The resilience of European tourism and the industry’s catalytic role in stimulating economic growth are undeniable. Yet European tourism is today confronted with the critical challenge of remaining competitive and attractive in the global arena. Despite this, interesting opportunities are emerging, particularly in the adoption of technology that would allow to enhance the competitiveness and sustainability of the European tourism sector and to meet the heightened expectations of the digital traveller. The concept of this event, “Connecting Europe through Innovation”, aims to explore how to best stimulate innovation in tourism by connecting public-private initiatives and sharing best practices and how to assist European tourism SMEs through technology with positioning themselves and becoming more competitive in the global marketplace. The event is closely linked to the 1st World Conference on Smart Destinations organized recently in Murcia, Spain.

AGENDA

09:00 – 09:15 Registration
09:15 – 09:20 Introduction of the High-Level Event by the Master of Ceremony
Sandra Carvao, Chief of Communications and Publications at UNWTO
09:20 – 10:00 Opening
Claudia Tapardel, Member of the European Parliament, Co-Chair of the Intergroup on European Tourism Development and Cultural Heritage
Edward Zammit Lewis, Minister for Tourism, Malta
Taleb Rifai, Secretary General, UNWTO
10:00 – 10:30 Coffee break
10:30 – 11:30 Panel 1: “Connecting Europe through smart mobility”

This panel will discuss the key challenges in intra- and inter-national connectivity and how these can be transformed into opportunities through the deployment of digital technology, the promotion of seamless mobility within Europe, and the positioning of Europe as an attractive destination globally.

Moderator: Juan-Jesus Garcia, Head of Industry Affairs Europe, Amadeus
Inés Ayala Sender, Member of the European Parliament, Committee on Transport and Tourism
Sergi Alegre, President, Airport Regions Conference
Eduardo Santander, Executive Director, European Travel Commission
Jaime Rodriguez de Santiago, Country Manager for Spain and Portugal, BlaBlaCar

Representative of IBERIA (TBC)

Q & A Session
This panel will discuss how to empower European tourism SMEs to better take advantage of the opportunities provided by the digital market. The debate will focus around the challenges and opportunities faced by SMEs in their day to day operations when using new technologies to manage the relationship with the digital travellers.

**Moderator:** Chris Pomeroy, Director of Global Strategies & Client Services, MMGY Global

*The voice of the traveller: Mr. Arto Kauppila and Ms. Lili Kfoury*

- Iuliana Gabriela Aluaş, Deputy Head of Unit European Commission, DG GROW, Unit F4 - Tourism, Emerging and Creative Industries
- Cláudia Monteiro de Aguiar, Member of the European Parliament, Committee on Transport and Tourism
- Andrea Kostner, Deputy Director, Content Management & Production, Vienna Tourist Board
- Manuel Aragones Marin, CEO, Travel Compositor
- Gerben Hardeman, Manager Responsible Travel & Tourism, ANVR
- Ramón Estalella, Secretary-General, CEHAT

**12:30 – 13:00 Closing remarks**

- Mircea Dobre, Minister for Tourism, Romania
- Maria Andres Marin, Director of European Parliament Office in Madrid

**13:00 Lunch Reception**