SHARING ECONOMY
and the TOURISM
and HOSPITALITY SECTOR
in GREECE
To take these new players seriously, and understand how they have recently attracted mainstream consumers away from traditional enterprises such as hotels, restaurants, taxis, and tour guides, it is not simply a matter of monitoring the evolution of their business scale at an international level or condemning their capacity to mount unprecedented challenges to the status quo of tourism and hospitality industry.

From a strategic point of view from the supply side, for the Greek tourism sector it is important to consider what factors shape the perceptions of travelers around the globe. On the demand side meanwhile, digital applications have, for example become the catalyst for facilitating human communication and changing the rules of the game for both the demand and supply of goods and services. The more travelers become familiar with smartphones and the online platforms of the sharing economy, the more available options they have in terms of identifying individual providers of transportation and accommodation services along with other activities.

Understanding phenomena such as these is a crucial step to take before the traditional providers of tourism and hospitality services start to examine in what ways they could engage in innovation and raise their game against competition inside and outside the sharing economy. In tactical terms, however, it is also a matter of priority for the Greek tourism sector to take steps to ensure that traditional service providers compete on a level playing field with sharing economy platforms. International experience has already shown the first response of governments to this new phenomenon is often spasmodic and soon creates space for further intervention.

Of course, it is not uncommon for institutional design and policy implementation to run behind the powerful force of technological and commercial advancements. Hence, it is imperative for the Greek tourism sector to first comprehend the key aspects of the phenomenon and, if necessary, enter into a sincere and systematic dialogue with the stakeholders of the sharing economy and destination authorities at different levels of public administration. On these grounds, the main objectives of this report are consistent with the role of the Hellenic Chamber of Hotels as the institutional consultant of the Greek Government as far as tourism and hospitality issues...
are concerned. As well as providing a solid basis for the identification of policy priorities in partnership with the Ministry of Tourism, the report should prove to be a useful read not only for hotels but for all sub-sectors associated with the tourism and hospitality industry in Greece.

The members of the research team firmly believe that rather than building stereotypes and taking a defensive stance, the stakeholders of Greek tourism should make a concerted effort to gain a solid understanding of the current state of the sharing economy in Greece and overseas, with a view to helping the public sector and other stakeholders inside the country deal with the wider implications.

To strike a balance between interpretations of challenges and opportunities, the report evaluates data from domestic and international experience in order to enable an integrated analysis of the influence of the sharing economy on the tourism and hospitality industry in Greece. Particular emphasis is given to the case of short-term rental accommodation for tourists, because this topic is a major source of concerns for hotel enterprises all over Greece.

Although systematic monitoring is seen as a prerequisite for understanding the full spectrum of long-term impacts, the publication of this report at this juncture is intended to serve the following purposes:

- **Provide a concise** overview of the emergence and expansion of the sharing economy with a focus on key drivers and concerns.

- **Assess the prospect** of integrating business models and tools of the sharing economy in the general context of travel-related services in Greece.

- **Provide suggestions** to the Greek hospitality industry concerning the adoption of innovative practices that could help them deal more effectively with the changing conditions and trends of the international tourism market.

- **Put forward** recommendations in relation to the development of a regulatory framework concerning the provision of accommodation services through the companies of the sharing economy.

- **Set the** agenda for a future debate among tourism stakeholders, public authorities, and the key actors of the sharing economy.
Abridged Version

The following document is an abridged version of the full report ‘The Sharing Economy on the Tourism and Hospitality Industry in Greece’.

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For the purposes of clarity and consistency, this report will use the term ‘sharing economy’ because it remains the most commonly used and accepted term.

It is important to underline, however, that there are many commonly used terms to describe the activities, business models and principles of the sharing economy.

**Sharing Economy:**
sharing assets with idling capacity (underutilized capacity) for economic, environmental and/or social benefit.

- **Sharing economy models** and platforms may be monetized (e.g. earning income from sharing assets) or non-monetized (e.g. swapping or gifting platforms).

- **Sharing economy companies (start-ups)** are online platforms dedicated to the sale or exchange of goods and services between providers and users. Examples include BlaBlaCar.com or Airbnb.com (hereafter referred to simply as ‘BlaBlaCar’, ‘Airbnb’ etc.).

- **Models** may also be tech-enabled (e.g. carsharing and ridesharing platforms that use mobile apps) or non-tech (e.g. neighborhood tool lending libraries).

This definition is reflective of the most recent clarification of relevant terms included in the 2014 report of NESTA and Collaborative Lab¹.

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Sharing Economy Stakeholders

The authors of this report have selected the following generic terms to refer to the different stakeholders involved in tourism inside and outside the sharing economy.

Providers:
Individuals sharing their own resources (the host of an apartment, the owner of a car, etc.) with users.

Users:
The end users of the product or service provided (the guest in an apartment, the person renting a car for their own use).

Public (tourism) Authorities:
Governmental agencies responsible for legislative oversight in a specific country, region or city, particularly in the field of tourism activities.

‘Traditional’ accommodation providers:
Officially registered businesses operating hotels, hostels, guest houses, etc.
In recent years, the sharing economy has begun to transform many aspects of life. In the changing conditions of supply and demand, the approach of new economic models to promote the sharing of underutilized assets is often referred to as “access over ownership”: instead of having to own things in our lives -- especially items that are infrequently used or expensive -- we can access them when and how we need them. This model applies to a range of assets, from car sharing and bike sharing to shared workspace, shared appliances and much more.

Broadly speaking, the proponents of the sharing economy argue that sharing (rather than owning) assets leads to economic, environmental and social benefits (e.g. sharing allows cost savings).

For the time being, however, the attention has turned to the capacity of the numerous platforms facilitating the access to goods, skills, transportation, space and funding to get heavily funded by investors. Deloitte University Press\(^2\) has reported that “venture capital firms have invested well over $2 billion in over 500 collaborative economy ventures globally since 2012”.

In August 2014, PWC\(^3\) also forecasted that the value currently created by five of the most prominent sectors of the sharing economy in the commercial landscape will increase significantly within the next decade provided that important regulatory and competitive challenges will be overcome. The comparative analysis of PWC concluded that the potential revenue opportunity of both the sharing economy and traditional rental sectors will be $335 billion by 2025, although in 2013 peer-to-peer finance, online staffing, peer-to-peer accommodation, car sharing and music and video streaming made up just 6% of total revenue generated by equipment rental, B&B and hostels, car rental, book rental and DVD rental.

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In recent years, the formation of the business models of the sharing economy and the popularity the respective markets enjoy among many consumers, have been driven by a series of distinct, yet interrelated factors, some of which are presented here.

The Impact of the Global Economic Crisis (GEC)

As a result of the GEC that was triggered in 2007, unemployment, frozen or decreased household incomes, rising costs for consumer goods have been common themes throughout the developed world. These factors have led providers to start sharing their goods, and have led consumers to search for goods and services that are more cost-effective.

The GEC has provoked a greater awareness of the need for self-sufficiency among taxpayers, a growing disillusionment with consumer culture in general, and for some, avoidance whenever possible, of goods and services provided by multinational corporations perceived to be associated with waste, damage to the environment and corporate greed. In short, the GEC has given rise to a consumers’ desire to utilize existing resources more effectively and a greater interest among consumers towards developing new sources of income.

The GEC has provoked a greater awareness of the need for self-sufficiency among taxpayers and a growing disillusionment with consumer culture.

4 The full spectrum of drivers along with the characteristics of their interaction with the sharing economy is presented in detail in the full report.
Over the past 20 years consumers have steadily become more comfortable with the efficiency and safety of purchasing goods and services online from countries they’ve never visited and from people they’ve never met.

Younger generations (Millennials are commonly identified as those born between 1980 and 1999, and who entered their teenage years as from the year 2000, putting them currently in the 18-35 age group), who started making their independent consumer decisions in the era of ‘internet everywhere’, have created strong demand for providers (whether they are supermarkets, airlines or banks) to conduct their business online. NB: (The consumer characteristics of the Millennial generation and their interaction with the sharing economy are covered in significant depth in the full report).

Mobile devices such as tablets and smartphones are rapidly becoming the principal device through which people manage their lives online. In the context of the sharing economy, mobile devices equipped with GPS and near-field technology have made it possible for residents and visitors alike to search for and access the nearest available guest room, car, parking space or home-cooked meal.
The use of social media has enabled individuals to grow and maintain a network of trusted contacts. This has also led to the creation of a powerful influential force on consumer behaviour and thus a powerful tool for marketers. Sharing economy platforms have connected users’ and providers’ social media profiles with their sharing economy site profile and allowed for a fast and efficient means to cross-reference and build trust among strangers.

This last step is vitally important to the sharing economy, a system built on trust and reputation.

Other Key Drivers of the Sharing Economy:

- Internationalization and Cultural Transformation
- A Cultural Shift towards Sharing
- Trust as the ‘New Currency’ in Transactions
- Urban Activism and Social Engagement
Issues and Concerns

A phenomenon that has spread as rapidly as the sharing economy, bypassing traditional distribution channels and disrupting established business models, has naturally provoked considerable controversy. Users, providers, sharing economy sites, established businesses offering similar services to those being shared (or traded, exchanged, rented, swapped or otherwise) and governments at all levels (municipality, province, nation state, regional, and even international) have found themselves on different sides of a furious debate about the present and future shape of the sharing economy.

Since some of the most widely-known sharing economy platforms operate in tourism-related activities (such as transport, entertainment and accommodation), the tourism sector has been at the centre of some of the most intense public disputes about the effect of the sharing economy on more traditional and established economic models.

The following is an overview of the matters which have caused most concern:

Taxation

Using sharing economy sites, after a few clicks, ordinary members of the public are able to lease an item or provide a service similar to that which established businesses or sole traders provide, the difference being that established businesses and sole traders are taxed according to long-established taxation regimes including taxes on sales, income and sometimes even sector specific taxes, such tourist taxes for overnight hotel stays.

This issue has provoked much anger among the business community providing such services, with accusations that sharing economy providers are ‘not competing on a level playing field’. The question of devising a tax regime for the transactions and business activity that are generated through sharing economy sites is still largely unresolved in most cities and countries. As governmental bodies become aware of the size of income they are potentially losing out on, their decision to intervene in the sharing economy has been significantly driven by the subject of taxation.

The scope of intervention in this case is not limited to the categorization of taxable and non-taxable activities along with the classification of tax levels. It is also about deciding what groups involved in the sharing economy should pay taxes and who will be responsible for the collection of such taxes.
Concerns on unfair competition also arise because service providers in the sharing economy do not comply with the licensing and certification requirements that apply for traditional businesses. Operators who do not obtain necessary documentation and find themselves in violation of established regulations are regularly subject to heavy fines. This is a particularly sensitive issue in the case of Greece, where along with tax evasion the provision of services from unlicensed operators has been a key topic for many economic sectors including tourism long before the recent growth of the sharing economy. It is also a fact, however, that another source of concern in different countries including Greece is the poor performance of the actual implementation of fines and additional penalties.

Concerns on safety and security revolve around issues of risk management for the groups participating in the sharing economy. From the point of view of customers, reputation based on peer-to-peer reviews could not necessarily operate in each and every case as a substitute for consumer protection laws. This is a rather sensitive issue given the absence of a universal approach to managing different types of reviews as well as processing payment information and personal data.

Moreover, licensing is connected to issues of security and liability. First, trust and reputation building are believed to drive self-regulation in the sharing economy and shape relations between service providers and users. As the future will show whether this idea is wishful thinking or a realistic prospect, lawmakers around the globe are under pressure to control emerging business models through licensing and certification. At the same time, the economic and social drivers of the sharing economy should notify lawmakers as to whether a common set of licensing requirements should apply in all cases or whether contemporary approaches should take into account the particularities of different cases (e.g. long-term unemployed, people engaged in occasional activity, non-profit businesses, etc.).

Additional concerns arise in the cases of both providers and workers. Being aware of the fact that an outstanding performance may be the key for more positive comments along with employment and revenue opportunities, these groups engage in the sharing economy with a limited capacity to defend themselves in cases of discrimination and without the benefits usually associated with professional activity including minimum wages, specific working hours, and social welfare.

As an integral aspect of policies related to sustainable urban development, the agenda of zoning reflects concerns on the coexistence of sharing economy practices with traditional land uses and professional activities. A key starting point is that the prospect of rejuvenating economic activity and promoting the efficient use of urban assets naturally provokes a certain degree of skepticism from citizens and entrepreneurs as to the extent of transformation that is promised to take place as a result of the introduction of new business models and social behaviours. Hence, lawmakers and urban planners are already considering how the introduction of new trends is possible to enhance the vibrancy of neighborhoods and commercial areas at the same time as securing stability and quelling the fears of tax payers, businesses, and other groups of stakeholders who have thus far operated outside of the sharing economy.
The Sharing Economy in the Tourism and Hospitality Industry

Travel and tourism have emerged at the forefront of the sharing economy for many reasons:

The sector has shown itself to be an especially innovative sector of the global economy, shaped quickly by new business models, products and services. The profound impact of low cost airlines on the air passenger transport industry is just one example of this.

The inherent nature of tourism as a social and a temporary experience means that it lends itself well to the flexible, temporary services offered through sharing economy platforms.

The profile of travelers is also changing: Millennials, families, business professionals and others demand a new set of travel services and experiences that many incumbent providers are not set up to supply (but local residents often can).

Shaping the Nature of Tourism Experience

Today travellers are taking advantage of a much broader range of experiences offered by local residents. Sharing meals, touring with a local or engaging in some other activity such as adventure sports is a rapidly growing business for sharing economy platforms. It is also worth considering that some tools (e.g. user-generated content reviews) used by sharing economy platforms are widely accepted to have enhanced the visitor experience.

In this business community, there are also three companies situated in Greece: Dopios (thematic tours and experiences), Incrediblue (boat rental services with suggestions for on-the-water experiences involving relaxation and exploration), and Cookisto (specially prepared home-made dining experiences).
Platforms of Short-Term Rentals

In this abridged version of the report, we present only those related to accommodation, and where relevant, discuss their presence in Greece.

At the forefront of the sharing economy have been the platforms that allow users to stay in private accommodation. The last decade has seen an explosion in the types of accommodation available, in line with the growth and increasing diversity of users and providers.

A decade ago Couchsurfing began to connect potential guests with voluntary hosts for alternative lodging options introducing the concept of ‘sharing’ an element of hospitality exchanges. The popularity of the site (which was very much based on member verification) gradually paved the way for more online platforms to allow people to host someone in their house with the prospect of being hosted someday, (e.g. Hospitality Club) or to swap their house while on vacation (e.g. HomeExchange).

In the absence of transactions, the activity of platforms such as Couchsurfing and HomeExchange is not identical to the activity of other platforms, which encourage residents to use their ownership and sublet their rooms or apartments over a short period of time in exchange for a nightly fee. This type of platform has become a key issue of concern for the accommodation sector in Greece, where a series of companies appear to have developed large portfolios of listed properties.

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Flipkey:

A vacation rental marketplace bought by TripAdvisor in 2008 and today boasting a portfolio of more than 300,000 rentals around the world. The site has more than 3,000 listed properties in tourist areas in Greece. According to data collected in October 2014, nearly 45% of these properties are situated in the popular destinations of Mykonos, Santorini, Paros, and Crete. Interestingly, 65% of listed properties in Mykonos are offered for €400 (or more) per night, yet 52% of listed properties in Crete are offered for €120 (or less) per night, which is an indication of the variety of available properties among tourism destinations in Greece.

Homeaway:

A vacation rental marketplace with over one million live vacation rental listings in 190 countries. The site recently signed a deal with Expedia to merge its inventory with that of the popular online travel agent. Homeaway has more than 6,500 listed properties in tourist areas in Greece. According to data collected in October 2014, nearly 53% of these properties are situated in Crete and the island groups of the Cyclades and the Dodecanese, many of them luxury villas and apartments (the site mainly rents

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5 https://www.flipkey.com/greece-vacation-rentals/g189398/
6 http://www.homeaway.com/search/keywords:greece
out entire properties). Actually, this a strong indication of the additional pressure caused by the growth of the sharing economy in some of the most popular tourism destinations in Greece.

In this context it is also interesting to note:

• The lower percentage (46%) of hotel beds situated in the respective areas as compared to the total supply of hotel beds in Greece in 2013 (source: Hellenic Chamber of Hotels).

• The equal level of hotel overnights in the respective areas (53%) as compared to the total number of hotel overnights in Greece in 2013 (source: Hellenic Statistical Authority).

10 years CouchSurfing.com

120,000 CITIES

9 Milion MEMBERS

430,000 EVENTS

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The Supply of Tourist Accommodation through Short-Term Rentals

Tax evasion and the provision of services by unlicensed operators has been a key issue of the political agenda for many sectors of the Greek economy including tourism, long before the recent growth of the sharing economy. As a series of sharing economy platforms appear to have developed large portfolios of listed properties all over the country, the issues of short-term rentals has drawn of the hotel sector stakeholders.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Hotels</th>
<th>Rooms</th>
<th>Beds</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>9,677</td>
<td>401,332</td>
<td>773,445</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- **Hotels:**
  - 46% of hotel beds are situated in Cyclades, Crete and Dodecanese.

- **Homeaway**
  - 53% of listed properties are situated in Cyclades, Crete and Dodecanese.

- **Housetrip**
  - The site has more than 1500 listed properties in tourist areas in Greece, most of which are situated in Crete and the island group of the Cyclades

- **Flipkey**
  - 45% of listed properties are situated in Mykonos, Santorini, Paros and Crete

*from data collected at the end of October 2014*
The Case of Airbnb

While many short-term rental platforms have started to make their mark over the last decade, it is Airbnb that has most affected the operation of the tourism sector and arguably put up the strongest competition to traditional providers of hospitality services.

Founded in 2008, Airbnb has in the space of 6 years attracted more than 800,000 listings in 34,000 cities in 190 countries. Today the site processes on average 1 million guest nights per month. More global stats on Airbnb are presented in the full report along with an overview of a range of steps that Airbnb has taken to improve its corporate profile and alleviate some of the concerns raised by the scope of its activity.

Airbnb in Greece (based on data collected in October 2014):

- **11,800** listed properties across Greece (mainly entire units such as apartments and villas)
- **68.5%** share of listed properties based on rent per night
- **68%** respective share among the 2300 listed properties in Athens
- **55%** respective share among the 1000 listed properties in Mykonos

ATLHENS: Range of rates per night for properties listed on Airbnb

- 8.5% <€103
- 32.0% €100-153
- 36.0% >€153
- 15.0% 8-43
- 32.0% 43-73
- 8.5% 73-103
The Response of the Tourism Sector

The growing expansion of the sharing economy has also brought a number of reactions inside and outside the boundaries of the tourism sector, with the debate revolving around issues of entrepreneurial innovation along with the prospect of introducing regulation that will secure competition on a level-playing-field.

• At the European Union level, the Commissioner for the Digital Agenda until October 2014, Neelie Kroes, made in last June the following statement: "Whether it is about cabs, accommodation, music, flights, the news or whatever. The fact is that digital technology is changing many aspects of our lives. We cannot address these challenges by ignoring them, by going on strike, or by trying to ban these innovations out of existence".

• At the same time, the official associations of the tourism and hospitality industry have already expressed skepticism about the sharing economy. In October 2014, the CEO of HOTREC, Christian de Barrin noted that "the explosion of new online platforms and, in particular, of new forms of tourism services has modified substantially the classical tourism business model. Shadow hospitality in particular, is a new phenomenon that needs to be addressed as it also affects the quality of the overall travel experience of the consumer which may directly impact the other tourism sub-sectors".

• In this context it is interesting to note that nearly four in five travel businesses polled by the World Travel Market 2014 Industry Report considered themselves to have been negatively affected by the activity of these platforms, with almost one in five saying they have been significantly affected.

• In any case, it is also worth considering that the ideas and practices of the sharing economy have already driven major hotel chains to introduce the provision of innovative services in their units. For instance, Marriott gives the opportunity to both guests and locals to use lobbies and other vacant areas of its hotels as meeting and work spaces. Another example is the Hilton brand of Homewood Suites, which provides additional amenities (e.g. enhanced food and beverage services, free Wi-Fi) to those guests who stay for many days in these units.
The Case of Short-Term Rentals

The rapid growth of the sharing economy has proven to be challenging and at times controversial because of the ways it can disrupt the established order of the tourism and hospitality industry. From a regulatory perspective this can be particularly problematic. In some cases, regulations governing the products and services that sharing economy companies have come to specialise in, were drafted before the Internet existed.

As regulations differ from city to city, region to region and country to country, sharing economy sites and the people using them have often found themselves in a “legal grey area”, making it difficult to assess which rules do (or should) apply. It also raises new questions around issues of ownership, access to property and resources, and risk management. It is essential that policy makers get involved in ways that harness the benefits of the sharing economy and encourage innovation, while setting appropriate rules to ensure safety and public benefit.

Since the provision of accommodation services through short-term rentals is regarded as the most dynamic segment of the sharing economy within the tourism sector, this section focuses on the main concerns associated with the legal regime in Greece as well as on recent examples of international experience in relation to the reaction of destination authorities.

The Current Regulatory Framework in Greece

In recent years, the Greek state has been active in terms of introducing legislation aimed at removing bureaucratic obstacles, simplifying procedures, and facilitating in general business growth in non-hotel accommodation establishments (e.g. villas and apartments). In this context, the following concerns arise due to the growing activity of the online platforms of the sharing economy in Greece:

• Owners cannot rent their properties to tourists for 30 days or less, unless they have met certain requirements in order to acquire the operation license issued by the Greek Tourism Organisation (Laws 4254/2014; 4276/2014). Accordingly, a big concern, especially in the case of urban centres such as Athens, is to what extent all the accommodation options (e.g. residential flats) provided by the online platforms of the sharing economy
comply with the limitation of 30 days or possess the relevant license. In the first case, another area of concern is whether beneficiaries pay taxes after informing the Greek state that they rent out their residential flats to tourists for more than 30 days.

• **In the case** of summer resorts in particular, the key concern is to what extent all the accommodation options provided by the online platforms of the sharing economy to tourists possess the operation license issued by the Greek Tourism Organisation. For all the officially registered units of non-hotel accommodation (e.g. villas, houses and apartments) in Greece, this is a matter of great importance in terms of figuring out whether they compete on a level playing field with the hosts of Airbnb and other platforms.

• **A final area** of concern is to what extent the apparatus of the Greek state has so far achieved to enforce the law in terms of collecting fines or imposing penalties on a variety of cases (e.g. when owners rent out their residential flats to tourists for up to 30 days, when owners rent out entire properties such as villas and secondary residences to tourists without possessing the operation license issued by the Greek Tourism Organisation or for more than 3 months per year, when individuals advertise the provision of any kind of tourist services without again possessing the operation license issued by the Greek Tourism Organisation).

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**Recent International Experience**

In 2014, there has been a vivid debate in many destinations around about the legal status of short-term rentals and the accommodation services provided through the platforms of the sharing economy. A key point of the following references is that simultaneously with reactions against the growth of this activity there have been many efforts on behalf of destination authorities to deal with emerging issues, revise outdated regulations, and improve awareness of the economic and social influence of the sharing economy.

• **It took** months of consultations in San Francisco, before city authorities voted on last October to legalise short-term vacation rentals by owners and tenants on entire property, as long as they would avoid tax evasion, meet certain registration requirements, and sublet their primary homes for up to 90 days per calendar year. Another interesting aspect is that Airbnb began – on the 1st of October 2014 – to collect from the guests and remit to the City of San Francisco similar taxes to those applicable to the local hotel sector.
• In order to address a series of controversial aspects related to the growth of short-term rentals, the New York State Office of the Attorney General released very recently a report on the activity of Airbnb based on data provided by the company itself. Besides the percentage (72%) of Airbnb listings which appeared to violate the law in New York City, the report has shown that during the review period around 6% of hosts acted as "commercial users" rather than "regular New Yorkers" in terms of controlling more than 20% of unique units in the city booked on Airbnb as private short-term rentals and accepting around 37% of the total volume of private reservations.

• In April 2013, the Strategic Plan 2012-2016 for Tourism in Catalonia by the Generalitat de Catalunya, estimated that there were around one million beds illegally available for tourism purposes in the region. As part of the move to bring the lease of ‘illegal tourist accommodation’ under control, in July 2014 the Generalitat fined Airbnb 30,000 euros (the highest sanction possible) for posting ‘illegal tourist accommodation’ on the site. Airbnb paid the fine, but was later fined a further 1,500 euros for not removing properties which the Generalitat considered to be ‘illegal’ as these were not registered in the region’s Catalan Tourism Register.

• In other cases, the British government has recently decided to undertake an independent review of the sharing economy as a means to understand the influence to the economy of the United Kingdom and address business and consumer concerns on the subject. Meanwhile, in the Netherlands, in Amsterdam, more than 800 properties have been recently registered under the category of ‘private holiday rental’. This category was approved by the Amsterdam City Council in February 2014, allowing homeowners to rent their residential properties for a maximum of 60 days per year and only to a maximum of four guests at any one time.

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4 http://www.ag.ny.gov/pdfs/Airbnb%20report.pdf
Conclusions

This report has examined various aspects of the growth of the sharing inside and outside Greece. A key point is that the sharing economy is associated with both opportunities and challenges, which is why many economies and societies around the world are currently exploring how they could improve their knowledge on the phenomenon. Hence, both Greece and the tourism sector inside the country should assess the following courses of action as part of a dialogue with relevant stakeholders involved.

Understanding the Various Ramifications of the Sharing Economy

The international dimension of the sharing economy is a product of the rapid and creative use of the most contemporary technologies and applications as much as a reflection of the consequences of the global economic crisis. The potential of people to become familiar with the concept of the sharing of assets is consistent with major challenges and dilemmas that the whole planet faces nowadays. Thus, it is expected that political leadership at different levels of administration will intensify efforts to enhance understanding of the various ramifications of the sharing economy.

Securing Competition on a Level-Playing-Field

Ensuring that traditional enterprises and professionals compete on a level-playing-field with the new business models and the community of online platforms and contemporary providers of goods and services is a prerequisite for the gradual integration of the sharing economy into the economic and social fabric of each place. Taxation is the top issue of this agenda, yet the analysis has outlined the broad range of issues and concerns associated with the prospect of securing safety conditions of and fair competition in the provision of goods and services.
Investigating the Interaction of the Sharing Economy with Tourism

In the case of the tourism sector, both the proponents and the critics of the sharing economy realize that they could not afford to ignore it. The influence of technological advancements to the essence and communication of tourism experiences together with the emergence of new consumption trends among geo-demographic and thematic groups of travelers, indicate how important further research is as a means to shed light on the various aspects that shape the interaction of the sharing economy with tourism.

Engaging in Innovation in the Provision of Hospitality Services

Because the agenda of the sharing economy on tourism and hospitality is not confined to the case of short-term rentals, hoteliers need to evaluate competition issues within and beyond their own field of action. This is certainly the case of harmonizing regulations in the provision of additional services such as transportation and tours within the scope of the sharing economy. At the same time, much depend as well on studying the sharing economy, as a generator of new trends, before introducing innovative practices in the provision of hospitality services.

Building on the Strengths of the Hotel Sector

In any case, there are many reasons (e.g. fundamental infrastructure, safety and security, additional amenities, etc.) for tourists to continue to opt for traditional accommodation options. In terms of taking advantage of its strengths, the hotel sector needs to re-consider certain operational aspects (e.g. pricing policy, affordable access to supplementary services of high quality, web presence, partnerships with suppliers from other sectors) as a means of enhancing the very nature of its offered product.
The report 'The Sharing Economy on the Tourism and Hospitality Industry in Greece' was prepared by Toposophy-Destination Marketing Agency upon commission by the Hellenic Chamber of Hotels.

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