

---

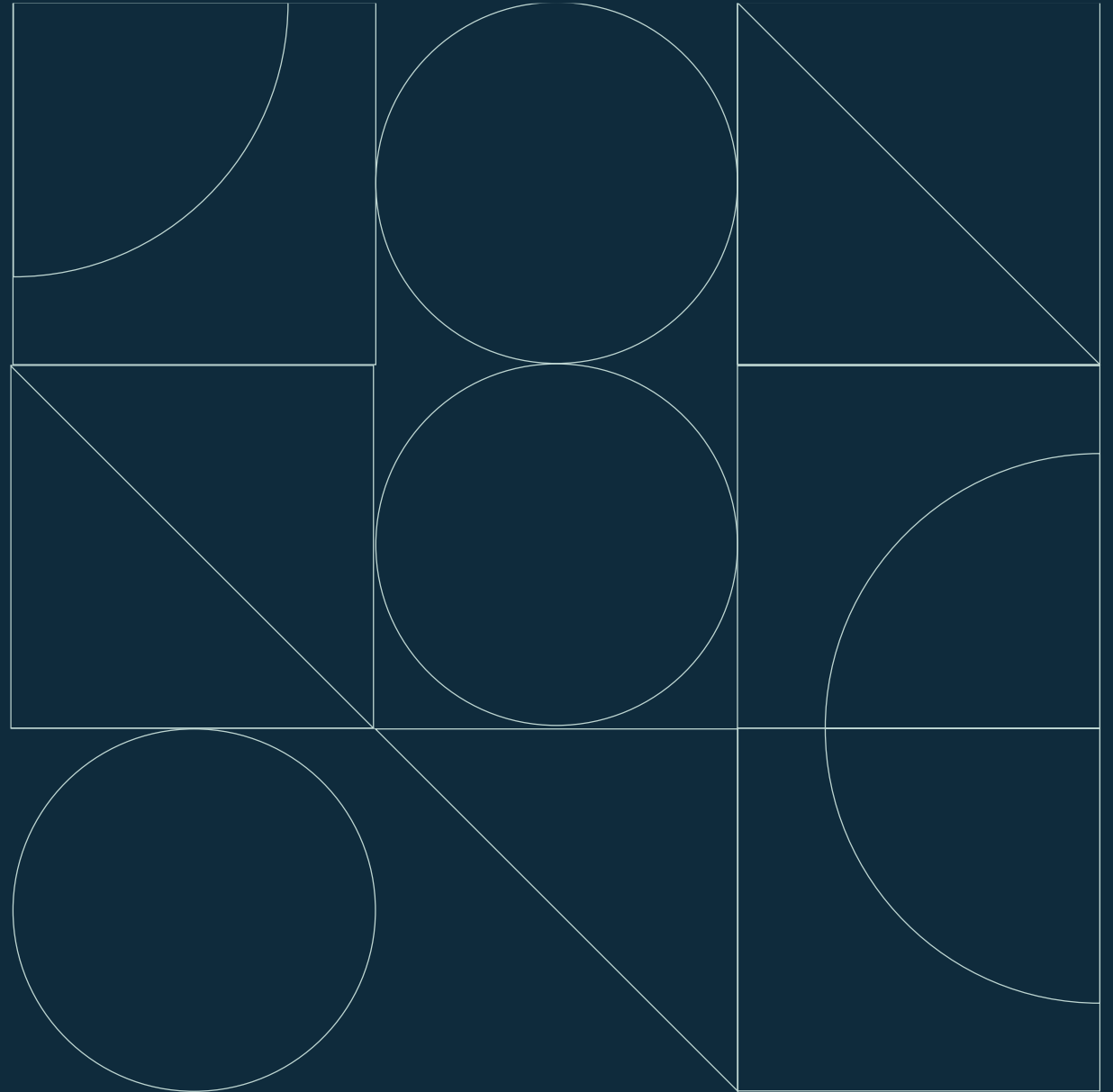
# Crisis Management Checklist for National Tourism Organisations

Brussels, September 2024

---

**EUROPEAN  
TRAVEL  
COMMISSION**

---



# Contents

## Introduction

Crisis Management Checklist	03
-----------------------------	----

## Phase 1

Preparedness	05
--------------	----

## Phase 2

Response	25
----------	----

## Phase 3

Recovery	49
----------	----

## Phase 4

Resilience	69
------------	----

## Specific guidelines

<a href="#">Steps of risk analysis in tourism</a>	11-12
---	-------

<a href="#">Elements of a robust crisis communication plan</a>	17
--	----

<a href="#">A phased approach to communications</a>	38-39
---	-------

<a href="#">Communicating with different stakeholders during a crisis response</a>	40-45
--	-------

<a href="#">Tackling disinformation - practical actions for NTOs</a>	46-48
--	-------

<a href="#">Communicating with different stakeholders, post-crisis (recovery phase)</a>	65-68
---	-------

<a href="#">Examples of communication simulation</a>	75
--	----

# Introducing the crisis management checklist

## Why a checklist?

When a crisis occurs, the ultimate aim of a National Tourism Organisation (NTO) should be to provide clear structures for organising crisis response and determine a clear set of responsibilities for its employees and subcontractors that will allow for faster, more efficient reactions.

Therefore, good crisis preparedness also requires NTOs to have a realistic picture of the types of crises that can occur within their country's borders and in neighbouring countries that might affect their own country. It also involves clearing as many bureaucratic/practical obstacles out of the way in advance as possible to allow an agile and sensitive response when a crisis occurs. This checklist guides NTOs and partners systematically.

This checklist acknowledges that across Europe, there is considerable variation in how national tourism organisations are resourced and the functions they are expected to provide.

From country to country, there are variations in:

- NTOs' responsibilities, internal structures and competencies,
- Governance structures (e.g. centralised vs. federal), with different policing and civil protection structures (state vs. regional)
- Resourcing that allows for varying levels of reach in terms of business support measures, research, and campaign deployment, among other areas.

The authors also acknowledge that decision-making relating to major incidents resides with national governments and regional administrations, with these institutions usually taking precedence.

---

Readers should interpret and adapt this checklist with these considerations in mind

# Introducing the crisis management checklist

## Overview

The Crisis Management Checklist is based on a framework made up of four consecutive phases: **preparedness, response, recovery and resilience**.

By nature, crises are not linear, and for that reason, the checklist is designed as a loop, where resilience measures will help support future preparedness.

At each stage of the checklist, four clusters of activity have been identified ('identify partners', 'create crisis management plans', etc.). Key actions under these areas of activity are arranged into a checklist format according to NTOs' broad areas of operation, such as research, business support, or communications. In this way, the checklist has been arranged to aid navigation and readability for NTO teams at a time when time and practicality are of the essence.







# Phase 1 Preparedness

---

# Phase 1: Preparedness

Effective pre-crisis planning is crucial to swift and effective crisis response and recovery, making this the **most essential stage of crisis management**. The actions listed in this section will help build long-term resilience to crises and their impacts. This phase requires an open-minded approach to identify the ‘what’ and ‘who’ and prepare for the ‘how’ crises are to be dealt with. The preparedness actions for NTOs are arranged under the following four stages:

---

**01** IDENTIFY

**02** CREATE

**03** ORGANISE & MONITOR

**04** UPDATE

---



Several activities listed under the Preparedness stage can also be considered part of long-term Resilience building. This includes activities related to capacity building of NTO staff and stakeholders, monitoring the situation for any signs of potential crises, reviewing and updating plans and procedures, and testing them through simulation exercises with different scenarios.

# 01

## PREPAREDNESS IDENTIFY

The first goal is to assess and identify systemic risks that could spiral into a crisis and determine who will be responsible as soon as a crisis occurs (both internally and externally). There is enormous value in working with the broadest range of stakeholders on this exercise, as well as staff at all levels within the NTOs; the more diverse the opinions and experiences that feed into this stage, the less likely the organisation is to miss blind spots or be susceptible to ‘groupthink’.

### AREA OF OPERATION

### CHECKLIST

#### Strategic Decision Making

- ☐ Assess and identify significant risks that could become a crisis. For more details, see ‘[Steps of Risk Analysis in Tourism](#)’.
- ☐ Identify key tourism stakeholders who would form a Tourism Crisis Management Group when a crisis unfolds. This would involve a mix of public and private partners to address the situation, coordinate key messages and plan for recovery.
- ☐ Explore how the NTO can contribute to a Crisis Management Committee of the central government (or a similar group of critical agencies that usually deals with a crisis) to ensure the tourism sector has a voice in decision-making when a crisis strikes.
  - ➡ *Example: Turismo de Portugal NTO is a member of the Permanent Committee for Prevention and Monitoring of the Effects of Drought. The Permanent Committee approves and monitors the implementation of the Prevention, Monitoring and Contingency Plan for Drought Situations and defines political guidelines to address drought.*

# 01 **PREPAREDNESS**

## IDENTIFY

### AREA OF OPERATION

### CHECKLIST

#### Strategic Alliances

- ☐ Build formal partnerships and alliances with organisations that can best support risk detection and provide early warnings to the tourism sector (e.g., civil protection and meteorological agencies).
- ☐ Build teams around common priorities between external organisations and NTO staff through familiarisation visits and webinars.
- ☐ Enhance relationships with NTOs in neighbouring countries that may be facing similar threats (e.g. impact of extreme weather or conflict on borders) to share best practices and agree on common approaches to messaging.

#### Communication

- ☐ Make a periodic review of situations that have the potential to become crises (see the full range of crisis types in Chapter 2), both within the country's borders and nearby.
- ☐ Review controversial issues that may cause national concern or are being reported consistently by the international media and may potentially affect the country's reputation in key markets (e.g., issues around racism, gender inequality, human trafficking, immigration, animal rights).
- ☐ Develop policy position papers and draft well-articulated statements on controversial issues relevant to the tourism sector (e.g. labour relations, overtourism, visitor behaviour).



# 01 **PREPAREDNESS**

## IDENTIFY

### AREA OF OPERATION

### CHECKLIST

#### Research & Innovation

- ☐ Work with overseas offices and industry groups to continually monitor/ identify key businesses and infrastructure most at risk of disruption through collapse (e.g. key airlines, tour operators).
- ☐ Carry out detailed scenario planning to explore ‘what if’ scenarios related to the risk assessment above that could significantly impact visitor flows.
- ☐ Evaluate what data is missing to allow the NTO and government partners to evaluate risks and work to close these gaps properly.

#### Internal Operations

- ☐ Identify team members responsible for a crisis response internally, as well as those who will be responsible for coordinating with external agencies.
- ☐ Incorporate the requirement for some team members to have crisis management experience into the NTO’s recruitment policy.
- ☐ Identify the NTO’s key contacts in crisis response, such as local emergency services and governmental agencies (police, civil protection), and the protocols for agreeing on crisis management plans and communications with them.
- ☐ Identify what procedures are needed to ensure the NTO employees’ well-being during a crisis

# Steps of risk analysis in tourism

## 01

### IDENTIFY RISKS

- ❑ Identify the sources of risk (hazards) to be managed, such as natural, civil/political, biological, and technological. This will involve assessing destination vulnerability to extreme climate change impacts, changes in the labour market, and the geopolitical situation in the immediate vicinity and further afield.
- ❑ Identify and explain those elements which are more vulnerable (less resilient and more susceptible) to crises, e.g. destination's reputation, economic viability, etc.
- ❑ Make a list of crises that might happen based on the ones that have already occurred in your region or country, which may happen again, considering risks at different levels that will require the NTO to respond.

## 02

### ANALYSE RISKS

- ❑ Analyse the likelihood and consequences of different risks. Understand which risks, if escalated to a crisis, will have the most damaging effects on the destination, and prioritise actions.
- ❑ For each risk identified, create a matrix that assesses and rates the likelihood of the event happening and the possible consequences. [Download Free Risk Matrix Templates | Smartsheet](#)

# Steps of risk analysis in tourism

## 03

### EVALUATE RISKS

---

- ❑ Rank and prioritise risks to view the risk exposure.

## 04

### TREAT RISKS

---

- ❑ Consider risk treatment options, select the most appropriate options, and prepare a risk treatment plan.
- ❑ Standard risk treatment plans include avoiding the risk, reducing the risk (likelihood & consequences), transferring the risk (sharing responsibility), retaining the risk and planning to manage the consequences.

## 05

### MONITOR & REVIEW RISKS

- ❑ Regularly review and update - at least annually, during periods when there is no crisis - current processes, plans and procedures in place to deal with crises.





# Steps of risk analysis in tourism:

## Further Readings

### Introduction to Risk Management in Tourism - Participant's Workbook

This workbook provides useful templates to be filled out during each step of the risk assessment process. It breaks down these steps into several helpful prompts to guide the completion of the templates (pp. 3-16).



# 02 PREPAREDNESS CREATE

This stage covers creating tools, procedures, plans and materials to be used as part of a planned and coordinated response from the moment a crisis occurs. One of the most important activities in this stage involves creating a robust Crisis Communication Plan that outlines the key tasks of NTO's communications staff during a crisis and the key messages. It also involves creating content and materials to inform stakeholders about the crisis' impacts and prepare for its effects.

## AREA OF OPERATION

## CHECKLIST

### Strategic Decision Making

- ☐ Develop a Crisis Management Plan addressing each identified risk, which will enable the NTO to react to certain crises as and when needed. The plan should clearly determine the roles and responsibilities of different entities (organisations or authorities), including identifying who should first act in case a crisis occurs, the roles of NTO staff, and procedures and actions to deal with different types of future crises.  
*➡ Example: The Emergency Response Plan launched by government authorities in Iceland (including the Icelandic Tourist Board) in November 2018 as a precautionary measure in the event of natural disasters or other incidents, with the aim of keeping tourists in Iceland as safe as possible. The plan was activated in November 2023 in light of the development of earthquakes in Reykjanes.*
- ☐ Develop procedures for exchanging information during a crisis with these other entities competent in crisis management (e.g. civil protection). This includes distinguishing clearly which information is for internal or public consumption.

## AREA OF OPERATION

## CHECKLIST

### Strategic Decision Making

- ☐ Agree with all entities involved on common terminology to be used in external communications that could impact tourism flows (e.g., state of emergency or imminent danger) to ensure that these are proportionate and relate to only the specific areas affected.
- ☐ Put in place procedures to postpone tourist arrivals to destinations affected by the crisis and prepare destinations that may receive visitors diverted or displaced.
- ☐ Establish an early alert system to help inform other entities responsible for crisis management in case of noticing any signs that a crisis is likely to occur (for example, a sudden and significant temperature increase).

### Strategic Alliances

- ☐ Share the crisis management plan for review by other relevant government agencies (e.g. health, environmental protection, civil protection) to ensure understanding and aligned approaches.



## AREA OF OPERATION

## CHECKLIST

### Communication

- ☐ Prepare phased general communication ‘core messages’ for different groups of stakeholders to be adapted for a specific type of crisis.
- ☐ Establish clear lines of communication and guidelines between tourism stakeholders on location to avoid misunderstandings, harmful speculation, and disinformation. Agree on clear roles on who will do what and when.
- ☐ Develop a Crisis Communication Plan (See ‘[Elements of a Robust Crisis Communication Plan](#)’).
- ☐ Prepare communication and materials (web tutorials, instruction manuals) to guide tourist-facing businesses on what to do during crises, where to get reliable, official information, and how to care for customers and staff properly.
- ☐ Prepare guidance for distribution among visitors on what to do if a crisis escalates (e.g. how to stay safe during a wildfire or flood, where to get reliable information).
- ☐ Ensure that preparedness materials (e.g. videos, website pages, apps, etc.) aimed at tourists are available in relevant (most widely spoken in the particular destination) languages.

## AREA OF OPERATION

## CHECKLIST

### Research & Innovation

- ☐ Create a ‘Threat Matrix’: a score sheet to evaluate factors such as sentiment in the media and impact on the tourism industry to understand the magnitude of the crisis better.
- ☐ Create indicators that allow the NTO to identify the main risk factors that could potentially lead to a crisis event.

➡Example: The rise of all supply chain prices due to inflation and post-pandemic effects on the hospitality workforce brought some challenges to the supply side. Turismo de Portugal is developing several strategies in coordination with several stakeholders to tackle the scarcity of workers, for example, by supporting research in this area. Through financing investigation and analysis of work labour trends, in 2023, Aveiro University released a Study of the Labor Market for the Tourism Sector supported by Turismo de Portugal.

### Internal Operations

- ☐ Consider recruiting a dedicated team member responsible for monitoring potential crisis situations with other government agencies and coordinating the NTO’s response.
- ☐ Systematically allocate necessary resources to allow the NTO to execute the Crisis Management Plan.
- ☐ Develop procedures that set the internal responsibilities of all staff members when a crisis hits (to be included in the Crisis Management Plan).

# Elements of a robust crisis communication plan

1

Statement of the organisation's communication policy, including the names (or positions) of authorised spokespeople.

5

Checklists for each functional role, outlining the main tasks.

2

Outline of the organisation's communication and its interface with the corporate Crisis Management Team (the head of communications should sit on the CMT).

6

Templates for initial statements and employee communications, including the first online posts, can be issued immediately after confirming key information. Templates should be developed for various possible scenarios, including accidents, serious incidents, diversion, hijacking/security incidents, and service disruption.

3

Protocols for ensuring all available communication channels are appropriately coordinated and that information and messaging are consistent with all audiences.

7

Database with phone and email addresses of important internal and external contacts (including primary media outlets, online influencers and service providers).

4

Description of functional roles and responsibilities

8

Standard forms and documentation (for example, media call logging form, press conference registration form)

# 03 PREPAREDNESS ORGANISE

The main task at this stage is organising the teams, facilities, and equipment needed to adequately address the crisis. This includes nominating decision-makers, spokespeople, and a crisis communications team that will monitor the evolving situation during the crisis and communicate information relevant to visitors and tourism stakeholders.

## AREA OF OPERATION

## CHECKLIST

### Strategic Decision Making

- ☐ Set up a Tourism Crisis Management Group (NTO + tourism sector stakeholders) that is ready in case of a potential crisis, with clearly defined roles and responsibilities. Practise what to do, who is doing what and how to communicate repeatedly to be ready.
- ☐ Join a Crisis Management Committee of the Government (or any other cross-governmental working group active during a crisis) to ensure the tourism sector has a voice in decision-making when a crisis strikes.

### Strategic Alliances

- ☐ Explore becoming part of a data/ information sharing network with access to quality information, e.g. within the national or regional government or international tourism networks (e.g. The Future of Tourism Coalition).

## AREA OF OPERATION

## CHECKLIST

### Strategic Alliances

- ☐ Explore becoming part of a data/ information sharing network with access to quality information, e.g. within the national or regional government or international tourism networks (e.g. The Future of Tourism Coalition).

### Communication

- ☐ Have designated spokespeople in place: a primary spokesperson and suitable alternatives. Key requirements for spokespeople include:<sup>6</sup>
  - Being in a position of responsibility and being able to speak with authority.
  - Experienced in dealing with news media.
  - Being highly articulate.
  - Having undergone crisis communication training.
- ☐ Set up a Crisis Communications Working Group with other stakeholders, with clearly defined roles and responsibilities and a crisis communication plan in place. Ensure everyone knows their roles to be ready for a planned response when a crisis hits. (NB: this Group is different to a Tourism Crisis Management Group)
  - ➡ *Example: Turismo de Portugal NTO is a member of the Permanent Committee for Prevention and Monitoring of the Effects of Drought. The Permanent Committee approves and monitors the implementation of the Prevention, Monitoring and Contingency Plan for Drought Situations and defines political guidelines to address drought.*

# 03 PREPAREDNESS ORGANISE

## AREA OF OPERATION

## CHECKLIST

### Research & Innovation

- ☐ Ensure that research and insights teams are sufficiently resourced and have time and budget available each quarter to monitor and report on emerging threats.

### Internal Operations

- ☐ Ensure that sufficient time is set aside each month or quarter for reviewing and updating crisis management plans.
- ☐ Ensure that the NTO's office has sufficient space and equipment to meet and work for extended periods during crisis occurrences, including office supplies, working outside business hours and procurement.



# 04

## PREPAREDNESS MONITOR AND UPDATE

After **identifying risks facing the tourism sector**, the task of monitoring for any signs of a potential/brewing crisis should happen permanently. It is also essential to ensure that the plans and materials prepared in the phases above are regularly updated since staff roles and tools for dealing with crises often change over time. Staying updated also includes regularly planning and practising different crisis scenarios with various responses. Doing this is not only part of good preparation but also an essential part of building long-term resilience.

### AREA OF OPERATION

### CHECKLIST

#### Strategic Decision Making

- ☐ Set aside time during B2B forums to discuss the potential for crisis disruption in the national tourism sector and lessons to be learned from earlier crises.

#### Strategic Alliances

- ☐ Continually evaluate which formal partnerships, alliances and events would benefit the NTO in building risk detection and improving crisis response capabilities.
- ☐ Hold regular meetings with NTOs in neighbouring countries that may be facing similar threats (e.g., the impact of extreme weather or conflict on borders) to monitor the impact on their tourism performance and update common approaches to messaging.

# 04 **PREPAREDNESS** **MONITOR AND UPDATE**

## AREA OF OPERATION

## CHECKLIST

### Communication

- ☐ Revise the Crisis Communications Plan regularly to ensure that the roles and responsibilities of the key players are relevant and well understood:
  - Ensure that the plan is reviewed and updated at least every six months.
  - Check that contact lists and the nominated candidates for key positions are up to date.
  - Ask whether the current version of the plan still reflects the “real world”, or if it is now outdated due to organisational changes or changes in the external environment
- ☐ Ensure that the NTO website is updated with the latest information relating to travel alerts and remove expired information to avoid confusion.
- ☐ Test the Communications Plan at least once per year:
  - Conduct an exercise to test the plan and to ensure that everyone understands their role and the purpose of the plan. An exercise may be a simple table-top or a full-scale input-response exercise.
  - Consider running the exercise outside of office hours but establish a protocol for what to do when key players are absent.<sup>7</sup>

# 04 **PREPAREDNESS** **MONITOR AND UPDATE**

## AREA OF OPERATION

## CHECKLIST

### Research & Innovation

- ☐ Collect data on arrivals to track demand and visitor sentiment and monitor the destination's reputation regularly.
- ☐ Regularly collect and analyse data on incoming visitor profiles and preferences for a data-based market diversification strategy (to avoid overdependence on specific markets).
- ☐ Observe wider geopolitical developments of the region and the targeted markets and collect data that will allow for the prediction of demand.

### Internal Operations

- ☐ Enhance the digital capabilities of NTO staff and local businesses to help achieve faster and more coordinated communication and procedures, as well as faster data analysis and dissemination of insights.
- ☐ Regularly clarify the internal responsibilities of all staff members when a crisis hits. Ensure all staff understand the internal responsibilities.

# 04 PREPAREDNESS MONITOR AND UPDATE

## AREA OF OPERATION

## CHECKLIST

### Internal Operations

- ☐ Regularly update and adapt training programmes for staff and stakeholders (e.g. local tour operators, accommodation providers), informed by the latest practices and technologies.
- ☐ Update any plans and procedures regularly. Ensure staff receive the necessary training and updates to understand the actions in the Plan.

➡ *Example: VisitFlanders has a Business Continuity Plan (BCP) for future crises, covering basic processes for various crisis types, though without detailed crisis-specific elaboration. It's important to maintain a list of essential actions for crises, such as knowledge sharing, sector gatherings, and community action. Our top priority is keeping the BCP up-to-date and ensuring all staff receive necessary training and updates.*



A dramatic volcanic eruption scene. In the center, a dark, jagged volcano is erupting, with bright orange and yellow lava flows cascading down its slopes. Thick plumes of white and grey smoke or ash rise from the crater into the sky. The foreground shows a dark, rocky landscape with some lava flows extending towards the viewer. The overall atmosphere is intense and powerful.

# Phase 2 Response

---



# Phase 2: Response

Crises can strike abruptly and with considerable intensity, often with little or no warning. When the crisis directly affects visitors, **calls for an 'official' response will arrive almost immediately**. The first step will be to **clarify facts before activating teams** and implementing the most appropriate tools and procedures to save lives, keep people from danger and minimise disruption to the destination. Clarity, transparency, and consistency in messaging with other government departments will be essential for reassuring stakeholders that the situation is being managed responsibly and avoiding misinformation. Remembering that this is likely a stressful time for the organisation's staff, key partners, and stakeholders is also important. The response actions for NTOs are arranged under the following four stages:

---

**01** CLARIFY    **02** ACTIVATE & IMPLEMENT    **03** SUPPORT    **04** COMMUNICATE

---



Communication is an overarching aspect of crisis response and occurs in each stage of this phase. The information in the 'Communications' rows in the following slides has been addressed in the stage **'Communicate'**.



# 01 RESPONSE CLARIFY

NTOs rarely have a comfortable margin of time to meet, prioritise actions and issue ‘holding’ statements to the media. Calls for official statements or guidance to businesses and visitors may start flowing in almost immediately. Therefore, as the first step during the response stage, it will be essential to clarify the facts, impacts, immediate measures, the need for data and other information, and plan for all possible situation developments.

## AREA OF OPERATION

## CHECKLIST

### Strategic Decision Making

- ☐ Designate key team members (usually CEO and deputies) as the point of contact for initial enquiries with the central government to collect incoming information in a centralised and streamlined way.
- ☐ Immediately after the crisis strikes, quickly clarify the facts, immediate measures, immediate impacts, and all possible situation developments.
- ☐ Identify the need for data and information that will be most valuable for the Crisis Response Group (key decision-making stakeholders) for an efficient response.
- ☐ Contact local/regional tourism organisation(s) in the affected area(s) to offer initial support and gather any local information their teams may have received about the situation on the ground.

### Strategic Alliances

- ☐ Refer to *Strategic Alliances* under ‘**Activate and Implement**’ below

# 01 RESPONSE CLARIFY

## AREA OF OPERATION

## CHECKLIST

### Communication

- ☐ Refer to stage 'Communicate'.

### Research & Innovation

- ☐ Refer to *Research and Innovation* under stage 'Activate and Implement'.

### Internal Operations

- ☐ Set up a suitable 'situation room' (e.g. a large meeting room) where team members can meet, work and plan the NTO response as required.
- ☐ Assign team members (according to the crisis communications plan) to remain in contact with different stakeholder groups (see 'communicate' table below).

# 02 RESPONSE ACTIVATE AND IMPLEMENT

This stage focuses on activating teams and implementing processes from the Preparedness phase. The NTO should take a bold approach, leading in areas where it can achieve significant results, including delivering official communications and facilitating industry cooperation. It is essential to consider the impact on stakeholders, such as visitors, media, and overseas offices, and ask, “How can we clarify the situation and minimize further impacts?”. Flexibility and adaptability to the evolving crisis are also crucial throughout this phase.

## AREA OF OPERATION

## CHECKLIST

### Strategic Decision Making

- ☐ Activate any crisis management protocols, inform all staff, designate leadership roles for key staff members, and suspend non-essential activities to free up staff to support the organisation’s response.
- ☐ Activate the Tourism Crisis Management Group of the most important stakeholders in the destination (see Preparedness stage), with clearly defined responsibilities and a programme of regular calls/meetings to give updates and make decisions.
- ☐ Designate appropriate team members to consider the likely questions that visitors in-destination, those due to arrive, the international media, overseas offices, transport operators and the travel trade will likely have to start preparing Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) lists for each group. Ensure staff are designated to update these lists as new information becomes available.
- ☐ If the evacuation of an area is necessary, activate procedures to ensure the cancellation or postponement of tourist arrivals to that specific area (and surrounding areas, if required)

# 02 RESPONSE ACTIVATE AND IMPLEMENT

## AREA OF OPERATION

## CHECKLIST

### Strategic Decision Making

- ☐ Where available, gather data on tourism infrastructure and numbers of visitors affected by the crisis, and set out scenarios for the central government to consider to ensure that the needs of visitors are taken into account (e.g. measures to be taken in case a nearby airport is closed, or how much shelter space is required for visitors in addition to residents).
- ☐ As the crisis progresses, analyse the long-term implications of the situation by identifying the desired end state. Evaluate various options to achieve it, select the best one and issue actions. Keep these other options as a plan B or C.<sup>8</sup>

### Strategic Alliances

- ☐ Hold regular calls with local/regional DMOs to ensure the NTO receives the most up-to-date information from the affected areas.
- ☐ Offer to provide RTOs/DMOs with additional staff, training, or financial resources where necessary.
- ☐ Hold regular (e.g. daily, early afternoon) briefing calls with key industry representatives to keep them updated on the latest situation, actions being taken, and areas where their support is required.

# 02 RESPONSE ACTIVATE AND IMPLEMENT

## AREA OF OPERATION

## CHECKLIST

### Communication

- ☐ Refer to stage 'Communicate'.

### Research & Innovation

- ☐ Monitor media output by external entities such as banks and insurance companies, which may provide estimates of the extent of damage or economic impact.
- ☐ Collect real-time information by collaborating with business associations that can provide data on the emerging impact, e.g., to demonstrate companies' loss of income, cancelled orders, lack of new orders, increased expenses, etc.

### Internal Operations

- ☐ Hold a meeting with NTO staff to run through and ensure everyone knows what their roles and responsibilities are during the response phase.
- ☐ Stay informed about government announcements: ensure knowledge and understanding of the impacts the new decisions resulting from the crisis (e.g. new government regulations, new support programmes for local businesses) will have on the organisation's budget.

# 03 RESPONSE SUPPORT

Crises are times of high tension, when lives and livelihoods may be lost, visitors will be disoriented, and the government’s response to the crisis will be under intense scrutiny from local and international politicians and the media. Maintaining a strong sense of collective responsibility, teamwork, and dedication to supporting those in most urgent need will be critical during this phase. Staff may be required to work outside of office hours and may well be troubled by the nature of the crisis on a personal level. Hence, it is critical to dedicate the necessary time and space to regularly check in with NTO staff and other key partners to understand how they can best be supported.

## AREA OF OPERATION

## CHECKLIST

### Strategic Decision Making

- ☐ Evaluate what physical resources the NTO has that can be dedicated to relief efforts for those affected (e.g., providing space, equipment, food, and staff time).
- ☐ Set up a staff solidarity fund, release staff to join relief efforts and show flexibility and gestures of goodwill towards those affected.

### Strategic Alliances

- ☐ Cooperate and meet with Government and business associations to discuss the effects of the crisis and the measures needed for local businesses.
- ☐ Work with national and local partners to coordinate diversion/evacuation efforts for affected visitors (e.g. arranging alternative accommodation or evacuation flights).

### Communication

- ☐ Refer to stage ‘Communicate’ below.



# 03 RESPONSE SUPPORT

## AREA OF OPERATION

### Internal Operations

## CHECKLIST

- ☐ Carry out a periodic well-being check among all team members:
  - Is everyone safe?
  - Has anyone been or could be badly affected? (i.e. personally, or through close family connections to the incident)
  - Are all team members still able to work (remotely or in the office)?
  - What immediate support is needed to ensure everyone stays safe?
  - What additional flexibility can the NTO provide as an employer (e.g. for those working long hours or with childcare needs)?

# 04 RESPONSE COMMUNICATE

In the response phase, communications should focus on reassuring and supporting local businesses, assisting current visitors and other tourism stakeholders with timely and updated information, pausing marketing and promotion, and responding quickly to tackle disinformation.

## AREA OF OPERATION

## CHECKLIST

### General principles for communicating

Continually maintain a timely and up-to-date response.

- ☐ Consider opening a dedicated microsite or blog to keep the NTO website updated with the latest information on crisis development, response, and support available to visitors and businesses affected.
- ☐ Provide links to official sources for further information and ensure that these are kept up to date.
- ☐ After the first statement has been issued, it is essential to maintain a regular flow of information which lasts beyond the first few hours or even days of the crisis. (See '[A phased approach to communications](#)')
- ☐ Consider the needs of diverse groups of stakeholders (e.g. visitors, their families and potential visitors, the media, travel trade and local businesses and residents) who will be seeking a trustworthy, clear and authoritative source of information.(See '[Communicating with different stakeholders during a crisis response](#)').

# 04 RESPONSE COMMUNICATE

## AREA OF OPERATION

## CHECKLIST

➔ *Example: During the floods in Limburg in summer 2021, the Netherlands Board of Tourism and Conventions started an information-campaign to inform people about the current status and the possibilities to stay in (other parts of) Limburg.*

Ensure that messaging is clear and repeated for impact.

- ☐ ‘Communicate, communicate and communicate’; repeat important messages over and over again to ensure that they are picked up during what will be a frenetic news cycle.
- ☐ Use clear, simple language that will be quickly and easily understood by those in an emergency situation and avoid complex terminology.
- ☐ Be specific about the geographic scope of the crisis, keeping in mind that overseas visitors and media may be unfamiliar with the country’s territory or administrative boundaries. Be clear about which tourism infrastructure (e.g. airports, transport connections) are affected and which alternatives are available.
- ☐ Issue the most important updates in the most common languages for visitors and the international media.

## General principles for communicating

# 04 RESPONSE COMMUNICATE

## AREA OF OPERATION

## CHECKLIST

### General principles for communicating

#### Monitor the evolving situation and be ready to adapt communications rapidly.

- ☐ Ensure that key staff members are tasked to monitor official channels, relay updates to internal teams, and update NTO channels when needed.
- ☐ Ensure the NTO can issue updates quickly and flexibly outside of office hours if needed.
- ☐ Ensure the operations team can access real-time intelligence and images showing how people at the scene portray the incident or service disruptions. This intelligence will sometimes be a significant factor in developing the operational and customer service response to any situation or reputation threat in real-time.<sup>9</sup>

Coordinate and collaborate with other entities that have to communicate with their audiences.

- ☐ Ensure it is clear who is communicating, to whom, and when to avoid misunderstandings, harmful speculation, disinformation, and duplicating of work. This should be clearly stated in the crisis communications plan.

# 04 RESPONSE COMMUNICATE

## AREA OF OPERATION

## CHECKLIST

### General principles for communicating

Suspend 'business as usual communications' where necessary

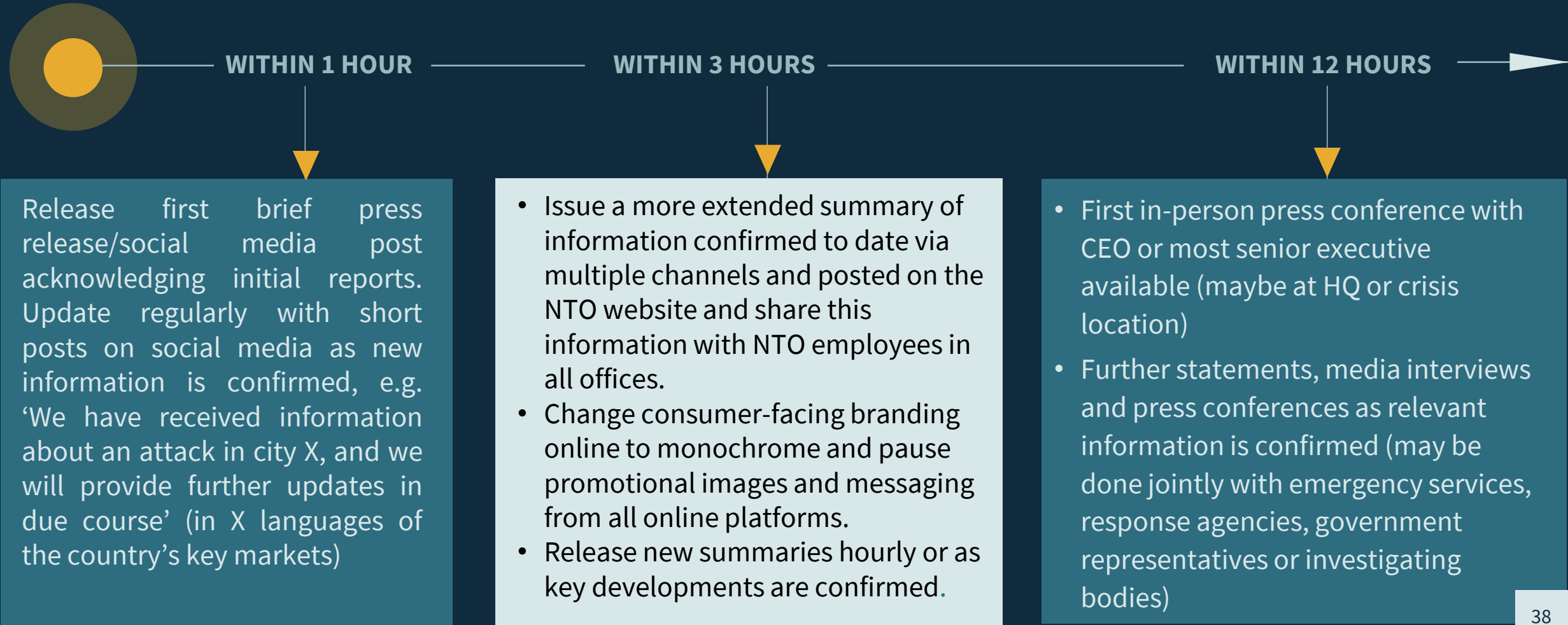
- ☐ Switch the website front page, social media channels and other external-facing platforms to a sombre or neutral design (depending on the nature and severity of the crisis) to show recognition of the situation and avoid accusations of ignorance or insensitivity.
- ☐ Suspend any active marketing programmes (activations, campaigns) for the destination until an appropriate recovery strategy is determined.

Maintain trust with transparency and integrity.

- ☐ Gain trust by correcting errors quickly.
- ☐ Use (and constantly improve) the procedures for countering disinformation in the era of artificial intelligence and social media. (See '[Tackling Disinformation - Practical Actions for NTOs](#)')



# A phased approach to communications



# A phased approach to communications

## WITHIN 24 HOURS

- (If deemed appropriate) first media appearance/statement by a most senior political leader to arrive at a crisis location (e.g. at/near the scene of a terrorist attack).
- The communications team may decide to post a video statement by the leader online. This would make the CEO “visible” early in the response, without exposing him/her to media questions while confirmed information is scarce.

## WITHIN 24- 48 HOURS

Provide updates (through various communication channels) on:

- Progress on assistance activities for tourists in the country affected by the crisis;
- The situation in the crisis-affected areas (damage to infrastructure, closed attractions, cancelled events, etc.)

## 48 HOURS ONWARDS

- Provide updates (through various communication channels) on:
  - Ongoing CEO Any Memorial events
  - Release of an initial investigation
- Ongoing CEO communication with employees
- Ongoing communications with travel trade
- Update communication lines and talking points for frontline staff

# Communicating with different stakeholders during a crisis response



## Local and regional tourism organisations in the affected area(s)

- Contact RTO/DMO management and, if possible, convene a team call for relevant NTO staff to receive an update on the current local situation.
- Share this checklist with the RTO/DMO.
- Jointly analyse areas where NTO resources / cut-through could help assist (e.g. clarifying details with international media, relaying critical information to visitors) and jointly analyse where NTO support could be provided.
- Gather information from local sources on safety measures being put in place, diversions or closures. Use them for dissemination among visitors. Jointly assess the potential impact of the crisis on day-to-day NTO functions (e.g., what the effect will be on collecting visitor data or the economic impact that the central government may request).

# Communicating with different stakeholders during a crisis response

## → Travel trade (overseas travel agents, inbound travel trade)

- Once the facts have been clarified, and a plan for visitors (e.g. diversions, closures, evacuations) has been established, convene an initial call with the tour operators representing the largest share of visitor arrivals in the affected destination(s) to communicate this news (this may also be done with the assistance of the NTO's overseas offices where relevant).
- Provide regular (daily, then weekly) updates to the travel trade through B2B social media channels, newsletters/bulletins, NTO overseas offices, travel trade media, and 1:1 direct updates.
- Seek feedback and updates from the travel trade. During a crisis, travel agents and regional accommodation providers may be in a good position to provide input to the Crisis Communication Team regarding the nature and scale of the incident as well as its likely impact on regular tourism activity and capacity to recover (e.g. availability of buses/aircraft for evacuations).

# Communicating with different stakeholders during a crisis response

## → Visitors

- Monitor official channels (e.g. local government, civil protection) and continually extrapolate information that will be valuable for visitors.
- Based on the available information and specific advice for visitors from the authorities, compile clear, concise updates through a single public-facing channel (e.g. microsite or blog).
- Use other channels (e.g. NTO social channels, local DMO social media, visitor information points, radio stations) to direct visitors to the blog described above.
- Mention specific city/destination names in your messaging to help visitors understand which areas are safe or unsafe to travel to.

# Communicating with different stakeholders during a crisis response

## → Visitors

- Provide visitors who may need to travel away from impacted parts of the country to unaffected areas with a list of tourism websites, phone numbers and other resources to assist them with making new holiday plans.
- Postpone press and PR efforts. Soon after, start communicating with a message: ‘Please come, but when the timing is right’.
- For surrounding areas untouched by the crisis, share that your area was fortunate to avoid damage. Include messaging that alerts followers that all area accommodations and attractions are open and welcoming visitors.<sup>11</sup>
- In case of an environmental crisis, destinations near the areas directly affected should be mindful of visitors travelling through regions damaged en route to their destination.



# Communicating with different stakeholders during a crisis response

## → Local businesses and residents

- Ensuring that updates for businesses are cleared and channelled through one place and consistent with local advice being given.
- Making it clear where businesses can access support programmes.
- Enhancing distribution of digital newsletters for information & online meetings for dialogue.
- Consider traditional direct mail to the homes of all citizens to inform them about what is possible to visit in different parts of the region.

# Communicating with different stakeholders during a crisis response

## → Media

- Take a proactive approach to sharing information and updates with the media to occupy space and avoid speculation. Remind the media of their responsibility to report events accurately.<sup>12</sup>
- Consider setting up a dedicated media centre to connect journalists with experts and have quick access to officials.

→ **Example:** During the tectonic activity affecting the village of Grundavik in 2023-2024, the Icelandic Tourism Board which has set up an International Media Centre to accommodate international journalists on both long and short visits and provide a place for journalists to meet scientific experts and decision-makers and be able to question them first-hand (rather than report myths/assumptions) about geological events that may affect tourism in the country.

# Tackling disinformation – practical actions for NTOs

Hostile actors may seek to take advantage of an incident to stir up confusion or anger among victims and the general public.

Disinformation may seek to exacerbate stereotypes and xenophobia and provoke an exaggerated response from public authorities.

Rumours can spread within seconds online (possibly based on artificial images, text, and video), so monitoring disinformation and fostering trust in official sources is a continual task for public authorities.



# Tackling disinformation – practical actions for NTOs

- ❑ Before taking any action against disinformation, consult and work with experts within the NTO, including subject matter experts, decision-makers, program and policy analysts and the communications team.<sup>13</sup>
- ❑ Establish strong partnerships and collaborate closely with skilled, trusted and respected subject matter experts to help sort fact from fiction. <sup>14,15</sup>
- ❑ Work closely with other government agencies to develop a coherent narrative consistent with visitors and other stakeholders, considering in advance the type of doubts or questions that members of the public are likely to have about what they are being told.
- ❑ Ensure consistency and repetition to increase the likelihood of accurate information being remembered, and create and maintain a narrative that helps drown out the false information.
- ❑ Provide easy-to-digest content that is produced in an engaging form, locally relevant, that travels well digitally and works on social media, is in popular languages, and is easy to find<sup>16</sup>
- ❑ Make accurate information available quickly. During a crisis, time is of the essence in being proactive with the media and consumers.

# Tackling disinformation – practical actions for NTOs

- ❑ Consider proactive approaches to deal with misinformation, including pre-bunking (anticipating and warning of potential disinformation attacks). This includes:
  - Awareness-raising using simple story-telling, slogans or humour and using trusted individuals to deliver messages.<sup>17</sup>
  - Reactive approaches include developing stories to communicate complex or abstract ideas or debunking<sup>18</sup> (explicitly exposing false information to clarify facts).
- ❑ Provide accurate evidence to back up corrections with credible sources and evidence, links, and references from reputable sources.<sup>19</sup>
- ❑ Engage with the audience. Active engagement with the public can involve social media accounts, online forums, public town hall meetings, or stakeholder events.
- ❑ Do not engage trolls. Watch out for combinations of rhetorical devices used by trolls such as social proof, strawman, ‘whataboutism’, ad hominem, claims of no evidence, etc. If somebody repeatedly uses these techniques in their online engagements, they are likely not interested in correcting false or misleading information.<sup>20</sup>



# Phase 3 Recovery

---



# Phase 3: Recovery

Depending on the nature of the crisis, the recovery phase may take a matter of days to many months. Helping destinations to recover quickly and better requires trust, investment and commitment from a wide range of public and private sector stakeholders. Ideally, the recovery process will address long-term challenges, too. During this phase, NTOs should **review and evaluate the organisation's response actions, analyse what has changed for the affected destination(s)** in terms of demand and supply, and adjust and make changes where necessary. Dedicated recovery communications are crucial at this stage to remain visible and communicate regularly to build confidence and trust, as well as to reassure and encourage visitors and travel trade that the destination is safe to return to. For this reason, communication is included in this section as a cross-cutting action that will occur simultaneously with the other three areas. The recovery actions for NTOs are arranged under the following four stages:

---

**01** EVALUATE

**02** ADAPT

**03** MONITOR & TEST

**04** COMMUNICATE

---

# 01 RECOVERY EVALUATE

Collect feedback and review what has just happened to understand better the crisis impacts and response, including the work of the Crisis Management Group and the communications team.

AREA OF OPERATION	CHECKLIST
Strategic Decision Making	<div><input type="checkbox"/> Designate a team member to collect feedback on the work of the Crisis Management Group and review what has just happened for improvements and continuous adaptation to the sector needs (within two weeks into the recovery phase). Critically evaluate:<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Crisis response measures, procedures and decisions undertaken by various stakeholders.</li><li>• The group dynamics of working together and how communications and internal processes can be improved.</li></ul></div> <div><input type="checkbox"/> Share the evaluation document with the rest of the Crisis Management Group, set aside time to discuss it, and update plans accordingly.</div>

# 01 RECOVERY EVALUATE

## AREA OF OPERATION

## CHECKLIST

### Strategic Alliances

- ☐ Set aside time with key industry representatives to evaluate and discuss the response to the crisis and lessons learned and the current needs of the business sector.
- ☐ Evaluate partnerships: which national and international networks and other partners were useful/beneficial to work with in crisis response, and which other partners may be useful for improving the NTO's crisis response in the future.

### Research & Innovation

- ☐ Analyse and evaluate the impacts of this particular crisis on:
  - The local tourism sector in the affected destination(s)
  - Other key stakeholders
  - The country's reputation
  - NTO staff
- ☐ Identify what data is the most crucial to be collected from now on to address the crisis' impacts, e.g.:
  - Value lost to businesses
  - Visitor flows affected
  - Brand and reputation impact
  - Number of tourists affected by the crisis

# 01 RECOVERY EVALUATE

## AREA OF OPERATION

## CHECKLIST

### Internal Operations

- ☐ Document the NTO's crisis response. Evaluate the challenges, successes and failures in the team's response so the whole team can learn valuable lessons, using impartial, external advisors if necessary (for objectivity).
- ☐ Set up a meeting with all staff to ensure everyone is aware of the crisis evaluation document developed after the crisis.
- ☐ Critically assess what internal procedures the NTO needs to keep or amend to ensure efficient day-to-day operations post-crisis (e.g. staffing adjustments, remote work arrangements, training or re-skilling programmes for the NTO staff).
- ☐ Evaluate if there has been any reputational damage to the organisation and how this can be addressed by improving internal procedures in the future.

# 02 RECOVERY ADAPT

Following a crisis, the need for some form of adaptation, in terms of partnership working, communications and internal procedures, is almost inevitable. The eventual changes will depend on the exact nature of the crisis and the lessons learned. Information in this section gives examples of general adaptations which may be required.

AREA OF OPERATION	CHECKLIST
Strategic Decision Making	<div> <input type="checkbox"/> Consider if any new regulations or amendments in the current system are necessary in order to deal with the results of the past crisis and prepare for a potential crisis in the future. For example:           <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Explore opportunities with relevant government departments for relaxing visa restrictions for visitors from alternative markets.</li> <li>• Explore opportunities for tax breaks, VAT adjustments, wage support or any other financial support schemes for tourism SMEs.</li> </ul> </div> <div> <input type="checkbox"/> Ensure that the NTO is part of the cross-governmental team working on a recovery plan for the tourism sector.         </div> <div> <input type="checkbox"/> Set aside time with key decision-makers within the government to discuss and clearly define the NTO’s role in crisis response and recovery (past and future).         </div>

## AREA OF OPERATION

## CHECKLIST

### Strategic Decision Making

- ❑ Work with the government to establish financial support schemes for SMEs and other stakeholders most affected by the crisis, such as tax reductions, holiday vouchers and travel incentive schemes.
  - ➔ *Example: Lithuania implemented a series of schemes to help its tourism sector recover from the pandemic:*
    - *Subsidies for tour operators, accommodation, and catering providers to enable settlements with tourists who refuse travel vouchers.*
    - *Holiday vouchers worth EUR 200 for medical workers in Lithuania.*
    - *Vouchers for a package of services provided by local tour operators, accommodation providers, transport, catering, spas, and entertainment.*
    - *The "Third Night Free " project was aimed at tourists who stay in the country for three nights or more and will get one night free of charge.*
    - *Hotels received an ongoing reduction in VAT to 9% (from 21%), while catering and event organisation companies will receive the same tax relief until the end of 2023; The share of energy price increases was compensated for business.*



## AREA OF OPERATION

## CHECKLIST

### Strategic Alliances

- ☐ Share experiences and best practices with other destinations affected by similar crises, e.g. participate in tourism sector events, both online and in-person. Following the evaluation of partnerships, set aside time to reinforce the collaboration with national and international networks (e.g. through regular meetings, events, and training).
- ☐ Explore opportunities with other destinations that can provide mutual benefits for tourism in your respective destinations, such as creating and promoting offers and incentives encouraging tourists to explore both destinations.
- ☐ Support the establishment of tourism clusters or hubs to strengthen the offer of local businesses.
- ☐ Broaden collaboration and explore new partnerships with the travel trade (e.g. specialised tour operators, travel agents, transport operators) to explore market diversification.
- ☐ Set up regular catch-up meetings with local private sector and key industry representatives to continue the collaboration and relationship building after the crisis to:
  - Keep them updated on any developments post-crisis, such as financial support schemes.
  - Understand the new needs and support required.

## AREA OF OPERATION

## CHECKLIST

### Strategic Alliances

- Explore marketing and promotion opportunities post-crisis, for example, in new markets or market segments.
  - Update them on current challenges and trends for the sector (e.g. trends in consumer demand or consumer behaviour).
  - Regularly explore the needs for skills development training such as digital skills, language skills, sales and marketing skills, and intercultural competence.
- ☐ Work with the local business sector to develop new tourism offerings and remove the reliance on one market, focusing on segments that tend to bounce back quicker (e.g. domestic travel or special interest tourism).<sup>21</sup>
- ➡ *Example: Following Russia's aggression on Ukraine in 2014 and in 2022 and the decline of Russian tourists to Latvia, the NTO has taken several measures such as the creation of new tourism products, promotion of domestic tourism, development of MICE and health tourism to attract new markets<sup>22</sup>.*

## AREA OF OPERATION

### Research & Innovation

## CHECKLIST

- ❑ Collect data to properly analyse the impact of the crisis on the local tourism sector and the NTO's reputation and to collect insights on target markets through:
  - Social listening in key source markets (what's trending on social media to understand perceptions about the country in the wake of a crisis).
  - Monitor business sentiment in key source markets.
  - Interviews with international travel trade.
  - Analyse bulletins from overseas offices.
  - Surveys of departing passengers at the border.
  - Hotel bookings.
  - Flight bookings.
  - Footfall in certain locations.
  - Interviews and surveys with local industry representatives on the state of the local tourism sector.

## AREA OF OPERATION

## CHECKLIST

### Internal Operations

- ☐ Adapt the NTO's strategy by reallocating funds, prioritising essential expenditures, and seeking additional financial support. Set solid measures and procedures to continue supporting employees' well-being and morale long-term, e.g. via dedicated employee assistance plan with counselling services, mental health days, dedicated time off to recover, and wellness programmes.
- ☐ Implement internal procedures to ensure efficient day-to-day operations post-crisis (e.g. staffing adjustments, remote work arrangements, staff support schemes).
- ☐ Constantly improve the digital skills of the industry and NTO's staff.
- ☐ In case of losing a key market, quickly reallocate the budget for research, promotion and new staff to explore alternative markets.
- ☐ Operate an open-door CEO policy and set aside dedicated time for CEO-staff check-ins (e.g. regular Q&A sessions).

# 03 RECOVERY MONITOR AND TEST

The goal of this stage is to observe and monitor any developments post-conflict that will allow the NTO to test the new plans within the new post-crisis world.

AREA OF OPERATION	CHECKLIST
Strategic Decision Making	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li><input type="checkbox"/> Observe wider geopolitical developments of the region and targeted markets regularly to capture trends and any other developments relevant to the destination.</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Monitor the effectiveness of the government support schemes for SMEs (such as tax breaks, VAT adjustments, and wage support) and keep the relevant government department updated on any necessary changes.</li></ul>
Strategic Alliances	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li><input type="checkbox"/> Designate a staff member to check opportunities to attend (and/or present) webinars and conferences on crisis management.</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Regularly evaluate the effectiveness of partnerships with national and international networks (e.g., based on data sharing and participation in joint thematic events or training).</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Regular meetings should be held with the local private sector and key industry representatives to stay updated on the state and needs of the local tourism sector.</li></ul>

# 03 RECOVERY MONITOR AND TEST

## AREA OF OPERATION

## CHECKLIST

### Research & Innovation

- ☐ Monitor data and insights that will enable the NTO to:
  - Understand the profiles of the country's key visitor segments (from data on the type of visitors in a given area, visitor spending, and footfall patterns).
  - Understand the profiles of visitors from alternative markets.
  - Design and develop a new product offer that responds to the needs of emerging consumer profiles. If the NTO isn't responsible for product development, it can support your industry with this knowledge.
  - Measure the impacts of the key markets on the destinations to avoid over-dependence on one market and certain tour operators and to identify trends.
- ☐ Develop scenarios related to whether the affected market is returning (or not).

### Internal Operations

- ☐ Regularly update and test the internal Crisis Management Plan. Put the health of business sector stakeholders, visitors, and residents at the centre of the plan to build confidence and resilience for the next crisis.
- ☐ Monitor internal procedures to ensure efficient day-to-day operations post-crisis (e.g. staffing adjustments, remote work arrangements, training or re-skilling programmes for the NTO staff).
- ☐ Regularly monitor the organisation's and destination's reputation.



# 04 RECOVERY COMMUNICATE

In this stage, NTOs should maintain visibility in reliable source markets and regularly communicate to build confidence and trust, reassuring visitors and the travel trade that the destination is safe. Evaluate the most effective communication channels and messages, including techniques and procedures for countering disinformation used in the crisis response phase.

## AREA OF OPERATION

## CHECKLIST

### General principles for communicating

- ☐ Remain visible to counter disinformation.
  - Keep a dedicated microsite or blog updated with the latest post-crisis developments and the support available to visitors and businesses affected.
  - Inform which areas are not affected or have already recovered and are safe to return to.
  - Provide clear Q&As and talking points to the media on the post-crisis developments and the available support.
  - Carry out FAM and press trips to demonstrate normality and provide opportunities to meet local people and put the situation into perspective.

# 04 RECOVERY COMMUNICATE

## AREA OF OPERATION

## CHECKLIST

### General principles for communicating

#### ☐ Reassure, build confidence and inspire

- Work on effective communication with the NTOs key stakeholders that should be reassuring (safe, healthy) and positive, to prepare the reopening of the country to tourism. (See Box: ‘Communicating with different stakeholders post-crisis’)

➡ *Example: Following terrorist attacks in Belgium in 2016, VisitFlanders worked with the local tourism sector to develop a warm welcome campaign #shareourmile, aimed at the current and returning visitors. In cooperation with Brussels Airport, several installations were created to highlight the core themes of Flanders as a welcoming tourist destination.*

- Provide continuous marketing and promotional support to local businesses.
- Use ambassadors to correct the (potentially tarnished by conflict) perception of the destination country.
- When possible, highlight the solidarity of the international community (e.g., NATO Summit, international conference or campaign) as it helps to avoid suggestions of isolation.

# 04 RECOVERY COMMUNICATE

## AREA OF OPERATION

## CHECKLIST

### General principles for communicating

- ☐ Evaluate your audiences and communications channels.
  - Use the window of opportunity in markets that are only temporarily affected to maintain awareness and inspire.
  - Boost PR activity in alternative markets.
  - Focus on attracting smaller, more flexible groups of visitors (rather than larger group tours, which may be more difficult to attract immediately post-crisis).

# Communicating with different stakeholders, post-crisis (recovery phase)

## → Local and regional tourism organisations in the affected area(s)

- Conduct regular meetings (e.g. weekly) with RTOs or DMOs to provide and exchange information about trends and insights.
- Consider collaborative marketing and communications campaigns, e.g., with neighbouring regions during a health-related crisis to promote short-distance travel in line with the authorities' restrictions.
- Jointly analyse areas where NTO resources and support could be provided (e.g., in dealing with the media and providing data on the local business needs to the central government).

## → Travel trade (overseas travel agents, inbound travel trade)

- Continue to provide regular (weekly) updates to the travel trade through B2B social media channels, newsletters, bulletins, NTO overseas offices, travel trade media, and 1:1 direct updates to reassure them it is safe to visit again.
- Have a detailed communications plan for targeting various markets (rather than one or two key markets).
- Map key travel trade partners in new target markets and set up meetings with those that offer the best prospects of driving demand in the long term.

# Communicating with different stakeholders, post-crisis (recovery phase)

## → Visitors

- Show and tell': once the destination can function and receive visitors, using 'on the ground' video footage, testimonies from local people and user-generated content help visitors see that the destination is open for business.
- Use maps and images to clarify the state of any areas that remain closed or are still in recovery, as potential visitors may be unfamiliar with the territory.
- Focus on strategic marketing campaigns for destination recovery, inspiring the curiosity of future visitors. Create digital content to encourage and inspire future travellers:
  - ➡ Example: 'The main During the COVID-19 pandemic, the Faroe Islands launched a remote tourism experience where virtual tourists could explore the islands via live video feeds controlled in real-time by locals. This interactive tool allowed users to navigate scenic landscapes and cultural landmarks from their devices, providing inspiration and a connection to the islands despite travel restrictions: Remote Tourism ([remote-tourism.com](https://remote-tourism.com)).

# Communicating with different stakeholders, post-crisis (recovery phase)

## → Visitors

- Develop information campaigns to build confidence to gain trust and reassure visitors, emphasising messages on the highest standards of health, safety and cleanliness (for health-related crises), or safety (for geopolitical crisis).
  - ➔ Example: ‘The main help to the local tourism industry is our continuous communication on the foreign target markets stressing that Estonia is located far from the war zone in Ukraine and that Estonia is a member of NATO<sup>23</sup>
- Consider what communications/promotional support can be offered to organisations that are helping the local population or rebuilding the region, and let the visitors know about them.
- Tackle disinformation as well as a lack of knowledge/awareness among potential future visitors.
  - ➔ Example: After the terrorist attacks in France (Bataclan 2015, terrorist attack in Nice 2016), many travellers were hesitant to visit Monaco due to concerns about security in France, despite Monaco being a separate country. Monaco responded by emphasising communication regarding its distinct sovereignty and the robust security measures in place within its borders. Additionally, they promoted alternative travel routes to reach Monaco without transiting through France, primarily via other neighbouring countries. While some travellers remained reluctant, this proactive communication strategy facilitated travel to Monaco for many, thereby mitigating the adverse effects on incoming tourism and business travel.<sup>24</sup>

# Communicating with different stakeholders, post-crisis (recovery phase)

## → Visitors

- Ensure your website is always updated with the latest information, both during and post-conflict.
  - ➡ Example: The earthquakes in 2020 (Zagreb & Petrinja, Croatia) caused major damage amidst lockdowns. Although tourists were not able to visit Croatia during the time of the earthquakes themselves, the NTO used their online presence to inform its followers and ensure support for the affected communities. Once travel to these destinations was open for visitors, they coordinated with the local businesses to adjust visuals and highlight tourist sights to focus on those that were still safe and accessible. Four years on, there are still major attractions (museums, churches, etc) that are still undergoing reconstruction, requiring continued adjustments to the NTO's communication initiatives – not just crisis communication.<sup>25</sup>



# Phase 4 Resilience

---



# Phase 4: Resilience

Resilience is an ongoing and dynamic process that will include typical ‘business as usual’ steps such as information monitoring, product adaptation, and industry innovation. However, a critical aspect of resilience is that **it should be based on sustainable and regenerative principles** to ensure a stable recovery and long-term development that respects people and the planet. This includes investing to enhance the long-term offer by creating new, more socially and environmentally sustainable experiences and improving tourism infrastructure that will help minimise the risks from environmental and social crises. A further key element of resilience is ensuring that the NTO is always primed to respond to a crisis by **having skilled and knowledgeable staff** in a wide range of areas (e.g. crisis response, digital skills, communications skills, response and adaptation to climate change). Investment in building the skills and knowledge of the NTO team beyond their core day-to-day functions is also essential.

---

**01** TRAIN

**02** INVEST

**03** COLLABORATE & INNOVATE

---



Please note that several activities listed under the Preparedness stage can also be considered part of long-term resilience building. This includes activities related to capacity building of NTO staff and stakeholders, monitoring the situation for any signs of potential crises, reviewing and updating plans and procedures, and testing them through simulation exercises with different scenarios.



# 01

## RESILIENCE TRAIN

This stage aims to enhance the skills of NTO's staff and prepare them for the next crisis through training programmes, crisis simulation exercises, and sustainability certification schemes.

### AREA OF OPERATION

#### Communication

### CHECKLIST

- ☐ Ensure that potential spokespeople in a crisis receive appropriate media training. This includes senior executives who may have previously received “media training” or who may feel that they are already familiar with how to deal with journalists. Training should ideally be:
  - Provided by specialists with experience in responding to multiple crises.
  - Delivered in person or via online/virtual reality-based programmes (which may be more cost-effective for widely dispersed teams).<sup>26</sup>
- ☐ Ensure that the spokesperson and communications team are trained to understand the key climate change impacts in your destination that have resulted in a crisis or can result in a crisis in your destination (e.g. crises due to extreme weather events).

# 01 RESILIENCE TRAIN

## AREA OF OPERATION

## CHECKLIST

### Strategic Decision Making

- ☐ As many skilled employees may have left the tourism workforce following a crisis, work with the government to help determine the programmes that would encourage more people to work in the tourism and hospitality sectors.
- ☐ Determine what key partnerships may be useful to achieve this, for example, partnerships with universities or vocational training institutions.
- ☐ Participate in crisis simulation exercises that would involve other agencies based on realistic threats to the country's tourism sector.

### Strategic Alliances

- ☐ Promote skills development amongst local businesses, particularly digital skills and AI developments, and in industry trends. Offer online or in-person education programmes for business or business advice from experts.
- ☐ Ensure that data on long-term market trends is shared widely to inspire new ideas and solutions and to design and develop new offers that respond to consumer needs.

## AREA OF OPERATION

## CHECKLIST

### Strategic Alliances

- ☐ Develop certification programmes around safety and sustainability that will encourage your local businesses to prepare to respond and adapt to climate-related impacts.

➡ *Example: The Türkiye Tourism Promotion and Development Agency (TGA) initiated the Safe Tourism Programme in 2020 (led by the Ministry of Culture and Tourism of the Republic of Turkey) in response to the Covid pandemic. Within the scope of the programme, companies from the accommodation, food and drink, tour/transfer vehicles, and congress and art facilities sectors have been certified. This has also built trust amongst operators in target markets, which has allowed Turkey's tourism to return quickly to pre-pandemic levels. TGA continues to encourage the tourism sector to have a verification/certification to minimise the risks from environmental and social crises by basing projects on sustainable initiatives.*

# 01 RESILIENCE TRAIN

## AREA OF OPERATION

## CHECKLIST

### Research & Innovation

- ☐ Ensure that NTO staff are consistently kept up to date with the latest research that relates to the country's tourism performance and situations which have the capacity to develop into a crisis (e.g. the effects of climate change, over-dependence on specific markets)
- ☐ Work with the academic sector to develop long-term forecasting models which can be adapted to different types of possible crisis scenarios.

### Internal Operations

- ☐ Schedule and implement crisis simulation exercises to ensure the NTO's frontline staff is educated, trained and empowered to deal with the crisis, with the roles and responsibilities of each staff member clearly outlined in the event of another crisis. (See '[Examples of communication simulation exercises](#)')
  - ☐ Set aside sufficient time for debriefing sessions so that all staff members can reflect and share lessons learned.

➡ *Example: Mexico City conducts each year on September 19 an annual mandatory emergency disaster simulation on the anniversary of an 8.0 magnitude earthquake which took place in 1985.<sup>27</sup>*



# Examples of communication simulation

1

**Notification exercise:** Check that the contact numbers are valid and key players (NTO staff as well as other contacts key in crisis response) can be reached quickly.

2

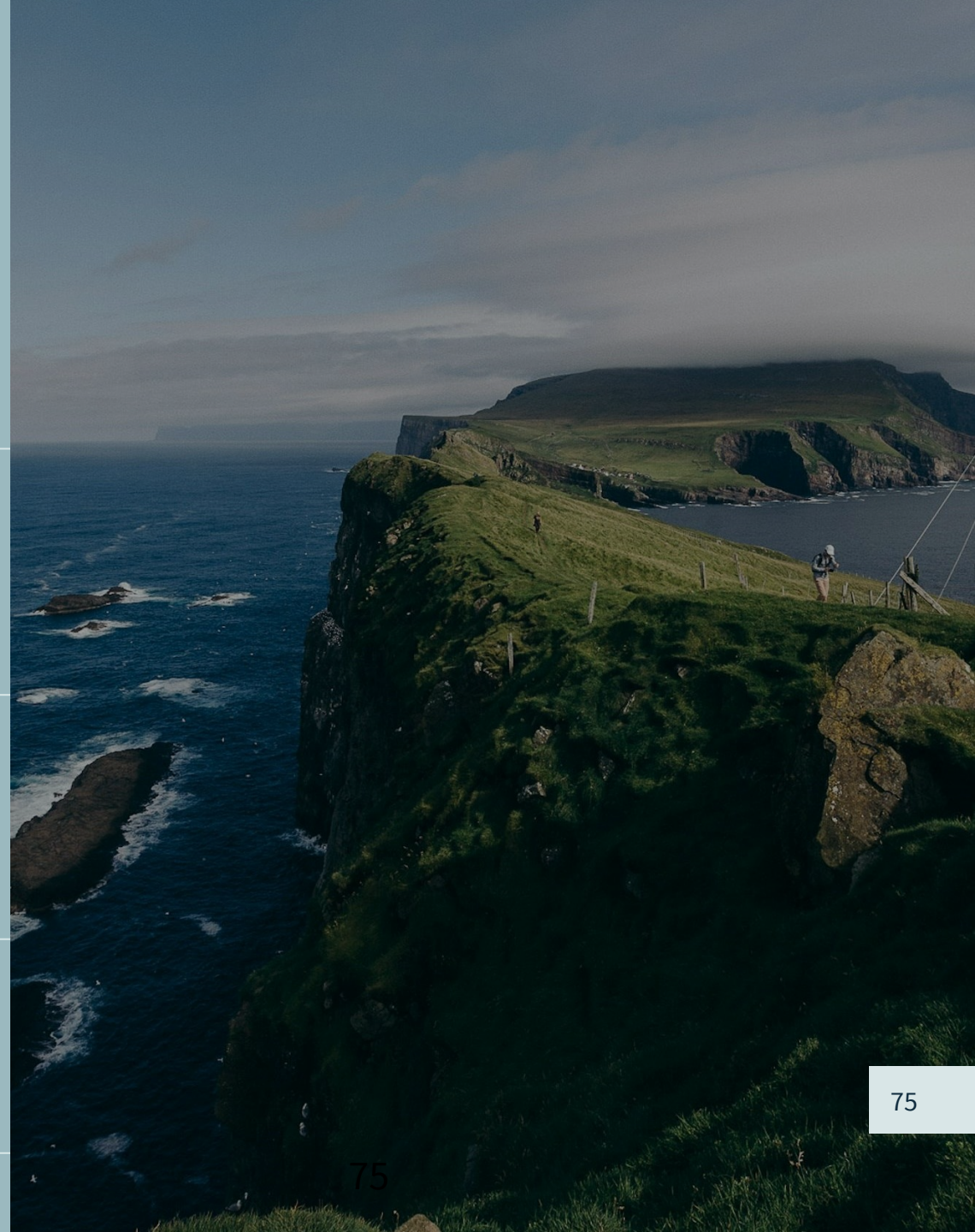
**Slow walk-through:** Take a potential crisis scenario and ask a series of questions of the team. Check whether the current plan provides the answers.

3

**Table-top:** Run through a simple crisis scenario and test one aspect of the Communication Plan – for example, developing updated press statements.

4

**Input-response exercise:** Test the entire Communication Plan by using an exercise control team to provide “inputs” via phone calls, emails, social media posts and “news reports”.





# 02 RESILIENCE INVEST

Investment will be required to enhance the destination offer to open up to new markets and new types of visitors (e.g., more climate-conscious customers) and avoid over-dependence on one market.

## AREA OF OPERATION

## CHECKLIST

### Communication

- ☐ Reassess the country's tourism success KPIs to guide a shift from financial and volume-based KPIs (such as visitor numbers) to KPIs that drive social and community well-being<sup>29</sup> (e.g. KPIs around protecting and enhancing the destination's assets or around creating safe and inclusive places for visitors and residents) and communicate about it to encourage increasingly sustainably- aware visitors and promote your brand. See '[Redefining Success: How DMOs can Drive Social & Community Well-Being](#)' report for specific examples)

### Strategic Decision Making

- ☐ Directly provide tourism-related data and insights collected during and post-crisis through periodic bulletins and other channels with stakeholders and organisations from beyond the tourism sector, e.g., government agencies.<sup>30</sup>

## AREA OF OPERATION

## CHECKLIST

### Strategic Alliances

- ☐ Avoid over-dependence on one market and certain tour operators. Ensure you have a detailed plan in place for targeting various markets.
- ☐ Invest in long-term resilience planning by adjusting the country's tourism resilience to climate vulnerabilities, in particular, adapting products and guiding the industry around shifting demand patterns.
  - ➡ *Example: Business Finland and Czech Tourism are working with their respective winter sports destinations to adapt to a future where snow and ice occur less regularly during winter.*

## AREA OF OPERATION

## CHECKLIST

### Strategic Alliances

- ❑ Work with the government to determine the areas that will increase the competitiveness of the destination's offer (e.g. investing in infrastructure to improve accessibility for different types of visitors, including the disabled and elderly; improving or broadening the offer to make tourism more inclusive for everyone; investing in data and research).

➡ *Example: Lithuania currently has two progress measures and is implementing actions dedicated to tourism:*

- *Transformation of the tourism sector: aimed at making structural reforms to the tourism data collected, disseminated, and used in the decision-making process.*
- *Progressive tourism infrastructure and marketing: seeks to implement model destination management organisations in the country and invest in infrastructure and create new means to promote Lithuanian tourism products and communicate abroad.<sup>31</sup>*

## AREA OF OPERATION

### Research & Innovation

## CHECKLIST

Invest in research to support the tourism sector in embedding sustainable practices and ensure that the destination is not as vulnerable to long-term shifts (climate, demographics, geopolitics).

- ☐ Collect data that will allow the NTO to identify changes and patterns in visitor demand or behaviour, for example, visitors choosing more sustainable practices while in your destination (number of visitors staying in eco-certified accommodation, choosing tours or products labelled as ‘low carbon’, or choosing sustainably accredited restaurants).

- ☐ Develop models that help to predict the impact of extreme weather patterns or weather-related disruption on tourism demand across the country’s territory.

➡ *Example: The Slovenian Tourism Board is working on a data analytics hub which will integrate a daily visitor counter, together with weather forecasts and other metrics in order to be able to analyse and predict the impact of weather on visitor demand in busy locations (as well as other capabilities that will come online as the hub is rolled out during 2024-2025).<sup>32</sup>*

- ☐ Measure long-term environmental impacts of the key markets on the country’s destinations, such as water, energy and natural resources use; levels of pollution; levels of waste caused by tourism.

## AREA OF OPERATION

### Internal Operations

## CHECKLIST

- ☐ Invest in enhancing your digital capabilities of the NTO: digital content, digital channel activation, designing digital experiences.
- ☐ Consider creating new, more socially and environmentally sustainable products and experiences and improving tourism infrastructure to help minimise the risks from environmental and social crises.





# 03 RESILIENCE COLLABORATE AND INNOVATE

At this stage, the aim is to anticipate potential long-term negative impacts and, in close cooperation with key partners and stakeholders, introduce innovative changes that will help mitigate the negative impacts of future crises.

## AREA OF OPERATION

### Communication

## CHECKLIST

- ☐ Be aware that media interest in the story may die down for long periods but will spike again periodically, often around anniversaries, the release of a new book or TV documentary about the crisis, or announcements of family/community engagement programs or initiatives in memory of those lost in the crisis.<sup>33</sup>
  - Anticipate these developments, collaborate with stakeholders to develop updated lines of action or stories to tell, and always be ready to respond adequately.

# 03 RESILIENCE COLLABORATE AND INNOVATE

## AREA OF OPERATION

## CHECKLIST

### Strategic Decision Making

- ❑ In collaboration with key stakeholders, plan for a crisis when there is no crisis and what can be done now to anticipate risks and introduce changes. Think about the three stages of crisis and about all areas where you can act (such as Research and Innovation, Strategic Alliances etc, as listed in this Checklist):
  - Preparedness/Resilience: Which processes and tools do we have in place, and how can we adapt or improve them long term?
  - Response: What are our priorities in the response phase? Who do we communicate with? What is critical for us to do?
  - Recovery: What are the best recovery strategies? What activities do we focus on during this stage to help us sustain recovery?'

Also see ‘ [Steps to Making a Risks Analysis in Tourism](#) ’ in phase preparedness

- ❑ Carry out long-term resilience planning, exploring “what if?” scenarios to identify the country’s exposure to various risks, possibly in collaboration with other entities.

➡ Check the example on the next page

# 03 RESILIENCE COLLABORATE AND INNOVATE

## AREA OF OPERATION

## CHECKLIST

### Strategic Decision Making

➔ *Example: Over the past three years, the Icelandic Tourism Board has been developing a complex ‘What If?’ macroeconomic model with scientists from a local university to help us understand how the impacts of different factors (e.g. the collapse of an airline, raises in VAT, natural disasters) might affect the performance of the industry overall. The type of statistics that feed the model include the data the NTO receives from airlines and the airport authorities. The work to further develop the model is still ongoing but provides a good example of long-term cooperation and resilience building.<sup>34</sup>*

### Strategic Alliances

#### Strategic Decision Making

- ☐ Continue to collaborate with other affected countries who have experienced similar crises to share knowledge and best practices (for example, through data sharing, regular meetings, and thematic events/webinars).
- ☐ Outside of training, partnerships with universities, digital players in the region or chambers of commerce can be strategies to advance the sector's skills or encourage new people to work in the sector.
- ☐ Collaborate with other destinations to promote sustainable practices.
- ☐ Ensure that the private-public tourism crisis management forum meets proactively a couple of times per year.

# 03 RESILIENCE COLLABORATE AND INNOVATE

## AREA OF OPERATION

## CHECKLIST

### Strategic Alliances

- ☐ Collaborate with other destinations to promote sustainable practices.
- ☐ Ensure that the private-public tourism crisis management forum meets proactively a couple of times per year.

### Research & Innovation

- ☐ Consider a joint study with a bank or a credit card company to analyse spending patterns and visitor mobility in your destination during extreme weather events such as heat waves.
- ☐ Collect and record feedback (e.g., annually) from similar destinations that have experienced a crisis. Make sure this is shared with the team.
- ☐ Develop a strategy or policy document that can be used as a base for a long-term recovery founded on social and environmental sustainability principles.

➡ *Example: The Netherlands Board of Tourism & Conventions (NBTC) used a national strategy ‘Perspective 2030’ as a roadmap that helped with the recovery post-Covid. Thanks to this, the NBTC accelerated the work with other actors within the tourism ecosystem to recover sustainably. At the recovery stage, they questioned how they wanted to recover (‘go back to pre-2019 or something new’) and the ‘Perspective 2030’ provided sustainable guiding principles that gave the ground to start steering the recovery in a more sustainable way.<sup>35</sup>*

# 03 RESILIENCE COLLABORATE AND INNOVATE

## AREA OF OPERATION

## CHECKLIST

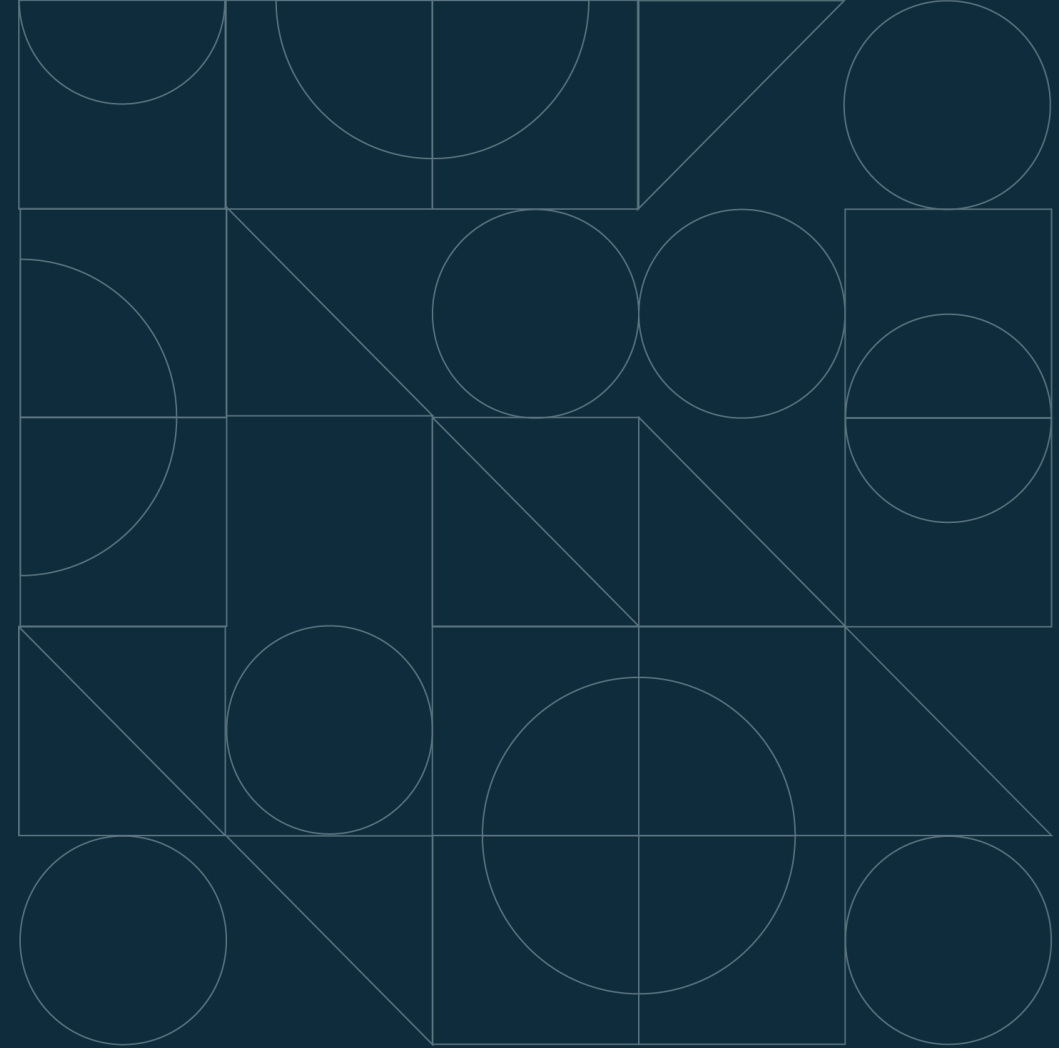
### Internal Operations

- ☐ Crisis management training should be included in the staff induction process to ensure everyone knows the procedures and lessons from past crises.
- ☐ Climate awareness training should be included as part of the staff induction process.
- ☐ Provide opportunities for crisis management and climate awareness training regularly, for example, once or twice a year.
- ☐ Update internal procedures about staff well-being (at least once a year).
- ☐ Use the opportunity to become more focussed on SDGs and longer-term sustainability.

# Methodology

The actions in the Crisis Management Checklist have been compiled from a variety of sources, including academic literature, research reports and publications, and blogs and articles by crisis management organisations or DMOs/NTOs (referenced in the checklist) as well as through the following primary research:

- An online survey on Crisis Management for European NTOs and their frontline staff responsible for crisis management (March-April 2024)
- A series of 1:1 interviews with NTOs' CEOs and senior staff members (March-May 2024)
- Two interactive workshops for CEOs during the ETC General Meeting held in Kaunas, Lithuania, in May 2024
- A review of benchmarks from international organisations, research bodies and industry associations





---

# References

1. Based on: APEC (2007) Introduction to Risk Management in Tourism - Participant's Workbook ([source](#)); PATA (2007) Tourism Risk Management ([source](#)) and CBI (2024) [How to Manage Risks in Tourism](#) ([source](#))
2. Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation APEC (2007) Introduction to Risk Management in Tourism - Participant's Workbook ([source](#))
3. CBI (2024) How to Manage Risks in Tourism (04.04.2024) ([source](#))
4. IATA (2018) Crisis communication and reputation management in the digital age: A guide to best practice for the aviation industry, p.13 ([source](#))
5. WTTC (2019) Crisis Readiness, p.18 ([source](#))
6. IATA (2018) Crisis communication and reputation management in the digital age: A guide to best practice for the aviation industry ([source](#))
7. IATA (2018) Crisis communication and reputation management in the digital age: A guide to best practice for the aviation industry, p.18. ([source](#))
8. International SOS (2024) What are the Three Stages of Crisis Management? (24-02-2024) ([source](#))
9. IATA (2018) Crisis communication and reputation management in the digital age: A guide to best practice for the aviation industry ([Source](#))
10. Adapted for NTOs, based on IATA (2018) Crisis communication and reputation management in the digital age: A guide to best practice for the aviation industry ([source](#))
11. Visit Florida (no date) Crisis Communications Tips ([source](#))
12. Actions adapted for NTOs, based on Visit Florida Visit Florida (no date) Crisis Communications Tips ([source](#))
13. Government of Canada (2024) - [Countering Disinformation: A Guidebook for Public Servants](#) ([source](#))
14. Government of Canada (2024) - [Countering Disinformation: A Guidebook for Public Servants](#) ([source](#))
15. Seger, E, & Briers, M. (2020) University of Cambridge, Centre for the Study of Existential Risk (23-10-2020) ([source](#))
16. World Economic Forum (2022) Melissa Fleming on tackling disinformation around health guidance and on the efficacy and the safety of the vaccine ([source](#)) (30-09-2022)
17. Local Government Information Unit (2023) Tackling Misinformation and Disinformation (12-04-2023) ([source](#))
18. Local Government Information Unit (2023) Tackling Misinformation and Disinformation (12-04-2023) ([source](#))
19. Government of Canada (2024) - [Countering Disinformation: A Guidebook for Public Servants](#) ([source](#))

---

# References

20. UK Government Communication Service (2021) RESIST 2 Counter-disinformation toolkit ([source](#))
21. Future Place Leadership – Handbook Crisis Management for Tourism Destinations ([source](#))
22. Survey on NTOs’ Crisis Management run for this project between March-April 2024
23. Survey on NTOs’ Crisis Management run for this project between March-April 2024
24. Survey on NTOs’ Crisis Management run for this project between March-April 2024
25. Survey on NTOs’ Crisis Management run for this project between March-April 2024
26. IATA (2018) Crisis communication and reputation management in the digital age: A guide to best practice for the aviation industry ([source](#))
27. WTTC (2019) Crisis Preparedness Management Recovery-Crisis Readiness-Nov 2019. p.17 ([source](#))
28. Based on: IATA (2018) Crisis communication and reputation management in the digital age: A guide to best practice for the aviation industry ([source](#))
29. City Destinations Alliance (2024) ‘Redefining Success: How DMOs can Drive Social & Community Well-Being’ report (May 2024) ([source](#))
30. ETC Survey on NTOs’ Crisis Management run for this project between March-April 2024
31. Survey on NTOs’ Crisis Management run for this project between March-April 2024
32. Interviews on NTOs’ Crisis Management conducted for this project between March-May 2024
33. IATA (2018) Crisis communication and reputation management in the digital age: A guide to best practice for the aviation industry ([source](#))

---

Copyright © 2024 European Travel Commission (ETC)

### **Crisis management checklist for national tourism organisations**

All rights reserved. The contents of this report may be quoted, provided the source is given accurately and clearly. While we encourage distribution via publicly accessible websites, this should be done via a link to [ETC's corporate website](#).

This report was compiled and edited by [TOPOSOPHY](#) on behalf of the ETC Market Intelligence Group.

**TOPOSOPHY**  
PLACE MAKING & MARKETING AGENCY

### **Published by the European Travel Commission**

Rue du Marché aux Herbes, 61,  
1000 Brussels, Belgium  
Website: [www.etc-corporate.org](http://www.etc-corporate.org)  
Email: [info@visiteurope.com](mailto:info@visiteurope.com)

ISBN No: 978-92-95107-72-4

---

**EUROPEAN  
TRAVEL  
COMMISSION**

---