

## February 2024 Flash Report

### On European Business Association Activities Related to Tourism Digitalization



On February 13, Nino Ushikishvili, the Deputy Managing Director of the European Business Association, joined a round table discussion on the challenges and potential of digital transformation in the tourism industry.

At the meeting, EBA and GFMTA unveiled a joint policy document aimed at analyzing industry challenges and developing recommendations for relevant public sector representatives. This significant document was developed with the support of the USAID Economic Governance Program and the ISET Policy Institute.

The meeting, attended by 30 participants, fostered a fruitful and engaging session involving representatives from both the public and private sectors. Among those contributing to the discussion were representatives from various entities such as the Georgian National Tourism Administration, USAID, members of the sector economy and economic policy committee at the Parliament of Georgia, international organizations, think tanks, and tourism associations.



The meeting received extensive coverage across both traditional and social media platforms, with the active participation of the EBA Deputy Managing Director.

**Links to coverage:**

- BMG: <https://fb.watch/qlvJWGCAY9/>
- Euronews Georgia: <https://fb.watch/qlvLgzNpEc/>
- 1TV: <https://fb.watch/qlvNRvOsGS/>



**Critical Challenges Outlined in Policy Document**



- Lack of digital solutions in tourist destinations
- Absence or lack of digital skills and a strong digital marketing policy among SMEs
- Underutilization of integrated digital platforms and inadequate adaptation to new technologies
- Insufficient digital skills among employees
- Inefficiency of managing online assessments
- The support for digitalization in the government's strategic documents, particularly in the domain of tourism, is vaguely articulated
- Limited access to financial resources

**Key Recommendations:**

- It is crucial to expand the digital infrastructure of tourism, which entails improving Internet connectivity, introducing mobile networks and digital payment systems, implementing digital booking and cancellation services, offering contactless payment systems, and developing mobile applications for tourists. Additionally, raising awareness among both service providers and consumers is imperative in this regard.
- Continuous collaboration among all industry stakeholders, active government involvement, and ongoing learning, implementation, and adaptation of digital skills and technologies through training programs are essential components for the sustainable development of the tourism industry. It is advisable to develop training programs involving educational institutions, field experts, and business

representatives to enhance digital skills. These programs should include modules covering digital marketing techniques, social media management, website development, and customer relations strategies.



- Consistently assessing online reviews of Georgia's tourism industry is crucial. It allows for the identification of problematic destinations, the development of optimal strategies, and the consideration of the preferences of new customers.
- Expanding support programs for SMEs and fostering digital startups and entrepreneurs are crucial steps in addressing the access to finance issue. A digitized tourism industry will not only enhance Georgia's tourist attractiveness and competitiveness but also foster economic growth in the country. You can access the complete policy document through [this link](#).



Additionally, considering its role as a business association with members already involved in the tourism and IT industries, and recognizing the presence of a hospitality committee within EBA, the association has expressed its readiness to actively participate in overcoming the existing challenges faced by both the private and public sectors through joint dialogue and cooperation.

Report ends.

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