



TOURISM

Since December 2009, the Union has competence to carry out actions to support, coordinate or supplement the actions of the Member States in tourism policy. Although the 2021-2027 multiannual financial framework does not provide for a separate budget line for tourism policy, during the 2022-2023 period the budget for tourism activities was earmarked under the single market programme.

LEGAL BASIS

Article 6(d) and Title XXII, Article 195 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU).

OBJECTIVES

The EU's tourism industry in the strict sense of the term (traditional providers of holidays and tourism services) is made up of 2.3 million businesses, primarily small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), employing an estimated 12.3 million people.

Tourism is a major economic activity in the European Union, accounting for 10% of its GDP, with wide-ranging impact on economic growth, employment and social development. It can be a powerful tool in fighting economic decline and unemployment.

EU policy aims to maintain Europe's standing as a leading destination, while maximising the industry's contribution to growth and employment and promoting cooperation between EU countries, particularly through the exchange of good practices.

RESULTS

A. General policy

Since 2001, the Commission has published several communications, the most recent one in 2014, setting out its policy guidelines for the development of the tourism sector. These are:

- ([COM\(2007\)0621](#)) of 19 October 2007 – [Agenda for a sustainable and competitive European tourism](#) – which sets out how sustainable development could ensure the long-term competitiveness of tourism and announced a three-yearly set of preparatory activities;
- ([COM\(2010\)0352](#)) of 30 June 2010 – [Europe, the world's No 1 tourist destination – a new political framework for tourism in Europe](#) – which analyses the factors



that make the European tourism industry competitive and the obstacles to its sustainable development;

- (COM(2012)0649) of 7 November 2012 – [Implementation and development of the common visa policy to spur growth in the EU](#) – which seeks to bring about an increase in the number of tourists from non-EU countries visiting the EU by establishing a common visa policy;
- (COM(2014)0086) of 20 February 2014 – [A European Strategy for More Growth and Jobs in Coastal and Maritime Tourism](#) – which seeks to promote sustainable growth and competitiveness in coastal and maritime tourism.

B. Special measures

1. Measures benefiting tourists (travellers and/or holidaymakers)

These measures include steps to make border crossing easier and protect both the health and safety and the material interests of tourists. They include [Council Recommendation 86/666/EEC](#) on fire safety in hotels, [Directive 2008/122/EC](#) on timeshare properties and [Directive \(EU\) 2015/2302](#) on package travel and linked travel arrangements. In addition, regulations have been adopted on passenger rights in all areas of transport (2.2.3). [Directive 2006/7/EC](#) of 15 February 2006 on the management of bathing water quality exemplifies the connection between tourism and other areas of EU competence. It also repeals Directive 76/160/EEC of 8 December 1975 with effect from 31 December 2014.

At Parliament's request, the Commission has launched initiatives in the form of five preparatory programmes on targeted topical issues for European tourism.

The 'EDEN' initiative focuses on promoting European tourist 'destinations of excellence', in other words little-known or emerging destinations that observe sustainability principles.

The 'Sustainable Tourism' concept includes the 'European Green Belt' (6 800 km of paths from the Barents Sea to the Black Sea), the aim of which is to promote the transformation of the former Iron Curtain into a cross-border network of walking and cycling paths. The EU also co-finances cross-border sustainable tourism projects to diversify tourism options in Europe.

The 'DiscoverEU' programme, among several other programmes on the promotion of tourism, allows 18 year-old Europeans to travel across the EU and learn more about the diversity of Europe.

2. Responsible tourism measures benefiting the tourism industry and regions

The Commission also supports the creation of networks between the main European tourist regions. The EU offers a range of funding sources to help tourism contribute to regional development and employment.

In April 2022, the Commission adopted a proposal for creating an EU-wide system on the protection of geographical indications of non-agricultural products (such as handicrafts) (COM(2022)0174). These products are often significant for local identity and attract tourism. One of the aims of revising the regulation is to boost regional



economies and tourism in these areas. It is currently awaiting the Council's [position at first reading](#).

Harmonised statistics on tourism have been compiled in the EU since 1996. [Regulation \(EU\) No 692/2011](#) of 6 July 2011 established a common framework for the systematic development, production and dissemination of European statistics on tourism collected in the Member States. In 2013, the Commission created a Virtual Tourism Monitoring Centre to coordinate the collection and storage of data and to guarantee a greater degree of synergy between the levels at which tourism policy decisions are taken. In October 2022, the Commission launched the [EU tourism dashboard](#), a tool to assist regional and national policymakers in directing policies and strategies in the tourist sector by increasing the accessibility of tourism statistics and aiding destinations and public agencies in monitoring their progress in the green and digital transitions. This is one of the proposed measures in the Commission's '[transition pathway for tourism strategy](#)' of 2022 (more details on the strategy below).

In November 2022, the Commission adopted a revision of [Regulation \(EU\) 2018/1724](#) on data collection and sharing related to short-term accommodation rental services ([COM\(2022\)0571](#)). With a focus on SMEs in particular, this initiative seeks to develop responsible, transparent and fair growth in short-term rentals as part of a well-balanced tourist ecosystem.

3. Other focused measures

The Commission also organised a [Showcase Conference on Tourism](#) that took place in Brussels on 19 March 2019.

In 2023, the Commission is planning to adopt a regulation on digitalising travel documents. This would make travelling easier, as digital travel documents are simpler to issue, which would benefit the tourism industry.

ROLE OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

Well before the entry into force of the Treaty of Lisbon, Parliament had adopted a series of resolutions on the Commission guidelines and initiatives concerning tourism.

After the Treaty of Lisbon entered into force, on 27 September 2011 Parliament adopted a [resolution](#) based on an own-initiative report entitled 'Europe, the world's No 1 tourist destination'. On 25 March 2021, it adopted an own-initiative [resolution](#) on establishing an EU strategy for sustainable tourism. The resolution called to rebuild the EU tourism sector after COVID-19, to refocus governance policy within the EU framework, to strengthen the transition to sustainable, responsible and smart tourism and to rethink the planning of future tourism.

On 27 October 2015, Parliament adopted [a position](#) at second reading with a view to the adoption of a new directive which seeks to enhance the protection of travellers undertaking package tours and which repeals Directive 90/314/EEC. The co-legislators are getting ready to amend the Package Travel Directive again. The work should start at the end of 2023. On 29 October 2015, Parliament adopted a [resolution on new challenges and concepts for the promotion of tourism in Europe](#). It concerns the digitisation of distribution channels, the development of the new sharing economy



sector, changing consumer behaviour, the need to attract and retain skilled staff, demographic change and seasonality. In it, Parliament calls on the Commission to present a new tourism strategy to replace or update the communication of 30 June 2010 entitled 'Europe, the world's No 1 tourist destination'.

On 24 October 2019, Parliament adopted a [resolution](#) on the negative impact of the bankruptcy of Thomas Cook on EU tourism. Parliament also endorsed a [resolution](#), on 5 May 2022, on the impact of the Russian illegal war of aggression against Ukraine on the EU transport and tourism sectors. Parliament also adopted other relevant resolutions including on the [implementation of the updated new industrial strategy for Europe: aligning spending to policy](#), on 15 September 2022, and on the [assessment of the new Commission communication on outermost regions](#) on 13 June 2023.

Members contributed to drafting and negotiating the EU legislation affecting tourism, such as the [proposal for a regulation on data collection and sharing relating to short-term accommodation rental services \(COM\(2022\)0571\)](#). When adopted, it will regulate the data collection activities of the short-term rental platforms, provide more security for tourists, ensure a level playing field for the tourism industry, as well as allowing cities affected by tourism to work towards sustainability and to ensure a good quality of life for their residents.

Parliament's Committee on Transport and Tourism and its Tourism Task Force (TTF) hold regular discussions with representatives of international tourism bodies and stakeholders. The TTF has also called for a more consistent tourism policy and raised the issue of a separate EU budget line for tourism.

MEASURES IN THE CONTEXT OF THE COVID-19 OUTBREAK

Europe is the world's leading tourist destination. The tourism industry is a vital part of the EU's economy, which is why the EU is committed to reviving this sector.

During the first four months of 2020, Europe saw a dramatic 44% decline in international tourist arrivals compared to the same period in 2019 – a decrease in line with global performance. Tourism job losses in Europe in 2020 were monumental, ranging from 14.2 million to 29.5 million.

The Commission deployed different rapid response tools: a proposal to suspend the rules obliging airlines to use their allocated slots at EU airports ([COM\(2020\)0111](#)); guidelines on EU passenger rights ([C\(2020\)1830](#)) and border checks ([C\(2020\)1753](#)); and [assistance in the repatriation of EU travellers](#) during the lockdown lasting from March to May 2020.

In May 2020, the Commission put forward its communication entitled 'Tourism and transport in 2020 and beyond' ([COM\(2020\)0550](#)), bringing together guidance and recommendations to safely restore unrestricted free movement and reopen internal borders; safely restore transport, connectivity and tourism services, in particular hospitality, address the liquidity crunch and rebuild consumer confidence, and issued recommendations on vouchers. Parliament, in turn, debated the COVID-19 outbreak during its plenary sessions of 10 March, 26 March and 17 June 2020. During its extraordinary plenary session of 26 March 2020, Parliament adopted its position on three legislative proposals: [launching the Coronavirus Response Investment Initiative](#);



[extending the EU Solidarity Fund to cover public health emergencies](#); and [temporarily suspending airport slot rules](#) (please also see [COM\(2020\)0111](#) above). Moreover, at its plenary session of 19 June 2020, Parliament adopted a [resolution on tourism and transport in 2020 and beyond](#), calling for rapid, short-term and long-term support for the transport and tourism sectors to ensure their survival and competitiveness.

In July 2020, the Commission adopted an '[Action plan for fair and simple taxation supporting the recovery strategy](#)' (COM(2020)0312). In this plan, the Commission outlined its goal to revise the VAT Directive, in particular the VAT special scheme for travel agents. In the fourth quarter of 2023, the Commission is planning on adopting this revision. The aim of the initiative is to revise the special VAT scheme for travel agents, VAT rules on passenger transport and the VAT exemption regime for non-EU travellers.

In March 2021, Parliament adopted a resolution entitled '[Establishing an EU strategy for sustainable tourism](#)', in which it called on the Member States to fully implement common and coordinated criteria for safe travel without delay. This included a common vaccination certificate and a system of mutual recognition of vaccination procedures for medical purposes, while facilitating the deployment of the EU Passenger Locator Form, digitally where possible, with full respect for data protection rules.

On 15 February 2022, Parliament adopted a [resolution](#) on the challenges for urban areas in the post-COVID-19 era, where it recalled that urban tourism played an essential part in the devising of urban policies and pointed out that most EU cities suffered from downturns in tourism following the pandemic and had to search for new and more sustainable modi operandi to restore tourism. This led to the increased use of new digital technologies, which enabled the better management of urban spaces and the movement of urban tourists to prevent the build-up of large groups and risky situations in the context of the pandemic.

Member States were called on to establish a common and non-discriminatory EU Health Safety Protocol for testing before departure, which should be reliable and affordable, and include rapid testing technologies, PCR tests and others.

On 17 March 2021, the Commission put forward a communication entitled 'A common path to safe and sustained re-opening' ([COM\(2021\)0129](#)), as well as a proposal for a regulation on a framework for the issuance, verification and acceptance of interoperable certificates on vaccination, testing and recovery to facilitate free movement during the COVID-19 pandemic (Digital Green Certificate) ([COM\(2021\)0130](#)), and a similar framework applying to third-country nationals staying or residing legally in the territories of the Member States ([COM\(2021\)0140](#)).

The EU Digital COVID Certificate was accepted in all Member States, helping to ensure the right to freedom of movement for all EU residents. Following a revision of the regulation and its adoption by Parliament and the Council ([Regulation \(EU\) 2022/1034](#)), the Digital COVID Certificate Scheme was extended until June 2023.

In February 2022, the Commission adopted its plan entitled '[Transition Pathway for Tourism](#)'. The updated EU industrial strategy stressed the need to strengthen the tourism sector's resilience and accelerate the digital and green transitions in the light of the COVID-19 pandemic. The transition pathway identified 27 areas of measures for the green and digital transitions, and to make the EU's tourism industry more resilient.



In response to this plan, the Council adopted the '[EU agenda for tourism 2030](#)' in December 2022. The agenda focused on five priorities: the green and digital transitions; resilience and inclusion; skills and support; and the governance and policy-enabling framework, with several actions included under each priority.

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