

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 Garcia-Chueca, Senior Research Fellow, Global Cities Programme, CIDOB

Francesc Teodoro, Research Assistant, Global Cities Programme, CIDOB

Debate facilitated by: **Eva Garcia-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

Àngel 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), Eslovenia

Maria del Pilar Leal, Professor and Researcher, CETT – University of Barcelona, Spain

Alan Quagliari Domínguez, 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 Démographiques (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