



**Position on School Holiday  
Coordination as a driver of  
Sustainable and Efficient  
Tourism in Europe**

## Position on School Holiday Coordination as a Driver of Sustainable and Efficient Tourism in Europe

**Better coordination of school holidays in Europe is essential for sustainable, year-round tourism. This position puts forward concrete recommendations to shape the upcoming EU Sustainable Tourism Strategy by considering peak-season pressures, driving a skilled and stable workforce, and improving overall sector efficiency. The position also aligns with key priorities such as innovation and competitiveness and encourages more cooperation when it comes to responsible tourism management for the benefit of businesses and employees across the EU.**

### 1. Executive summary

Improved coordination of school holiday periods across Europe can play a pivotal role in making European tourism more sustainable, resilient, and efficient, in line with the objectives of the upcoming EU Sustainable Tourism Strategy. While education and training policies remain under national competence and EU-wide harmonisation is neither feasible nor desirable, closer voluntary coordination among member states is increasingly necessary in light of evolving tourism patterns and pressures.

Better alignment of school holidays can also help reduce excessive peak-season concentration, ease pressure on transport, accommodation, and local communities, and support more balanced, year-round tourism activity, making this issue a critical sustainability priority for European mobility and tourism alike. This contributes to greater affordability, reduced the disruption of complex tourism value chains, and enhanced resilience against disruptions and potential shocks in the hospitality industry, which should be core priorities of the upcoming EU Sustainable Tourism Strategy. By enabling more stable operations, it also supports year-round employment, improves working conditions, and strengthens education, skills development, and workforce retention in the tourism sector.

Furthermore, school holiday coordination should be embedded in a broader policy approach that fosters stronger collaboration between local, regional, national, and EU actors, underpinned by reliable, accessible, and reusable tourism data. Eurochambres believes that such coordination can act as an enabler for innovation, the development of additional travel solutions, alternative and emerging tourism models, and increased investment in high-quality, accessible accommodation, particularly in peripheral and less accessible regions. In this context, improved coordination will contribute to mitigating risk, reducing regional vulnerability, and building a more balanced and resilient tourism ecosystem that delivers long-term benefits for businesses, workers, and local communities alike.

Eurochambres emphasises that an improved coordination of school holidays can also serve as a catalyst for strategic investment and policy innovation in European tourism. By smoothing demand across the year, it creates better conditions and incentives for start-ups, the development of new tourism products, and the regeneration of existing accommodation

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facilities, with higher quality, sustainability, and accessibility standards. Combined with targeted funding, benchmarking tools, and the sharing of best practices, coordinated holiday planning supports the diversification of destinations and tourism models, reduces overreliance on peak periods, and strengthens the long-term resilience of the sector.

### 2. Why the chamber network considers this topic relevant

This topic matters to Eurochambres because chambers are closely connected to tourism businesses and regularly observe how demand peaks linked to school holiday calendars affect operations, employment planning, and investment decisions. With a broad European network, Eurochambres can help bring together different viewpoints from market operators, tourism offices in certain destinations, and public authorities and encourage an open dialogue on how European tourism can best navigate emerging challenges and opportunities, including those related to seasonality and the concentration of demand during school holiday periods.

Eurochambres members also contribute to evidence-based policymaking and effective implementation. Through their local and regional affiliates, they support public–private dialogue, disseminate information on initiatives, training and up-and reskilling programmes, and funding opportunities, and help increase SME participation in tourism-related measures. Through studies departments and data-driven projects, including the use of big data to analyse visitor behaviour and market trends, chambers often compare regional developments and identify performance patterns in the European tourism sector. In addition, chambers support skills development, particularly digital skills in vocational training, and are involved in branding, tourism labels, and networking activities, helping businesses access different tourism models and respond to changing demand.

More generally, chambers contribute by supporting informed discussions and knowledge-sharing. Through comparative analysis, exchanges between EU regions, and the dissemination of information on initiatives, programmes, best practices and funding opportunities, chambers improve understanding of how different tourism models also respond to seasonal patterns. Their involvement in skills development, digitalisation, branding, and networking supports tourism businesses in adapting to changing demand cycles and exploring more diversified and resilient approaches to tourism management.

### 3. Arguments for better coordination of school holiday periods

Improved coordination of school holiday periods is increasingly important in light of the severe labour and skills shortages affecting the hospitality and tourism sector across Europe. The European Commission identified [42 occupations](#) as EU-wide shortage occupations, including several in accommodation, food services and tourism-related activities. The [EURES 2024 Report on labour shortages and surpluses](#) further confirms that the tourism sector is experiencing rising demand for hospitality workers and persistent shortages across a wide range of occupations.

The [newest edition](#) of the annual Eurochambres Economic Survey based on responses from over 40.000 businesses identified labour costs, regulatory burden and lack of skilled workers as the top three challenges for 2026. Many tourism businesses already struggle to recruit

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sufficient staff to cope with highly concentrated peak periods, leading to operational constraints, restriction on services and increased pressure on existing workers. By smoothing tourism flows over the year, better coordination of school holidays can ease pressure on limited staff resources, improve workforce planning, and allow businesses to operate within realistic staffing capacities, contributing to more sustainable working conditions and a more resilient tourism sector.

### Main arguments:

- **Economic stability and job security:** Spreading holiday periods more evenly across Europe can help businesses—especially SMEs—use their infrastructure year-round, supporting consistent revenue and securing jobs in tourism regions.
- **Attracting and retaining skilled workers:** More balanced tourism flows allow for year-round employment opportunities, making jobs in tourism more appealing and helping regions recruit the qualified staff they need.
- **Sustainable tourism and resource management:** Reducing peak-season pressure supports sensitive ecosystems and encourages responsible use of tourism resources.
- **Easing pressure on infrastructure and services:** A smoother distribution of visitors relieves congestion on transport networks, public services, and tourism staff during traditional peak months.
- **Enhanced visitor experience:** Destinations with balanced occupancy throughout the year can offer higher-quality services, increase guest satisfaction and strengthen Europe's reputation as a travel destination.
- **Steering tourism flows strategically:** Coordinated school holidays can help reduce overcrowding in popular destinations and encourage visits to less frequented areas, supporting a more balanced tourism ecosystem.

### 4. Recommendations

- **Creation of a European tourism data space:** as one of the cornerstones to address unbalanced tourism. By integrating data on visitor flows, capacity, seasonality, and mobility patterns, this framework could also incorporate structured information on school and public holiday calendars across member states, alongside variables such as weather conditions, climate-related risks, major events, transport disruptions, and accommodation availability. Greater visibility and comparability of holiday schedules would allow policymakers and destination managers to better anticipate peak demand, assess cumulative impacts.
- **European platform for dialogue:** Creating a voluntary, transnational platform could bring together member states, regions, and tourism stakeholders to exchange information, develop solutions, and provide a clear overview of holiday schedules across Europe.
- **Early planning and transparency:** Sharing planned school holiday periods annually would allow countries to identify overlaps and adjust where feasible, supporting smoother travel patterns.
- **Staggered holidays:** Shifting start dates by days or weeks, particularly in February, July, and August, could help distribute arrivals and departures more evenly. This would require clarity on the length of adjusted periods (days versus weeks) and whether changes are temporary or based on rotating arrangements, alongside

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additional incentives, and more collaboration between local businesses, regional authorities, and EU-level stakeholders are key for the success of this approach.

- **Best practices:** Encouraging working groups, thematic conferences, learning labs, and workshops will result in a more systematic exchange of successful approaches and innovative solutions, contributing to the objectives of the upcoming EU Sustainable Tourism Strategy.
- **Development of sustainable and diversified tourism:** Promoting alternative types of holidays, such as cultural, nature-based, rural, and adventure tourism, could reduce pressure on traditional peak-season destinations. This can also be supported by targeted training and the recruitment of specialised skilled workers in these niche areas, ensuring high-quality services and experiences for visitors.
- **Exploring AI and digital tools:** Artificial intelligence and data-driven technologies can help destinations better understand visitor flows, predict peak periods, and optimise services. This could benefit workers by improving staffing planning and workload distribution and allow holiday periods to be managed in ways that reduce congestion and enhance guest experiences. AI can also support strategic promotion of lesser-visited destinations, helping tourism regions diversify and adapt to changing patterns of demand.
- **Boosting investment:** By smoothing demand, coordinated holidays will reduce investment risk and encourage businesses and local authorities to develop sustainable tourism infrastructure, specialised services, and innovative products in regions outside traditional periods, making off-peak holidays more attractive.

### 5. Context and limits

School holidays remain under national or regional jurisdiction, so legally binding EU legislation is not possible nor desirable. Although there is widespread recognition of the importance of advancing sustainable tourism, this must never translate into excessive regulation at national and regional levels that leads to complicated operations for businesses. Instead, the emphasis should be on simplifying the tourism ecosystem, reducing administrative and reporting burdens, and creating incentives for more sustainable practices.

Similarly, upcoming EU initiatives in this sphere should remain non-binding, allowing flexibility for national and regional authorities to participate voluntarily and adapt measures to their context. This ensures that coordination can take place effectively without imposing rigid obligations or any administrative burdens.

Voluntary cooperation, including with countries outside the EU such as Switzerland, Norway, and the UK, can still improve coordination without creating new bureaucracy. The EU's role can focus on promoting dialogue, facilitating information exchange, supporting common objectives, and providing recommendations, where helpful.



Eurochambres – the association of European chambers of commerce and industry – represents more than 20 million businesses through its members and a network of 1700 regional and local chambers across Europe. Eurochambres is the leading voice for the broad business community at EU level, building on chambers’ strong connections with the grass roots economy and their hands-on support to entrepreneurs. Chambers’ member businesses – over 93% of which are SMEs – employ over 120 million people.

Previous inputs can be found [here](#).

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