



## GENERAL MANAGEMENT

### In 2021, the Brussels tourism sector continued its efforts in the face of the consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Despite this unprecedented context, visit-brussels was able to implement major projects to facilitate its digital development and the cross-functionality of its teams. While many challenges remain, the organisation is approaching the future of tourism from a realistic perspective that is both optimistic and clear-minded.

Patrick Bontinck, Managing Director of visit.brussels and Sigurd Vangermeersch, Deputy Managing Director, take stock of this year of contrasts.

#### What were visit.brussels' objectives for 2021?

**Patrick Bontinck :** "The year has been punctuated with uncertainties and strategic changes of direction, with a health crisis that has set in for the medium term. As in 2020, the first obvious step was to adapt to our tourism, culture and event partners' needs.

Our organisation has pursued three priority goals: supporting the existing offering (hotels, museums and attractions, etc.) to be able to respond to demand as we come out of the crisis; guaranteeing stakeholders in the sector a minimum amount of footfall by attracting potential customers to Brussels; and finally, maintaining long-term relations with our clients (tour operators, conference organisers, etc.) via communication and prospecting activities."

**Sigurd Vangermeersch :** "Internally, 2021 was a pivotal year, with many challenges and significant expectations from the stakeholders in Brussels tourism. Brussels' regional government had just launched its recovery plan in 2020 and we had begun a programme to transform our organisation. Despite the difficulties, at the end of the year, we were able to measure the progress made."

#### And today, what are the challenges?

**P.B. :** "Many questions arise. How do we rebuild the destination's appeal? How do we redefine this appeal by capitalising on what we have learnt from the crisis? Urban tourism is in the midst of change and I remain convinced that there will be a pre-COVID tourism and a post-COVID tourism.

In terms of business tourism, we had no doubt that we would maintain hybrid meetings, for which Brussels is very well placed, as we come out of the crisis. And we will be able to capitalise on what we have learnt to support our future strategies.

In terms of leisure tourism, the main challenge lies in 'storytelling'. Beyond discovering the destination, tourists want to have a unique experience and share it. This trend already existed and is becoming stronger. And Brussels has a great card to play, with wonderful 'stories' to tell. Far from being a museum city, frozen in time, it's alive with diversity. Visitors will undoubtedly identify with at least one of its many facets.

Finally, a new type of tourism, focused on sustainability, is emerging and will become ever stronger. The need for sustainable tourism is also a reality of which visit.brussels is a part, through many initiatives."

**S.V. :** "In 2022, the internal dynamic will follow on from the accomplishments of 2021 and will continue the transformation projects that were kicked off in 2020.

Aware of these persistent difficulties relating to the pandemic, we must make every effort to promote the development of visit.brussels, in several areas: cross-functionality, cohesion, a spirit of co-creation and the well-being of our employees. At the same time, we're working to strengthen the digitalisation of our services and putting in place new tools. We're convinced that this development will result in advances that enable our organisation to align with the more general goal of the tourism sector's longevity."



## Why strengthen digitalisation?

**P.B. :** “The need to strengthen digitalisation has been verified both within the framework of the recovery plan and in light of the pandemic context and the many additional responsibilities entrusted to us by the Brussels-Capital Region Government over the past two years.

This increase in our remit has taken place without the organisation receiving, as necessary, a budgetary increase that would have enabled us to increase our staff numbers. The 35% increase in our action budget, from 20 to 26 million euros, took place with the same number of people in the teams at the same time. This development will indisputably lead to consequences on the organisation of our activities.”

**S.V. :** “In this context, we’re investing in digitalisation to increase our efficiency. By automating a series of tasks, technology should make our employees’ lives easier, and increase their comfort at work. This will enable them to concentrate better on our core business: carrying out the assignments entrusted to us by the Brussels-Capital Region Government. Of course, the transitional period presents certain challenges, in a context that remains complicated.”

**P.B. :** “It’s clear that this transition also aims to provide constant quality for our customers, through a new digital service in particular. The new internet portal being created will lead to a real revolution in how we approach customers. It will facilitate relations and enable us to disseminate information of optimal quality, with the main aim of bringing our partners and visitors closer together. And it will convey the many wonderful stories that Brussels has to tell our audiences.”

## visit.brussels has benefited from an overhaul of its organisation. What are the first lessons?

**P.B. :** “Our new structure aims, above all, to strengthen the teams’ cross-functionality. The COVID-19 crisis has enabled us to experiment with cross-functionality in a virtual way thanks to Microsoft Teams. After reviewing this experience, we took the decision to create a cross-functional digital team that will offer support to the whole digital transformation.

We also became aware that this aim of cross-functionality needed the right tools. Within this framework, we decided to improve our project management tool and we will upgrade to a new version of MS Project that will be much more open and may incorporate more data than the previous version. This new tool, integrated in Microsoft Teams, will enable us to achieve better cross-functionality of work and tasks.”

**S.V. :** “To take advantage of the opportunity to gradually reopen tourism, we must maintain a collective dynamic promoting cohesion, synergy and goodwill at the operational level. This trend must be manifest at all levels of our organisation to accomplish of our 2022 goals.”

## In 2021, visit.brussels deployed a plan to revive the tourism sector. What was the outcome?

**P.B. :** “Many aspects of this recovery plan worked well, in particular the sector support funds that enabled us to promote a large number of initiatives and strengthen consistency facing shared goals.

Thanks to this fund, we were also able to develop promotion of the destination’s digitalisation and sustainability, and we benefited from the improved quality of the offering.

Furthermore, visit-brussels has been able to develop new products, such as the visit.brussels Pass which is seeing real success with Belgians and is boosting the footfall of Flemish and Walloon visitors alike. We’re seeing a dichotomy between the international public’s perception and that of the Belgian public. While tourists from neighbouring or distant countries are showing real enthusiasm for Brussels, the Flemish and Walloon public is keeping its distance and often considers the capital as an administrative city, with all its restrictive aspects. This is not, of course, an absolute phenomenon, but the crisis recalled the whole importance of a local and Belgian clientele in the capital. Refreshing its image with the national public remains a priority challenge and one of our key strategic goals in 2022.



Finally, we've observed certain limits in terms of our communication campaigns. Although these have seen very high penetration rates in terms of the budgets spent, they have shown the importance of multi-channel communication and anticipation, in a year of permanent change."

### What were the year's other highlights?

**P.B. :** "Several events featured in 2021. First of all, Brussels tourism partners demonstrated a real desire to work together to save the sector, with an unprecedented show of synergy. What's more, certain events had a new dynamic. For the first time, the Bright Brussels festival held two editions (in November 2021 and the beginning of 2022), which were a real success. Last but not least, I'd like to emphasise the great flexibility and capacity for adaptation that our teams demonstrated throughout this year of crisis and for that I thank them greatly."

**S.V. :** "2021 enabled our teams to enjoy some respite when the health measures were somewhat relaxed. This favourable development enabled us to come together for an internal event organised at the end of the summer holidays. This reunion between colleagues had a positive effect on me this year and undoubtedly enabled me to regain energy and optimism!"

### How is visit.brussels starting 2022?

**P.B. :** "We want to approach 2022 with realism, and we're both optimistic and clear-minded. Many challenges and uncertainties subsist and the Invasion of Ukraine will strengthen them even further. The role of visit.brussels is, and will remain, to reassure all the economic sectors involved in tourism in the Brussels-Capital Region, with a view to redeploying the related activities as soon as possible. We know that the effects of this crisis will last over the medium and long term, and we're prepared to handle them by listening to the market, new trends and our partners."

**S.V. :** "Internally, we're persevering with our transformation programme, driven by an overall perspective of cross-functionality and digitalisation. We've already covered a good part of the journey and we'll continue our efforts in this way in 2022."

### What strategy will you deploy?

**P.B. :** "For 2022, our strategy is based on four themes. Firstly, we'll rely on the analysis carried out in-house of visitor behaviour thanks to the tools put in place during the crisis. Secondly, we'll place special importance on listening to our different partners. Thirdly, by extension of the second theme, we intend to prioritise listening to the users of our services and visit.brussels' staff. Finally, we remain open to new tourism paradigms to promote Brussels in the most suitable way possible, in the wake of the city marketing studies that we carried out in recent months."

**S.V. :** "Furthermore, we wish to maintain excellent relations with our social partners, both within the Works' Council and the Work Health and Safety Committee. It is essential to bring together all the conditions conducive to a peaceful social climate to envisage the implementation of our goals with serenity. We therefore intend to pursue our efforts in an aim to maintain optimal working conditions for our employees, and to consolidate the mindset that defines our organisation."

### How do you envisage the future of tourism?

**P.B. :** "We are determined to face the future with optimism, both for business tourism (MICE - Meetings, Incentives, Conferences & Exhibitions) and leisure tourism."

With respect to MICE tourism, we have been offered a unique opportunity with the deployment of hybrid meetings and trade fairs. While Brussels does not initially seem large enough to compete with major cities like Paris or Berlin, these new formulas enable us to position the destination to host larger-scale conferences, combining in-person and remote events. We will work hard to develop this offering in 2022. This is a sizeable challenge because we'll need



suitable infrastructure. But we benefit from an asset that no other city can offer: as the capital of Europe and the headquarters of many international institutions, Brussels is one-of-a-kind. We're, therefore, optimistic for the long term.

We're also optimistic about the future for leisure tourism. At a national level, Belgium attracts major events, like the Tomorrowland festival whose economic benefits reach as far as the capital. Other events, such as Rave Rebels or La D mence have seen significant development over time and also help boost footfall. Finally, for the individual leisure clientele, Brussels enjoys a central geographical location, at the crossroads of many cultures. It offers significant appeal in terms of diversity and multiculturalism, which are essential criteria for a larger and larger share of our clientele.

This multiculturalism leads to the presence of extremely dynamic contributors, with a very varied offering. This abundant variety enables the public to enjoy new experiences and feel Brussels' unique character. The juxtaposition of many cultures and the freedom of expression that define our capital also reflect the public's current expectation to be able to express their identity without restrictions. Brussels offers this possibility, as a city that's proud to be open to the world and different cultures."

**S.V. :** "Finally, at internal level, we're also able to foster great hopes, both in terms of the structural development of visit.brussels and the development of our skills. And, above all, our capacity to meet sizeable challenges, which will certainly punctuate the future of our organisation."

### **Brussels, a uniquely positioned tourist destination**

As an international capital and a great place to live, Brussels is uniquely positioned on the European and world tourism map. It offers a real balance between business and leisure tourism.

The presence of the European Union's institutions, NATO and more than 2,200 international associations mean that the city has a particularly active conference and meetings industry for a city of 1.2 million inhabitants.

Moreover, with 183 nationalities present in the region, Brussels is the second most cosmopolitan city in the world and the most cosmopolitan in Europe. A true laboratory of cultural diversity, its creativity has become an attraction in itself, with the capital now a hub of contemporary art. If you add to this its city centre listed as a UNESCO World Heritage Site, the Belgian capital is particularly attractive for short stays.



## TRANSVERSALITY, EXCHANGES, CO-CREATION: VISIT.BRUSSELS GETS A NEW STRUCTURE AND NEW TOOLS

Rolled out in 2020, the new internal organisation of visit.brussels divides, around the General Management, the activities into four 'poles': Client Experience, Media, Finance & Operating and Strategy & International. The HR and Logistics departments are attached to the General Management.

In 2021, to support the transversality and efficiency of this new organisation, visit.brussels launched a major project to digitise its activities. This complete digital transformation process is supported by the creation of a transversal team and the incorporation of a new user-friendly tool, designed to facilitate internal transversality.

### CLIENT EXPERIENCE

Client Experience is the operational pole of visit.brussels. Its name clearly expresses its mission: to create experiences for clients — business and leisure tourists, Brussels residents and Belgians — and thus strengthen their links with the destination. These experiences on the ground also allow the pole to contribute to the organisation's strategy.

Around 50 staff members divide their activities into three services, dedicated to the different targets: Visitor Services, B2B Events and B2C Events.

#### Visitor Services

##### Mission and objectives

Visitor Services is in charge of all contacts with people who visit or are planning to visit Brussels. It informs them and provides inspiration in the area of tourism and culture through various channels:

- Four physical contact points (information desks at BIP/Brussels Info Place, the showcase reception complex of the Brussels-Capital Region, and Brussels City Hall), the interactive [experience.brussels](#) exhibition and the [Station Europe](#) information desk in collaboration with the European Parliament;
- digital contact points (interactive terminals and touch screens in various locations in the capital);;
- remote contact tools (telephone, e-mail, post, Messenger, chat function on the association's website).

The Service is also responsible for the creation, distribution and sale of publications tailored to the needs of visitors: city maps, thematic brochures and the official visit.brussels guide.

##### 2021 in a few key points

A new city map, available in six languages, was developed to complement the Official Guide for the destination. A source of inspiration for anyone wishing to visit Brussels, these two tools allow everyone to make the most of their Brussels experience.

On the ground, around 20 new digital contact points were created with the installation of new interactive terminals in hotels, event venues and museums. This interactive network, which now has 52 terminals, has also been updated with new content, with a specific focus on the theme of cycling.

At the [BIP](#), a new cash register and inventory management system is vastly enhancing work comfort and efficiency, with a positive impact on the customer experience. The customer experience has also been enhanced by the new reception desk, which is user-friendly and accessible to people with reduced mobility, people with disabilities and shorter people.

To improve the quality of remote contacts (phone calls, emails and instant messaging) and to be able to manage these 7 days a week from January 2022, the Service implemented a protocol for handling requests in six languages.



To valorise the recovery of cultural activities, the collaboration with [coucou.brussels](https://www.coucou.brussels) was intensified, the timetables were revised to better match the expectations of customers, and shows were organised every Thursday in September 2021.

The teams also maintained and promoted [experience.brussels](https://www.experience.brussels) and set up two new educational activities. The exhibition was also part of the program of the [Erfgoeddag](#), the [Brussels Museums Nocturnes](#) and the [Iris Festival](#). The Service also carried out maintenance and repairs to the cultural signage masts.

On 18 and 19 September, the building of the [BIP](#) was opened to the public during the [Heritage Days](#), with 28 free guided tours. The BIP was also the central point for information, Covid Safe Ticket verification and sales of passes during [Museum Night Fever](#) on 23 October. And the Visitor Service supported the [Plaisirs d'Hiver](#) by coordinating the Covid Safe Ticket chalet in the Grand-Place.

Finally, two bike hubs were created, at the [See-U](#) site and at the [Hospice Pachéco](#) site. These hubs offer all the necessary information to experience cycle tourism in the Brussels-Capital Region.

## 2022 Outlook

As regards publications, the Official Guide will be adapted to the new visual identity of [visit.brussels](https://www.visit.brussels). Its content will be optimised based on customer feedback and it will be translated into six languages (instead of three currently). A new comic strip brochure will be published and the Service will start to produce a brochure dedicated to architecture. In addition, a selection of new items will be added to the range of products on sale, with a special focus on highlighting the strengths and talents of Brussels.

In terms of physical contact points, the information offices will also be decorated in the new colours of [visit.brussels](https://www.visit.brussels) and new uniforms will be designed for staff.

In terms of digital and remote contacts, the network of interactive kiosks will continue to be expanded and the protocol for processing back-office requests will be optimised. A more efficient system for collecting statistics will also be developed, to allow customer satisfaction to be evaluated more effectively.

Work is also planned to continue the interactive exhibition [experience.brussels](https://www.experience.brussels), in particular the refurbishment of a room and the renovation of the lighting. This work will be done while the current venue will remain fully operational.

Finally, the team will maintain the network of 46 cultural signage masts, and make any necessary repairs such as replacing any missing or damaged tarpaulins..

## B2B Events

### Mission and objectives

The B2B Events Service organises meetings between Brussels' tourism partners (hotels, venues, cultural activities, attractions, etc.) and their professional target audiences, both for business and leisure tourism: online tourism agencies, trade fair and congress organisers, etc.

To do this, the Service analyses the market, looks for interesting platforms (trade fairs, workshops, meetings, etc.) and arranges Brussels' presence at events aimed at professionals and which meet the needs of its partners. It also contributes to the revenue of [visit.brussels](https://www.visit.brussels), in particular through the organisation of its own events.

Finally, as a single entry point for Brussels' tourism partners, the B2B Events Service supports the other teams at [visit.brussels](https://www.visit.brussels) with their projects, in particular by collecting information on the ground.



## 2021 in a few key points

In 2021, the B2B Events Service coordinated the Brussels presence at three virtual trade shows: ITB (Berlin) in March, with 8 partners, [Fitur](#) (Madrid) and [IMEX](#) (Frankfurt) in May, without partners.

From July, the Service once again coordinated the Brussels presence at 5 face-to-face trade fairs: [RDA GTE](#) (Cologne) in July, [IFTM](#) (Paris) in October, [WTM](#) (London) and [IMEX America](#) (Las Vegas) in November, and [IBTM World](#) (Barcelona) in December. These trade fairs involved 21 partners and generated 385 leads.

The Service organised three events of its own: the [European Association Summit](#) (in April), bringing together the major professional associations, the [visit.brussels Awards](#) (in June), which rewards tourism-related sectors, and the Summer Ambassador's Night (in September), to honour the actors who promote Brussels as a conference destination. The first event was held in hybrid mode, with a TV screen; the other two were held face-to-face, with an audience limited by the Covid restrictions in force.

The B2B Events Service also coordinated 24 workshops, Fam Trips to discover Brussels and MICE (Meetings, Incentives, Conferences & Exhibitions) and leisure meet-ups in Belgium and abroad. Half of these events had to be cancelled or postponed due to the Covid situation. The face-to-face events which made it possible to involve the partners brought together 30 Brussels-based tourism professionals.

Finally, the Service was responsible for coordinating diplomatic actions including the Brussels Days Paris (in September), organised jointly with [hub.brussels](#) and [Brussels International](#). In effect, visit.brussels shares common objectives with these two organisations: to position the Brussels-Capital Region on the international scene, to create networking opportunities at the highest level with local companies and authorities, and to promote the economic dynamism, know-how, creators, cultural wealth, gastronomy and tourism and MICE potential of the Region.

visit.brussels also carried out specific missions on behalf of the Brussels Region, in particular for the [Realty](#) (Brussels) or [MAPIC](#) (Cannes).

State visits and economic missions were cancelled or postponed to 2022.

## 2022 Outlook

In 2021, faced with the Covid crisis, the team put its creativity to work to reinvent the events and maintain support for Brussels' tourism partners. They will continue to do so in 2022, to ensure that professional events are held in three possible ways: face-to-face, virtual and hybrid.

## B2C Events

### Mission and objectives

The B2C Events Service plans to develop excellence in the events world, by setting up and organising events for the general public, in close contact with visitors and inhabitants of the Brussels-Capital Region.

These events position the destination for international and local visitors by focusing on Brussels' key themes, such as comics and gastronomy. By bringing people together, they offer great socio-economic potential for all related sectors.

The Service also organises events that are complementary to the management contract of visit.brussels, such as the [Printemps Numérique](#) or the [I Love Science Festival](#). It also ensures the presence of the destination 'Brussels' at various fairs and exhibitions for the general public which are organised in the capital.



## 2021 in a few key points

The calendar of 'general public' events planned in Brussels for 2021 was further affected by the Covid-19 crisis, especially at the beginning of the year. As a result, several events had to be adapted. And some events were postponed until autumn, with the result that there was a substantial events offering in Brussels between September and December. But the good news is that all the events organised by visit.brussels were able to go ahead in 2021, sometimes with revised formulas, and sometimes on different dates.

The agenda kicked off in May 2021, with a completely overhauled hybrid version of the [Iris Festival](#) 10 concerts, which were recorded in new locations in Brussels in collaboration with RTBF, were put online. On the comedy scene, seven vignettes written and produced by the collective of young Brussels comedians 'What The Fun' were also broadcast online. Meanwhile, guided tours and demonstrations of some of the Brussels public services were organised face-to-face.

A series of events followed, all adapted to the Covid control measures in force at the time they were launched.

- The [Comic Strip Festival](#) was transformed into Comic Strip Month, with six exhibitions, awarded prizes, treasure hunts, famous comic strip balloons pumped up, guided tours and an international guest of honour, the Republic of Korea.
- The [eat! BRUSSELS, drink! BORDEAUX](#) festival offered foodies a unique version of 'Dinners', in the brand new Tour & Taxis Maritime Station. Each evening of the festival, 200 seated guests enjoyed a different menu, devised by a 100% Brussels team: three chefs, a pastry chef, a cheesemaker, a barman and a brewer; all accompanied by Bordeaux wines.
- I Love Science Festival and Printemps Numérique were postponed, and exceptionally for 2021, shared their date and location: from 15 to 17 October at Brussels Expo. .
- [Bright Brussels](#) had a very special 10-day edition during the All Saints' Day holiday, setting one of the first milestones in the recovery of the Brussels tourism sector.
- The [Pride](#), usually co-produced by visit.brussels, was not held in its usual format but was organised by the Belgian Pride non-profit association as a festival called Q.Artz Festival, in September.
- Two of the three B2C fairs in which visit.brussels planned to participate — the [Foire du Livre](#) (Book Fair) and the [Salon des Vacances](#) (Holiday Fair) — had to be cancelled. The [BATIBOUW](#) trade show was however organised in a virtual guise.

## 2022 Outlook

The experiences of 2020 and 2021 allowed the B2C Events Service to develop events that are increasingly adapted to the tastes of the public and unprecedented situations. As a result, various events were transformed for their 2022 edition and future editions. While the Covid-19 crisis took a heavy toll on staff and partners, it also prompted a re-examination of many long-standing habits and certainties, thereby triggering a process of reinvention. More agile and creative, the teams envisage a new and inspiring 2022 events agenda.



## MEDIA

The Media pole manages all external communication of visit.brussels. It upholds the image of Brussels, the Brussels tourism offering and the visit.brussels organisation across all media channels in a 360-degree strategy, whereby digitisation is an essential strand.

Some 41 employees are split into three services that interact within the pole: the Communication Service, the Editorial Service and the Studio.

### Service Communication

#### Mission and objectives

The Communication Service coordinates external communication initiatives on behalf of various internal clients of visit.brussels. It sets out the communication strategy and planning according to the targets and communication channels, then mandates the Editorial Service and the Studio to produce the tools. At the end of the process, the Communication Service analyses and reports on the results. Depending on the needs, it also collaborates with external partners (media agencies, creative agencies, production companies, etc.), as was the case for the 2021 campaign for the tourism relaunch in Brussels.

This centralised approach, in collaboration with the other two services of the Media pole, promotes brand compliance and consistency in communication projects, as well as measuring their impact.

#### 2021 in a few key points

The campaign for the re-launch of the destination was the major project of the Communication Service in 2021. In tune with the four seasons, it was designed to enhance awareness of Brussels and stimulate tourist and cultural consumption.

In the spring, under the slogan “*Éteignez vos écrans, Bruxelles vous attend*”, (Turn off your screens, Brussels is waiting for you), a first activation campaign invited various target audiences (local and national) to take a break from their digital consumption and go out to (re)discover Brussels.

Starting in June, the summer campaign rolled out a new creative thread: “*Brussels is open*” (#BrusselsOpen), capitalising on the soul of Brussels: an open, tolerant and warm city. This campaign was available both online and offline, on all media, and targeted potential local, national and international visitors: posters, TV spots, social networks, partnerships with various media and influencers, press relations, etc. It was continuously re-evaluated with a view to possible adaptations, taking into account the continuous evolution of the Covid situation.

Still within the framework of the recovery plan, significant media investments were made in order to continue the communication of the Brussels Health Safety Label and initiate a broad campaign to support culture, with influencers.

In addition to this B2C element, a B2B element was rolled out to professional audiences, in order to support the Brussels MICE (Meetings, Incentives, Conferences & Exhibitions) sector.

In 2021, the Communication Service also coordinated the communication for various events: [Bright Brussels](#), the [Iris Festival](#), the [Comic Strip Festival](#), [Printemps Numérique](#), [I Love Sciences Festival](#) and [Dinners by eat! BRUSSELS, drink! BORDEAUX](#).

Furthermore, it supported various tactical digital campaigns throughout the year to drive traffic towards inspiring cultural articles (such as ‘The selection of the week’ on the agenda.brussels website) but also the sales of the Brussels Card, the visit.brussels Pass or the last minute tickets of [Arsène 50](#).

#### 2022 Outlook

In terms of communication, 2022 looks like it will be a return to normal, without a relaunch campaign. The Covid restrictions have been significantly scaled back and it will be possible to devise campaigns in complete creative freedom.



## Service Éditorial

### Mission and objectives

The Editorial Service is responsible for the content of all online and offline publications of visit.brussels in four languages (French, Dutch, German and English). Primarily based on briefings from the Communication Service, it drafts content for the social networks of visit.brussels, the two websites (visit.brussels and agenda.brussels), the numerous newsletters dedicated to cultural life, the expat community in Brussels, the meeting, conference and associations sectors, etc.

It also manages relations with the national and international press and acts as the organisation's mouthpiece

### 2021 in a few key points

The activities of the Editorial Service during 2021 were of course strongly influenced by the pandemic, which severely affected the tourism sector, which had 70% fewer overnight stays across the board. Nevertheless, a slight recovery was observed and the editorial team leapt into action to bolster it.

This support took the form of press communication that went beyond simple crisis management. The Service made its expertise available to the national and international press 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, and provided the media with information and interviews on all topics concerning the Brussels-Capital Region, from key figures to popular events. The contacts with the national and international press were sustained, through meetings and dozens of press trips, via press releases and through editorial collaborations.

Thanks to the brands visit.brussels, agenda.brussels and the various sub-brands, the team intensively promoted the Brussels Region, primarily on the websites, in the newsletters and on the social media of visit.brussels, for which the Editorial Service is responsible for managing the content.

Brochures, various publications and mailings were also produced for the MICE sector, leisure tourism and culture.

### 2022 Outlook

In 2022, the Editorial Service will focus its attention on the new digital environment. In terms of content, it will shape the new identity of visit.brussels, in particular on the website and social media. Additional temporary staff will be recruited to support the existing team.

In all its actions, the strategy of the Service will aim to position Brussels as a highly cosmopolitan city and a distinct cultural destination. The messages conveyed will focus on developing an image of Brussels as the capital of Art Nouveau, contemporary art, surrealism, jazz and everything related to club culture, heritage, gastronomy and sustainability. The hotel and conference amenities of Brussels as an international capital and the most politically influential city in the world will also be highlighted, as will Brussels' expertise in hybrid meetings. Moreover, the strategic, central location of Brussels, less than two hours by train from Paris, London, Amsterdam and Cologne, will be reinforced.

## Studio

### Mission and objectives

The Studio is responsible for creating and producing all the (audio)visual communication supports of visit.brussels: posters, mailings, presentation material, ads, videos, radio and TV spots, web portal, etc.

It is also responsible for the technical management and graphic design of the websites visit.brussels and agenda.brussels, and manages the photo library in collaboration with the organisation's photographer.

The objective is to develop effective and innovative communication tools, in line with the identity of visit.brussels. The Studio mainly implements its projects on the basis of briefings from the Communication Service, but it is also the single point of contact for any internal service which needs an online or offline publication to be produced.



## 2021 in a few key points

In 2021, the Studio worked on different versions of the relaunch campaign concept for different media: online ads, press ads, internally produced TV spots, etc.

It created and produced all the communication tools for the virtual and face-to-face events organised by [visit.brussels](https://www.visit.brussels). In order to create strong and inspiring visuals, the Studio solicited external service providers, in particular for [eat! BRUSSELS](#), [drink! BORDEAUX](#) and the [Tram Experience](#).

In anticipation of the centenary of the birth of the Brussels garden cities, the Studio created, produced and directed a three-minute film in sequence shot, featuring three of the most representative garden cities. This film will be used by all cities to invite citizens to the festivities, with short format versions for social networks.

Finally, a new digital tool has been created and will be integrated into the new web portal in 2022: the Venue Finder. This tool allows B2B visitors to easily find a venue for their event or meeting, according to criteria oriented towards the needs of their target (location, availability of hotels and restaurants nearby, hosting capacity, etc.).

## 2022 Outlook

2022 will see the launch of the new ecosystem and the new identity of [visit.brussels](https://www.visit.brussels). The Studio and its webmasters will incorporate all the visual content and will be responsible for following the guidelines set out with the external agency.

This evolution of the ecosystem and the identity of [visit.brussels](https://www.visit.brussels) will mean that various communication tools will have to be updated. And all media will have to be produced according to these guidelines.



## FINANCE & OPERATING

The Finance & Operating pole brings together visit.brussels's general services and support. It plays an essential intermediary role in the functioning of all the organisation's departments.

Its activities are divided into three entities which together employ around 30 people: Income Services (commercial activities generating own revenues), Internal Services (support services including IT support, Governance and the Purchasing unit) and Accountancy.

### Income Services

#### Mission and objectives

The Income Services team manages part of visit.brussels' revenue and runs the organisation's own projects: the [Tram Experience](#) (discovering the gastronomy of Michelin-starred Brussels chefs on board a converted tram), guided tours of the City Hall, the 'last minute' ticketing service [Arsène 50](#) which democratises access to cultural events, and the ticketing platform for visit.brussels's partner cultural and tourist operators. It also operates the [BIP](#) (Brussels Info Place, the Brussels-Capital Region's showcase reception complex), sells media space and manages the sponsorship of certain projects.

By generating revenue for the organisation, Income Services helps to balance the budget.

#### 2021 in a few key points

The [Tram Experience](#) was relaunched on 15 September 2021. Thanks to the support of the sponsors, the vehicle was completely renovated, and its interior and exterior design completely redesigned. The Tram Experience was also awarded the Brussels Health Safety Label. Thanks to a powerful media campaign, the team organised 89 outings of the tram, bringing together a total of 2,266 general public customers and 526 corporate customers. The project generated turnover of €300,000 and an average customer satisfaction rate of 8.6/10, a positive evaluation that will encourage the organisers to continue this activity and promote it.

Guided tours of the City Hall were heavily affected by the Covid-19 crisis.

After many months of absence, the [Arsène 50](#) ticketing service was relaunched in September. By offering a dynamic showcase of Brussels' cultural offerings at half price, this platform stimulates the discovery of and access to numerous shows and events. The platform currently features over 80 cultural institutions and 7,000 tickets were sold in 2021.

Income Services also manages an online ticketing platform for various museums, attractions and external partner events. Despite a complicated year, the team is delighted by the excellent results achieved with this ticketing service. Indeed, some 109,305 tickets were sold in 2021 for 229 listed activities, generating turnover of €1,120,000.

After being closed for several months, the [BIP](#) and its conference centre were able to reconnect with its public. 136 events were organised there, welcoming a total of 4,413 people and generating total turnover of €136,000, a result which is nevertheless much lower than the turnover recorded before the crisis. The team also continued to improve the multimedia equipment in the halls, with a view to welcoming visitors in an even more professional manner and facilitating hybrid events.

In terms of partnerships (sale of media space in visit.brussels's communication tools), the Service adapted the 'Let's Meet' business tourism brochure, with the creation of a digital catalogue. Given the impact of the crisis on the sector, it was decided that, unlike in other years, the visibility of partners would be offered free of charge. The Service also consolidated its collaboration with the European Parliament.

Finally, as regards the search for sponsorship for its own events, visit.brussels could count on the financial support of Sibelga for the [Bright Brussels](#) festival.



## 2022 Outlook

The [Tram Experience](#) will continue to operate with an emphasis on active marketing among its corporate audiences.

As regards the guided tours of the City Hall, Income Services is still aiming to increase visits from the Dutch public.

The service will also continue to develop the marketing of its two online ticketing platforms, with more powerful tools going forward (among other things, a new 'Organisers' area). It will also initiate a brainstorming on creating a new digital ticketing platform, bringing together all the cultural offerings in the Brussels Region, and will continue to make its expertise available to cultural players in Brussels. For the [Arsène 50](#) ticketing service, Income Services intends to return to the figures achieved before the crisis (45,000 tickets per year) in 2022. It also aims to develop the offering, in particular with the major cultural institutions and the Flemish theatres in Brussels. To ensure the visibility and recognition of the two online ticketing platforms, there will be a special focus on their new look & feel.

Prospecting and development work will also continue for the [BIP](#). Marketing for the BIP will be strengthened, in particular via targeted newsletters.

Finally, in the area of partnerships and sponsorship, Income Services intends to resume and consolidate its collaborations.

## Internal Services

### Mission and objectives

Internal Services comprises three transversal and support services: Governance, Purchasing unit and IT support.

As a Brussels public interest organisation, visit.brussels carries out its activities within a framework of missions and objectives defined in its policy letter, with performance indicators issued by the Brussels-Capital Region.

In this context, Internal Services follows up on the action plan, the policy letter, budgets, grants and the financial audit. It centralises and carries out all visit.brussels purchases and legal actions. Finally, it manages the organisation's IT and telephony environment and provides support to users.

### 2021 in a few key points

In 2021, the Internal Services team set out to achieve its annual objectives. This included the drafting of the action plan, the policy letter and the activity report, as well as ensuring consistency with the budget.

As in previous years, the team's mission was also to draft the operating and campaign budgets, in collaboration with the Directors and Management, in order to guarantee a balanced budget for the 2021 fiscal year.

Playing a front-line role in the relations between visit.brussels and the various subsidising authorities, the Internal Services team drew up various reports while managing the follow-up of subsidies (requests, implementation, justification) and drafting new project sheets.

The Purchasing unit and the Governance unit continued their respective strategic missions throughout 2021. A new team was integrated into the Purchasing unit. Its mission is to carry out all public contracts and conclude framework agreements in order to ensure the smooth progression of the procurement operations necessary for the organisation. An analysis was also carried out for the implementation of a centralised purchasing service. As public procurement contracts are complex procedures, the Purchasing unit and the Governance unit ensure that procedures are respected and help raise awareness among internal customers about respecting the deadlines for public procurement.

As the preferred interlocutors in the relations maintained by visit.brussels with the CEL (Inspector of commitments and Settlements) and its various suppliers, the Purchasing unit and the legal team have, moreover, actively helped develop close and long-lasting relations with these partners. Finally, they have helped foster interaction with other regional organisations, in order to develop synergies in various themes.

IT Support continued to pursue its objectives in 2021, which include managing the environment and the IT security of visit.brussels, while ensuring the maintenance of the various software. These missions cover a wide range of activities, including purchasing licenses and managing telephony



## 2022 Outlook

The Internal Services team intends to pursue its objectives in keeping with the realisations of 2021, and in line with the transversal philosophy of visit.brussels.

In addition, it is resolutely committed to sustaining its dynamic of centralising information. This is aimed in particular at applying best practice, maintaining service quality objectives and an approach oriented towards providing effective solutions in the interest of the client. These various aspects constitute transversal objectives on which visit.brussels as a whole is based to a large extent.

As for the Purchasing unit, its objective in 2022 will be to maintain and strengthen its key role as a centralised service within visit.brussels and to build its efforts, to be in line with the transversal rationale inherent in the organisation.

## Accountancy

### Mission and objectives

The Accountancy Service handles all the accounting paperwork for visit.brussels.

### 2021 in a few key points

The Accountancy Service took care of all payments for the organisation. It also prepared financial statements on an accruals basis, and monitored the budget forecast. In addition, this dedicated Accountancy Service ensured the quality of the financial information, and drafted the closing accounting and budgetary files, with a view to the certification of the accounts by the external auditors..

### 2022 Outlook

In 2022, in addition to its recurring tasks, the Accountancy Service will continue its work to digitise documents, including electronic invoicing..



## STRATEGY & INTERNATIONAL

The Strategy & International pole lays the strategic foundation for visit.brussels. It contributes to the organisation's positioning and supports its development, by informing the various services about the opportunities and expectations of its partners and clients.

Its activities are divided into three departments, which together have 44 employees: International Development, Marketing Strategy and Industry Coordination. These three complementary departments work in synergy, reinforcing transversality and consistency.

### International Development

#### *Mission and objectives*

The International Development Service aims to strengthen the image of Brussels among the world's major associations and conference organisers, as well as leisure tourism professionals. Its activities cover research on the ground (potential customers, needs analysis, new growth sectors, etc.), promotion of the destination, canvassing and customer support.

It positions Brussels on the international map of conferences and trade fairs (MICE, Meetings, Incentives, Conferences & Exhibitions), focusing its approach on the five Brussels poles of excellence: life sciences and bio-pharma, ICT, sustainability and clean technologies, creative industries and media, and business services.

The 13-strong team based in Brussels is in charge of the local market and multi-market projects, while five tourist attachés promote the destination in the five priority markets (Germany, Spain, France, Italy and the Netherlands). The Service also works with agencies representing Brussels tourism in the United States, the United Kingdom, distant markets (Brazil, India) and Dubai.

#### *2021 in a few key points*

In 2021, the International Development Service hosted 82 international and national conferences in Brussels, as well as 11 technical visits. During the year, it handled 636 requests for potential conferences and trade fairs, including 13 candidacy applications.

13 new conferences were approved to receive the services of the Growth Support Programme offered by visit.brussels, and 11 conferences benefited from this support in 2021. The services offered by the Growth Support Programme to event organizers (conferences, fairs, exhibitions) allow them to make the destination radiate throughout the world. They include creating personalised promotional videos or after-movies at the end of recurring events, promoting candidacies abroad, promoting the event in question with candelabras in the city, promoting the destination among conference participants during guided tours, and providing public transport tickets (STIB and SNCB).

In addition, the Service represented Brussels as a destination among MICE and leisure tourism professionals during more than 20 commercial initiatives (workshops, international fairs, dinners in face-to-face and virtual form) on priority markets (Belgium, France, Germany, the United Kingdom, Italy, Spain, the Netherlands, the United States and distant markets).

Finally, the team, including the foreign attachés, continued their contact and analysis work, in order to gauge the potential for collaborations in the years to come. It also supported its clients in searching for solutions in both the MICE and leisure sectors: developing hybrid proposals, cancelling events, keeping Brussels in tourism programmes, etc.



## **2022 Outlook**

The Covid-19 crisis has led to a major shift in the MICE and association sectors, and hybrid solutions are emerging as a benchmark model for the future. With a broad portfolio of venues with a capacity of 500 to 1,500 people, as well as several exclusive halls, Brussels has a wide range of assets to position itself as a European hub for hybrid conferences. To this end, the team has set up a register to identify the venues which are suitably equipped to host events of this type.

In the leisure sector, in addition to culture and heritage, the International Development Service is developing a tourism offering oriented towards experiences and exclusivity, for which there is a growing demand. A register and several collaborations are also ongoing in this area.

For 2022, the objectives remain unchanged. In both the MICE and leisure sectors, the Service will continue to position and market Brussels in its priority markets, with a specific focus on neighbouring countries. As for distant markets, links with Russia will of course be suspended; as for Brazil, India and China, the department will continue its relations with professional tourism actors via the agencies that represent it in those places, in order to ensure promotion there in the longer term

## **Marketing Strategy**

### ***Mission and objectives***

The Marketing Strategy Service implements visit.brussels' marketing strategy. It supports the organisation in adopting the most effective strategy possible that is best suited to the needs of its partners and clients.

The Service supports the operational departments, to which it contributes by centralising market information, issuing recommendations and analysing the results of the actions undertaken.

Based on input from the sector, it identifies priority targets and segments as well as their needs. It analyses market opportunities in order to optimise the positioning of Brussels's cultural and tourist offering. Finally, as a knowledge centre for Brussels tourism, it provides visit.brussels' partners with useful information, in particular through regular surveys and newsletters.

The Marketing Strategy Service also works on the brand strategy of visit.brussels, to develop a consistent and recognisable image for all. It also supports the organisation and its partners in its approach to sustainability and accessibility.

### ***2021 in a few key points***

In 2021, the Marketing Strategy Service supported the departments of visit.brussels in a context of permanent change in the face of the Covid crisis, by collecting and analysing information on the choices, needs and expectations of Brussels' tourism customers.

The data collected made it possible to monitor the Covid-19 crisis and to identify signs of recovery in the tourism sector. During this period of uncertainty, the team accompanied the Strategic Committee of visit.brussels as well as the partners of Brussels tourism in identifying the challenges to be taken into consideration for the update of the Policy Letter 2022. It also assisted the Brussels municipalities, together with the Industry Coordination Service, in identifying their potential for tourist attractiveness.

In addition, the Marketing Strategy Service worked closely with the Communication Department to launch and coordinate the city marketing project of visit.brussels. The first phase of this project runs from the summer of 2021 to the summer of 2022, and the aim is to conduct a range of studies, analyses, interviews and consultations involving



stakeholders from a variety of sectors. The aim is to identify a distinctive positioning for Brussels on the international scene, and translate this into consistent messages for target audiences.

At the same time, the team contributed to the strategic brainstorming for the new digital ecosystem, by conducting an extensive study on B2C customer journeys.

The Marketing Strategy Service also worked on projects relating to sustainability, including the roll-out of the Green Key label at the sectoral level and the valorisation of cycling tourism, with the creation of two bike hubs and the gradual roll-out of the point-node bike network. A project to integrate inhabitants more effectively in the tourism strategy was initiated at the international level, and sustainable and inclusive tourism initiatives were supported in the framework of the tourism recovery plan.

Finally, the Service made strategic recommendations for B2B or B2C events, services and campaigns, and worked to develop the customer relationship management (CRM) program and adapting this tool to the organisation's needs.

### **2022 Outlook**

In 2022, the Marketing Strategy Service will continue the activities undertaken in 2021, in particular in terms of supporting city marketing projects and the roll-out of the new digital ecosystem.

The team will also ensure that relevant information is distributed among tourism and cultural partners, and will support the process of drafting the 2023 Policy Letter.

It will also need to play a more important role in structuring, summarising and disseminating strategic information within visit.brussels and among its partners.

Finally, it will work in close collaboration with other services in implementing a transversal sustainability action plan.

## **Industry Coordination**

### **Mission and objectives**

The Industry Coordination Service is the link between visit.brussels and the actors on the ground, and valorises the tourist and cultural offering that embodies Brussels' DNA. It identifies and responds to the needs of partners and ensures that this diversified offering meets the interests of cultural, tourist and business visitors.

Its 18 collaborators cover various sectors: contemporary art, design, museums, exhibitions, heritage, Art Nouveau, pop culture, performing arts, street art, comics, attractions, leisure, guides and Greeters (volunteer citizen guides), hotels and accommodation, gastronomy, nightlife, sports, event venues, conference organisers, event agencies, federations of international associations, and association management companies. They also valorise different communities: LGBTQI+, families, children, education, expats, citizens, film crews (via the [Film Commission](#)) and economic actors federating business tourism (via the Ambassadors and Centres of Excellence).

On a daily basis, the team works to support and valorise these sectors through communication campaigns. It encourages innovation and growth, and develops synergies to reinforce the image of the Brussels-Capital Region through these themes. It keeps its partners informed and runs a training programme for them, via the Quality Academy.

Finally, it is also within the Industry Coordination Service that the decentralisation of tourism in the 19 Brussels municipalities and the promotion of the Region through its districts, in particular the European Quarter, is implemented

### **2021 in a few key points**

During the Covid crisis, culture and urban life remained powerful levers, creating social links and rich experiences. The campaigns were rolled out depending on whether venues were allowed to open, the various yardsticks and the resilience of the target audiences, in a spirit of intelligence, collective work and agility.



Among the many notable achievements, the Industry Coordination Service organised around 20 multi-sector or sectoral meetings as well as 15 training sessions.

It set up initiatives with other associative actors or regional public organisations. It intensified collaboration with the 19 municipalities in order to implement transversal projects, strengthen the tourism and cultural policy, relocate events and valorise neighbourhoods, with a specific focus on relaunching the European Quarter.

The Service also launched the Brussels Health Safety Label and supported the implementation of Covid-related health measures: 158 Brussels tourism partners were awarded the label, 100 inspections were carried out and 521 actors were trained in 5 training sessions.

To encourage access to culture, the Services provided support to around 100 event organisers, to enhance their organisation, visibility and visitor numbers. This support was particularly evident through various multi-channel communication campaigns and free candelabra campaigns (via competitions) as well as through the organisation of free guided tours.

To promote the sectoral or inter-sectoral offering, the team developed inspiring content and publicity editorials, and supported campaigns with the national and international press. It devised initiatives targeting specific audiences (expats and Europeans living in Brussels, young people with Youth for Culture, LGBTQI+, etc.), co-created new cultural products and modernised others.

At the B2B level, the Industry Coordination Service provided assistance in getting behind Brussels' bid to host major international events or conferences. It also organised various actions aimed at convincing MICE organisers and associations to choose Brussels for their events or professional activities (meetings, training, Fam Trips, federations of ambassadors and professional associations, etc.). Finally, it supported various requests for filming in Brussels. The year 2021 was a record year in this regard, with 358 audiovisual projects supported.

### **2022 Outlook**

The Industry Coordination Service will continue to foster the development of projects that contribute to the strong identity of Brussels as a cultural and tourist capital, in all its diversity.

It will repeat most of the actions implemented in 2021, and will launch new ones: developing new events, new competitions promoting Brussels' cultural and event offering, finalising the European Quarter brand, stepping up the digitisation of services, etc.

In line with visit.brussels' policy letter 2022, 20 actions requested by the tourism partners will be implemented. Co-creation with these partners, but also with the 19 municipalities and other public bodies, will be intensified, in particular with a view to developing new collaborations and transversal actions.

Finally, to support B2B contacts and MICE tourism, actions aimed at positioning Brussels will be enhanced according to the Capital Intelligence analysis, which identifies the economic sectors and their key players.



## 2021 ACTION AND RECOVERY PLAN

Even if the arrival of the vaccines at the beginning of 2021 made it possible to envisage prospects for the resumption of cultural and tourist activities, the economic impact of the Covid-19 crisis continued to hit all players in these sectors very hard. The arrival of a third wave also demonstrated the uncertainty in which tourism was immersed and the difficulty of projecting into the future, even the near future.

General financial aid, which has been rolled out since 2020, continued to be offered to companies in the Brussels-Capital Region in 2021, with particular attention paid to the highly affected sectors of hospitality, tourism and culture. Continuing on from 2020, visit.brussels launched a co-creation process with its partners to determine their needs and the specific projects that the organisation could initiate within the framework of its competences, to support the recovery.

Within this framework, six pillars, first defined with the Strategic Committee, served as guidelines for the 2021 visit.brussels action plan as well as for the recovery plan:

- attracting local Belgian visitors and those from neighbouring regions to Brussels;
- breathing new life into the offer to improve the experience of locals and visitors;
- providing financial support for the sector's recovery;
- giving a boost to the digital transformation of the sector;
- becoming an exemplary sustainable destination;
- helping all partners to be fully up to date with their knowledge and skills.

Workshops were held within the organisation and with its partners to translate these strategic pillars into concrete actions and projects.

The visit.brussels teams and several dozen players from the different sectors then proposed actions suited to the needs of these sectors, but also- and above all- to the needs and preferences of their customers. Different scenarios have been established for each action, so that visit.brussels can anticipate health regulations and has a 'Plan B'- and even a 'Plan C'- to adapt more effectively to unpredictable and changing conditions.

Lastly, visit.brussels has referred to the Tourism Manifesto published by the European Travel Commission to ensure that this recovery plan is aligned with the priority policies identified.

### 1) **visit.brussels Pass**

To support the tourism sector and allow tourists to (re)discover Brussels, visit.brussels and the Brussels Regional Government introduced the 'visit.brussels Pass' at the beginning of summer 2021. The action ran from 5 July to 30 November 2021.

This pass, worth €40, could be used at Brussels tourist partners who had previously registered for the action in the following categories: recognised accommodation, attractions, guided tours and events.

The general objective was to bring foreign tourists back to Brussels. With regard to the tourism partners, the aim was to increase their turnover and promote tourism, to guarantee that the action had a multiplier effect. For customers, it was necessary to offer a simple, complete and attractive product.

To maximise the effect of this action, only foreign tourists could initially download the visit.brussels Pass. Then, and depending on the available stocks, Belgian tourists (Walloon and Flemish) could also use it. This action was supported by a widespread communication campaign in the following neighbouring markets: France, the Netherlands, Germany, Luxembourg and, to a lesser extent, Spain.

A total of 149 partners participated in the action and 167,713 visit.brussels Passes were downloaded. Passes not used after 60 days were made available to the public. 71,276 Passes were used out of a total of 100,000, which represents



a budget of €2,851,040 out of a total of €4,000,000. The rest of the amount allocated to this action (€1,148,960) was returned to the Brussels Region. The communication campaign, mainly newsletters, reached an average audience of 50,000 people per week. A total of 47,219 people agreed to continue receiving information from visit.brussels, which is a significant addition to the organisation's B2C database.

The partners involved in this project gave it an average satisfaction rating of 9.11/10.

## 2) MICE/Leisure communication campaigns

Communication in general, and campaigns more specifically, were one of the major issues of 2021. The objective was to attract visitors from Brussels, Belgium and neighbouring regions to the destination, but also to boost the offer in order to optimise the experience of locals and visitors.

### a. Attracting local, Belgian visitors and those from neighbouring regions

visit.brussels had a total amount of €1,750,000 for the implementation of this mission. This amount has made it possible to target both business tourists (MICE) and 'leisure' visitors, through a series of actions.

As far as leisure tourism is concerned, after a first year of communication in 2020 which brought many lessons, the visit.brussels teams were convinced that the 2021 campaign should above all be considered a lever for reactivating and revitalising the tourism sector.

The messages conveyed to the target audiences had to be engaging and aim not only at directing attention to the Brussels tourism partners, but also at transforming interactions into real conversions. The visit.brussels Pass was developed in line with this strategic basis.

In the context of the visit.brussels Pass promotion campaign, which was mainly focused on the revival of the tourism partners, the objectives were varied. The aim was of course to encourage the local (Brussels) population to take a more active part in activities and to attract a Belgian population from other parts of the country to Brussels. But the visit.brussels Pass was also intended to attract people from neighbouring countries.

As well as encouraging these audiences, one of the key missions of the Pass was to restore their confidence, which had been shaken in the context of a global pandemic. At the same time, the campaign was intended to bring the various partners together and give them excellent visibility. Lastly, the aim was to highlight the entire economic sector of restaurants and cafés in the Brussels-Capital Region.

This is where the image campaign with the slogan 'Brussels is open' (#brusselsopen) was born, with the goal of promoting Brussels as an open, warm and authentic city, just like its inhabitants.

While much has been done to attract a leisure-oriented clientele, business tourism (MICE) has also been the focus of many actions. The aim was to position Brussels as a European hub for hybrid meetings, thanks to accessible digital solutions. Our capital also offers unique networking opportunities thanks to its strategic positioning as the European capital and the presence of numerous international institutions. In this context, the Brussels Health Safety Label offered solid guarantees to ensure visitor safety, in a context of a pandemic that still persists.

visit.brussels used various strategic means to achieve this objective of positioning the Brussels-Capital Region as a European hub for hybrid meetings: advertorials and media buys in specialised magazines, posters in neighbouring countries with high MICE potential (France, Germany) and the implementation of a digital campaign. Regarding the latter, visit.brussels recorded good incidence rates, especially during the summer wave, particularly in France and Germany (visibility, clicks), despite a 2021 year-end marked by a rebound of the epidemic, which led to a slight decrease in efficiency.



The achievement of this mission- attracting local, Belgian and neighbouring visitors to Brussels, both from a MICE and a leisure perspective- by visit.brussels required a budget of €1,750,132.

#### **b. Breathing new life into the offer to improve the experience of locals and visitors**

The health situation has created specific needs and accelerated structural changes in the needs expressed by both locals and visitors. Moreover, Brussels was not the only destination to suffer in this period and to hope for the return of visitors as soon as the situation allows it.

With a budget of €650,000 for this mission, visit.brussels boosted the adaptation and enrichment of the tourism offer to enable the Region to meet the expectations of locals and visitors, and create (or maintain) a competitive advantage.

visit.brussels has focused its efforts around four strategic pillars aimed at revitalising the nightlife sector, art and culture, tourist and cultural consumption and the restaurant and café sector.

Firstly, it wanted to support the nightlife sector to get locals and visitors to reclaim the public space and revitalise nightlife in Brussels. An intense media campaign promoted festive 'Open Air' events so people could discover Brussels in the open air, in the Region's remarkable places. The campaign was also designed to communicate the reopening of clubs in October and received media and social media support.

Although the summer season started late, the 'Open Air' campaign recorded excellent results. It also supported a number of partners, such as vK, Gay Haze, Rio Sensation, Deep In House, Rebel-Up, Catclub, ChatsNoir, Hangar, Bloody Louis, Forever Young, La Premice, Les Jeux d'Hiver, Chez Ginette and Lefto presents.

The second strategic pillar, called the 'Public Art Trail', aimed to promote art and culture in the public space. In this context, it aimed to promote 'corona-safe' routes outdoors, within the 19 municipalities of the Brussels-Capital Region.

The occurrence of the health crisis had highlighted the importance of having an outdoor activities offer. Brussels has a particularly rich architectural and artistic heritage but it is not always easy to access. With this in mind, guided tours, trails, tours and games in the city allow the public to discover this heritage.

To this end, it was necessary to create autonomous pedestrian trails on the theme of public art. These trails were initially introduced on supports such as Google Maps and then on the maps created for the future visit.brussels website. The second phase of this project, when the new platform is available, will include additional multimedia content (soundtracks, videos, archive images). The project also starts a wider collaboration with [hub.brussels](#) and [Brussels Mobility](#), to continue creating tours to promote public art in the Region.

10 walks are already available. These walks are accessible on the visit.brussels website and are illustrated by numerous photos. As well as the fact that this activity is free, this medium emphasises its safety, given the outdoor setting. A large number of partners took part in this action and are promoted as part of the trails, such as Ecran, [hub.brussels](#), [Brussels Mobility](#) and all the cultural partners. Adjustments are being made, in particular the encoding of the different trails in the four languages (English, Dutch, German, French). Once this has been completed, this new tool will be the subject of a much more sustained communication campaign by visit.brussels.

The third strategic pillar concerns the visit.brussels Pass, mentioned earlier in this chapter.

Lastly, the fourth strategic pillar focused on supporting the 'Reca' (restaurants and cafés) sector as part of the 'Brussels is (re)setting its table' campaign. The objective, in consultation with the [Horeca Federation](#), was to increase the communication and visibility of this sector, the partners and their actions. In this regard, gastronomy was put in the spotlight to attract a maximum number of visitors to the restaurants and cafés of Brussels. The [eat! BRUSSELS, drink! BORDEAUX](#) event was used to launch the campaign, which spent several weeks promoting Brussels gastronomy. The offer was also highlighted to match the preferences and behaviours of the different target audiences.



In addition, several campaigns to promote the destination and its gastronomy (via advertorials in the specialised and general press) were set up in France, the Netherlands, Flanders and Wallonia. Specific action related to nightlife was also planned in Ghent to target a younger audience. However, for health reasons, this action was postponed until 2022. The main fees were maintained for 2021.

This mission - boosting the offer to optimise the experience of locals and visitors - by visit.brussels required a budget of €648,000.

### 3) Support Fund

In 2020, faced with the complete cessation of tourist and cultural activities, visit.brussels, together with the Brussels-Capital Region, created five support funds to help tourism and culture stakeholders equip themselves in terms of health, security or 'touchless' services, strengthen their digital development, deal with the crisis in the events industry, etc.

In 2021, and as an extension of the actions carried out in 2020, visit.brussels rolled out support action based around two specific funds, with a global budget of €1,000,000: a financial support fund for the development of sustainable and inclusive tourism offers, and a support fund for investment in digital solutions.

Access to these funds was through the submission of a file, and applications and calls for projects closed at the end of 2021. 188 eligible applications were submitted in 2021 and 65 applications were closed.

#### - Financial support fund for the development of sustainable and inclusive tourism offers

The health crisis forced visit.brussels to rethink the model of tourism it wants to develop and offer to visitors. Before the pandemic, the notion of sustainable tourism expressed the resources used to respect the environment— by limiting, for example, the carbon footprint— and the well-being of citizens.

It is now a question of regenerative tourism and resilient tourism. These concepts aim to create tourism that is not only respectful of the city and its inhabitants but also brings real added value to the destination. It is also tourism that is able to withstand changes and has the ability to anticipate, rebound or transform.

The development of an inclusive cultural and/or tourist offer is also a priority for the Brussels-Capital Region.

visit.brussels wanted to support the tourism and culture sectors in this dynamic transformation of tourism, through a call for projects to stimulate the development of sustainable and inclusive tourism initiatives. The organisation had a provisional budget of €500,000 for this purpose.

The organisation used a panel of experts to analyse the projects. Each applicant was allowed to submit a maximum of two projects, for which the support was capped (between a minimum of €2,000 and a maximum of €20,000 per dossier).

Of the 99 applications received, the jury selected 34. The average amount of the applications per dossier was €14,705.88. The dossiers submitted included themes such as inclusion and social mix, accessibility, sustainability, mobility and green spaces. Within the framework of this fund, visit.brussels had a budget of €458,871.

#### - Support fund for investment in digital solutions

The unprecedented crisis experienced by all tourism and culture stakeholders has drastically accelerated major changes in the behaviour and expectations of visitors and consumers, particularly in terms of digitalisation. It was imperative in this context, and for the long-term recovery of tourism and culture in Brussels, that the stakeholders in the sector be able to meet these new expectations.

A call for projects- for which visit.brussels had a provisional budget of €500,000- aimed to support these stakeholders in their investments in sustainable digital solutions.



This call for projects, which was included in the recovery plan, had a triple objective:

1. to encourage and increase the digitalisation of the cultural and tourist offer in the Brussels-Capital Region;
2. to financially support the operators involved in this process;
3. to improve the visitor experience and meet their changing expectations.

Each applicant was allowed to submit two projects, for which the support was capped (between a minimum of €5,000 and a maximum of €20,000 per dossier).

Of the 89 candidate files submitted to visit.brussels, the jury selected 31. The average amount per dossier was €16,129.03. The applications included various projects, such as computer, audiovisual and connected equipment, digital city tour/gamification, website/e-commerce/chatbot, digital interactive application/system, interactive/digital maps, etc.

Expenditure on this action amounted to €495,637.

#### 4) Sustainability

visit.brussels is committed to sustainability, a major objective that is reflected in all the actions implemented by the organisation. It intends to support the Brussels-Capital Region in the development of an exemplary sustainability image.

An envelope of €50,000 had been made available for this strategic objective, and the visit.brussels teams carried out a set of actions whose expenses amounted to €49,274.62.

As part of its recovery plan, visit.brussels has joined forces with [Pali Pali](#), an accelerator for cultural, social and solidarity projects, to develop two bicycle hubs, thus promoting a better service for cyclists and visitors wanting to discover Brussels by bike. The sites selected as the locations of these bicycle hubs are [See-U](#) (Ixelles) and [Hospice Pachéco](#) (Brussels). [Hors Catégorie](#), a non-profit organisation promoting bicycles, whose main activities are on the See-U site, helped Pali Pali select the projects present on this site and created a link to integrate these different projects during the opening of the bicycle hub at the Hospice Pachéco.

This project promoted two unique locations where anyone travelling, moving around or visiting the city on two wheels can find bike-related services, amenities and activities. The Hospice Pachéco bike hub promotes a space located in the city centre, as the majority of the tourist offer is located there; the See-U bike hub is more decentralised and targets locals, students and expats.

#### The following actions have been carried out:

- development of bicycle hubs with Pali Pali and several partners associated with the project;
- promotion of guided bike tours, bike-friendly accommodation, bike publications, etc.;
- installation of two terminals within the bicycle hubs from 16 September 2021 to 15 January 2022, to measure visitor satisfaction;
- creation of a logo, an article on bike hubs and a page dedicated to bike tourism on the visit.brussels website;
- sending out of a press release;
- awareness-raising and information for the partners of visit.brussels as part of the Brussels Quality Academy programme;
- promotion in the publications [Le Petit Futé](#) and [Cyclo-Mag](#).



### The results achieved are:

- strong action to boost the bicycle offer from July to December (extension of the action initially planned for summer);
- the pooling and promotion of existing cycling initiatives (existing bike hub partners and involvement of new partners, such as guided tour organisations);
- the promotion of the bicycle as an active mode of transport for discovering Brussels;
- increasing the attractiveness of Brussels as a bike-friendly destination at local and national level, but with the difficulty of obtaining results at international level;
- visitor satisfaction through a turnkey cycling experience;
- the implementation of a medium- and long-term strategy, consistent with the strategy and objectives of visit.brussels (segmentation, districts, values, etc.), and the desire to perpetuate this action beyond 2021.

The Hospice Pachéco hub was open five days a week, from Wednesday to Sunday, to reach as many people as possible, including people who wanted to visit the site during the weekend. It welcomed many curious visitors and, thanks to the reputation of the non-profit organisation Hors Catégorie, a large percentage of the Brussels visitors to this hub were people who already knew the bike hub on the See-U site. The other visitors were mostly tourists, and the action was also able to attract customers of the Jardin open-air café.

### 5) Digitalisation

The Covid-19 crisis served as an accelerator for the industry's need to digitise, in response to changing customer expectations as well as the health measures put in place to stem the spread of the virus.

visit.brussels therefore had to adapt to this new reality and also help the stakeholders in the sector to equip themselves.

At the beginning of 2021, the organisation had a budget of €100,000 for this purpose, with the aim of launching a digital transformation of the tourism sector as part of its missions.

The actions implemented included the creation of a new digital tool, the Venue Finder. This tool allows B2B clients to easily find venues for an event based on a series of criteria and filters. It also makes it easier for tourists to find offers that match their expectations and are located in the surroundings (hotels, restaurants, entertainment, etc.).

An interactive map of Brussels has also been created. It allows users to visualise points of interest and routes through the city. It has already been implemented on the [Bright Brussels](#) website and offers users a customised route for discovering the works of the festival as well as information about the surrounding points of interest.

The expenditure for the completion of these objectives amounted to €101,942.

### *Continue and boost the recovery of the tourism sector in 2022*

The maintenance and revitalisation of the tourist and cultural offer are visit.brussels' priorities for 2022, in a context of the global disappearance of the health crisis.

To achieve this, the organisation intends to mobilise its teams and focus their efforts on four strategic areas: analysing visitor behaviour, remaining attentive to its partners as well as its visitors and staff, and demonstrating its ability to be open to new tourism paradigms.

visit.brussels has already chosen a central principle that will guide its actions during 2022. With the experience gained during the crisis, the organisation intends to capitalise on this to provide the public with ever more appropriate responses.



It will work towards this goal by, for example, increasing the digitisation of its offer with the creation, in 2022, of a new digital portal and a transversal digital service. Aware of the new tourism imperatives, the teams will also make every effort to take sustainability into account in each of their actions. Lastly, in the wake of the actions carried out in 2021 and aware of the essential assets of the Region —with its central position in Europe and the presence of numerous international institutions and associations—, visit.brussels will use all its energy on giving Brussels an important place on the international stage in terms of hybrid meetings.



## TRANSPARENCY

The non-profit visit.brussels applies the circular of 18/09/2018 on the application of Article 11 of the joint ordinance to the Brussels-Capital Region and the Joint Community Commission of 14 December 2017 on the transparency of the remuneration and benefits of Brussels public officials.

The transparency report for 2022 presents the remuneration of the directors and the budget achieved in 2021.

### Board of directors

	29-janv-21	26-février-21	19-mars-21 (cs except)	26-mars-21	23-avril-21	07-mai-21	21-mai-21	25-juin-2021
<i>Cécile JODOGNE</i>					300	300	300	300
<i>Ilaria MASELLI</i>	300		300	300	300	300	300	300
<i>Jenna GAILLY</i>	120	120	120		120	120		
<i>Delphine HOUBA</i>								
<i>Frank LELON</i>	120	120	120	120	120	120	120	120
<i>Mourad MAIMOUNI</i>	120			120 (présent cs)				120
<i>Marie SECRETANT</i>	120	120	120	120	120	120	120	120
<i>Stéphanie OBEID</i>	120	120				120	120	
<i>Nicolas VAN DE VELDE</i>								

Notes: No attendance fees for Delphine Houba & Nicolas Van de Velde

