



Ressort: Reise & Tourismus

Impact of the COVID-19 on international tourism

Rome, 28.03.2020 [ENA]

The World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) has released its updated assessment of the probable impact of the COVID-19 on international tourism.

Exceptional introduction of travel restrictions across the world will cause, according to the United Nations specialized agency for tourism, the decline of international tourist arrivals by 20% to 30% in 2020 when compared with 2019 figures. However the Wuhan coronavirus

outbreak continues to intensify and UNWTO emphasizes

that these data depend on the latest developments as the global community faces up to an extraordinary social and economic challenge and should be figure out with caution in view of the extreme unknown nature of the current crisis. In 2020, Italy is expected to register a decrease of approximately 4.7 million international tourist arrivals due to the impact of coronavirus (COVID-19) on the country's tourist sector. In line with the estimate, the region of Veneto will record the highest drop with a shrinkage of roughly 970 thousand arrivals. Similarly, Tuscany is expected to register a decrease of about 695 thousand arrivals from international tourists in 2020.

An estimated fall of between 20-30% could translate into a decline in international tourism receipts (exports) of between US\$300-450 billion, almost one third of the US\$ 1.5 trillion generated in 2019. This would mean that between five and seven years' worth of growth will be lost to COVID-19 considering past market trends. Putting this into context, UNWTO notes that in 2009, on the back of the global economic crisis, international tourist arrivals declined by 4%, while the SARS outbreak led to a decline of just 0.4% in 2003.

UNWTO Secretary-General Zurab Pololikashvili declared: "Tourism is among the hardest hit of all economic sectors. However, tourism is also united in helping to address this immense health emergency –

our first and utmost priority – while working together to mitigate the impact of the crisis, particularly on employment, and to support the wider recovery efforts through providing jobs and driving economic welfare worldwide."

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While it is too early to make a full estimation of the probable impact of COVID-19 on tourism, it is clear that millions of jobs within the sector are at risk of being lost.

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About 80% of all tourism businesses are small-and-medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), and the sector has been oriented in providing employment and other opportunities for women, youth and rural communities. In conjunction with this new assessment, UNWTO highlights tourism's historic flexibility and ability to create jobs after crisis situations, while also emphasizing the importance of international cooperation and of ensuring the sector is made a central part of recovery efforts. Since the start of the current crisis, UNWTO has been working assiduously with the wider United Nations system, and directly with the World Health Organization (WHO) to guide the sector, issuing key recommendations for both high-level leaders and individual tourists.

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