

ANNUAL TOURISM REPORTING

Country: IRELAND

Article 3 of Council Decision 86/664/EEC¹ of 22 December 1986 establishing a consultation and cooperation procedure in the field of tourism stipulates that:

"...each Member State shall send the Commission, once a year, a report on the most significant measures it has taken and, as far as possible, on measures it is considering taking in the provision of services for tourists which could have consequences for travellers from the other Member States. The Commission shall inform the other Member States thereof".

The following reporting form aims at facilitating compliance with this Council Decision.

SECTION 1 TOURISM ORGANISATION AND GOVERNANCE

This section is aimed at reporting on the following:

- **Administrative organisation**
- **Territorial organisation**
- **Organisation and links between the national tourism authority and the provinces / regions**
- **Organisation and links between the national tourism authority and industry associations, stakeholders and customers**

1.1. Please provide a **short description of the administrative and territorial organisation of public bodies responsible for tourism**, indicating the relationship and cooperation between national, regional and local bodies of the core responsibilities and competences of each department (Max. 3000 characters)

The **Tourism Division** of the **Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport** advises Government on national tourism policy, providing the strategic direction required to support the growth of a competitive and sustainable tourism industry. The tourism agencies, operating under the aegis of the Department, deliver and implement the policy.

Fáilte Ireland, the National Tourism Development Authority was established under the National Tourism Development Authority Act 2003. Its role is to promote and facilitate sustainable growth in Irish tourism by supporting competitive tourism enterprises to develop, sell and deliver authentic Irish tourism experiences to new and repeat visitors.

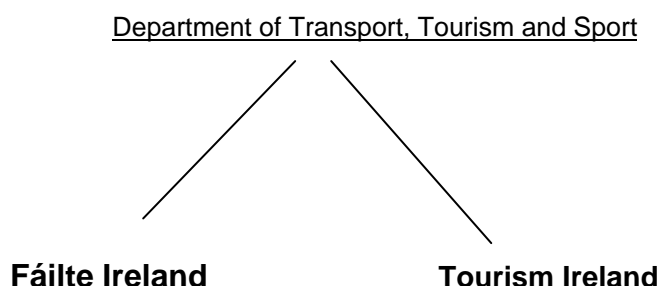
Tourism Ireland Ltd, the all-island tourism marketing company, was formally incorporated in 2000, following the designation of tourism as an area for cooperation under the Good Friday Agreement

¹ <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/Notice.do?val=123070%3Acs&lang=en&list=123070%3Acs%2C&pos=1&page=1&nbl=1&pgs=10&hwords=>

(1998). Its overall objective is to promote increased tourism to the island of Ireland. Tourism Ireland is accountable to the North South Ministerial Council, with funding being provided by the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment in Northern Ireland and by the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport in Ireland.

1.2. Please provide an organisation chart reflecting the above described administrative and territorial organisation.

Organisational Structure:



1.3. Please list and describe briefly the relationship and main areas of cooperation between national/regional public tourism bodies and the most significant / active private organisations / stakeholders / industry associations / unions / consumer organisations. (Max. 1500 characters)

The Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport engages with other Government Departments in relation to issues which have an impact on tourism and is represented on relevant interdepartmental committees. The Department also consults widely and maintains a close working relationship with the tourist industry and other key stakeholders regarding the formulation and implementation of tourism policy and related strategies and programmes. From time to time, the Department establishes cross-cutting working groups to consider specific issues of relevance to tourism but also to other areas by bringing together all relevant stakeholders. In March 2015, the Department published a new Tourism Policy Statement to provide the necessary direction to support a competitive and sustainable tourism industry and give clear direction to the tourism agencies for carrying out their operational programmes. This new policy statement is entitled "People, Place and Policy – Growing Tourism to 2025".

Local Authorities have long recognised the important contribution of tourism to their local areas. They provide infrastructure and environmental management that is essential for a fully-functioning economy like the provision of roads and the provision of recreation and amenity facilities, with consequent benefits for both locals and visitors. More directly, Local Authorities are active in many aspects of tourism, such as the organisation and funding of events, and the development of public tourism infrastructure. Local communities have also contributed to tourism, being centrally involved in initiatives like the Tidy Towns competition, festival organisation and local amenity development. The new Tourism Policy Statement (see above) commits to an enhanced role in tourism for both local authorities and local communities.

1.4. What is the existing national/regional specific legislation on tourism?
(Max. 500 characters)

The Tourist Traffic Acts 1939 – 2011 provide for the establishment and corporate governance of the

National Tourism Development Authority (Fáilte Ireland) as well as setting out the statutory framework for the promotion of tourism and the development of tourism facilities and services.

SECTION 2 - MEMBER STATE ECONOMIC DATA AND TOURISM BUDGETS

This section is intended to provide an overview of the key statistical information about the general tourism economic environment of the Member States.

Data marked with **green** is also collected by Eurostat. Data marked with **orange** is equally collected by the OECD. The data categories match the templates of these two organisations, therefore data reported to the Commission can be transferred / used when reporting to Eurostat and OECD and vice-versa.

The statistical data provided in the tables below shall cover the year 2013 and, **if available**, 2014.

The data collected through these sections will also feed into the future Virtual Tourism Observatory.

Please use the Excel templates provided below in order to facilitate coherence and comparability of the data.

Please note that you are only requested to fill in data that is available in your country. Please insert "N/A" for those that you are not able to provide.



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SECTION 3 NATIONAL TOURISM POLICY AND STRATEGIES

This section aims at collecting information on the Member States general strategic vision as well as the specific objectives of their tourism policies.

3.1. Please provide information in bullet points on the key mission, main medium and long-term objectives and the main targets of your national tourism policy. (Max. 1500 characters)

The Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport recently finalised a new Statement of Tourism Policy “**People, Place and Policy – Growing Tourism to 2025**”.

The Tourism Policy Statement contains three headline targets, to be achieved by 2025:

- revenue from overseas tourism, excluding air fares and ferry charges, will be €5 billion per year by 2025, net of inflation. The comparable figure for 2014 is €3.5 billion;
- there will be 250,000 people employed in tourism by 2025, compared with

approximately 200,000 at present; and

- there will be ten million overseas visits to Ireland by 2025, compared to 7.6 million in 2014.

3.2. Do you have a multi-annual national tourism strategy specific / relevant for tourism in place? If yes, please describe in bullet points the main medium and long-term objectives of the strategy as well as **who is responsible for its implementation. How is the implementation monitored and how often?** (Max. 2000 characters)

Work has commenced on an action plan to set out the measures to deliver the objectives of "People, Place and Policy Growing Tourism to 2025" through the tourism agencies and the necessary supporting actions by other stakeholders, including the industry, to ensure that the policy objectives are achieved. Any policy for tourism development will ultimately only be realised by the development and growth of tourism enterprises and employment and the on-going renewal of the industry's offering, in terms of quality, services and product mix, to meet the ever-changing demands of the market.

4. TOURISM CHALLENGES, MEASURES AND INITIATIVES

This section aims at collecting information on the challenges the Member states and the tourism industry has to deal with as well as the measures put in place to tackle them.

4.1. Please identify the key challenges for the tourism sector in your country and indicate their importance /priority in the table below.

CHALLENGES	IMPORTANCE / PRIORITY		
	HIGH	MEDIUM	LOW
Diversification of the tourism offer	X		
Protection of the cultural heritage	X		
Protection of the natural heritage	X		
ICT and innovation	X		
Connectivity and transport	X		
Employment in tourism	X		
Improving education and skills in tourism	X		
Combatting seasonality	X		
Demographic changes		X	
Improving accessibility of tourism	X		
Improving socio-economic data in tourism	X		
Economic crisis and recovery	X		

Improving the sustainability of tourism offer	X		
Combatting climate change		X	
Improving the quality of tourism offer	X		
Developing responsible tourism practices	X		
Competition against other destinations	X		
Administrative / regulatory burden, bureaucracy	X		
Other, please specify Community Involvement in Tourism	X		

4.2. Please describe briefly the main measures in your country aimed at tackling the key high-priority challenges indicated above. (Max. 2000 characters)

<p>Under the new Tourism Policy the Government has agreed that</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It will place tourism as a key element of its economic strategy, with development in the tourism sector reflecting the highest standards of environmental and economic sustainability, and the role of tourism in promoting peace and political co-operation on the island of Ireland will continue to be recognised and encouraged. • Ireland's people and place remain our biggest assets in terms of our ability to attract an even greater number of overseas visitors in the future. At the same time, these assets must be mobilised within a robust and effective policy framework if Ireland is to reap the economic and social benefits of tourism. • To ensure that Ireland is successfully promoted overseas and our visitors' expectations are met, the marketing of Ireland as a visitor destination will aim to generate a balance of visitors from both mature and developing markets; our heritage assets will be protected, and any public investment in tourism will be based on evidenced need; • Ireland's tourism industry will have the capacity and capability to meet the changing needs of visitors, underpinned by a clear and coherent framework for the development of human capital in the industry; and • There will be a clear understanding of the responsibilities and expectations of Government, State agencies, Local Authorities, the tourism industry and other stakeholders in the development of our tourism industry; with an enhanced role for Local Authorities and recognition of the contribution of communities to tourism; 	
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4.3. Please identify if any of the above mentioned challenges relate to any legislative measures at EU level, and how. (Max. 1000 characters)

Connectivity and transport:

A general challenge is the level of access (particularly air access) to Ireland, including anything that makes travel more expensive – e.g. rising oil prices, environmental taxes.

More than most other EU Member States, the island of Ireland relies heavily on air transportation for tourism purposes (Ireland is one of only three Member States with no land or tunnel connection to the European mainland). For this reason, maintaining and growing direct, competitive and convenient air access to the island of Ireland is of critical importance to our tourist industry - anything that makes travel more expensive will reduce demand among price-sensitive consumers, leading to reduced capacity, fewer services and routes and, therefore, reductions in visitor numbers and tourism revenue.

4.4. Please identify and describe any measures implemented in your country to increase tourism flows from other EU Member States and from third countries. (Max. 1000 characters)

The 'Wild Atlantic Way' is one of Ireland's most exciting developments of recent years – some 2,500 kilometres of the most captivating coastal drive in the world stretching from Donegal to West Cork. The Wild Atlantic Way has been very well received by visitors overseas. Investment continues to add breadth and depth to the hundreds of interesting discovery points along the route.

4.5. Please describe how promotional measures implemented in your country make use of / capitalise on the promotional campaigns carried out by the Commission (i.e. Ready for Europe, EDEN, low-season tourism campaigns, etc.). (Max. 1000 characters)

Over the past number of years Fáilte Ireland has made significant investment in tourism infrastructure around the country, to allow the industry and all tourism stakeholders to make the most of the natural/green asset and allow the visitor to experience and engage with natural Ireland. Such investment aims to maximise opportunities to grow rural tourism in a sustainable manner based on the sustainable use of our natural assets, with a focus on creating, retaining and diversifying jobs in the rural economy on the back of this infrastructure development.

Cavan Town and its environs won the European Destinations of Excellence (EDEN) tourism award in 2013 for its progressive work on improving accessibility to visitors with a disability.

The Great Western Greenway in Mayo is an example of sustainable tourism growth in Ireland in recent times. This Greenway, which runs along the route of the disused Midland and Great Western railway (closed in 1937), has been recognised as a European Destination of Excellence under the category of 'Tourism and the Regeneration of Physical Sites'. The Greenway is the longest off road walking and cycling trail in Ireland, and allows visitors connect not just with the natural environment but also with the story of the local community. Ireland (through Fáilte Ireland) is also represented on the EDEN network which aims to maximise the exposure of previous EDEN winners.

4.6. Please identify and describe any measures /actions in your country which contribute to maximising the potential of national policies for developing tourism (e.g. ensuring that tourism interests are taken into account in the development of other policies which may have impact on tourism). (Max.1000 characters)

Tourism does not operate in isolation. Given the diverse nature of tourism-related economic activity, it is affected by a wide range of policies, both at the domestic and EU level. For example, policies that impact on the natural and built environment, the nature and rates of taxation on various forms of economic activity, and structures for the public support of private enterprise all impact on the sector.

In addition to its regulatory role, the State has a wider role in framing an environment that allows enterprise to prosper. This can include the provision of targeted supports that are compliant with EU State Aids rules. The support for capital investment in tourism provided by Fáilte Ireland is an example

in this regard. Fáilte Ireland also provides other forms of support to the tourism industry, including advice and assistance on establishing and developing a tourism enterprise, tourism-related academic research, and tourism destination development.

Since coming to office the Government has implemented a series of Action Plans for Jobs. These have identified key actions to be achieved within specific timeframes in order to create an environment which encourages job creation. Actions to support tourism have formed a key part of these plans and have helped the industry to return to growth.

4.7. Please identify and describe any measures/actions in your country which contribute to maximising the potential of EU Financial Instruments for developing tourism (e.g. information on main objectives, financing opportunities, training courses, etc.). (Max. 1000 characters)

Axis 3 of the EARDF (European Agriculture and Rural Development Fund) 2007-2013 concerns the quality of life in rural areas and diversification of the rural economy. Among the measures under Axis 3 is Encouragement Of Tourism Activities. The main objective of this measure is to promote the sustainable, regionally balanced, tourism potential of all rural areas through the provision of necessary infrastructure and the development of the countryside as a recreational resource for all. In Ireland, funding of €48.8 million has been approved in respect of approximately 2,300 LEADER Tourism projects.

4.8 Please describe shortly which EU programmes are used the most frequently and for what purposes of tourism development in your country. (Max. 1000 characters)

See response to 4.7 above. Furthermore Ireland has participated in every EDEN competition since it was launched by the commission.

The European Destinations of Excellence (EDEN) highlights the value, diversity and shared characteristics of lesser known tourist destinations and promotes destinations where the economic growth objective is pursued in such a way as to ensure the social, cultural and environmental sustainability of tourism.

Sustainable and responsible tourism, whether talking about economic, social or environmental sustainability, is a broad concept and may be interpreted in various ways depending on the attributes of a Member State or region.

The following questions focus on sustainability and responsibility in tourism as described in the 2007 Commission Communication² on an agenda for sustainable and competitive European tourism.

4.9. Sustainable destination: What support is given to strengthen destination management at the national /regional/local level (e.g. supportive policy environment, knowledge networks, training programmes, technological support tools, financial support, promotional activities, etc.)? (Max. 1000 characters)

As part of its support for tourism businesses, Fáilte Ireland assists with destination development. On the “Developing your Locality” section of its website (<http://www.failteireland.ie/Develop-Your-Business/Work-with-Local-Partners.aspx>), Fáilte Ireland encourages business to work with other local businesses to capitalise on the special qualities of their locality and outlines 5 steps for developing a destination plan that links local products and creates an image, vision and brand for their area.

A project funded by Fáilte Ireland and the EPA, which tested a set of sustainable tourism indicators (ACHIEV), has led to the development of a manual/toolkit for the measurement of sustainability at destination level.

4.10. Sustainable businesses: What support is given to strengthen the sustainability and competitiveness of tourism businesses (e.g. supportive policy environment, knowledge networks, orientation of business support services to sustainability, training, financial incentives, promotional activities, etc.)? (Max. 1000 characters)

Recent years have proven to be very challenging for the tourist industry. The downturn in demand and the significant private investment in tourism capital- such as hotels - in that period have placed enormous demands on tourism businesses many of which continue to experience trading and operational difficulties. This has led to Fáilte Ireland investing heavily in providing practical and tailored business supports to individual tourism enterprises across the country. However, now that the industry is growing again, the Minister allocated an additional amount of €450,000 from within the Department’s overall allocation for 2014 to ensure that the number of training places supported by Fáilte Ireland is maintained at current levels, to meet recruitment needs and also to ensure that skills mismatches in the labour force are addressed.

4.11. Responsible tourism: What support is given to tourists and the tourism industry to promote their responsible practices and choices (e.g. awareness raising, sustainability in education, national marketing and media campaigns, promotion of certification schemes, etc.)? (Max. 1000 characters)

The DiscoverIreland.ie website has a section dedicated to “Green Holidays in Ireland” (<http://www.discoverireland.ie/green>) where all providers listed have a recognised third party eco-certification and have taken steps towards a greener future, including reducing their energy and water consumption, improving their waste management and ensuring they source fresh seasonal produce from local suppliers. There is also information on the Leave No Trace code of outdoor ethics in Ireland and on a wide range of outdoor and eco-activities <http://www.discoverireland.ie/Site-Content/Things->

² http://ec.europa.eu/enterprise/sectors/tourism/documents/communications/commission-communication-2007/index_en.htm

4.12. Please describe maximum three of the most significant planned / future tourism measures (legislative or non-legislative) which envisage to impact travellers visiting your country from other Member States or from outside Europe. (Max. 1000 characters)

Ease of access is an important consideration for visitors from developing tourism source markets. However, Ireland and UK remain outside the Schengen common travel area. Therefore, Ireland and the UK continue to co-operate on measures that maximise the efficiencies that can be gained in the processing of visas from third countries. A short-stay visa waiver programme, launched in 2011, allows visitors or business people from 18 countries who have lawfully entered the UK on a valid visa, to travel on to Ireland without the requirement to obtain an Irish visa. There were an estimated 109,000 visitors to Ireland from these countries in 2013, an increase of 66% when compared with 2010, the last full year before the visa waiver programme was introduced.

Building on the success of the Visa Waiver Programme, a new British-Irish Visa Scheme was launched on behalf of the Irish and British Governments in October 2014. The new joint visa programme enables visitors from China and India to travel freely between Ireland and the United Kingdom using the same travel documents i.e. using either an Irish or UK visa. This is a significant step, as it means Chinese and Indian visitors are able – for the first time – to visit both Ireland and the UK, including Northern Ireland, on a single visa of either country. These changes will make it easier and more attractive than ever before for Chinese and Indian visitors to come to Ireland and the UK in 2015 and to travel without restrictions throughout the island of Ireland.

5. ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

5.1. Please describe maximum 3 best practices of tourism measures implemented at national, regional or local level (any type of activity). (Max. 2000 characters)

Wild Atlantic Way

The 'Wild Atlantic Way', a long distance driving route along the Atlantic Coast, is proving very successful with visitors from across the world. The Wild Atlantic Way is 2,500km of the wildest, most captivating coastal driving in the world, stretching from the Inishowen Peninsula in Donegal to Kinsale in County Cork. It takes travellers through one of the world's most dramatic coastal landscapes, on the edge of Europe and offers visitors an opportunity to connect with friendly, welcoming people in towns and villages along the way, to experience Ireland's heritage and culture and enjoy our great, locally grown fresh food and freshly caught seafood. <http://www.wildatlanticway.com/home/>

Ireland's Ancient East

Ireland's newest tourist trail, called 'Ireland's Ancient East' was recently launched. It has four distinct themes: Ancient Ireland, Early Christian Ireland, Medieval Ireland and Anglo Ireland. It will make it even easier for visitors to explore Ireland's rich history and heritage and experience that mark Ireland out from the rest of Europe and the world - from pre-historic passage graves, early Christian monasteries, Viking settlements to medieval cities. <http://www.failteireland.ie/Ireland-s-Ancient-East.aspx>

5.2. Please describe, in a concise manner, in your view, what policy developments / actions / activities would you expect from the Commission's tourism team that would serve better (than the current ones) the EU Member States and the industry. (Max. 2000 characters)

The tourism priorities outlined most recently by Commissioner Bienkowska are welcome and will present a challenging work programme for the commission.

The implementation of these tourism priorities should seek the appropriate balance between regulating for a functioning market and not burdening enterprise. Furthermore the actions which flow from the

tourism priorities should be tightly focused on those aspects which can provide maximum benefit to the tourism sector.