

Agenda item 6:

Report on the UN Tourism Affiliate Members activities in Europe for the period 2025-2026

1. Introduction

1. This meeting of the UN Tourism Commission for Europe (CEU) provides a timely opportunity to reflect on the latest activities and strategic direction of the UN Tourism's Affiliate Membership in the region.
2. The report outlines the main institutional developments and thematic contributions of Affiliate Members (AMs) in Europe, providing insight into strategic objectives, implementation progress, Affiliate Membership status and trends, and upcoming opportunities.

2. Context and strategic orientation

3. The work of the Organization in this area, carried out through its specialized structure, the Affiliate Members and Public-Private Collaboration (AM-PPC) Department, continues to focus on **strengthening our Affiliate Membership**.
4. The overall objective is to enhance the value of belonging to UN Tourism as an Affiliate Member, ensuring that each member feels part of a dynamic and relevant network that offers spaces for collaboration, visibility and engagement.
5. In this context, AM-PPC has prioritized efforts to support Affiliate Members in fully benefiting from their membership, while strengthening the capacity of the network to contribute to the Organization's agenda. This includes both a more effective engagement of existing members and a quality-driven expansion through the incorporation of strong new partners.
6. These strategic objectives aim to consolidate the Affiliate Membership as a key pillar of the Organization.

2.1 Enhancing the Value of Affiliate Membership

7. Consistent work is currently being done by the AM-PPC Department in order to (a) reach a more effective integration of the Affiliate Members in the Programme of Work, agenda of activities and main projects carried out by UN Tourism, and to (b) permanently improve the facilities and services offered by the Organization to AMs.
8. During the reporting period, efforts to better **integrate Affiliate Members into the technical and strategic work of UN Tourism** have gained further momentum.
9. This approach, based on a mutually beneficial dynamic, seeks to leverage the expertise of Affiliate Members while providing them with increased institutional visibility and opportunities for

engagement. It reflects the principles established through the **Legal Reform** and the new **Expansion Strategy**, aimed at strengthening governance and ensuring that Affiliate Members from all regions —particularly the less represented ones — play a more active role in shaping the global tourism agenda.

10. Affiliate Members from Europe have made notable contributions across several thematic areas:
 - **Artificial Intelligence and Tourism:** the 2025 *publication Artificial Intelligence (AI) & the Tourism and Hospitality Sector* featured strong representation from European Affiliate Members, including Booking.com, Madrid Region, Grupo Piñero, Madrid Destino, Meliá Hotels, Vienna Tourist Board and Visit Benidorm. These contributions illustrated the application of AI key areas such as customer personalization, dynamic pricing, predictive analytics and data-driven sustainability practices.
 - **Astro-tourism:** The recently launched *UN Tourism Guidelines on Astro-tourism* provide practical guidance for destinations, while promoting sustainable tourism practices. The guidelines were developed in collaboration with Fundación Starlight, with contributions from several European Affiliate Members and regional stakeholders, such as La Palma Island Society for Economic and Social Promotion and Development and the Tenerife Tourism Board.
 - **Audiovisual:** the *World Tourism Film Awards 2025* organized by the International Committee of Tourism Film Festivals - CIFFT (December 2025), recognized excellence in tourism storytelling and best tourism videos and campaigns promoting destinations.
 - **Gastronomy Tourism:** The *9th UN Tourism Global Conference on Wine Tourism* (Plovdiv, Bulgaria, October 2025), provided a platform for collaboration across the sector, highlighting tourism's role in supporting sustainable and inclusive development.
 - **Sports Tourism:** Key initiatives included:
 - *First Sport Summit Madrid* (June 2025), organized by the affiliate member MadCup, that brought together over 5,000 professionals, 200 brands, 120 exhibiting companies, and 150 leading global speakers.
 - *5th Edition of MADCUP* (Madrid 2025): the largest international federated youth football tournament, featured competitions across the Community of Madrid. With over 840 teams from 41 countries and more than 15,000 young players, the tournament reaffirmed its role as a major driver of sports, tourism, culture, and economic development in the region.
 - *1st edition of the UN Tourism Awards for Excellence in Sustainable Sports Tourism, powered by FIA* (March 2026): This global programme recognizes outstanding initiatives that position sport as a driving force for sustainable tourism development. The initiative further positioned UN Tourism as a leading global platform for promoting sustainable sports tourism and encouraged innovation and the exchange of best practices among destinations and industry stakeholders.

These initiatives further positioned UN Tourism as a leading platform in the field of Sports Tourism.
 - **Thermal Tourism:** the *Thermal Tourism Congress 2025* (Budapest, Hungary) brought together key stakeholders (mayors, tourism professionals, and wellness experts) to explore the role of thermal destinations in sustainable development and health tourism.
11. AM-PPC Department has also continued to **strengthen the services and facilities offered to Affiliate Members**, with a particular focus on enhancing opportunities for networking, visibility and institutional representation.
12. In this regard, Affiliate Members have been actively involved in UN Tourism's statutory meetings and key events (Executive Council sessions, Regional Commissions and World Tourism Day

celebrations).

13. Additional visibility and engagement opportunities were provided through major international tourism fairs such as FITUR and ITB Berlin, notably through the Affiliate Members Corner — a dedicated platform for showcasing projects, exchanging ideas and strengthening public-private dialogue, such as:
 - the Affiliate Members Corner focused on Disruptive Technologies in Tourism, organized within the framework of the 26th General Assembly (November 2025), featuring case studies and insights on the adoption of technologies in tourism, including Artificial Intelligence, Internet of Things, Virtual & Augmented Reality, and biometrics.
 - FITUR (January 2026): UN Tourism Affiliate Members Corner - Cross-Sector Value in Tourism: a session capturing key insights, case examples, and data on cross-sector collaboration in tourism, drawing on peer exchanges among selected Affiliate Members. The discussion highlighted the growing intersection of tourism with culture, music, sports, wellness, retail, hospitality, and urban development, with participation from European AMs such as Allianz Partners Spain, the European Historic Thermal Towns Association (EHTTA), ICVB, and Madrid City Council.
 - ITB Berlin (March 2026): the Affiliate Members ICCA – International Congress and Conventions Association, and Trip.com participated as speakers in the UN Tourism Ministers' Summit, reinforcing the AMs perspectives on tourism policy.
14. These were excellent platforms not only to showcase and highlight Affiliate Members' work, but also to facilitate their engagement and collaboration with the governments of the Member States and many other relevant tourism stakeholders.

2.2 Quality-oriented expansion

15. A key priority remains ensuring a **high-quality and committed Affiliate Membership**.
16. Significant progress has been achieved in strengthening the rigor of the admission process, notably through the introduction of an application fee effective 1 January 2026. This measure reinforces the quality filters applied to new applications and contributes to ensuring that only entities with the capacity to add value are admitted. This mechanism was approved by the 123rd Executive Council and incorporated into the Charter of Affiliate Membership.
17. During the reporting period, 18 new Affiliate Members were admitted out of approximately 42 applications, reflecting a **more selective process** aligned with this quality-driven approach.
18. Europe currently accounts for 257 Affiliate Members, representing approximately 50% of the total network.
19. At the same time, **improved retention and membership stability** have been observed, with a significant decrease in the number of members leaving due to arrears — **from 97 in 2022 to 18 in 2025** — reflecting stronger engagement and the positive impact of recent measures.

3. Enhanced collaboration with the Board of Affiliate Members

20. The collaboration with the Board of Affiliate Members has continued to play a central institutional role.
21. The 2022-2025 mandate marked the first four-year mandate for the Board, aimed at strengthening institutional stability and aligning it with the mandate of the Secretary-General.

22. AM-PPC continued to support the **Board of Affiliate Members** in the organization of all their meetings and demarches and to have a permanent and smooth collaboration in all the important issues on the agenda. The 62nd Meeting of the Board (*Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, November 2025*) and the 63rd Meeting of the Board (*Madrid, Spain, January 2026*) focused, among others, on governance matters (election of the authorities of the Board), approval of the roadmap of participation of the Board 2026 statutory meetings and the development of the Programme of Work.
23. AM-PPC encouraged and supported the participation of the institutional representative of the AMs, designated by the Chair of the Board, in all UN Tourism's Statutory meetings celebrated lately (Executive Councils and Regional Commissions).
24. Particular emphasis has been placed on strengthening the dialogue between the Board and the **Committee on Matters Related to Affiliate Membership (CMAM)**, contributing to improved alignment, transparency and governance.

4. Elections for the 2026–2029 Board of Affiliate Members

25. Affiliate Members have elected the members of the new Board for the 2026–2029 term. Preparations for the election took place between January and September 2025 and the elections were held between 1 and 22 October 2025 on a dedicated, secure online platform.
26. At the 62nd meeting of the Board, held on November 2025, its members elected NECSTouR - European Regions for a Sustainable and Competitive Tourism as its Chair, Saudi Tourism Authority as its First Vice-Chair and Cámara Argentina de Turismo as its Second Vice-Chair.
27. Among the other 20 Board Members, Catalan Tourism Agency, Madrid Hotel Business Association - AEHM, Croatian National Tourist Board, CETT – Barcelona School Tourism, FITUR - International Tourism Exhibition, International Congress and Convention Association – ICCA, Madrid Destination, Culture, Tourism and Business, RED ESTABLE – Spanish Network for Accessible Tourism, and Türkiye Tourism Promotion and Development Agency - TGA represent the AMs from Europe.
28. The election process demonstrated the Organization's commitment to participatory governance and institutional legitimacy, as well as the increasing interest of the Affiliate Members to participate in the governance of the network, taking into consideration the consistent number of candidatures registered: 56. Also it is worth noting that 64% of eligible voting members cast their ballots, which marked an important increase in the participation, compared to the previous elections for the Board, celebrated in 2021.

5. Affiliate Members and Public-Private Collaboration – Programme of Work 2026–2027

29. The Affiliate Members and Public-Private Collaboration Department elaborated its Programme of Work 2026–2027 in full alignment with the Organization's General Programme of Work 2026–2027. These two strategic instruments are distinct yet complementary:
 - The General Programme of Work of the Organization, developed in consultation with Member States, outlines the Organization's institutional priorities and global strategic direction.
 - The Affiliate Members Programme of Work translates those priorities into concrete initiatives, partnerships, and knowledge products driven by Affiliate Members.

30. To enhance participation and alignment, UN Tourism launched an open Call for Proposals, inviting Affiliate Members to contribute initiatives supporting the Organization's priorities.
31. This process has strengthened engagement and enabled the development of new partnership formats, including the "Affiliate Members-Driven Services for UN Tourism" framework, designed to provide Member States with access to innovative tools, expertise, and services.

6. Conclusion

32. The Affiliate Membership continues to play a pivotal role in advancing innovation, dialogue, and sustainable development across the global tourism sector.
33. In Europe, progress has been particularly significant—both in terms of membership growth and quality and thematic contributions to the global agenda.
34. Looking ahead, the focus will remain on strengthening the network, fostering active participation in UN Tourism programmes and events and ensuring alignment with the Organization's strategic priorities.
35. Through continued cooperation between Member States and Affiliate Members, the region is well-positioned to further consolidate its leadership role in shaping the future of global tourism.

Conclusions and recommendations CEU/CR/6 (LXXII)¹

The Commission for Europe,

- Recalling the mandate of UN Tourism and the strategic role of Affiliate Members in fostering sustainable tourism and public-private collaboration;
 - Recalling the Legal Reform and Expansion Strategy aimed at strengthening the quality, governance and regional balance of Affiliate Membership;
 - Taking note of the report on the activities of UN Tourism Affiliate Members in Europe for the period 2025–2026;
 - Having heard the report of the representative of Affiliate Members, Mr. Senthil Gopinath, Chief Executive Officer of the International Congress and Convention Association (ICCA);
 - Having heard the intervention(s) of the delegations of XXX;
1. Appreciates the contributions of European Affiliate Members to UN Tourism's Programme of Work, particularly in innovation, sustainability and emerging tourism segments, and their role in advancing knowledge-sharing and cross-sector dialogue;
 2. Recommends that UN Tourism continues to enhance the effective integration of Affiliate Members into its technical work, programmes and statutory activities, while maintaining a quality-driven approach to membership expansion;
 3. Notes with satisfaction the progress achieved in Affiliate Membership governance, retention, collaboration with the Board of Affiliate Members and the successful conduct of the 2026–2029

¹ This is a draft of the conclusions and recommendations for the corresponding agenda item. For the final text adopted by the Commission, please refer to the Conclusions and recommendations document issued at the end of the session.

Board elections;

4. Encourages Member States and Affiliate Members to strengthen public–private collaboration and actively engage in the Affiliate Members Programme of Work 2026–2027, including through partnerships and Affiliate-Member-driven initiatives.