Towards a Sustainable City Centre Recovery
April 8th and 9th 2021
Online session
Organised by: CIDOB (Barcelona Centre for International Affairs) in collaboration with Eurocities, and with the support of Barcelona City Council

European cities attract millions of visitors each year, with numbers particularly rising since the year 2000. The COVID-19 pandemic suddenly emptied them of tourists as travel restrictions and abrupt lockdowns were imposed across Europe. The fall in visitor arrivals was unprecedented: London (-9.8 million), Rome (-5.6 million), Paris (-5.4 million), Istanbul (-5.3 million), Barcelona (-4.9 million), Amsterdam (-4.3 million), Prague (-3.8 million) and Dublin (-3.8 million). This downturn has particularly affected city centres, whose services and retail sectors are highly dependent on the tourist industry, due to their high density of restaurants, hotels, souvenir shops and tourist attractions.

In response, city governments have adopted a range of measures to revitalise these urban areas. An ongoing study by CIDOB’s Global Cities Programme in seven European cities (Amsterdam, Barcelona, Ghent, Florence, Nantes, Ljubljana and Prague) has observed that the first reaction of local authorities was the adoption of short-term policies to reactivate the economic and tourism sectors. In particular, several measures were adopted to rescue micro, small and medium-sized businesses in city centres. However, the research has also identified a growing interest among cities in intervening in other policy areas, such as governance and participation, digital innovation, culture and housing, as a way to drive a sustainable recovery of urban tourism. In this regard, the study, which remains in progress, is observing that the COVID-19 crisis is accelerating the transition towards a more sustainable urban tourism model.

Against this backdrop, this webinar aims to discuss how this transition will take shape and to what extent a more sustainable urban tourism model will entail not only diversifying city centres’ economies and retail sectors, but also the housing market (long- and short-term rentals), the cultural offer (tourist attractions and a quality cultural offer that also appeal to locals) and city life as a whole (day-to-day services and facilities, e.g. libraries, kindergartens, parks). The event is organised by CIDOB’s Global Cities Programme, in collaboration with Barcelona City Council and Eurocities. It will bring together elected city officials, practitioners and scholars for a discussion that will take place over two days. The first day will be devoted to analysing the impact of COVID-19 on urban tourism and reflecting on possible ways forward, while the second will explore ongoing policy responses and future municipal strategies to move towards a sustainable recovery.
Thursday, April 8th
10.00h–12.05h CET

By-invitation online meeting with experts, scholars and practitioners from the economic, cultural, housing and tourism sector (via Teams).

10.00 – 10.05 **Welcome and introduction**
Agustí Fernández de Losada, Director, Global Cities Programme, CIDOB

10.05 – 10.15 **Presentation of the study on city centre recovery**
Eva García-Chueca, Senior Research Fellow, Global Cities Programme, CIDOB
Francesc Teodoro, Research Assistant, Global Cities Programme, CIDOB

*Debate facilitated by:* Eva García-Chueca, Senior Research Fellow, Global Cities Programme, CIDOB

10.15 – 10.45 **Diagnosis and assessment: The impact of COVID-19 on city centres and city governments’ responses**

*How has COVID-19 crisis impacted urban tourism in city centres?*
*Which measures have been undertaken in European cities to mitigate the impact of the pandemic in city centres?*
*Which goal did these measures pursue?*

10.45 – 12.00 **Proposals: How to transition towards a more sustainable urban tourism model and diversify city centres?**

*How can cities envisage strategies to make its tourism model more sustainable (understanding sustainability in a broad sense: social, economic, cultural…)?*
*Which policies or measures should be undertaken to diversify the function and uses of city centres from the perspective of its economy and retail, cultural and housing offer, access to services…?*
*Which governance framework should be established to rethink city centres?*

12.00 – 12.05 **Concluding remarks**
Mireia López, Researcher and Associate Professor, Pompeu Fabra University (co-author of the study conducted by CIDOB)

*List of participants:*

Jordi Baltà, Cultural Consultant and Researcher, Transit Projectes, Barcelona, Spain
Núria Benach, Professor, Faculty of Geography, University of Barcelona, Spain
Pilar Conesa, Founder and Director, Anteverti, Barcelona, Spain
Charlotte Desmet, Research Manager, Ghent Tourist Office, Ghent, Belgium
Ángel Díaz, President, Advanced Leisure Services, Barcelona, Spain
Mercedes Giovinazzo, Director, Interarts, Barcelona, Spain
Leonie Hehn, Project Manager, Cambra de Comerç de Barcelona, Spain
Ljubica Knežević Cvelbar, Professor, School of Economics and Business, University of Ljubljana; President, of SRIPT (Strategic Partnership for Innovation and Research in Tourism), Slovenia
María del Pilar Leal, Professor and Researcher, CETT – University of Barcelona, Spain
Alan Quaglieri Dominguez, Associate Professor, Ostelea – Tourism Management School and UOC – Open University of Catalonia, Spain
Greg Richards, Researcher, Tilburg University, The Netherlands
Mariona Segú, Researcher, Institut National d’Études Demographiques (Ined), Paris, France
Martijn van Vliet, Chief Economist, Amsterdam City Council, The Netherlands
Friday, April 9th
09.30h-11.30h CET

City-to-city online dialogue with elected officials (public session via CIDOB’s Youtube channel)

09.30 – 09.40 Welcome and presentation
Laia Bonet, Deputy Mayor for International Relations, Barcelona City Council
Pol Morillas, Director, CIDOB

09.40 – 09.50 Presentation of the study on city centre recovery and the results of the discussion on Day 1
Eva Garcia-Chueca, Senior Research Fellow, Global Cities Program, CIDOB

09.50 – 11.15 Towards a Sustainable City Centre Recovery
Debate facilitated by: Anna Lisa Boni, Secretary General, Eurocities

Debate 1: Long-term strategies to reactivate and diversify city centres

Laia Bonet, Deputy Mayor for 2030 Agenda, Digital Transition, Sports, Territorial and Metropolitan Coordination and International Relations, Barcelona City Council
Victor Everhardt, Deputy Mayor for Economy, Finances, Tourism, Amsterdam City Council
Hana Trestikova, Councillor for Culture, Conservation, Exhibitions and Tourism, Prague City Council

Debate 2: How to transition towards a more sustainable urban tourism model?

Tjaša Ficko, Deputy Mayor for International Relations, Ljubljana City Council
André Sobczak, Vice-President of Nantes Métropole for European Affairs, Employment and Corporate Social Responsibility, Nantes Métropole
Cecilia Del Re, Deputy Mayor for Tourism, Innovation, Environment and Urban Planning, Florence City Council

11.15 – 11.25 Concluding keynote
Claudia Monteiro, Member of the European Parliament

11.25 – 11.30 Wrap-up and way forward in the Eurocities framework
Anna Lisa Boni, Secretary General, Eurocities