

GREEN DAYS 2020: ONLINE TALKS - RETHINKING DEVELOPMENT

Conference Conclusions

PLENARY SESSION 1 – CIRCULAR ADVANTAGE: THE ECONOMIC AND BUSINESS RATIONALE

- We can witness that demand for raw materials in the world is increasing and finite supplies make some countries dependent on others for their raw material. Extracting and using raw materials has major impact on the environment and increases in energy consumption and CO2 emissions. With this in mind, we have to move to the new approaches for businesses, make them more circular, and for that we first need to make the fundamental change in our mindsets. Development and implementation of the circular economy roadmap will enable Montenegro to implement those changes.
- It is not the question why we need to change, and when, but how to make these changes happen. The transition to a circular economy requires knowledge and investments in research and development, using innovation to deliver more sustainable solutions. These solutions need to be users oriented, leading us to new ways of doing things. We need to use the creativity younger generation has, and to inspire them to be the drivers of change!
- In the EU, an estimated 20% of the total food produced is lost or wasted while in Montenegro it is 30%, and households generate more than half of the total food waste. Food waste is unacceptable on ethical, economic and environmental grounds. Development and enforcement of prevention and redistribution measures, recognizing the new ways of doing things rather than relying on changing the consumer habits - will enable us to fight this issue.
- Many circular solutions relate to digitalization which unlocks the potential of a circular economy. Digitalization will be an essential instrument in enabling and facilitating the circular economy at a fast pace, which will result in less pressure on the environment, it will improve competitiveness, stimulate innovation and boost economic growth along with job creation.

PLENARY SESSION 2 – FUTURE DRIVEN INNOVATIONS

- Efficient implementation of the Smart Specialization Strategy (S3) will accelerate development of the local innovation ecosystem in Montenegro, increase competitiveness on the local and regional level, as well as ensure the country's integration into the European Research Area (ERA) – it is of crucial importance to focus on the implementation of the S3 Action plan, as a prerequisite for the future development of the innovation environment in the country. The S3 Strategy has received wide recognition in the country as the new development strategy whose significance is especially emphasized in the post-COVID-19 stage.
- Governments can establish institutions, and formulate and implement durable policies, which will together form a sound basis for advancing innovation potential. However, it is essential to understand that the governments are not alone in this process, which will be successful only if comprehensive consultations with all relevant actors are conducted. Hence, partnering with innovators, inventors, job creators, local leaders, workers and consumers, while considering their opinions and recommendations is the key to making innovations the main drivers of change and growth.
- In the light of the COVID-19 crisis, it is anticipated that nations will invest heavily in medical research and development (R&D), with an emphasis on ensuring global health security and strengthening emergency response, during and after the pandemic. Despite the fact that wide collaboration in the field of science and health is increasingly valued, decreased travel and working in isolation will complicate and slow down the flow of intellectual capital. The expectations are that the virtual collaboration will not be able to fully compensate in such circumstances. That said, it is absolutely necessary to take a proactive stance and adopt a creative approach toward online academic collaboration and scholarships. Embracing digitalization in education to the highest possible extent will provide opportunities for harnessing full innovation potential in R&D field.

PLENARY SESSION 3 –TURNING PROMISES INTO ACTION: CLIMATE PROMISE 2030

- We are at a historic inflection point, where all aspects of life, all sectors of the economy, and previous approaches to international cooperation and development require a re-think. Ultimately, this means a re-calibration of the social, economic and environmental policies – and a *re-allocation* of public and private finance and investments – many examples of which we have seen in the past few months in the immediate response to COVID, but which now must go further to catalyze a green, sustainable recovery and ensure we build back better.
- We must rebalance our relationship with the environment – both through mitigation and smart adaption activities. We must deploy and, in some cases, re-allocate resources such as Fossil Fuel Subsidies that are locking countries into unsustainable growth trajectories and discouraging private sector investments and innovations in clean and renewable energy.
- The Sustainable Development Goals and the Paris Agreement give us the targets we need to steer a course towards just, equitable, and prosperous human development that is in sync with – and positively leverages - our planet's rich and diverse natural capital. Governments and businesses around the world are starting to get the message. Most notably, the European Union, through the Green Deal, is using the crisis as an opportunity to deliver transformational change that is guided by the science of the Paris Agreement and puts in place the building blocks for sustainable, green recovery and development.
- Montenegro's investments into renewables may serve as a springboard for achieving carbon neutrality in future years, thus being ahead of the countries which have been delaying necessary reforms in this area. Another important element of the EU's Green Deal that is relevant to Montenegro is the transition away from fossil fuels through improved energy efficiency, as well as better organization of the electricity market. It also demonstrates the opportunity to achieve more ambitious national level targets through the Nationally Determined Contributions and UNDP's Climate Promise

- We do have a clear path forward set down in the Sustainable Development Goals, the Paris Agreement and in the European Green Deal. We must rely on these frameworks to correct the system failures and inequalities that brought us here, and to guide the policies and investments that will drive smart recovery and deliver a triple socio-economic and environmental win. Montenegro is on the right course, with its willingness and determination to put the substance at the core of its development through the EU accession process. Political will is present and further work is needed in building capacities, as well as in approaching various financial mechanisms in order to reach the set targets.

PLENARY SESSION 4 – TOURISM 2020: PLANNING RECOVERY FOR THE LONG TERM

- There is a need for embedding planned, synchronized response that ensures sustainability and innovation in tourism. The tourism sector has been heavily hit by the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, thus requiring changes in the tourism related policies and actions at the national and global level. It was an unexpected hit on which governments reacted strongly, but not in a synchronized way. Now it is expected that international travel will resume, and tourism is known as an industry that is “immediately hit, but also able to restart promptly”. However, pandemic has thought us a lesson: sustainability together with innovation will become the “new normal”. This “new normal” has to be embedded in planning, in a way that enables measuring sustainability by global standards. Hence, we need to embrace coordinated response, which implies measuring and controlling of external and internal flows in a sustainable way.
- Tourism has the power to restart the world economy in a sustainable way. *Secretary-General of the United Nations António Guterres sent a landmark message to the world: “Tourism can be a platform for overcoming the pandemic. I encourage all those involved in the tourism sector to explore how we can recover better, including through climate action and other steps that advance sustainability and build resilience.”*

Tourism has proven to be one of these industries that can restart the economies in the world, as it is horizontal and cross-cutting, with high impact on numerous sectors such as agriculture, transport, trade, construction etc. and a significant

impact on environment. This is important for Montenegro where the sector of tourism is contributing more than 20% to the national GDP. This standstill in the tourism gives us the perfect opportunity to select a new direction and move forward by adopting a more sustainable path. Serving as a merger between different industries, tourism can serve as an accelerator of sustainability in all those industries.

- Tourism has to embrace “resilience approach”. The key to long-term success for destinations and enterprises lies in the resilience of the tourism sector that requires a holistic development and management approach which goes beyond the present concept and requirements of sustainable tourism. The resilience of the tourism sector lies on four pillars: 1) Innovation and Adaptation – we need creative approaches to ensure renewed and consistent tourism management; 2) Anticipation and Transformation, as we need regular observation of new trends to ensure timely instigation and modification of strategic processes - it's all about flexibility and changeability; 3) Prevention and Mitigation - to avoid or minimize negative effects of internal or external negative factors and 4) Protection and Preservation to retain the resources and enable future generations to build on the current sustainable practises.
- In building up sustainable tourism, future holistic mobility solutions will play a major role. Sustainable transport and travel play an important role in the development of sustainable tourism. In Montenegro, the seasonality of tourism demand leads to rising demand for transport and mobility services during the high season, which impacts heavily the traffic in specific tourism regions. This is an additional reason to work on sustainable mobility solutions as essential for ensuring less pressure and less negative impact on the environment, as well as for more comfortable lives of all, be it residents or visitors. It goes beyond transformational shift from fossil fuel vehicles to those powered by electricity.

It is essential to determine the pathway towards the modal shift to sustainable modes of transport (bicycles, e-vehicles, car-sharing, fuel efficient public transport and walking), and thus towards the reduction of vehicle pollutant emissions and tourism carbon footprint. Sustainable transport is also a market opportunity, since consumers are becoming more and more conscious about the need for sustainability and are willing to pay more for sustainable transport solutions.

In Montenegro it is necessary to raise awareness about environmentally friendly modes of transport, to facilitate behavioural change of residents and

tourists towards alternative transportation modes that foster healthy, active and safe commuting and create new and improved energy efficient mobility options for residential and leisure travel.

In Montenegro a linkage between existing tourism providers and high sustainability values and visions needs to be created, while making sustainable tourism offer more visible and easier to access. Also, further learning and implementation of certification programs which enable the development of a responsible tourism in the future is compulsory.

For Montenegro, it is essential to capitalise, share and build on the regional and EU best practices and proven measures for soft mobility and green mobility in destinations, exploiting the results of previous actions that have proven successful in sustainable tourism mobility and accessibility. A multi-modal, clean transport supplementing traditional cars and public transport with innovative models (on-call public transport, last mile solutions) in a green tourist destination powered by green energy with local products offer - is a package to be offered to tourists.