

## Support for tourism during the health crisis

Performance audit

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[FULL REPORT \(FR\)](#)



[EN SUMMARY](#)



### What we assessed and why

We assessed the support measures implemented by the French government and its operators in 2020 and 2021 to help businesses in the tourism sector cope with the COVID-19 crisis. These measures, which constituted the “Tourism Support Plan”, were presented to those involved in the sector at the meetings of 14 May 2020 and 12 October 2020 of the inter-ministerial committee on tourism.

Three questions, agreed with the advisory committee<sup>1</sup>, were selected:

- Did the design and rollout of support measures protect the viability of businesses in the tourism sector?
- Did the emergency measures allow tourism to resume and respond to the return of domestic and foreign tourists to France from the summer of 2020 and in 2021?
- Where necessary, has the transformation of the tourism sector started?

### What we found

Before the pandemic, France was the world’s leading tourist destination, with around 90 million tourists and 442 million overnight stays in 2019. Tourism accounted for 77.5 % of the country’s GDP from 2010 to 2020 and the sector employed more than 2 million people directly or indirectly. However, the pandemic led to a significant decrease, with a 46 % drop in turnover in 2020 and 2021, which particularly affected travel agencies (60 %) and air transport (70 %).

In response to this situation, the government rapidly allocated €45.5 billion to the tourism sector in 2020 and 2021, representing 21 % of emergency aid. The measures sought to prevent bankruptcy and redundancies, boost supply and demand for tourism, and transform the sector to make it more sustainable. This aid compensated for 88 % of the losses in terms of gross operating surplus and 25.8 % of the loss in turnover.

<sup>1</sup> In accordance with the methodology used for public policy evaluations, an advisory committee made up of experts and stakeholders from outside the *Cour des comptes* was set up in January 2022. Its aim was to advise and give an opinion at each stage of the assessment of the support provided by the French state and its operators to the tourism sector during the health crisis (see its composition in Annex 3 of the report in French).





The results show a decrease in bankruptcy (44 % less compared to 2019) and stable numbers in terms of employees in the sector. The recovery was helped by the flow of national and European tourists, with 3 % more tourists (in the summer of 2022) than before the pandemic. The level of cash flow in the sector increased by 50 % compared to 2019, and 95 % of professionals considered that the shorttime work scheme helped avoid redundancies.

However, the sector's digital and green transformation was insufficiently funded and did not adequately address the sector's needs. There were limited measures regarding digitalisation and improving energy efficiency, which were not consistent with the emergency measures.

Moreover, recruitment difficulties, which have intensified since the pandemic, were not well addressed by the support measures. For instance, a specific platform – *monemploitourisme.fr* – was created for the sector. However, its impact during the health crisis was limited, both because of its late launch (in May 2021) and its small audience.

## What we concluded

Although the measures of the “Tourism Support Plan” have protected the viability of businesses and boosted recovery, the tourism sector must be transformed to ensure its competitiveness, meet sustainable development challenges and fight global warming.

We recommended that the different parties involved:

1. carry out a review of the effects that Order No 2020-315 of 25 March 2020 had on recipient companies and on consumers (French Ministry of Economy, Finance and Industrial and Digital Sovereignty);
2. by the end of 2023 at the latest, carry out a review of the *monemploitourisme.fr* platform, to either improve or discontinue the service (French Ministry of Economy, Finance and Industrial and Digital Sovereignty; French Ministry of Labour);
3. draw up, together with local and regional authorities, a national strategy for the green transition of the tourism sector, including quantitative objectives and specifying signatories' commitments (French Ministry of Economy, Finance and Industrial and Digital Sovereignty; French Agency for Ecological Transition).