

# Tourist Well-Being and Infection Prevention and Control

Spanish scale





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

# Tourist well-being and infestation, prevention and control Spanish scale



Union for the Mediterranean  
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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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## Abstract

The purpose of this report is to examine the impact of the health crisis on tourism.

In the first section, a brief introduction is given to explain how the flow of tourists has evolved due to the impact of Covid-19.

The second section discusses the relationship between tourism and personal health.

The third section reviews previous health crises and the current one and how they have affected tourism.

The fourth section discusses the health measures related to tourism that have been implemented in Spain to limit the spread of Covid-19.

Finally, the last sections discuss the possible future development of tourism and, more specifically, its revival in the Mediterranean.

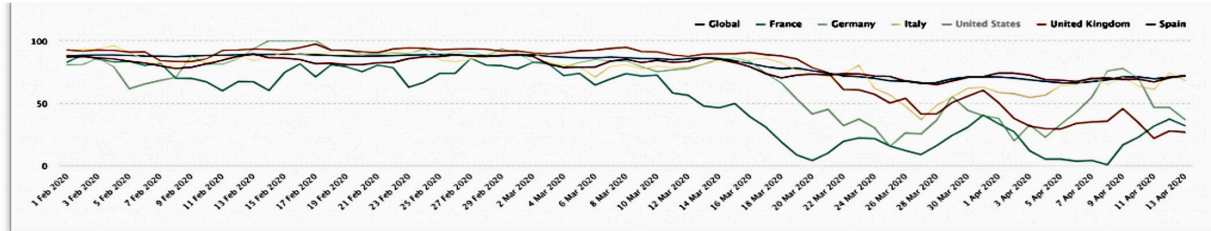
## I. Introduction

Before the pandemic, tourism accounted for more than 10% of global GDP and provided employment for 20% of the world's working population. In the specific case of Spain, tourism accounted for 12% of GDP and provided employment for 12.7% of the population (Bauzá Martorell and Melgosa Arcos, 2020).

In the search for the safety of tourists in Spain, there are prevention plans, such as the Safe Tourism Plan, whose main objective is to permanently increase the safety of citizens in tourist areas and provide a safer environment for tourists during their stay in the country (Ministerio del Interior, 2013). Likewise, due to the coronavirus health crisis, prevention guides have been created to reduce contagion, which include specifications for service, cleaning and disinfection, maintenance and risk management for the different sub-sectors of tourism (TURESPAÑA, 2020).

The fact that tourist destinations know how to strengthen the keys to security as an element of competitiveness will be seen positively by tourists. The development of cities must therefore focus on making them more resilient in the face of crises such as the current one. According to Mabrian (2020), due to the Covid-19 health crisis in Spain, the Spanish Safety Perception Index has suffered a continuous global decline in the perception of safety by tourists, especially in key markets such as the United Kingdom (-70%), France (-61%) and Germany (-54%) (Fig. 1).

Therefore, in order to develop safe tourism, the development of a tourist health card has been promoted, which would contain basic information about the visitor's health status in relation to the coronavirus, indicating whether they have already been vaccinated, whether they have overcome the disease or whether they have carried out a test with a negative result, allowing tourists to feel safer when travelling (Pimentel de Oliveira, 2020).



**Figure 1.** Evolution of the Spain Security Perception Index (Executive summary effects of the Covid-19 crisis. Destination: Spain. MABRIAN)

## II. Tourism and Health

There is a well-established relationship between travel, tourism and health. In fact, the motivations for participating in early forms of tourism were closely linked to notions of wellbeing and health. As a result, places or destinations that focus on providing perceived health benefits have long been recognized.

Today, tourism continues to contribute to health and well-being. For some, there are specific and predetermined health reasons for travelling, while for others it is a more implicit sense of escape and relaxation that leads to a greater sense of well-being. If tourism experiences can potentially improve certain health indicators, then the role that tourism can play in promoting health and well-being needs to be recognized in order to advance the health and well-being agenda.

Whether or not tourism is recognized as an official ‘human right’, the fact remains that it facilitates the free international movement of people and is linked to a person’s right to travel, the right to rest and the right to relax from work. Tourists themselves seem to share this view, as they perceive the need to take at least one annual holiday as a priority over many other household expenses, even in economically difficult times (Bonner and de Hoog, 2016). Access to tourism can play an important role in combating social exclusion (Hazel, 2005), and as such social tourism takes into account the socio-economic, health and political barriers to participation in tourism.

Mental health is increasingly being considered in tourism research and practice, with some studies suggesting that tourism experiences can have benefits for both physical and mental health (Richards, 1999). While tourism experiences have generally been researched in relation to health, it is important to recognise the potential health benefits of engaging with nature and the natural environment. For example, it has been suggested that the natural environment may have restorative qualities that can improve health and well-being (Wolf and Wohlfart, 2014), and that happiness may be enhanced by tourists who care for or appreciate nature as part of their tourism experiences (Bimonte and Faralla, 2015). The earliest forms of tourism, and the motivations behind people’s decisions to travel, are closely linked to notions of well-being and health.

As a result of the interrelationship between travel, tourism and health, places or destinations that focus on providing these desired benefits have long been recognised. From a geographical or supply perspective, Smyth (2005) identifies three different types of ‘therapeutic landscapes’: those associated with or known for healing, those associated with the provision of health services and those associated with support networks for the care provision.

On the other hand, the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (2011), Health tourism qualifies the practice of traveling to a foreign country in search of medical treatment and at the same time doing joint activities of more traditional tourism. But this concept goes beyond medical tourism, including the subsegment of wellness tourism, which is more related to the prevention of diseases that compromise the health of the tourist.

In recent years, more than thirty new human diseases have been identified and some that were thought to be under control have been treated. Despite advances in disease control, our societies are more vulnerable and interdependent than they were a century ago. The consequences of a major disease outbreak are therefore catastrophic. The number of outbreaks can increase due to climate instability caused by climate change. Outbreaks may also increase due to human activity, which facilitates the spread of disease through international transport and trade, urbanisation and environmental degradation, and migration and tourism.

Due to its geographical location, Spain has a high level of cross-border traffic with Africa and other parts of the world, of people, food and goods, as well as migratory birds, which can be an important risk factor for the introduction of these diseases. Of all these factors, however, it is immigrants arriving in Spain from underdeveloped countries who are most often blamed for the introduction of new diseases or the reappearance of certain endemic diseases in our country. But the data show us that, first of all, and for purely statistical purposes, the more than 50 million tourists that Spain receives each year pose a much greater risk of introducing diseases than the 400,000 immigrants per year, a clear example being the current health crisis derived from Covid.

On the other hand, our better standard of living means that more and more Spaniards are travelling to other countries on holiday or on business, where unknown diseases are prevalent, in addition to rural tourism, which has increased certain pathologies (Jaime Jiménez and Díaz Fernández, 2009).

### III. Tourism and epidemics in the Mediterranean

Due to the volume of international travellers and the process of globalisation, tourism is recognised by the medical community as a vector of disease transmission, as it has influenced the spread of infectious diseases such as outbreaks of influenza, Ebola or Zika.

In recent years, there have been warnings of diseases with the potential to cause epidemics, such as Middle East Respiratory Syndrome (MERS-CoV), which emerged from the Arabian Peninsula in 2012 and was active until 2014, with cases imported into Europe, Africa, North America and Asia, where tourists were confirmed to have been a route of transmission.

The AH1N1 influenza virus (known as “swine flu”), which was classified by the WHO as a pandemic and affected international tourism, with Mexico being the most affected country; and the outbreak of Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) in 2003, which originated in China and spread to countries in North America, Latin America, Europe and Asia, with more than 110 countries imposing some form of restriction on tourists from mainland China. This outbreak raised two issues: the close link between travel, tourism and the spread of infectious diseases, and the vulnerability of tourism to health crises (LalanzaRodelgo, 2020).

In addition to the human toll, the spread of such diseases has a social and economic impact on the countries affected. For example, the SARS outbreak in 2003 led to a fall in world tourism of around 0.4% compared with 2002, which translated into a loss of 30 to 50 billion dollars in this sector (Menchero Sánchez, 2020).

In the case of Spain, the likelihood of an infectious disease outbreak is very low. Despite the large flow of tourists and immigrants, and the geographical position that makes Spain a gateway between Africa and Latin America and Europe, Spain constitutes an area of influence in terms of possible health threats that can be easily transmitted to other countries (Herce, 2004). An example of this is the situation in 2016 with the Zika virus, which is transmitted by mosquitoes, sex and blood transfusions. Until 2007, only sporadic cases were reported in Africa and Asia, but between 2015 and 2016 it spread to Latin America. A risk assessment was therefore carried out in Spain.

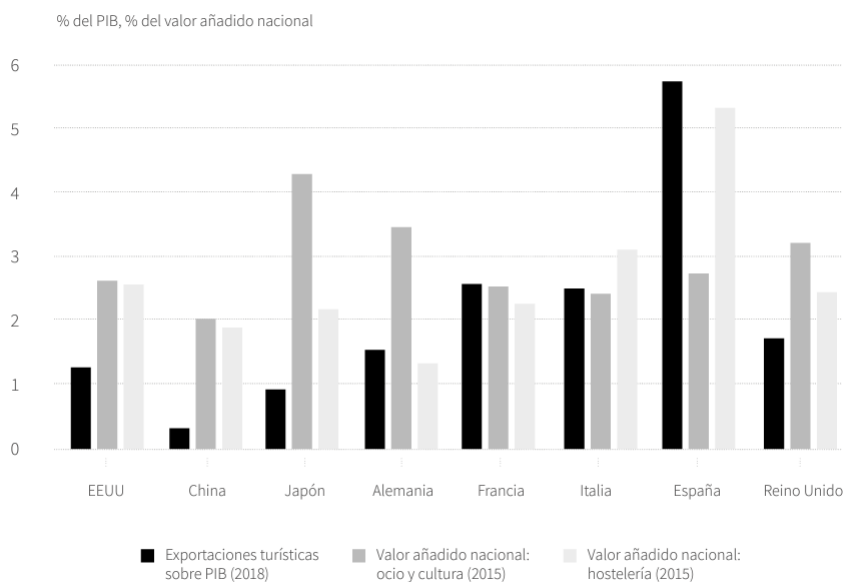
Despite the fact that the transmitting mosquito was present in several Autonomous Communities, most of them on the Mediterranean slope, the main risk of introducing the disease was linked to the arrival of infected travellers, as more than 1 million foreign tourists from Latin America visited Spain in 2014, and around 800,000 Spaniards travelled to this region.

The fact that the Mediterranean coast is one of the most popular tourist destinations also increased the risk of transmission of the disease. As a result, a series of recommendations were drawn up to improve information on the virus for citizens and health professionals, and a number of protective measures were adopted, both for international travellers and for the regions receiving them (Centro de Coordinación de Alertas y Emergencias Sanitarias, 2016).

In response to the spread of Covid-19, a Public Health Emergency of International Concern was declared on 31 January 2020, although WHO and UNWTO did not recommend the use of travel restrictions, stating that any measures taken in relation to tourism should be proportionate to the threat, leading to the activation of public health protocols at international points of entry.

Therefore, the two main measures adopted were restrictions on travelers from affected countries and the invalidation of visas, measures which has greatly affected international tourist flows; however, since the declaration of the Coronavirus as a pandemic, on March 11th, 2020, countries began to establish extreme containment measures such as border closures and the suspension of large-scale international air traffic (Menchero Sánchez, 2020).

UNWTO reported that there has been a global decline of 22% in the first quarter of 2020, in which arrivals were reduced by 57%, losing 67 million international tourist arrivals and nearly 8 billion dollars in revenues (UNWTO, 2020). In the case of the Spanish economy, it is expected to be one of the hardest hit countries, since it depends largely on hospitality and leisure services (LanzaRodelgo, 2020) (Fig. 2). For the year 2020, the Alliance for Tourism Excellence, foresees a loss of 83,134 million euro, which represents 54% less turnover of the sector compared to 2019.

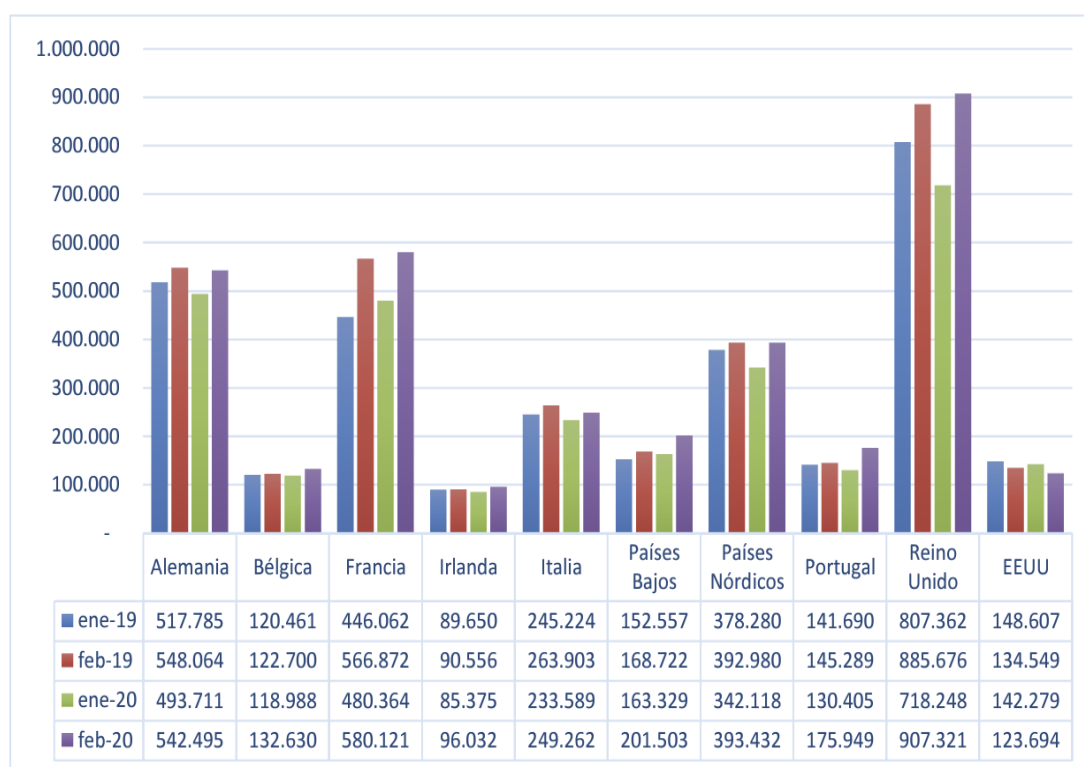


**Figure 2.** Weight of tourism, hospitality, leisure and culture on GDP in the main receiving countries (Lanza Rodelgo (2020))

The cessation of activity both in Spain and in the rest of the countries, has led to a reduction in both internal and external demand, producing a fall in the “demand for goods and services from the rest of the world and an interruption of global value chains,

as well as the cessation of tourism trends” (Banco de España, 2020). The estimates made by the Bank of Spain, based on the calculation methodology used and different factors that have been taken into account, such as the duration of the confinement, the characteristics of the transition to normality and the success of economic policies, foresee a decrease in the average annual rate of GDP in 2020 that could go from 6.6% in the most optimistic scenario, to 13.6% in the most pessimistic situation; as well as “a rebound from the second half of the year that will give rise to a remarkable recovery in 2021”.

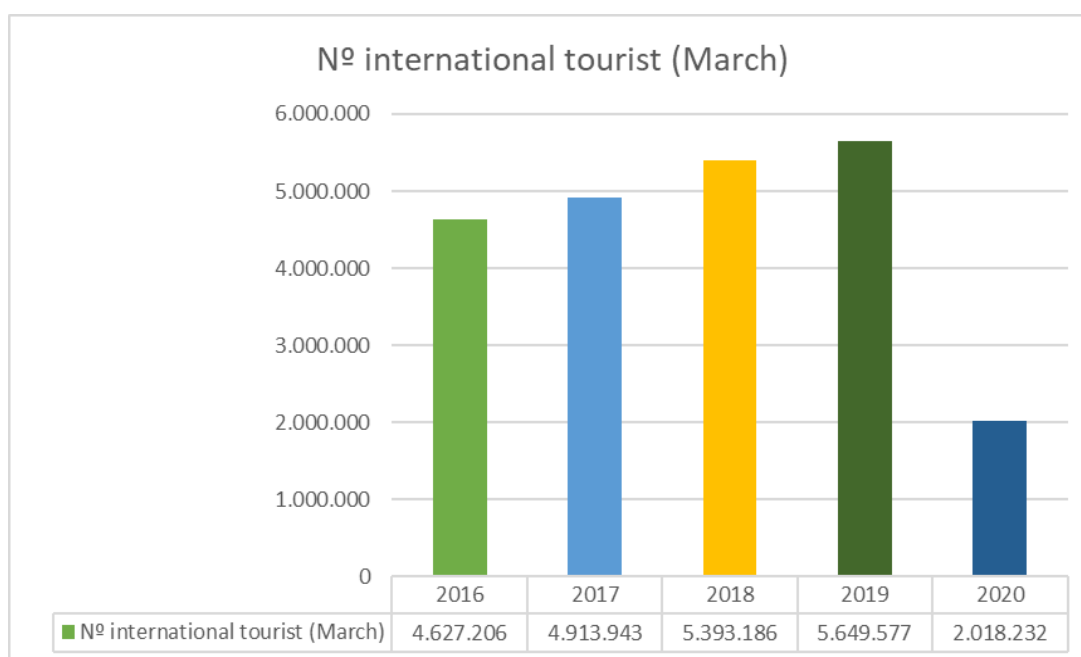
Ribes Noguera et al. (2020) in their report “Consecuencias del estado de alarma por la crisis sanitaria del Covid-19 en el sector turístico español” (2020) analyse the evolution of the tourism sector during the state of alarm. As reported, in February 2020, before the state of alarm, Spain received 4.4 million international tourists, 1% more than in the same month of the previous year, with the United Kingdom being the largest sender with almost one million tourists, followed by France and Germany with around half a million tourists (Fig. 3).



**Figure 3.** Number of international tourists by country of residence between January and February 2019 and 2020 (Ribes Noguera et al., 2020)



After the declaration of the state of alarm on March 14<sup>th</sup>, 2020, which meant the suspension of any tourist activity and the closure of borders, the arrival of the number of tourists plummeted, as expected, to almost 4 million fewer tourists than in the same month of 2019 (Fig.4). This loss of tourists was translated into an economic loss of 3,819.98 million euro compared to the previous year, which represents a negative variation rate of 63.3%. Due to the state of alert, during the month of April 2020 the number of international tourists registered in Spain was zero.



**Figure 4.** Number of international tourists in March. Years 2016 – 2020  
(Ribes Noguera et al. 2020)

## IV. Sanitary measures applied in Spain and their consequences in the Tourism sector

In addition to the closure of borders, with the repatriation of international tourists coordinating airlines, tour operators and embassies, the Government of Spain decreed a series of measures that involved companies in the tourism sector (LanzaRodelgo, 2020).

The first measures are included in Royal Decree 463/2020, which suspends hotel and restaurant activities, excluding home delivery. Likewise, this decree suspended the opening of museums, archives, libraries and monuments to the public, premises in which shows, sports and leisure activities are developed.

At the same time, containment measures were established for civil and religious ceremonies. This same decree establishes the exception that allows keeping those establishments open, in which there are customers who at the time of the declaration of the state of alarm were hosted in a stable and seasonal manner, provided that the establishment has the necessary facilities to be able to carry out activities of first necessity. These establishments, however, could not receive new customers until the end of the state of alarm.

Some tourist accommodations were declared essential services, in order to mitigate the negative effects and on the employment of the declaration of the state of alarm.

These establishments were used to guarantee accommodation and food to workers who were engaged in any of the following activities:

- Maintenance, health care, repair, and execution of works of general interest.
- Supply of agricultural and fishery products and the crews of the vessels, including complementary services in the field of health, port, airport, road and rail, food, rescue, and maritime safety.
- Installation, maintenance and repair of telecommunication networks and data processing centers, energy and water supply, supply and transport services of goods or passengers linked to the activities declared as essential.
- Essential services such as security forces and bodies.
- Workers in activities related to the supply of electricity, petroleum products and gas.
- People who must travel to care for the elderly, minors, dependents, people with disabilities, especially vulnerable people or with health care needs, as well as those people who, due to a major cause or situation of need, urgently need punctual accommodation.

- The provision of accommodation services shall be accompanied by the observance of protective measures and instructions against Covid-19. Likewise, the provision of services such as catering and other services necessary for the proper provision of the accommodation service is allowed, provided that it is made possible to do so, exclusively for those who are accommodated, with the exception of access to the facilities and services of restoration and cleaning for professional carriers, even if they are not accommodated.

Some accommodations that had the necessary conditions to provide health care, either in consultation or hospitalization, were enabled for the reception of patients, either with Covid-19 symptoms or for the accommodation of residents in centers for the elderly who did not present symptoms of Covid-19 infection and had not had close contact with possible positive cases. In these cases, the owner of the hotel facility is responsible for maintenance, night security and reception, while the rest of the services, such as room cleaning, were carried out by personnel designated by the Government of the Autonomous Community.

Likewise, the owner of the hotel will assume the responsibility of his own personnel who work in the dependencies and in the event of damage to the facilities and thereby will be entitled to compensation. Also, responsibility, for the residents and social care professionals housed therein, will be assumed in full by the Community Government.

Among the priorities of the European Council was to address the socio-economic consequences, and several measures to support the tourism sector were therefore declared. First, a line of financing was created for companies and freelancers especially affected by Covid-19. Secondly, it establishes a set of measures to support the prolongation of the activity of workers with discontinuous fixed contracts in tourism, trade and hospitality sectors related to tourism activity.

And finally, it establishes the suspension of the payment of interest and amortizations corresponding to the loans granted by SETUR during the period of one year. Likewise, the Autonomous Communities are establishing a series of economic aids, such as the postponement of the payment of certain fees or the suspension of others during the period of inactivity.

As for consumers, to guarantee their right and protection, a series of measures were established applicable to contracts for the sale of goods and provision of services, including trips that have been canceled due to Covid-19 that consist of the delivery of a voucher to make the trip after the end of the state of alarm or the return of the corresponding money (Melgosa Arcos, 2020).

To slow down the Covid-19 infection in the touristic sector, the Spanish government has developed a series of guides. These guides explain some specifications of services, cleaning and disinfection, maintenance, and risk management for each tourism sub-sector.

In general, the means for tourist guides are (Ministerio de Industria, Comercio y Turismo, 2020):

- Be informed and trained in guidelines to follow in terms of prevention of hygienic-sanitary risks in the development of the activity.
- Avoid physical contact and maintain a safety distance of at least 1.5 m.
- Correct use of masks.
- Frequent cleaning and disinfection of hands and personal belongings.

Likewise, the tour guide must inform customers of the prevention measures they must apply.

For each tourism sub-sectors, a guideline has been prepared with specific recommendations, for example, for the health resorts, the guide establishes general requisites for all the workers, which can be summed up as avoiding physical contact, wearing a mask, washing hands regularly and disinfecting objects for personal use frequently.

Also, the guide gives instructions for every position and every spa's facilities. Similarly, establishes the information that the spa should provide to customers. (Instituto para la Calidad Turística Española [ICTE], 2020).

## V. The Future of the Tourism Sector

Despite the great weight of tourism in the economy because it is not a vitally important activity, it has been one of the last sectors to resume activity. To strengthen the development of tourism post Covid-19, future scenarios must be considered taking into account institutional and sociological factors (Table 1). Thus, obtaining several possible future scenarios, such as those proposed by Vargas Sánchez(2020), in which he suggests that changes in mobility restrictions by governments will lead to quantitative changes in the sector, while the behavior of the tourist will cause qualitative changes in the adaptation of the tourist offer to the new trends.

**Table 1.** Possible scenarios for tourism(Turismo post-Covid-19: el turismodespués de la pandemia global. Análisis, perspectivas y vías de recuperación)

| Changes                                                  |            | Tourist behavior<br>(more prudent and sensitive to security and health) |                                                  |
|----------------------------------------------------------|------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------|
|                                                          |            | Structural                                                              | Relevant                                         |
| <b>Government policies<br/>(Restriction on movement)</b> | Structural | Scenario 1<br>Sectorial reconfiguration                                 | Scenario 2<br>Quantitative contraction           |
|                                                          | Relevant   | Scenario 3<br>Changes in touristic demand                               | Scenario 4<br>Back to the Pre-Covid-19 situation |

For Romero-Padilla et al. (2020), the recovery of the tourism sector must be approached as a transformation of the sector to avoid reproducing and expanding the previous situation of the mass model of unlimited growth. This report also underlines that tourism must adapt not only to possible outbreaks of Covid-19, but also to climate change, since it can affect a multitude of destinations in Spain. That is why it is necessary to review the measures that are being proposed, aiming at a short-term recovery, with the idea of recovering the state before the crisis, and complement them with measures that help to carry out a change based on long-term sustainability. In the same text, a post-crescent approach is proposed, that is, prosperity without growth (Jackson, 2011) for the field of the tourism sector, which largely coincides with the principles established by UNWTO for sustainable tourism.

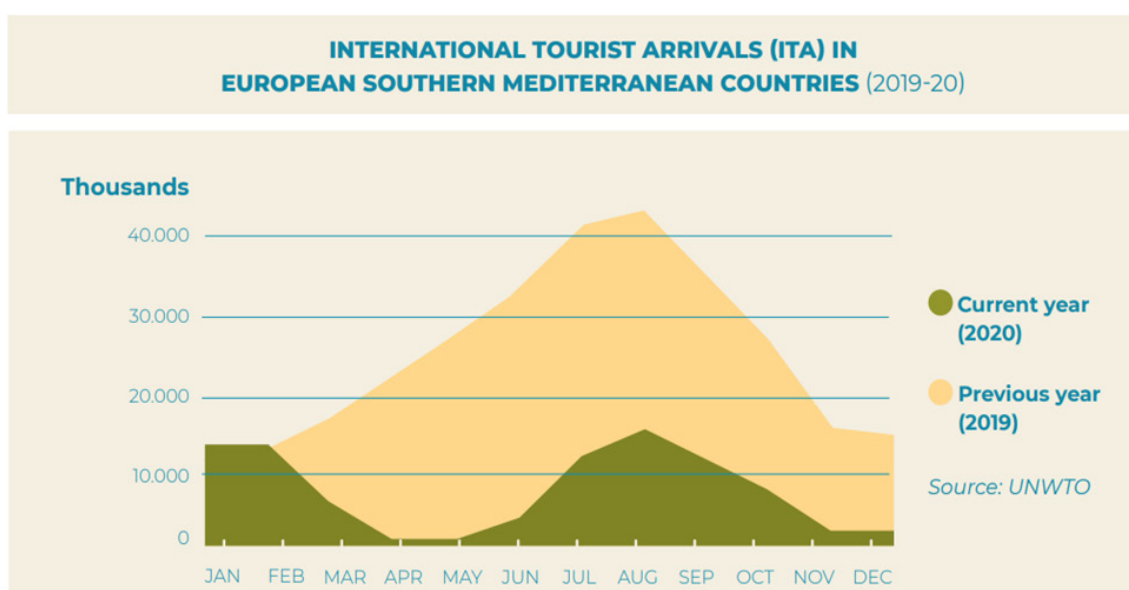
The principles would be:

- Make good use of environmental resources, maintaining essential ecological processes and helping to conserve biodiversity.
- Respect the socio-culture of the host communities; preserve their cultural and architectural assets and their traditional values, contributing to intercultural understanding and tolerance.

- Ensure long-term economic activities that give well-distributed socio-economic benefits to all social partners and contribute to poverty reduction.
- However, [Romero-Padilla et al. \(2020\)](#) point out that although these principles have been formulated for decades, their application does not occupy an important place in the idea of future tourism development.

## VI. The Future of Mediterranean Tourism after Covid-19

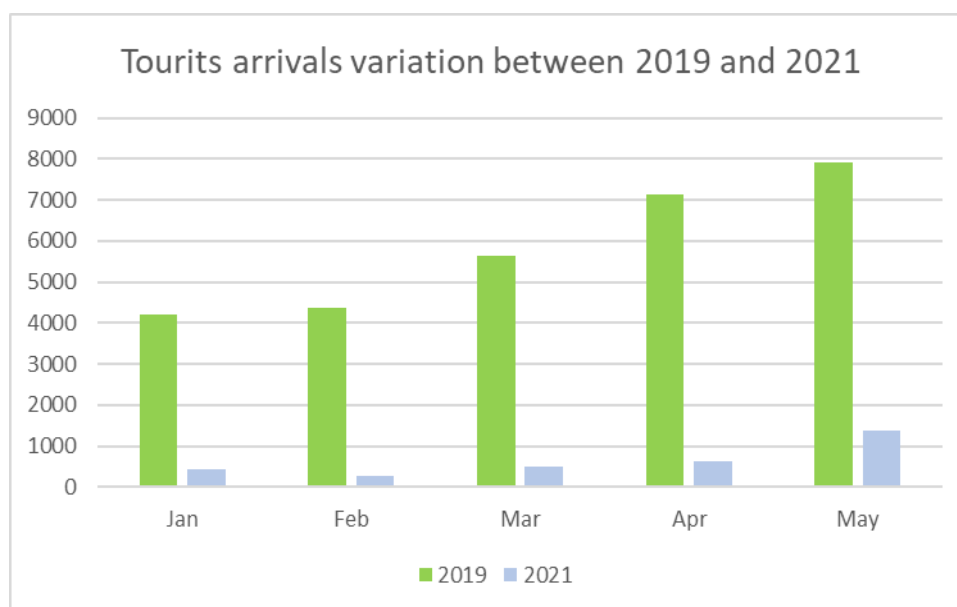
The tourism sector has been severely affected during 2020, as countries around the world maintained travel bans and border closures to curb the spread of Covid-19 (Fig. 5). In the second half of March 2020, all types of travel (plane, road, sea, train, etc.) drastically decreased their activity, with the European tourism sector being the second most affected, with a 66% decrease in the arrival of international tourists.



**Figure 5.** Tourists' arrivals in European Southern Mediterranean countries, years 2019 - 2020 (Fosse, 2021)

Although they still maintained sanitary restrictions, some countries in the Mediterranean region had an uptick in visitors during the summer of 2020, although most tourists preferred to stay in their country of origin to avoid possible infections on planes and airports. Before the pandemic, tourism was expected to grow by 3 to 4 percentage points, but now, according to UNWTO estimates, an 80% drop is estimated (UNWTO, 2021).

Among the northern Mediterranean regions, Spain has been the most affected country by Covid-19, with a loss of 89% of tourist arrivals in 2021 compared to 2019 (UNWTO, 2021) (Fig. 6).



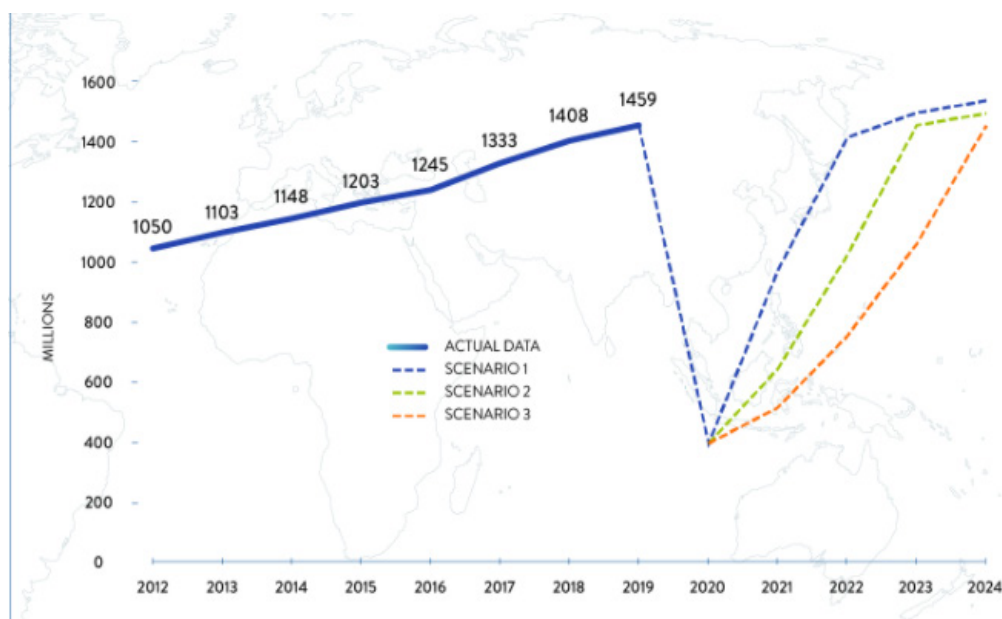
**Figure 6.** Tourist arrivals variation between 2019 and 2021 (UNWTO data)

Due to the great impact of Covid-19 around the world, the economic and social consequences in the tourism sector will last for years. In addition, uncertainty will continue to be an important factor, making it very difficult for public and private agents to act to promote a rapid recovery. The UNWTO (2021) drew scenarios of what the sector can undergo in the coming months, based on various estimates of the Covid-19 spread (Fig. 7).

However, the return to pre-pandemic levels is not expected for 3 or 4 years, depending greatly on the vaccination process. Proposed scenarios point to a rebound in 2021, assuming infections drop as traveler confidence rises and governments lift restrictions, but by no means will 2019 levels of international arrivals be reached in less than 3 years, the most optimistic scenario being the first, which indicates recovery by mid-2023, and the most pessimistic the last, which draws recovery by the end of 2024.

The future of tourism is based on two trends: digitalization and sustainability. For the development of sustainable tourism, the action of tourism agencies can be the promotion of emerging, less crowded, and nature-based destinations in order to distribute workflows and create new jobs and reduce pressures on the environment.





**Figure 7.** Scenario of tourism between 2021-2024 (UNWTO, 2021)

Other actions that can be carried out by these agents are the integration of the local communities of the places receiving visitors in tourism planning, the support of activities based on the care of the environment and biodiversity and / or cultural values, *etc.*

Social and Solidarity Economy (SSE) integration in blue economy sectors, such as coastal and maritime tourism, is the framework for developing a balance between environmental care and socio-economic benefits, enabling the improvement of the resilience of local communities, and ensuring long-term economic sustainability. For their part, travel agencies and tour operators can work in this direction by reducing their carbon and water footprint, avoiding food waste, reducing the use of plastics, working with local suppliers, and giving decent and fair working conditions to their workers.

In this sense, the European Commission was already creating a Green New Deal for the European Union before the Coronavirus crisis, with the aim of achieving carbon neutrality by 2050. In addition, the creation of the Farm to Fork strategy has been announced, whose objective is to reform the food system to make it more sustainable, including the reduction of the use of fertilizers and pesticides, direct causes of water and sea pollution and directly affecting the tourism sector.

Other initiatives to contribute to greenhouse gas neutrality are also being proposed, such as the Ocean Fund plan for the transport of maritime goods. More specifically, in the Mediterranean there are various plans for sustainable development, such as the Mediterranean Action Plan of the Barcelona Convention for the protection of the Mediterranean Sea, endorsed in 2016 to Mediterranean Strategy for Sustainable Development, although none of these plans has had a great advance in their development.

As for the digitalization of tourism, social networks can help promote personalized experiences that reduce mass tourism and favor the protection of the environment. It can also create and improve jobs due to the reconversion and improvement of workers' skills. In addition, digitalization allows the consumer to have better access to information, improving the decision-making process.

The best way to reconcile quality tourism and respect for the environment is to invest in local human capital, ensuring that the whole community progresses in this transition (Fosse, 2021).

## VII. Conclusions

The main conclusions of this work are:

- The tourism sector is very vulnerable to health crises; therefore, a more resilient tourism model needs to be developed, as climate change is likely to increase the frequency of health crises such as the current one.
- Covid-19 has particularly affected the economies of typical tourist destinations, which will have a slower economic recovery than countries where tourism isn't as important in the economy.
- The economic recovery of the Mediterranean destinations involves adapting tourism to a more sustainable way.
- Tourism recovery must strike a balance between environmental protection and socio-economic benefits. It must therefore be based on local communities respecting their culture, making good use of their natural resources and ensuring long-term economic development, such as the UNWTO's Principles for the Development of Sustainable Tourism.

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