

SUMMARY OF ARTICLE: [HTTPS://DX.DOI.ORG/10.12795/REA.2022.I44.04](https://dx.doi.org/10.12795/rea.2022.i44.04)

Covid-19 infection reduction measures as a safety certification in the Spanish tourism sector

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KEYWORDS

Covid-19
Tourist destinations
Standardization
Planning
Cooperation and collaboration

As a result of the SARS-CoV-2 coronavirus, the world has been plunged into an unprecedented health crisis affecting virtually all sectors, with tourism being one of the worst affected by the pandemic. Facing this unfamiliar and disconcerting situation, tourism destinations have made great efforts to integrate risk management into the tourism sector. Although the virus was initially underestimated, as it appeared to be of little threat, the relevant stakeholders were forced to address the situation by taking decisions quickly.

In this new framework, public-private cooperation has proved essential to tackle the virus and its consequences. In Spain, Covid-19 has triggered the development of a series of plans and measures for prevention, containment, mitigation, information and broadcasting of the virus to the population and tourists, the analysis of which is the basis of this article. But this has not only been seen in the competent administrations, but also in the tourism sector, which has adapted its establishments with material to prevent the spread of the virus and has rigorously followed a series of action protocols to carry out tourism activities in a safe manner. Moreover, for its elaboration, public and private actors in tourism destinations have created working groups to ensure that the establishment of the measures is representative and acceptable to tourism service providers in the reality of the national sector.

Therefore, the aim of this article is to identify the main measures established by and for the tourism sector at the national level in Spain, promoted by the government and its dependent organizations, to deal with the pandemic caused by Covid-19. The aim is also to check whether these measures have been developed as a possible certification.

For the development of this article, the methodology has been based, firstly, on the review of the existing literature in databases such as Dialnet or AENOR+, among others, on the concepts of tourism governance, cooperation and collaboration, tourism policy and standardization. Twelve articles and six press reports published during the pandemic were consulted to create the theoretical framework. On the other hand, the measures carried out at national level for the tourism sector have been selected and analyzed, from which the main key



points have been extracted. With regard to these measures, the 22 *Guidelines for the reduction of Covid-19 infection in the tourism sector*, the *Travel Safe Spain* campaign and the *Next Generation EU Funds* have been selected. Likewise, the organizations that have participated in the elaboration of these measures have been analyzed in order to verify to what extent they have collaborated, what are the relations between the participating entities and to verify whether there has been a preponderance of the public sector over the private sector or vice versa. Additionally, to find out what type of tourism activities they belong to and how the selection process of the organizations for their collaboration in the elaboration of the measures has been carried out. Finally, the data collected have been processed quantitatively to provide numerical evidence of the involvement of these organizations in the development of measures to tackle Covid-19 in the tourism sector.

Through the development of this article, a series of results and conclusions have been reached. With regard to the analysis of the twenty-two guides, a high level of public-private cooperation has been observed, with more than one hundred organizations involved. For the establishment of specific measures for each tourism sub-sector, the working groups for the establishment of measures for tourist visits, golf courses and MICE tourism stand out. However, for the vast majority it is difficult to quantify the exact number of organisms involved. These cooperative guides have also been seen to unify a number of criteria for tourism service providers. For the tourism sector, this is a relevant and new development, as until now there have been no unified basic guidelines. Moreover, from these guidelines came the UNE 0066 Standards, which in turn led to the ISO/PAS 5643 Specification on *Requirements and recommendations for the reduction of Covid-19 infection in the tourism industry*, which is still in force. In this specification, measures to reduce risk are included and an international standard is promoted.

With regard to the guides, one of the questions was to check whether they had been developed with the aim of leading to a safety certification for tourism businesses. Although it is not known whether they were drawn up with that intention, from the beginning the guides were intended to establish protocols with unified procedures within the national territory and allow the development of tourist activity to continue in a safer way. As mentioned above, the guidelines resulted in a specification at national and international level and have therefore served to standardize and certify a new reality affecting the sector.

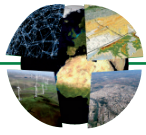
Another of the measures consulted was the *Travel Safe Spain* website, in the development of which fifty entities participated, with a preponderance at the national level, followed by the local and regional levels. As in the previous case, the relationship between the organizations that have collaborated in the establishment of the measures or their selection to participate in the project is omitted. With regard to the type of activity carried out by the entities that have collaborated in this campaign, eleven categories have been identified, among which travel agencies and tour operators, public entities and professional associations stand out, coinciding with the typologies most affected by the pandemic, and, at all times, they have shown great initiative in tackling the crisis. Furthermore, the analysis of this initiative has shown that two thirds of the collaborating entities belong to the private sector, showing a clear preponderance over the public sector.

It is important to highlight the importance of public-private collaboration in the development of measures to deal with this pandemic and any other type of risk, as safety is one of the features that tourists value most when visiting a destination. Moreover, identifying and managing risks will not only make destinations safer, but will also help to improve their tourism image and increase demand.

On the other hand, it has been seen that, although Covid-19 was initially underestimated and the organizations responsible for the matter were reluctant to establish measures for fear of a strong economic impact, the elaboration of measures by and for the tourism sector was necessary and that, to a certain extent, it has served to rethink the activity itself and the processes in a consensual manner.

However, once the analysis of the measures and initiatives promoted has been carried out, it is striking that in all cases the organizations that have participated in the elaboration of these appear as collaborators. As the existing literature has shown, collaboration and cooperation are two terms with different meanings. It is therefore established that this would be cooperation, as they have worked together to achieve an end and this relationship has arisen from a conjunctural opportunity.

Finally, these measures could even be considered as tourism policy since they are coherent actions, the challenges facing the tourism sector have been defined, a specific budget has been earmarked for their



development, they have been promoted by a formal public actor, the private sector has been involved, concrete objectives have been defined and measures have been proposed that affect tourism as a whole.

In view of the above, it is established that the measures carried out at national level for the tourism sector with the aim of reducing the effects of Covid-19 have proved to be effective, as they have resulted in a standard for Spanish tourist destinations and their implementation is being promoted at international level.