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Report Finds Spain Offers the Best Conditions in the E.U. for Opening a Restaurant

Marketplace METRO cited €98bn in annual tourist spending in Spain and ranked France sixth on cost and hiring pressures.

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Marketplace METRO said Tuesday that Spain now offers the most favorable overall conditions in the European Union for opening a restaurant, while France presents a more mixed picture, with solid demand but higher pressure from costs, rents, and

hiring.

The finding comes from the company’s new restaurant launch report, which compares 20 EU countries across nine indicators tied to demand, operating costs, administrative barriers, staffing, competition, and real estate pressure. The study, released from Düsseldorf, ranks Spain first overall, followed by Finland, Denmark, Sweden, Ireland, and France.

According to the report, Spain’s top position reflects a combination of strong consumer demand, heavy tourism spending, and relatively supportive cost conditions. Marketplace METRO said tourists spend more than €98bn a year in Spain, the highest figure in its analysis and ahead of France at €71bn. The company said that level of visitor spending gives the hospitality sector a major source of revenue and helps support restaurant openings.

France placed sixth in the ranking. The report said the country offers stable demand and revenue potential, but entrepreneurs face weaker conditions on costs and margins. It also pointed to high real estate pressure and labor shortages as obstacles for new operators. In the company’s assessment, those factors can slow the launch of new restaurant concepts even when customer demand remains strong.

Angélique Mhiri, country director of Marketplace METRO in France, said in the release that France shows “a mixed profile” in the evaluation. She said demand and sales potential are stable, but cost performance is only moderate, and high rental pressure and recruitment constraints can hold back new openings.

The study comes at a time when restaurant operators across Europe are still dealing with elevated input costs. In its summary of the French market, Marketplace METRO said rising ingredient and energy costs are weighing on entrepreneurial activity in hospitality despite strong demand for food service and the possibility of meaningful revenue.

Beyond the overall ranking, the report points to large differences between countries in basic operating expenses. Using Eurostat price data, Marketplace METRO said food and beverage prices are currently more favorable in Poland, Czechia, Hungary, Spain, and

the Netherlands. For restaurant operators, lower purchase costs can improve margins in a business where profits are often narrow and depend heavily on buying strategy and close cost control.

Energy prices, another major expense for restaurants, also vary sharply across the bloc, the report said. Electricity prices in Nordic countries remain especially low, ranging from €0.09 to €0.13 per kilowatt-hour, compared with about €0.16 per kilowatt-hour in France. Marketplace METRO said those differences have a direct effect on daily operating costs and long-term profitability in a sector that relies on refrigeration, cooking equipment, ventilation, and lighting.

Administrative procedures were another key factor in the study. Marketplace METRO said France and the Netherlands stand out for relatively easier setup conditions, while entrepreneurs face longer and more difficult processes in Germany, Luxembourg, and Italy. The company said those administrative burdens can slow market entry for new businesses.

Staffing conditions were less favorable in some of the countries that otherwise scored well on demand. The report said vacancy data show waiter positions in Spain and Portugal are filled relatively quickly, suggesting faster access to front-of-house labor. In contrast, labor shortages are more pronounced in France, the Netherlands, and Belgium, where new restaurant operators may have greater difficulty building stable teams.

The full ranking shows wide variation across the 20 markets. After Spain, Finland ranked second, helped by strong scores on costs, staffing, and property-related factors, according to the report. Denmark ranked third and Sweden fourth. Ireland came in fifth, supported by strong demand and favorable administrative conditions, though its score on costs and margins was weak. France followed in sixth place.

At the lower end of the ranking, Austria placed eighteenth, Hungary nineteenth, and Czechia twentieth. Despite low food and beverage costs in Czechia, the country received weak scores in several other parts of the model, including administrative and location-related factors, which pushed it to the bottom of the overall table.

Marketplace METRO said the report is intended as a benchmark rather than a substitute for detailed feasibility work or site-level analysis. The methodology gives equal weight to each of the nine factors and to each of the four broader categories: revenue and demand, costs and margins, setup and staffing, and competition and real estate. The company said the goal is to compare the baseline conditions for launching restaurants across selected EU markets using a standardized framework.

The study was published by Marketplace METRO, which supplies equipment, technology, cleaning products, office items, tableware, and other operating goods to hospitality businesses through METRO’s broader professional customer network. The company said the full dataset, methodology, and source list are available on its website.