



Executive Council

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Thematic discussion: “Innovation in Tourism: Finding New Ways to Overcome Seasonality”

I. Background

1. Seasonal fluctuations in tourism demand, also known as seasonality, are a common feature to a large number of tourism destinations worldwide, resulting from both natural causes, notably weather patterns, and institutional causes such as religious, public and school holidays. Worldwide, the months of June to September (and December-February in the Southern Hemisphere) concentrate 45% of all international tourist arrivals.
2. Aside from representing an important economic challenge in terms of the profitability of tourism companies and wealth generation in destinations, seasonality also has considerable environmental and socio-cultural impacts such as congestion management, use of natural resources, seasonable employment or social pressure.
3. Given the impact and complexity of seasonality in tourism, it is fundamental to ensure that the public and private sectors put in place innovative programmes that increase visitation during off-peak months and foster demand all year round.
4. In order to promote innovative approaches to overcome seasonality, UNWTO has, through its Affiliate Members Programme, developed a prototype in Uruguay—Punta del Este 365—which aims at identifying the appropriate strategies to fight seasonality including public-private partnerships, and the development of new products in coordination with other sectors such as agriculture and sports.

II. Objectives

5. On the occasion of the 100th session of the UNWTO Executive Council, the thematic debate aims to:
 - (a) Identify the impact of seasonality in terms of employment, economic viability, use of infrastructure, environmental effects, etc.
 - (b) Exchange information on existing innovative national policies to fight seasonality



- (c) Share best practices of innovation in product development, marketing and promotion, incentive programmes, and partnerships
- (d) Define possible areas of action for the Secretariat as well as for increased cooperation between UNWTO Members on this important issue.

III. Guidelines for discussion

6. For the purpose of a fruitful and lively participation in the discussion, the Secretariat invites delegations to share their experiences in the development of innovative solutions to overcome seasonality, particularly focusing on the following areas:

- (a) Partnership frameworks and initiatives between the public and private sectors
- (b) Use of new technologies in marketing and promotion and in product development
- (c) Incentive schemes and national policies
- (d) Development of new products and experiences, including the integration of new services along the value chain and the staging of events
- (e) Programmes to increase connectivity and transport capacity.

IV. Actions to be taken by the Executive Council

7. The Executive Council is invited:
- (a) To recognize that seasonality is one of the major challenges facing the sustainable development of the tourism sector;
 - (b) To take note of the initiatives undertaken by the Secretariat in this area, namely the Punta del Este Prototype; and
 - (c) To ask the Secretary-General to keep working on the issue of seasonality as reflected in the PoW of the Secretariat for the period 2016-2017.