extended. According to the directive, only essential travel would be allowed for health reasons, business reasons, family reunification, and return to permanent residence.
- Flights between Greece – Turkey and Greece – Catalonia, Spain, remained suspended.
- All flights to Greece from Albania and North Macedonia would continue to operate only through Athens International Airport (AIA).
- Only 10,000 travelers from Israel per week would be allowed to enter Greece on flights landing at all airports in the country.
- Only 500 permanent residents of Russia per week would be allowed to enter Greece on flights landing (only) at the airports of Athens, Thessaloniki, and Heraklion.

The aviation directive banning entry to Greece of non-EU Citizens was also extended until January 7th, 2021. Citizens from the following 9 countries were excluded from the ban: Singapore, Australia, Japan, New Zealand, Rwanda, South Korea, Thailand, Uruguay, and the United Arab Emirates. On January 8th, 2021, Greece's Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) extended travel restrictions and announced 7-day quarantine (previously 3 days) to all passengers on international flights, until January 21st, 2021. On January 22nd, 2021, flight travel directives extended until February 8th, 2021. Under the new NOTAM, the limit on the number of passengers arriving from Israel was lifted. On February 8th, 2021, the Hellenic Civil Aviation Authority (HCAA) further extended travel restrictions for domestic and international flights in Greece. The non-essential travel restriction for domestic flights (travel between prefectures) in Greece extended to 6am

on March1st. Exempt from the restrictions are emergency flights, Hellenic national healthcare system flights, state flights, sanitary flights, humanitarian flights, military flights, cargo flights, firefighting flights, frontex flights, technical landing flights (where passengers do not disembark) and ferry flights (return with crew without passengers). The HCAA's update for its Covid-19 aviation directives (NOTAMS) extends travel rules and restrictions for all international flights, which includes the 7-day quarantine measure for all arrivals from abroad. All arrivals from the UK must take a PCR test after their seventh day of quarantine in Greece. If the test is positive the quarantine will be in force for 14 days. If the test is negative the quarantine ends. The temporary ban on entry into Greece from outside the EU has also been updated. Citizens from the following 10 countries are excluded from the ban: UK, Singapore, Australia, New Zealand, Rwanda, South Korea, Thailand, United Arab Emirates, Russian Federation, and Israel. It is noted that Japan has been removed from the list of countries exempt from the restriction. Flights between Greece – Turkey remained suspended; the weekly limit on arrivals from Russia remains in place until at least the end of February 2021.

Land border arrivals from Bulgaria were allowed through Promachonas border station. Entry from other border stations with Bulgaria was allowed for essential travel only. With regards to Albania, North Macedonia and Turkey entry was permitted for essential travel. Essential travel was allowed through Nymfaia, Krystallopigi, Kakavia, Kipi, Evzones and Promachonas points of entry.

Arrivals by ferry ships were permitted only in Patras, Corfu and Igoumenitsa ports. Travelers had to complete a Passenger Locator Form (PLF) 24 hours before their arrival in Greece. An electronic or hard copy of the PLF confirmation had to be presented to the designated crew members before embarkation onboard a ship at any Italian port. Travelers would receive the PLF with a QR code on the day of their scheduled arrival to Greece (at midnight) and would be notified via email. No such restriction applied on yachting.

Since November 9th, 2020, arrivals by sea of private yachts, cruise ships, ferries, and any other professional tourism vessels, regardless of flag or destination abroad, as well as the disembarkation of passengers of these boats in any way whatsoever, are prohibited.

From May 15th, 2021, the Greek government, as the vaccination programs in all EU countries was moving forward decided to lift some of the above restrictions for EU citizens and citizens of countries like USA, Australia, New Zeeland, Russia, Israel *etc.*, in order not to lose another touristic period. For entering the country, the following are requested: (1) Vaccination certification or, (2) Certification of previous disease, (3) A negative PCR test, 72h prior to the arrival.

V.2. Sanitary protocols applied in the tourism sector

Since the summer 2020 the Greek government and the EU stated principles for the safe and gradual restoration of tourism activities. The Greek Tourism Ministry has released the health protocols that are to be applied in all the hotels in the country for their safe reopening and operation in the aftermath of the Covid-19 pandemic. Recommended dates for the reopening of hotels in Greece (which have been closed since the country first went into lockdown):

- June 1st: Reopening of year-round hotels
- June 15th: reopening of all other tourist accommodation establishments (seasonal hotels and resorts)

The specifications for the reopening of Greece's hotels apply to all types of tourist accommodation establishments regardless of technical and operational features, classification, type, and duration of operation. Every hotel in Greece is obliged to draw up and follow a protocol in accordance with the instructions of the Tourism Ministry.

The administration / management of hotels with a capacity of more than 50 rooms are obliged to develop an action plan and individual protocols for each section of the establishment. More specifically, the aim of the action plan is for the hotel to take measures to prevent and effectively manage suspected Covid-19 cases to limit the spread of the virus to staff and guests. The action plan must comply with the recommendations of Greece's public health organization – EODY and will be revised according to developments. According to each action plan:

- Hotel management must appoint a health coordinator to supervise that the protocol is being followed and individual people to supervise each hotel section (e.g., F&B, housekeeping).
- Hotel staff must be trained to follow and execute action plans.
- All hotels will be required to have a doctor on call, who will act on the instructions of EODY for testing suspected cases of Covid-19. At the same time, through telemedicine, doctors will be able to monitor suspected cases.

Action plans will note which hotels have been accredited by certification bodies (optional) in terms of taking measures to prevent and treat coronavirus cases.

Operational plan for managing Covid-19 cases (all hotels)

All tourist accommodation establishments, regardless of size, are obliged to draw up an operational plan to be able to manage suspected Covid-19 cases, in accordance with the current instructions of EODY.

Each establishment must appoint a coordinator to supervise that the proper management of suspected coronavirus cases is being followed out. EODY must be informed on the personal details of all coordinators and collaborating doctors. For the staff the following are mandatory:

- All staff members must be aware of how the Covid-19 virus is transmitted; be able to provide information to guests; be trained on practices for cleaning and disinfecting identified spots; follow hygiene rules to avoid transmitting the virus (frequent hand washing, avoiding handshakes, physical distancing, avoiding contact of hands with eyes, nose and mouth and respiratory hygiene).
- Every hotel must provide each staff member with personal protective equipment (masks, gloves).
- Staff is advised to stay home and seek medical attention if they experience symptoms related to the disease, notifying the hotel's health coordinator.
- It is recommended that staff undergo thermal screening every morning.
- If a staff member meets a Covid-19 case, he must report it immediately to the hotel's health coordinator and be excused from work.

Hotel logbook

For public health protection, every hotel must keep an updated record of staff members and all guests staying at the hotel – name, nationality, date of arrival and departure, contact details (address, telephone, e-mail), so that communication is possible if a coronavirus case is identified later.

The General Regulation on Personal Data Protection (GDPR) must be observed, and all staff members and guests must be informed that their information will be kept on file for reasons of public health protection. It is necessary to record and update all events that may occur in the logbook.

Communication

- All hotels must inform their employees, guests, contractors, suppliers, visitors, and the general public on the measures of their action plan.
- It is recommended for all hotels to update their websites with a dedicated Covid-19 section, which will include information on their new policy of taking increased hygiene measures, changes in opening hours of common spaces and modification of check-in / check-out duration. Hotels may also provide this information with their available means (*e.g.,* on public TVs, in room TVs, on signage in the hotel and printed information at reception).

Accommodation services

- For the Reception desk according to the legislation the following are described as mandatory:
- Staff members are obliged to follow the necessary hygiene measures (frequent hand washing), keep the appropriate distance (at least one meter from customers) and avoid handshakes.

- When requested, staff should be able to: a) inform guests on the hotel's rules and the new measures taken to address incidents, b) provide useful information to health care providers regarding the locations of public and private hospitals, Covid-19 reference hospitals and pharmacies in the area and c) provide personal protective equipment (masks, gloves) when requested.
- It is recommended for hotels to provide information leaflets on basic health instructions translated into English, French and German. In addition, hotels can also provide useful coronavirus-information for guests through an application for mobile phones.
- Each hotel must have a medical kit available for the occurrence of an incident, which will include disposable gloves and masks, antiseptics, cleaning wipes, apron, long-sleeved robe, laser thermometer.
- Staff must be in a position to identify symptoms and report them directly to the health coordinator.
- Plexiglass windows can be placed at reception (optional).
- The reception desk must have an antiseptic for use by the customer (fixed or non-fixed devices)
- Frequent disinfection of reception desks is recommended.
- For all to maintain a distance of two meters from one another, the hotel should arrange the reception desk and furniture in public areas in such a way in order to keep the space open, add floor markings and properly manage queues in order to reduce waiting times.
- Queuing at reception during check-in / check-out must be avoided.
- It is recommended to use electronic alternatives for check-in-check out (*e.g.*, mobile concierge, use of tablets that can be disinfected after each use).
- Credit or debit cards are recommended for payment of hotel costs (cash should be accepted only in exceptional cases). Bills, invoices, and receipts are recommended to be sent by email.
- All key cards must be disinfected.
- Mandatory extension of duration of check-out and check-in times between stays (check out by 11am and check in from 3pm) so that rooms can be thoroughly cleaned and disinfected and aired out through natural ventilation.
- Non-hotel guests are prohibited from entering hotels.
- For cleaning, disinfection, housekeeping procedures the following should be performed:
- All hotels are obliged to follow enhanced disinfection and deep cleaning practices in accordance with EODY instructions. Special cleaning instructions for rooms are also provided for Covid-19 cases.

- All hotels must reinforce their sanitation services in all public areas and pay special attention to cleaning “high-frequency touch points” such as door handles and elevator knobs.
- Meticulous cleaning and very good room ventilation must take place between stays of guests.
- Guests with symptoms should be monitored (discretely).
- The frequent cleaning of rooms during the stay of guests should be avoided (this is for housekeeping staff to avoid meeting possible cases and to prevent further transmission).
- The daily change of sheets, pillowcases and towels should be avoided and only carried out upon the request of guests.
- It is recommended to remove immaterial objects (pillows, bedding) from all rooms.
- It is recommended to remove shared multi-purpose items such as menus, magazines, *etc.*
- TV and air conditioner controls should have disposable covers.
- Fabric surfaces (*e.g.,* furniture upholstery) should be cleaned with a steam appliance.
- The doors and windows of all rooms should be opened daily for natural ventilation.
- Notification (on room doors or inside rooms) is recommended so guests are informed of when and how their rooms were cleaned.
- It is recommended to place individual antiseptic gels in each room.
- Concerning food services, the hotels should apply the following guidelines:
- All kitchens in hotels are obliged to follow Hazard Analysis Critical Control Points (HACCP), an internationally recognized method of identifying and managing food safety related risk.
- Goods must be received by specific staff members who always wear gloves and masks.
- All kitchen staff members should keep distance from one another, in accordance to the requirements of health authorities.
- Entrance to the kitchen area is prohibited for the public.
- All restaurant and bar managers must implement social distancing through table spacing and guest seating.

<u>Swimming pools and other recreational water facilities</u>

- Only outdoor swimming pools in hotels are allowed to operate, according to the current legal framework.
- Indoor swimming pools are prohibited from operating.

- Number of bathers: the crowding density in hotel pools is calculated with an index of 5 m2 of water surface per person.
- Physical distancing:
- The layout of seats on swimming pool decks (sunbeds, chairs, sun loungers, *etc.*) should be such so that the distance between the ends of the seats of two people under two different umbrellas be at least 2 meters in each direction.
- It is recommended for hotels to cover seats, tables, personal storage boxes, staff notification buttons and price lists with materials that can be effectively disinfected.
- All seats, tables, personal storage boxes, price lists and any other items should be disinfected after a guest leaves and before used by another guest.
- It is recommended for hotels to offer towels that will cover the entire surface and disinfect each sunbed / seat after each use. It is recommended to remove fabric surfaces from sunbeds.

Air conditioning and space ventilation

According to the Health Ministry's guidance on "Taking measures to ensure public health from viral and other infections during the use of air conditioning units", special attention should be shown on non-recirculation of air and allowing natural ventilation in rooms and other areas (by shutting down the system that deactivates air conditioners when doors are opened).

Shops operating in hotels

The same rules apply in shops operating inside other establishments, according to the current legal framework. Social distancing rules apply. Special floor markings should be used for guests to maintain the proper distance (1.5 meters) from one another. Other restrictive rules regard how many people are allowed in one shop, depending on size.

Public areas (outdoor and indoor)

Public areas include lobby, seating area, outdoor seating, *etc.* (not decks around swimming pools). Social distancing rules apply.

- Recommendation to avoid the use of elevators. Installation of disinfectants at elevator entrances and recommendation for use upon entrance and exit. Frequent cleaning of elevators especially on "high-frequency touch points" such as handles and knobs.
- Signage and floor markings must be used to remind customers to keep their distance from one another.
- Installation of antiseptic solutions (fixed or non-fixed devices) in all public areas.

- Furniture should be moved around in the layout of public spaces so that physical distancing is maintained by avoiding overcrowding (4 people/10 sqm)
- Hotels are recommended to allow guests to park their own vehicles rather than provide a valet service. If a valet parking service remains, the valet must wear a non-surgical mask and gloves.
- Hotels are advised to examine the possibility of suspending the operation of inhouse business centers. As an alternative, hotels can provide guests with Wi-Fi access. Printing services or other business services can be provided through the connection of a personal device of guests.
- Overcrowding in restrooms should be avoided.
- Rules apply to hotels that offer access to beaches. Physical distancing rules apply for seating (sunbeds, chairs, sun loungers, *etc.*). The layout of these seats should be such that the distance between two people under two different umbrellas is at least 3 meters in each direction. Bathers should be discouraged from placing towels or beach mats between umbrellas.

Transfer Service

- For vehicles up to 5 seats, the driver is allowed to transfer only 1 passenger. A second passenger is allowed only if the first passenger needs assistance.
- For vehicles up to 6 or 7 seats, the driver is allowed to transfer 2 passengers.
- For vehicles up to 8 or 9 seats, the driver is allowed to transfer 3 passengers.
- Passenger limits may be exceeded, only if the guests are parents with minors.
- The use of non-surgical masks by passengers and drivers is Mandatory.
- It is recommended for drivers to provide antiseptics.
- Drivers must avoid handshakes.
- Drivers must ensure that the vehicle is naturally ventilated.
- Drivers of club cars must wear masks and gloves. The vehicles must be disinfected after each use. There are no restrictions on the number of passengers for open top vehicles (golf cars).

Many private certification bodies have developed private inspection schemes and standards to certify hotels and businesses of the tourism sector, for their compliance in implementing safety measures against the spread of Covid -19. In Greece more than 12.200 tourism related enterprises have been certified for implementing these sanitary protocols.

Figure 9. Certification logos for tourism enterprises that implement safety measures against the spread of Covid-19

VI. The resumption of tourist activity

VI.1. Fears remain

Risk is an important driver of human behavior, in everyday life as well as in the vacation context. People shift their typical behavior to avoid risk; thus, protecting their material possessions and health. Ensuring safety is an important vacation planning objective mainly due to several unknown situations related to visiting new places and meeting new people. Destination attributes play an important role in leisure travel, as they represent characteristics of tourist places that tourists find most important when making travel-related decisions. Tourists consider natural and cultural attractions as well as safety to be the most important attributes of their chosen destination. These attributes are followed by the costs of visiting and living. However, in times of a pandemic, ensuring health and safety becomes a priority when planning a vacation (Kővári and Zimányi, 2010). Understanding the role of risk and anxiety in tourist behavior is important for the development of measures, which help to restore travelers' certainty in general and in specific vacation related decisions. COVID-19 has generated an unprecedented level of fear in the public, likely hampering the recovery of the tourism industry after the pandemic ends (Wachyuni and Kusumaningrum, 2020). Covid-19 pandemic leads to the development of COVID-19 travel risk perception and travel anxiety, and most likely also to general anxiety. The three concepts have different impacts on vacation plans. Behavior-specific approaches are needed to reduce the travel risk associated with Covid-19 and related travel and general anxiety, which will help restore international travel. Empirical findings show that Covid-19 makes people uncertain and leads to the development of travel anxiety. People who traveled frequently in the past express the least likelihood of not traveling in the future, due to the coronavirus. Following this, it is important that the tourism industry improves its communication strategy by informing travelers on how health related COVID-19 risks can be reduced to a minimum. Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, tourism was generating substantial positive impacts on the global economy; however, it was also causing vast negative environmental and social costs. While the COVID-19 pandemic triggered devastating economic costs for the tourism and other industries, it may be expected that early forms of post covid-19 tourism will be more sustainable. Tourists are more likely to focus on small scale tourism, domestic travel, and individual tourism experiences; and be more reserved in their tourism consumption. Such tourist behavior will substantially reduce negative environmental and social costs of tourism, typical for the pre-COVID-19 times. Before the COVID-19 pandemic, the general travelling population was reluctant to alter typical vacation behavior in favor of more sustainable tourism–very little tourists intendedly make sustainable vacation decisions. Due to COVID-19 and general anxiety, people will be making low risk vacation choices which will be more sustainable; thus, helping tourism to recover into a more sustainable future. Tourism providers and destinations should develop small-scale tourism, involving risk prevention measures and, in doing so, ensuring that the social making sure that social, environmental, and economic capabilities of their local communities are met.

Vaccination and safety measures are believed to be the key to changing the game. As previously mentioned more than 12,200 tourism related enterprises have been certified for implementing these sanitary protocols. The vaccination program in the country moves with high speed.

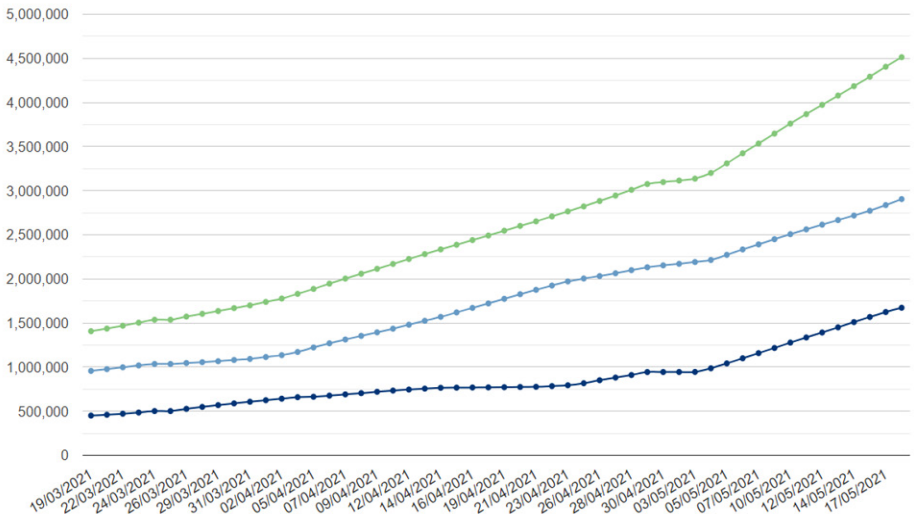

Figure 10. Vaccinations in Greece until May 17th, 2021 (EODY, 2022)

A recent study confirms that Spanish tourists mind Greece as a health safe destination. Figure 11 indicates that 72.3% of Spanish tourists consider Greece as a Safe Tourist Destination. According to the mean score of each factor, for the Spaniards, the "consciousness and discipline of the citizen with the rules and regulations", "the highly trained medical and nursing professionals" and the "commitment on maintaining an unaffected brand name in terms of safety" considered the most significant factors that name Greece a Safe Tourist Destination. On the other hand, the less significant factors are their "prior travel experiences in Greece" and "how safe one can be under the COVID-19 circumstances" and "the access to information and advertising campaigns about how safe is to travel to Greece". The results of the survey indicate that the image of Greece as a Safe Tourist Destination is strongly correlated with factors of "Successful management of the COVID-19 pandemic compared to other countries" and "Low rates of corona virus infection nationwide".

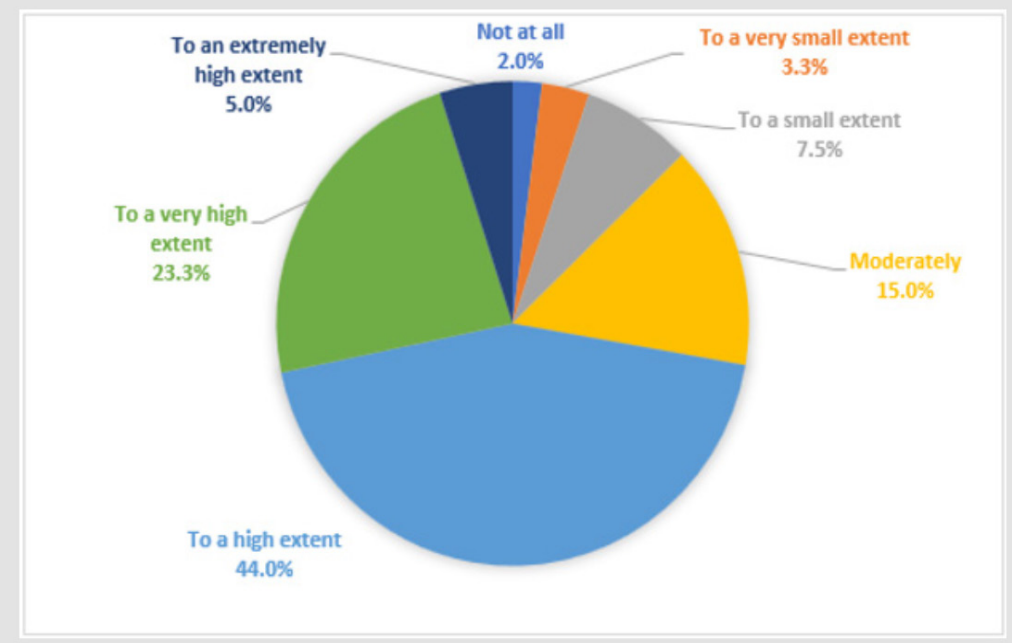

Figure 11. Greece as a Safe Tourist Destination (Spaniards perceptions) (Metaxas, 2020)

VI.2. Changing tourist behaviour

Faced with the desire to travel and practical obstacles against it, people are expected to make more considered travel choices. Tourists in the post-COVID era will be less willing to compromise on their next trip. They will have much higher expectations of hospitality service providers and be much more demanding. In order to keep up, the industry should prioritize offering services, facilities and experiences that cater to wellness, health, and overall wellbeing (Moreno-González *et al.* 2020). They will need to focus on high hygiene standards, which tourists are expected to covet.

The pandemic has made it clear that the future of tourism and the tourism of the future will undergo changes. Given the fact that there are mature destinations that speak of the loss of 12 businesses per day by the tourist offer, new ideas will emerge to meet this demand eager to resume travel, adapting to new tastes and trends. Let's see some of those that should mark the new era of tourism:

Excellence in health and hygiene: Excellence in service and, what's more, in countries that stand out in this factor such as Spain, will be highly reflected, at least in the first post-covid years, in health and hygiene issues. The measures taken - and well communicated - will reflect the concern of the providers of the different tourist services for their clients and their employees.

Communication as an ally for success: Marketing strategies and the development of new products and services adapted to new tastes and needs will continue to make the

difference between success and failure. So will efficient communication - in all its aspects - adapted to each demand niche. Communications must include social media as well.

Technology to get to know the client: The use of technology, both for the development of new products and services - especially everything related to contactless - and to talk efficiently with clients and continue to know their profile, what they are looking for, what they think, and which are their fears when travelling is, more than ever, a decisive matter. Other trends also stand out, such as artificial intelligence for assisted communication in the first levels, virtual reality as a marketing tool for destinations, data management or alternative payment systems, among others. All these advances will play a very important role in the development of new tourist destinations and the reinvention of mature destinations.

The return of travel agencies: In the same way, these advances usually bring back to basics, and travel agencies, at least those that apply the aforementioned, will emerge as beneficiaries thanks to their role as generators - whether in a real or perceived way - of the tranquility of clients. Insurance, especially that involving cancellations and doctors with improved coverage, has become one of the protagonists in the era of travelling with masks and the threat of lockdown.

Destinations created for the 12 months of the year: The seasonal adjustment has always been a basic factor in some tourist destinations with a very marked season, mainly those that have based their offer on sunny beaches and have not varied their services in existing undervalued tourist resources to extend the seasons for tourism. The new offer that must emerge gives rise to the opportunity to co-create the destination considering the 12 months of the year and throughout the territory (tourism 360º/365 days).

Tourism for all: Accessibility, increasingly on the rise due in part to an ageing population, will continue its fair growth and will provide greater comfort not only to people with special needs, but also to the rest of the population. Let's not forget that accessibility is essential for 7% of the population, good for 40% and comfortable for 100%.

Regenerative and conscious tourism: Sustainability was already a growing trend before the pandemic. Now it must become a sine qua non for different destinations and operators. It is not about growing, but about doing it intelligently, taking advantage of all resources without compromising them.

Necessary joint work: Synergies and public-private, public-public, and private-private collaboration will be necessary more than ever in the reconstruction of the sector.

VII. The future of Mediterranean tourism in the post-Covid-19 context

The social and economic consequences for the tourism sector, due to the pandemic, will thus be felt for years to come, and the uncertainty is still a major factor in the equation, forbidding both public and private actors to build up hope for a quick recovery. While in the second half of 2020, 53% of destinations temporarily eased travel restrictions in 2021, a slow recovery is expected. The seniors, for example, could be fearful of travelling for the upcoming years, while those subject to financial setbacks brought about by the COVID 19-induced economic crisis will have less disposable income to spend in tourism. The United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) drew scenarios of what the sector can expect in the coming months, based on various estimates of the COVID-19 spread. However, the return to the pre-pandemic level of 2019 is not expected before 3 to 4 years, depending on the vaccine timeline. These scenarios point to a rebound in the year 2021, provided that the contagion numbers decrease, which would lead to a boost in travellers' confidence on the side of the customers and a lifting of travel restrictions on the side of government regulations. The first scenario draws a recovery for mid-2023, the second by the end of 2023 and the third by the end of 2024. For 2021, the number of international arrivals will remain significantly lower than in 2019 in any case.

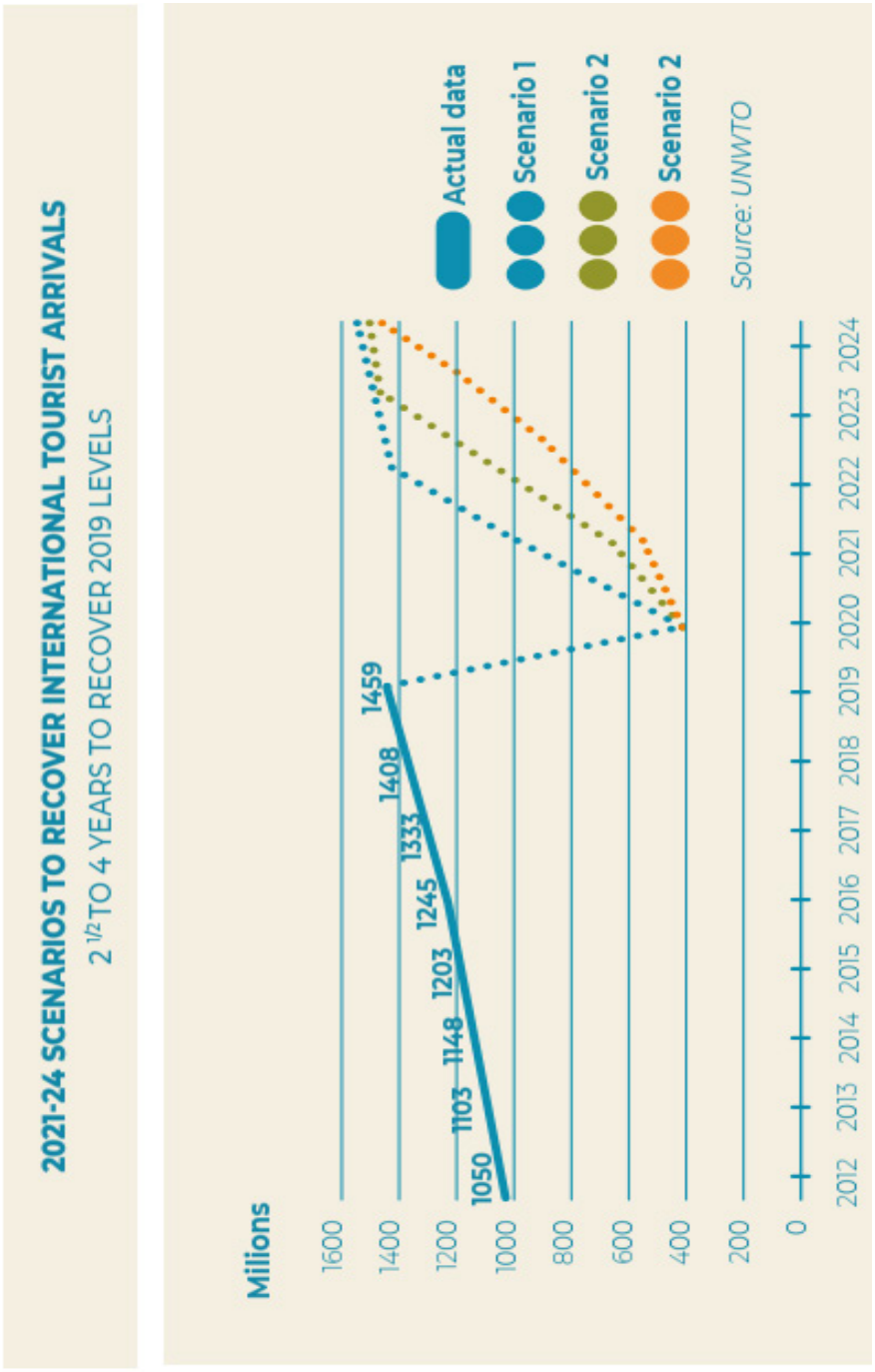

Figure 12. 2021-2024 Scenarios for the recovery of international tourist arrivals (UNWTO, 2020)

VIII. Conclusions

Greece, after the successful management of the first wave of the Covid-19 outbreak, the high vaccination rates, and the wide implementation of sanitary protocols is considered a Safe Tourist Destination for international tourists.

In health crisis such as the Covid-19 pandemic tourism sector has been affected the most because tourism supply and demand decline dramatically. Providing a healthy safe destinations' environment may attract tourists because they feel less fear and anxiety for their health.

A full recovery should certainly not be expected in the year 2021, although a significant improvement in tourism is expected. For Greece as for the most Mediterranean countries recovery should be expected in the summer of 2023 at the earliest, provided that a change in visitors and travelers regarding their safety occurs.

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