



## UNWTO Commission for the Americas

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### **Enhancing the integration of Affiliate Members in the general activities of the Organization**

#### **Integration of the Affiliate Members Programme into UNWTO General Programme of Work**

1. The main strategic objective of UNWTO is to help create the conditions for competitive and sustainable tourism worldwide. In this mission, UNWTO, as an inter-governmental organization, relies on strong alliances that facilitate such goal. Therefore, organizations that share the overall objectives of UNWTO need to be identified and nurtured to build partnerships that become the vehicles for extending the scope and impact of UNWTO around the globe.
2. The White Paper stresses the need for the Organization to proliferate its partnerships with institutions within and outside the UN System, specifically with the private sector. This is precisely the mandate of the UNWTO Affiliate Members Programme, clearly reflected in Paragraph 98 of the White Paper, a guideline of reforms for a more relevant UNWTO approved by the General Assembly: "in order to strengthen the Organization and the position of Affiliate Members, nongovernmental members need to be taken care of in a much more regionalized approach by the Regional Commissions, be an essential part of their activities and, from these platforms, be more integrated into UNWTO's Programme of Work." This is seen as an effective tool to expand UNWTO's reach and sphere of influence.
3. The World Tourism Organization is one of the only United Nations agencies with full involvement of private and non-governmental entities, whose participation is channelled through the Affiliate Members Programme. The Affiliate Members Programme currently has 414 Members from 77 countries, 214 from the private sector representing a variety of industries (accommodation, hospitality, travel agents, tour operators, transport including aviation, travel insurance organizations, etc.), 122 from

the academic sector, and 78 from National, Regional, Local, City Promotion Boards and Destination Management Organizations.

4. The Affiliate Members Programme is considered crucial for establishing valuable and lasting partnerships with private and non-governmental stakeholders. The unique nature of the Affiliate Members Programme, as a forum where companies from different sectors, universities and destination promotion entities can interact transparently and synergistically in activities of mutual benefit under the umbrella of a UN agency, results in a valuable framework. Elsewhere, companies and entities may associate themselves through single purpose guilds or activities, but the Affiliate Members Programme exceptional heterogeneous mixture is thus the perfect framework to test new approaches in tourism collaboration and innovation and generates many distinctive opportunities for the tourism sector.

- a) The first opportunity, due to the nature of the Programme and its role in an inter-governmental organization, is the potential of the Affiliate Members to establish models of public-private partnerships that can work in practice, giving way to concrete manifestations and developments. This is considered essential, as these models are becoming an indispensable element of any initiative that takes place in the tourism sector, where the interaction and the exchange of experiences are crucial. Through this initiative UNWTO seeks to establish models revolving around specific areas, which can be replicated in other destinations providing recommendations and serving as a reference.
- b) The second opportunity arises from the fact that one of the most important sources of innovation comes from the interaction between the diversity of the stakeholders, as has been proven through successful pilot projects and prototypes developed by the Affiliate Members Programme. These initiatives offer a pragmatic approach to harness this diversity, and tangibly apply the existing knowledge within the Organization and its members. The Affiliate Members prototypes are living research and analytical projects carried out in a tourist destination with the purpose of identifying key elements required to set forth policies and strategies that enable destinations to position themselves in the international arena and to strengthen the social and economic impact. The first one of these Prototypes is [Madrid Precious Time](#). This project represents a practical learning exercise that produces a model that can be replicated in other cities and continuously improved in terms of implementation and innovation; a model that creates higher added value for cities' tourists and greater and more sustainable benefits for local communities. Madrid Precious Time was developed in 2012, when 22 cities came together in Istanbul to identify the challenges facing city tourism today. The project gathers public and

private sector partners from diverse areas such as technology, hospitality, arts and culture, handicrafts, retail, design and insurance, working together to create new and innovative products that would help position Madrid as a 'Premium' destination. This prototype aims to serve as a template for collaborative approaches to the development of new tourism products in city destinations. Prototypes provide examples of the remarkable value of collaboration and knowledge exchange in multidisciplinary networking exercises.

- c) Another tangible example of the potential of these partnerships is the creation of networks which integrate research and education institutions with organizations from the private and public sector through an initiative which places students from Affiliate Member Universities in relevant Affiliate Member Organizations. The Affiliate Members Programme is currently developing this pilot project to define the protocol to implement this initiative in practice.
- d) The fourth opportunity is the establishment of networks designed for Members to work together in areas of mutual interest. The UNWTO Knowledge Network is the first one to date and is a practical example of a network of innovation and research entities. The UNWTO Knowledge Network presents a unique space where knowledge generators, policy makers and practitioners proactively participate in sharing, and accessing relevant resources to stimulate the creation, dissemination and application of tourism knowledge with a particular focus on innovation.

5. Enhancing the integration of the work of the Affiliate Members into the General Programme of Work of UNWTO is an ideal approach to strengthen the aforementioned opportunities, proactively utilise this diversity and substantially apply the capacities that exist within the Organization.

6. To achieve this goal and maximize this potential, the Secretary-General has mandated specific actions for enhancing the integration of the Affiliate Members Programme in the UNWTO's General Programme of Work and created the Member Relations Committee, chaired by the Secretary-General and coordinated by the Director – Executive Secretary of Members Relations, which meets periodically to ensure coordination between the various Regional Programmes and the Affiliate Members and establish a specific protocol for the Affiliate Member Programme participation in the Regional Commissions and proactive participation in UNWTO's activities.