RAPPORTEUR GROUP

EU Low Season Tourism Initiative Board

EULSTIB

FINAL REPORT

JÄMTLAND HÄRJEDALEN Turism

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Disclaimer

This paper should be regarded solely as a report compiling contributions of relevant stakeholders of the EULSTIB initiative for submission to the European Commission's DG for Internal Market, Industry, Entrepreneurship and SME's. Under no circumstance should it be regarded as the official position or opinion of the Commission and its services.

Summary

This report focuses on the tourism industry. It discusses the current status of the industry as well as its future growth, and potential impact on economic growth and job generation. Since this is the concluding report of the EULSTIB initiative (EU Low Season Tourism Initiative Board), particular emphasis has been given to tourism seasonality. This is an issue that creates a low year-round employment rate in tourism SME's resulting in an insecure labour market, lower tax revenues and slower economic growth at a regional level. Furthermore, as the EULSTIB initiative has focused on senior travellers as an important potential market segment for developing the low and medium seasons, the report discusses age-friendly tourism and makes related recommendations.

Key findings
The main overall finding is that **building skills and competence of the SME's**, using a bottom-up approach, is key for boosting tourism development. This report recommends focusing on enabling SME's to improve their quality and their own ability to provide tourism products and services to the market in order to have sustainable and long-term industry impact. One suggested method for achieving this is through effective business training programmes for the SME's, which will in turn boost tourism during low and medium seasons.

There is significant **interest among different stakeholders** at all levels to learn more from each other in order to work smarter and build cumulative benefits and knowledge. The EU's long-term commitment to developing the tourism industry has created a strong base for cooperation amongst stakeholders and increased opportunities for building knowledge related to sustainable tourism development. For future EU projects and initiatives related to tourism seasonality (or tourism in general), **processes need to be set up** to better capture lessons from previous projects and enhance communication between on-going projects.

Feedback suggests that the **EU has the greatest impact on tourism development when it adopts the role of industry facilitator,** focusing on initiatives that enable existing tourism industry participants to create growth. This facilitator role should be clarified, and EU financial programmes and initiatives should be governed and shaped such that they adhere to the objective of tourism industry facilitation and tightly correspond to actual market behaviours and what is truly needed by the industry.

The question of **whether to promote the EU as a single destination** towards long-haul markets or not is also examined. An analysis of consumer reasons to travel suggests that the diversity of Europe is one of its main attractions and therefore the diversity of all EU member states should be promoted rather than communicating homogeneity. Such communication is most successfully done by the industry itself using its existing platforms with which tourists are already familiar, rather than developing new EU level platforms and asking consumers to switch.

Finally the report concludes that **age-friendly tourism should be developed with deeper knowledge of the senior market and its diversity.** The starting rationale should always be to target and understand tourists by interest (type) rather than age.

The conclusions of this report are based on: information collected from relevant reports and articles; interviews with participants of the EULSTIB initiative; interviews with representatives of previous projects related to seasonality and age-friendly tourism; and reviewing best practice.

1. Introduction

1.1 Starting Point

The starting point for this report is the EU's Growth Strategy, *Europa 2020* (EU2020), launched in 2010, the objective of which is to create smart, sustainable and inclusive growth in European member regions.

The report is centred on employment, but further expands to R&D, education, social inclusion and poverty reduction. The tourism industry is implicated, largely due to its direct and indirect effects on employment.

EU2020 has a number of joint initiatives, so called "Flagships", intended to be engines for boosting growth and employment. Within each initiative, both the EU and national authorities need to coordinate their efforts so they are mutually reinforcing. These flagships, which we have seen as a base for this report, are as follows:

1. Digital agenda for Europe
2. Innovation union
3. Youth on the move
4. Resource efficient Europe
5. An industrial policy for the globalisation era
6. An agenda for new skills and jobs
7. European platform against poverty

1.2. Issue

Many tourism destinations in Europe are challenged by seasonality. This is where peak seasons occur over a short, intensive period of the year and account for the majority of the annual revenues of a destination's SME's, while the remaining periods (off-peak) have a lower and more uncertain tourism demand. Seasonality leads to a low year-round employment rate in tourism SME's and subsequently results in an insecure labour market, lower tax revenues and slower economic growth at a regional level.

1.3 Mission

Collect the outcomes of the EULSTIB Action Group's 2015 - 2016 work. Present know-how, best practices and policy/business recommendations at the EU level, with the aim of increasing tourism demand during the low season and improving the competiveness of the tourism industry. The report will be used as a reference document for guiding future European policy making and public/private investments in the tourism industry.

1.4. Aim

The report describes, analyses and highlights the current status of the tourism industry, and discusses their future potential. It focuses on the low and mid seasons, with a view to creating the conditions for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth.

Limitations: The scope of the report is limited to the focus areas of the EULSTIB board.

1.5. Objectives

1. Gather knowledge and provide an overview of current and planned age-friendly tourism related products, initiatives and policies in Europe, giving priority, but not limiting to those planned to support tourism in the low and medium seasons.
2. Identify best practice and promising transnational products that have stimulated low season tourism and created new jobs and economic growth, helping to address the ever-present challenge of seasonality.
3. Assess and estimate the potential size of tourism demand from Europe and other relevant source markets for the low and shoulder seasons. Consider current and future volumes through 2025 and their impact on jobs and economic growth potential.
4. Develop policy and business recommendations (mainly for SME's) at the EU level on how best to shorten the low season, for example by taking advantage of age-friendly tourism.

1.6. Methodology and implementation

The report was compiled according to the following methodology:
1. In depth interviews with a selection of subject-matter experts in the field
2. Questionnaire surveys sent to:
    a. all participants of EULSTIB's action groups
    b. project managers/owners of current projects
    c. project managers/owners of recently granted projects
3. Collation and analysis of previous reports, strategies and research related to the subject.

The purpose of this methodology was to create both breadth and depth of competence and content. However, there was varied interest in participating in material collection, so there is a risk that the result does not reflect the lessons and experience of the majority. Nonetheless, the results highlighted certain recurring comments and lessons from the majority of sources that did participate, so we deem the results to be credible.

1.7. Outline of the report

The report is divided into three sections:
- Part 1 (chapters 3 - 7) corresponds to objectives 1 and 2 above
- Part 2 (chapters 8 - 10) corresponds to objective 3 above
- Part 3 (chapters 11 & 12) corresponds to objective 4 above

2. Background

2.1. Seasonality in the tourism industry

The wide diversity of the tourism industry both directly and indirectly impacts the growth of the sector. The UNWTO defines tourism as: *"…the activities of persons traveling to and staying in places outside their usual environment for not more than one consecutive year for leisure, business and other purposes."*

The tourism industry has long been associated with seasonal fluctuations as tourists travelled primarily during their traditional holiday periods. However, regardless of the total visitor numbers, the destinations themselves experience particular trends over the year depending on the traveller type. Different visitor groups have different travel patterns, spending habits, trip length, goals and trip expectations. Tourism is clearly a demand driven industry and the behavioural habits of the consumers drive trends and shape the industry.

Seasonal patterns are prevalent across Europe, but vary greatly in character in different parts of the region. Traditional summer mass-market destinations typically experience short, intensive peak seasons between June to August, and a low season for the rest of the year. In contrast, the more traditionally winter-orientated destinations experience their peak season from Christmas through to Easter.

However, there are several destinations that managed to create a balanced year-round flow of visiting tourists from an early stage. These are typically larger European cities, that are not dependant on weather but on their unique attractions, culture and shopping to attract inbound tourists.

Seasonal variation leads to revenues being generated only in specific periods of the year. This presents a financial barrier to year-round, and therefore sustainable, employment. Since tourism companies aren't able to offer secure, year-round employment, they have difficulties in recruiting people with the required skills, in particular academic qualifications. This uncertainty, in turn, leads to a lowered interest in relevant education specific to the industry.

2.2 Macro level factors that impact tourism

To understand and propose the best conditions for continued growth in the tourism industry, one has to first understand the macro level context and factors that affect the tourism industry today, and will continue to do so in the future.

Firstly, travel habits are directly and indirectly affected by the **political situation** in Europe and the rest of the world. In some instances shifting politics can lead to a complete halt in travelling and during the past few years for example, rising terrorism has reduced travelling, at least in the short term.[1] On the positive side, country level political decisions can create demand in tourism. For example, policies that improve safety and security, or those that ease visa regulations, may encourage a traveller to choose a destination they previously would not have considered.

Secondly, but closely related to politics, is **EU and/or country level legislation** that can affect the EU's competitiveness vis-à-vis third-country destinations. For example, legislation related to taxes, value added tax (VAT), consumer protection, service directives and levies can all impact the development of tourism at a macro and SME level.

[1] Tourism and terrorism: a quantitative analysis of major terrorist acts and their impact on tourism destinations, A BRAHAM P IZAM, 2000

Thirdly, **technological trends** such as digitalisation have had a major impact on the tourism industry. How tourists search for information, book trips and share experiences with each other have changed fundamentally. These changing habits have lead to product ranges and destinations that were once governed by providers, today being driven and shaped actively by consumer choices. Relatedly, both private and business travellers today demand a high level of digital accessibility, which requires well-developed infrastructure. This is true in both urban and rural environments, which in itself is a challenge for sustained attractiveness. Digitalisation and new technology have also made it possible for people to share experiences and create value in new ways. Entirely new channels of communication have opened for B2B (Business to Business) and B2C (Business to Consumer) interaction, allowing direct and immediate evaluation of experiences by consumers that business owners can no longer control. [2]

Fourthly, depletion of the earth's **natural resources** is a major concern for many, including individual travellers. This is a particularly important issue that the tourism industry needs to address responsibly, due to the high environmental impact and cost of international travel. Low-cost airlines have decreased the personal costs of travel, but at the same time, consumers have become more demanding of carriers to take responsibility for their environmental impact. This may eventually lead to higher fares, alternative fuel usage and other measures to reduce environmental costs.

In short, macro level factors and actors impact tourism development in ways that trickle all the way down to a micro level. Demographics and politics can alter consumption behaviour and consequently also change the tourism industry. This is a time of opportunity as more people have the possibility to travel so demand is on the rise. However, there are also increasing challenges related to security, the environment and unbalanced travel patterns, and stakeholders at both micro and macro levels have a joint responsibility to address these so as to create the conditions for sustainable, long-term growth.

2.3 The potential of the +55's for offsetting seasonality

The EU Commission has identified the +55 age group as a potential target market segment to reduce the fluctuations of seasonality, as this group is less dependent on travelling during traditional school holidays. Due to the characteristics of this age segment, this target group is also known as "baby boomers" [3] (those born between 1946-1964), WHOPS (Wealthy, Healthy, Older People), the mature consumer or Senior Tourists.

These travellers have the possibility to travel during quieter periods that often coincide with lower prices. However, the +55's cannot be treated as one coherent, single target group. It is a market segment comprised of individuals with different interests, physical capabilities, travel habits and financial means.

To increase the demand for travel among the +55's during low and mid seasons, strategies need to be formulated based on knowledge of this market's actual needs, behaviours and preferences, to respect the heterogeneity that exists within this huge group.

2.4. Measuring the industry qualitatively

One of the challenges for setting strategies and objectives in the tourism industry, is that success is currently measured only in quantitative values, i.e., more beds, more guests, more reasons to travel. To develop the industry, an alternative view of success could be adopted, shifting from

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[2] Digitalisation and Innovation in Tourism, file:///Users/user/Downloads/Report%20Panel%201%20Digitalisation%20and%20innovation%20in%20tourism%20-%20ETF%20-%20Pedro%20Ortun.pdf

[3] https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Baby_boomers

quantitative values to qualitative factors, i.e., better beds, or greater guest satisfaction. This change in mind-set may be a more sustainable approach that makes a lasting difference in the future of travel.[4] "You cannot do today's job with yesterday's methods and be in business tomorrow," (author unknown).

One important focus area identified for enabling sustainable and qualitative growth in the tourism industry is to ensure that the necessary skills exist at the right stakeholders. Therefore, skills and competence (what, for who and how) is a recurring discussion point throughout this report.

In summary, this report presents the challenges and opportunities for the tourism industry and trends that are relevant to tourist destinations. It can be used as a tool for planning on-going, year-round growth by highlighting "how to" examples and sharing experience from completed, on-going and planned initiatives. The report also focuses on the competence required in the industry and the need to strengthen skills at all levels of operation and management.

2.5. The EULSTIB initiative – Improving knowledge and establishing a business model for age-friendly tourism within the EU

"The European Commission aims to encourage the cooperation of all stakeholders involved in the senior and youth travel markets to make the most of potential opportunities to extend tourism seasons beyond traditional peak periods. Adapting tourism to globalisation and new market demands requires that efforts are made to improve the professional skills of SME's and it's workers within the tourism industry. There is a transformation within the industry, that the workforce needs to adapt to, for example new technologies, customer behaviour and customer expectations." [5]

In order to follow the recommendations of the report *"Facilitating cooperation mechanisms to increase senior tourists' travels within Europe and from third countries in the low and medium seasons"* the European Commission drafted an Action Plan. Based on that plan the EULSTIB[6] initiative presented a draft roadmap for implementing the action plan. Two key objectives were highlighted:

1. Improve knowledge to be able to identify a "senior tourism profile" to boost demand in low and medium seasons within the EU and from third countries, by sharing and analysing socio-economic and travel data.
2. Facilitate the creation of a transnational business model for an age-friendly tourism at the EU level with a view to:
   - Improving the offer
   - Promoting Europe as a single destination
   - Improving governance at all levels and exploring financing opportunities.[7]

Action groups were formed on a voluntary basis, with a large number of people indicating interest from the public, private, academic and non-profit sectors. EULSTIB was responsible for coordinating and developing the activities that would be carried out in the various action groups based on the roadmap, to ensure goals were met. Since the start in 2015, the EULSTIB group members have met in Brussels on several occasions, and maintained on-going contact by e-mail and using other tools such as CIRCABC. In parallel with EULSTIB's work, a number of existing projects have also been carried out within the areas included in the roadmap.

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[4] https://conscious.travel

[5] https://ec.europa.eu/growth/sectors/tourism/offer/seniors-youth_en

[6] The informal ad-hoc group 'European Union Low Season Tourism Initiative Board' (EULSTIB) http://ec.europa.eu/growth/sectors/tourism/offer/seniors-youth_en

[7] Draft Outline Roadmap-Low and Medium Seasons Tourism Initiative 2015-02-11

The roadmap developed encompasses a broad scope, which from several perspectives can be deemed to have achieved the major objectives set for the initiatives. These include: gathering and making accessible the results from the various actions groups; developing a "senior tourism profile" to address the challenges of seasonality and employment within tourism; and thereby, identifying common principles and recommendations for creating a business model for age-friendly tourism.

The roadmap work has already been carried out to a certain extent by the EULSTIB action groups. A large amount of relevant material has been published on CIRCABC. All stakeholders have had the opportunity to review these materials to learn from each other, improve their capabilities and identify best practices that were also compiled in accessible documents. In reviewing published material as well as completed and on-going projects, it became clear that recommendations had already been made regarding the quality and availability of age-friendly tourism, or alternatively, existing tourism. This material could beneficially be shared wider and used by more people.

In terms of transnational products, there are several good examples available, such as themed tours, cruises and fly & drive packages. These products require the same kind of knowledge in terms of the guests' preferences and requirements for quality, accessibility and content, and this was a recurring theme throughout the material collected for this report. Essentially, what is primarily needed is an increase in the competences of the SME's, irrespective of whether the tourist experiences are transnational, national or local. (See section 6 below)

In all areas, the need for clarity in roles and responsibilities, both within the EU projects and across the tourism value chain, has come up as a challenge that needs to be addressed. In a constantly changing world, roles and responsibilities need continuous review to ensure that good governance and leadership is in place at different levels. It is therefore difficult to provide a clear set of governance roles that are always valid. However, from the results collated it is evident that the SME's should and already do take major responsibility for product development and communication, while the role of public sector actors is, as far as possible, to facilitate the success of the SME's by carrying out activities that are within the remit of the public sector. These are explained in the recommendations of this report.

Part I - Overview of EU initiatives, best practice and knowledge related to seasonality and age-friendly tourism

3. Overview of current, previous and planned initiatives related to age-friendly tourism

3.1. Current projects and initiatives

3.1.1. Tourism Destinations Crossover (DiscOver55)

This project targets four geographic areas: Montepisano (Italy), Lake Saimaa (Finland), Vulkanland (Austria) and Izola (Slovenia), which all have the qualities to attract a stable international flux of senior travellers in the near future and also in low and mid seasons. Based on the ex-ante assessment and SWOT analysis performed prior to proposal submission, the project DiscOver55 intends to build an innovative transnational tourism product for the European senior audience. The indicators to be used to assess the four destinations will be chosen from the E.T.I.S. (The European Tourism Indicator System) of the European Commission. The common theme for the four destinations is “Water for Wellbeing”.[8]

3.1.2. EDEN55plusNW

This initiative is focuses on developing the network of tourism products for seniors, building cooperation along the tourism value chain for EDEN destinations in partner countries for more competitive and sustainable growth.

The project EDEN55plusNW aims to upgrade the excellent networking concept of small, diverse, rural EDEN destinations in EU countries. The tourism product ‘Transnational Mobility Model for Seniors in Pilot EDEN Destinations’ with the slogan “Slow down to feel the life in EDEN destinations” connects four neighbouring countries and five pilot EDEN destinations in Austria, Slovenia and Croatia. It will develop four cross-border tourism products, which will be tested by two groups of seniors from Italy. The main focus is to design suitable cross-border tourism products in pilot EDEN destinations for seniors of 55+ (women and couples) to increase tourism flows in low/medium seasons in pilot (and later on in other) EDEN destinations by removing obstacles along the tourism value chain and increasing investment opportunities for the tourism industry, SME’s and businesses in Europe and at an international level.[9]

3.1.3. Europe for Seniors (EUROSEN)

The proposal is to develop senior tourism in the low season according to the needs, expressed by senior citizens, for a cultural and social tourism. The central theme of the trips lies in the researching of their own roots and the connections with the others’ experiences in the framework of the common European identity.

The senior visitors meet the senior hosts in “minor” destinations with touristic potential, organised in Clusters of Local Culture (CLC), where they have a full immersion into a relational, thematic, participative, experiential tourism linked to the territory identity and values. The CLC are included

[8] http://www.discover55.eu

[9] https://eden55plus.wordpress.com

in itineraries connecting major destinations and designed by tour operators. However, the clusters themselves develop the range of touristic services.

Comments by project representative
The major aim of this project is to help currently non-touristic territories become touristic destinations, organised in Clusters of Local Culture, where senior tourists meet the senior hosts in the local community and become fully immersed in the local culture. The aim is also for senior groups to start to travel out of season, for them to visit not only major destinations but also the CLC, and for tourism SME's in the CLC improve their international activities. The tourism SME's at minor destinations will benefit from the project by improving their ability to deal with international tourists. The project differentiates from previous projects by taking care not only of the needs of senior tourists but also those of the hosting seniors who lead the organisation of the Clusters of Local Culture, create and revise activities. The packages, including both famous destinations and CLC, are promoted towards senior associations and Tour Operators specialised in seniors' travel in Europe, thanks to the contacts of the AGE platform which is an association gathering hundreds senior associations in Europe.[10]

3.1.4. FOREVER YOUNG! (FY)

"Forever Young!" will enhance transnational mobility by designing routes and products, based upon local cultural UNESCO heritage (immaterial and material such as oral traditions, monuments, Mediterranean diet etc.) in association with the promotion of local typical food and beverages, in order to provide an unique learning experience: "living the culture".

3.1.5. Enjoying central European gardens and parks (GARDEN ROUTE)

The central aim of the project is to develop new transnational tourism products for senior citizens (any person over 55 years old) who are looking for a tranquil place to relax and take some time out in green spaces where nature is perceived to invigorate the body and the soul. The beautiful parks and gardens of Europe are a great way to offer that through a mixture of history and leisure. The product will: enrich the cross-border tourist offer and facilitate tourism flows especially during medium seasons in the EU; stimulate the competitiveness of the local SME's; improve public and private transnational cooperation among actors along the tourism value chain; and help improve the living conditions of the local populations. The Garden Route will run through 4 central European countries. The current project will bring together relevant stakeholders from cross-border regions along the route in Slovenia, Austria, Hungary and Croatia.

3.1.6. Improving senior tourism in small and medium lakeside towns in Europe (LAKtive Tourism)

This project involves the creation of a specific tourism product focused on senior target groups (over 55) travelling in low and medium seasons to small lakeside towns. The package will be tailor-made for each destination, based on a basic concept and enriched with several special collateral activities. The LAKtive Tourism project will be proposed and developed in 6 towns situated on beautiful lakes in 5 European countries (Italy, Rome, Slovenia, Ireland and Spain). [11]

3.1.7. Please Let Enjoy A Seniors Experience (PLEASE)

Seniors aged 55 to 70, who are already retired and living off a pension are available to travel in low to medium seasons. The new touristic offer provided by this project will be organised around the

[10] EUROSEN Project representative. E-mail interview 2016-05-12.
[11] http://www.neulakes.eu/project/

concept of a sharing economy, according to the project requirements while respecting the customers expectations. The exception will be international transfer, which will be provided through standard air carriers. The Senior target will also be trained to become familiar with the online self booking process, becoming the “Maker" of its own touristic product. The project will be carried out in 5 EU Countries (Italy, Spain, Greece, Bulgaria and Malta).

3.1.8. Senior ENhancing Intangible and INTERgenerational in Europe during the low season and medium season (SENINTER)

The project SENINTER proposes the creation of a slow and sustainable tourism product targeted and adapted to seniors travelling with their grandchildren during the low and medium seasons in Europe. The children are preferably less than 6 years old, which means that they are fairly free to travel. The seniors are preferably retired in order to travel outside of the high tourism season, which means that they should be over 55 years old.

3.1.9. Seniors on Reciprocal Tourism (SORT)

SORT is a multilateral project with 8 EU partners from 7 South Eastern Europe countries. The central idea is to design, trial, evaluate, document, diffuse and valorise a new touristic package and service for tourists over 55 years old. The main objective is to facilitate the movement of the elderly towards the partners’ local communities by giving them the properties of a wanderer-guest, as well as of a volunteer. Within project framework, partners will create different local hosting programmes for seniors and for the local community, test them in pilot applications and assess and evaluate the results. Finally they will develop a guide describing the whole process.[12]

3.2. Previous projects and initiatives

3.2.1. The Europe Senior Tourism Programme

(*This part is mostly derived from the “Assessment report on the economic and social impact of the Europe senior tourism programme, 2014 - 2015”.*[13])

The Europe Senior Tourism programme follows the European Commission's tourism-related work, which includes the various parallel initiatives that have been developed within the scope of the Commission.

The Calypso Preparatory Action was launched in 2009. The aim of this initiative was threefold: to facilitate access to tourism for the disadvantaged sectors of society; to fill the gaps that occur in the low season months; and to promote the concept of European citizenship through tourism exchanges. The target groups were seniors and retirees, young people, disabled adults and families with social difficulties. Calypso was implemented through several actions. After a call for proposals, awards were granted to ten projects with different models of bilateral and multilateral exchanges supporting and promoting travel for the Calypso groups outside the high season. Another major project funded by the EC was the B2B e-Calypso platform (www.ecalypso.eu), a web platform to facilitate transnational tourism exchanges, particularly in the low season. Created in 2013, it groups the organisations/institutions involved in travel management for the Calypso groups with accommodation providers. It is also a hub offering the agents of European social tourism publications, good practices, news and general information on social tourism.

In May 2012, the Commission launched the pilot phase of the Senior Tourism Initiative, with which it sought to define the framework conditions to improve transnational travel outside the high season

[12] http://sort.mentores.eu

[13] SEGITTUR, *Assessment report on the economic and social impact of the ”Europe senior tourism project, 2014-2015*, p. 8-10.

for seniors in Europe. The aim was to promote tourism outside the tourist peaks so as to stimulate economic growth and employment in Europe and contribute to the competitiveness of the industry. The European Commission identified seniors and young people as groups that can travel easily during the low season and therefore represent an opportunity for the sector. Three calls for proposals were published within the scope of this initiative: the first in 2013, co-funded four projects (only for seniors); the second in 2014 focused on seniors and young people. The period for the submission of projects for this call closed in June 2014. In 2015, the call "Supporting Competitive and Sustainable Growth in the Tourism Sector" was also launched, including the themes increasing tourism flows in low and medium seasons for seniors and youth target groups. The awarded projects will start during 2016 and are described in this chapter under *3.1. Current projects and initiatives.*

The Senior Tourism Initiative also included the preparation of the report *"Facilitating cooperation mechanisms to increase senior tourists' travels within Europe and from third countries in the low and medium seasons"* based on which an action plan was developed. After consultation with the public and private sector, the European Union Low Season Tourism Initiative Board (EULSTIB) was set up for the period 2015 - 2016. A group of experts was selected to define a roadmap for actions to boost low season tourism and ensure the orientation, coordination and monitoring of the activities under the action plan. The group was formed by experts from governments, the private sector, European industry, the academic sector and civil society.

In June 2015, the EC held the "*Workshop on low/medium season tourism for seniors and youth in Europe"* in Brussels. Aimed at promoting the exchange of points of view and good practices between public and private European actors, the meeting also discussed the opportunities for the senior and youth sectors, and the attractiveness of international markets (China, Brazil and the United States) in relation to the challenge of seasonality in tourism.

In February 2016, the conference "*Europe: The best destination for seniors*" was organised in Firenze, Italy, where the projects ESCAPE, Senior Rail Travel Project, SENTour Connect and SenGor were presented (see descriptions below).

3.2.2. ESCAPE

The "European Senior Citizens' Actions to Promote Exchange in tourism" (ESCAPE) project brings together 8 partners from 6 different countries. They have joined forces to work on enhancing the existing tourist infrastructure and staff in the low season, thereby facilitating transnational exchanges off-season, concentrating on the senior citizen market, the 55+ age range. The project covers the geographical areas of Belgium, Bulgaria, Cyprus, France, Italy and Portugal proposing a partnership of eight organisations whose activities and services encompass tourism and senior citizens' interests. The ESCAPE partners propose innovative and sustainable transnational tourism packages for travellers over 55 years old, in order to increase tourism flows in Europe off-season, and promote Europe as a continent of attractive, quality and safe destinations all year round. Around 10 such packages will be developed and pilot tested.[14]

3.2.3. Senior Rail Travel Project

The Senior Rail Travel Project aims to facilitate pan-European mobility of mature travellers by rail, by developing innovative and sustainable tourism packages that are tailor-made for the target group and their needs. The project follows a customer-focused "Service Design" approach that analyses the problem from the customer's perspective, observing and interpreting their needs and behaviours, in order to transform these into potential future services. Based on this, Interrail Tour travel packages have been developed including all elements of the travel journey, from mobility by train all over Europe, to accommodation and cultural offers.[15]

[14] http://escape2europe.eu/escape-project
[15] http://www.interrail-tours.com/about

3.2.4. SenTOUR Connect

The SENTour Connect Project has been built to develop sustainable solutions for the tourism industry in multiple destinations suitable for the full scope of potential senior travellers, regardless of their travel experience. The objectives are to study and develop mechanisms supporting transnational stakeholder cooperation, improve tourism seasonality patterns across Europe, create innovative and sustainable transnational tourism packages for seniors and strengthen public-private partnerships.[16] The work will investigate and exchange knowledge and product development, package development and eCalypso integration and training, package/pilot exchange tests and assessment and promotion and dissemination of European Tourism as an asset to European citizen participation.[17]

3.2.5. SenGor – Seniors go rural

This project focuses on defining a generic, but flexible operating model for generating and marketing individually adapted products that facilitate transnational tourism flows of seniors in low season to rural and micro-SME's and their destinations. The project includes several such pilot product implementations.

The Model consists of two transnational components that establish a common framework for generating real products:
(1) Guidelines for a "Senior-friendly" product accreditation "Seniors Go Rural. This accreditation sets specific criteria for receiving Seniors for rural tourism services and destinations. The content of the accreditation has been agreed and supervised by representatives from the transnational organisations EuroGites and AGE Platform. It is supplemented by guidelines for rural tourism businesses on the preparation of products that are suitable for senior needs.
(2) Operating systems for promotion, sales, and payment clearing such as off-season vouchers, discounts/club cards, or similar. The accredited senior-friendly products are made accessible to Seniors through agreements that regulate promotion, sales, and payment in a homogeneous way across Europe. They will be set up as framework agreements, which will always require adaptation as applicable between the affiliated organisations of AGE and EuroGites. However, homogeneous basic procedures and rules are always maintained across Europe and for all implementations.
The entire Operating Model – from definition to implementation – is a B2C solution, requiring the direct involvement and self-regulation of the interested parties. Public Administration participates at the side of the beneficiaries (through social support to senior organisations), or at the receptive side (NTOs and DMOs) in the setting up and running of the system. [18]

Silver suitcase
As part of the project, a product development guideline was created for rural tourism products aimed at active seniors aged over 55. The guideline was complied based on rural tourism product criteria that were identified through a feasibility study carried out looking at low-season requirements. The "Silver suitcase" membership card was developed to promote and sell the products. This system is based on agreements between rural tourism service providers and a rural tourism marketing organisation, in which Senior tourism organisations can distribute the cards to their individual members. The card operating model has been designed to motivate and support senior low-season travel.[19]

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[16] http://www.ecalypso.eu/steep/public/section.jsf?id=132
[17] L. Gobin, SENTour Connect Project: https://www.google.se/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=2&ved=0ahUKEwi_zrH4gdLMAhUCKpoKHWpPCaYQFgglMAE&url=http%3A%2F%2Fec.europa.eu%2FDocsRoom%2Fdocuments%2F6909%2Fattachments%2F1%2Ftranslations%2Fen%2Frenditions%2Fnative&usg=AFQjCNFEu7vGu_XCNFjiPM2pNX-JIZJKnQ&bvm=bv.121658157,d.bGs
[18] http://www.celotajs.lv/cont/prof/proj/SenGoR/Sengor_eng_active.html
[19] http://www.celotajs.lv/cont/prof/proj/SenGoR/Results/Sengor_product_guidelines_EN_FINAL.pdf

3.2.6. AGE-platform

AGE Platform Europe is a European network of more than 150 organisations of and for people aged 50+ representing over 40 million older people in Europe. AGE Platform Europe was set up in January 2001 following discussions on how to improve and strengthen cooperation between older people's organisations at the EU level. Membership is open to European, national and regional organisations, and to both organisations of older people and organisations for older people.

3.2.7. TOURage

This project has grown from the idea that although demographic change brings many challenges it can also bring opportunities to regions. Tourism is one of the fastest growing industries in Europe and relatively remote regions have both a lot of unexploited and unknown development potential in this regard. The project seeks to identify good practices of developing tourism possibilities for the growing segment of elderly travellers.

The results will be communicated to the rest of Europe explaining how "The Senior Tourism Model" can be created and enhanced and also what kind of tools can be used to improve regional senior tourism policies. The overall objective of the project is to enhance regional economies through senior tourism development and to support active and healthy ageing. The project aims to increase awareness amongst regional authorities, decision-makers and politicians in the field, highlight challenges and benefits, future potential and trends, and above all share good practices that have been deployed.[20]

3.3. Planned projects and initiatives

3.3.1. The Silver Economy

The silver economy is an on-going study, the results of which will be presented in the beginning of 2017. The main objective of the report is to estimate the potential size of the European Silver Economy in terms of markets, economic growth potential and GDP impact from now until 2025. The report will present an overview of current and planned Silver Economy related initiatives in Europe. The intention is that these projects will develop ten promising cases illustrating where innovation can create new jobs and economic growth. Finally, policy recommendations will be developed at the EU level regarding how to best grow the European silver Economy.

[20] http://www.tourage.eu

4. Evaluation summaries

To collect feedback and recommendations for the future, questionnaires were sent out to EULSTIB action group members as well as representatives from four previous projects related to tourism seasonality and age-friendly tourism (ESCAPE, Senior Rail Travel Project, SenTOUR Connect and SenGor). Short summaries of the findings are presented below. A full summary of the EULSTIB evaluation can be found in Appendix 1. Appendix 2 contains the full questionnaire template sent to the four previous projects (then referred to as *current* projects since they were not completely finished at the time of the questionnaire invitation).

4.1. EULSTIB initiative

All EULSTIB action group participants were invited to respond to a questionnaire. The purpose was to gather feedback regarding the work that had been carried out and to gain knowledge of all participants' experiences to enable improvements for similar initiatives in the future. There is a risk in generalising the results due to the low response rate, but the following conclusions can be drawn:

- Overall, participants appreciated the conferences for their discussion topics and networking opportunities, but suggested organisation and structure needed to be improved.
- The objectives of the initiative could have been more clearly defined. Some responses indicated that objectives were perceived to be well defined initially, but became less clear by the end of the initiative. The definitions of the action group tasks were regarded as being somewhat clearer, but the level of work, communication, engagement and organisation within the groups fell short of that required to meet objectives.
- Most respondents do not consider that their action groups have finished their tasks yet. Recommendations suggested for addressing this were: more private sector involvement, more meetings, better leadership and structure, and financing the work of experts.
- The most successful outcomes are regarded to be the repository of documents, networking opportunities, collaboration and the idea exchange on the concept of senior travel.
- Recommendations for achieving better results include more support from the Commission, linking with other EU projects, more focus on innovation and use of technologies, less discussion, and clear lines of work and guidance.

4.2. Previous seasonality and age-friendly tourism projects

Project representatives from four projects on tourism seasonality and age-friendly tourism, that all finished in 2016, were asked to share their **most successful results, challenges encountered and future recommendations for similar initiatives.**

ESCAPE
The most successful outcome is regarded to be the business cooperation established between five tour operators in Bulgaria, Cyprus, France, Italy and Portugal, which all focus on senior tourism during the low season (through the ESCAPE tourism packages and the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding between them). Other successful outcomes cited were: development of ESCAPE Club criteria (applicable to senior-friendly tourism businesses), increased awareness of senior tourism business prospects (especially during the low season), and recruitment of senior-friendly tourism businesses and attractions (i.e. ESCAPE Club members).

Feedback suggested that if the project had lasted for more than 18 months, there would have been time to *implement* and *put into practice* the links/synergies that had been established with other EC funded projects in the area of senior tourism. A longer project duration (30-36 months) was suggested for future similar initiatives.[21]

Senior Rail Travel Project
The launching of new products for seniors is seen to be the most successful outcome. For the first time, Interrail Tours has included an Interrail Pass in tourism packages specially designed for the

[21] ESCAPE Project representative. E-mail interview 2016-04-19.

needs of the senior target group. Interrail Premium Pass, which is designed for more independent senior travellers, is another product resulting from the project. Successful cooperation was established between numerous partners from the European countries involved, which continues even after the project's conclusion.

Two unavoidable issues had a negative impact on the project's results. Firstly, the Interrail product is complex, involving more than 30 partners and demanding specific technical requirements for issuing passes and respecting seat reservations. Secondly, the time frame was relatively short given that third parties, such as potential benefit or distribution partners, needed to be approached. The project's results may have been even better without these limitations. However, the consortium will continue to work together on the project after its official end, so the issue of finding partners in a restricted time frame will be solved.

Future recommendations include cooperating with seniors. However, consideration needs to be given to the fact that the target group is heterogeneous, so similar initiatives should carefully define the senior market segment and cooperate with exactly this segment.[22]

SenTOUR Connect
The most successful outcomes from the project were reported to be the quality criteria checklist for SME's, the senior tourism network, the Knowledge Centre on Senior Tourism, the practical experience of the packages for seniors, and the discussions and advice provided before and while they were travelling.

Although it was not an objective of the project, the possibility to also commercialise the products was cited as a way of achieving even better results. The project period did not allow for the development-evaluation and organisation of the packages in low season. However, this has been resolved by extending the project for 5 months during the low season. Another challenge mentioned was the evolution of the eCalypso platform during the project (B2B to B2C without a new direction being specified). This has been resolved with an improved website with links to eCalypso.

Recommendations for future similar initiatives include learning from existing projects, creating a knowledge centre with the existing project partners, and financing expertise procured to new projects.[23]

SenGor – Seniors go rural
The most successful outcomes were regarded to be the guidelines for product development, promotion material for both clients and micro-SME providers, the website, the “Silver Suitcase” logo as a registered trademark with possibility to be a future generic label, as well as the cooperation between the four parallel projects (common meeting and event in Florence, Feb 2016).

It was considered that, to gain even better results, the period for implementation and testing should have been longer and the delayed start of the project changed the testing period to a less favourable period of the year. The research on senior needs was conducted only through members of senior organisations, as stipulated by the project requirements. However such organisations do not cover the full spectrum of travellers in this age group. This is regarded as a limitation both for the research results and also for practical testing at a later stage.

One of the challenges of the project was that one partner from the side of the senior organisations left the project, making the involvement of the target group somewhat more complicated. Also, as previously mentioned, the fact that independent, fit seniors (the target) do not participate in senior organisations, meant that they were not reached through this communication channel. The timing of the actions after the delayed start was also a challenge, compounded by the fact that international travel for this age group still requires a longer pre-planning period than dealing with the younger generation.

[22] Senior Rail Travel Project representative. E-mail interview 2016-04-18.
[23] SenTOUR Project representative. E-mail interview 2016-04-20.

Recommendations for future similar initiatives include having more focus on technical (information, surveys etc) aspects of senior-friendly tourist offers and products, followed by dissemination and implementation through training, technical assistance, a repository of tools and examples, and an expert pool. Also, involving private commercial entities that already deal with this segment, either specifically (specialised entities or companies), or having seniors as a relevant part of their clientele (OTA, low-cost carriers) would be beneficial as they have valuable information about the preferences and behaviours of this segment. Sharing experience and knowledge exchange between relevant actors (projects, stakeholders, target group, destinations) is also a recommendation for future initiatives.[24]

[24] SenGor project representative. E-mail interview 2016-04-23.

5. Reflections on current and previous projects and initiatives

A list of previous and current EU initiatives and projects dealing with seasonality and age-friendly tourism can be found later in this report. While this list might not be fully exhaustive, it clearly reflects the EU's strong commitment to this issue and the importance that it has been given. Many valuable results have been generated by the previous initiatives and projects, and positive results are expected from the current and planned projects. However, there are important lessons to be learnt, which are highlighted here and later in the report.

5.1. Communication between projects and effective use of previous project results is essential

There has been an array of projects with similar themes, objectives and actions that have been implemented simultaneously, in the same time period. Projects also follow each other chronologically. This creates a risk of concurrent exploration of the same concept, but in different geographical areas, and also the starting of projects that don't build on the results of previous ones. It is recommended that future projects build on previous ones and learn from previous results. Further, the EU should design future project calls so that they highlight continuation and development of previous project results in order to make progress.

5.2. Target the senior market more precisely

Many of the above listed projects do not fully consider the heterogeneity of the senior segment. For example, accessibility is often a major theme in these projects, while many seniors today are very active and seek more challenging activities and experiences. Targeting seniors and creating specific products and packages for them can also be problematic as many seniors prefer not to be identified based on their age. On the contrary, many wish to travel on the same terms as others, and can be deterred by products specifically created for the +55 market group. In line with the research findings presented in Chapter 9, it is recommended that age-friendly tourism projects do not target this market as a homogenous group, but rather strive to understand the expectations and needs of the mature market as individuals and related to their travel locations, rather than the segment itself. Future initiatives should specifically define the kind of seniors they are targeting, find the right channels to reach them and also cooperate with this group.

5.3. Ensure actions correspond to market behaviours

EU project calls often require that participants from several different Member States form a project group and create transnational products, websites and platforms based on various themes. While this transnational cooperation is positive, transnational tourism products do not always correspond well to market demands. Different countries also have very different market conditions. Additionally, most tourists today, regardless of age, are not likely to use EU platforms and websites when browsing for holidays, but rather use established platforms with which they are familiar, such as booking.com, hotels.com, tripadvisor.com or travel agents. The tourism products developed in some of the above-mentioned projects are marketed through the project websites, which are normally not natural channels for tourists browsing holidays. To address this, flexibility in project calls is recommended as well as ensuring that project requirements are in line with market behaviours. One illustration of this issue is the project in which research into senior needs was required to be done through senior organisations, even though a large portion of the target group does not engage in these types of organisations. These kinds of requirements risk limiting project results.

5.4. Implement actions at the right levels

EU funds for these kinds of projects tend to be granted to organisations, DMO's, etc. However, the stakeholders that are most in need of such support, and would contribute most to growth and development, are the tourism SME's. Meaningful activities that would strengthen tourism SME's should be the core theme of all such projects, as this is most often where tourism consumption takes place. This issue is discussed further in Chapter 6: Business training for improving tourism in the off-peak season.

5.5. Define EU initiatives to support the tourism sector and its SME's

Transnational tourism products, packages, tourism websites and similar activities are facilitated and financed by the EU through different initiatives. To make these processes and results more effective and successful, and not compete with what is already being done in the market, the following recommendations are suggested:

1) Promote experience and knowledge exchange between relevant actors. Involve private commercial entities that are already active in this segment (specialised entities or companies, OTAs, low-cost carriers) – they have "real" and valuable information about the preferences and behaviour of this segment.
2) Consult and strengthen local tourism SMEs.

5.6. Allow for flexibility in project time frames

Proper formulation and adaptation of project time frames will help to ensure that objectives can easily be met and timings correspond with seasons. This enables effective market tests and the collection of feedback from users. When possible project length should be set based on project activities with flexibility in mind, so as not to hinder the project results.

6. Business training to increase and improve tourism during the off-peak season

6.1. Improving the tourism offer through SME business training

There are two main conclusions that can be drawn from the EULSTIB initiative work regarding improvement of the quality of offers for the senior market during the off-peak season:

- Firstly, knowledge and training are regarded as key factors for improving the quality of the tourism offer. Knowing the behaviour, needs and preferences of the target groups, as well as how to accommodate for them, is fundamental for strategically compiling and promoting tourism supply. Business training is identified as important for disseminating and using the knowledge gained about the markets.
- Secondly, training initiatives should be implemented from the bottom up, identifying the SME's as the key players in the industry, and subsequently, the main target group for business training. The role of SME's in the tourism industry is crucial in terms of visitors' perception of quality, since they are the main suppliers in the tourism chain, providing the services that the tourist will request during their holidays. Ensuring appropriate and updated knowledge and skills among tourism SME's is therefore seen as an important aspect of improving the overall destination offer.

6.2. Ensuring training for SMEs throughout the service chain

Most holidays include interaction with a number of service providers. One single experience of poor quality service is enough to lower the guest's overall satisfaction from the entire trip. From a destination development point of view, ensuring excellent quality levels and service all through the service chain is therefore crucial. This also creates an inter-dependence between tourism SME's. This might be even more pertinent when developing off-peak season tourism that is often characterised by less overall access to service.

Business training aimed at improving the overall tourism quality – for off-peak as well as peak seasons - must be provided to as many businesses as possible that interact with tourists. Tourism training initiatives tend to focus on large operators such as chain hotels and airlines, even though tourists interact with a number of other businesses (mostly SME's) while on holiday. Business training can instead be arranged, and be more beneficial, from a destination point of view rather than being in the hands of individual, separate businesses.

One method that can be used to identify a specific tourism service chain is the concept of geographical, linear and thematic destinations. **Geographical** destinations are defined by their geographical borders, and promote all products within the area under the same trademark (e.g. Paris or Tuscany). **Linear** destinations are shaped by linear itineraries (e.g. cruises or TranSiberian Railway) and **thematic** destinations are defined by a specific theme that connects different geographical points of interest (e.g. sports or wine). In this sense, the destination and its companies are defined by the activities the tourists wish to engage in during their holiday. The most significant products that compose the destination can be grouped and, if suitable, go through a general tourism quality business development programme together, focusing on hostmanship, accessibility, sustainability or other general themes. Grouping similar businesses in more niche-oriented business development programmes (like restaurants or accommodation services) has also proved successful.

6.3. Common features of good business training programmes

This list summarises the common features of successful tourism business training programmes, elements that can be seen in most programmes presented in Appendix 1. This list can be viewed as a guideline on what makes a good programme:

- They are **based on the guests and their behaviours, needs and preferences.** Only after such mapping has been carried out, should methods and strategies be designed for how to accommodate for them in the best way and keep business one step ahead. This knowledge comes from collaborating with research institutes or keeping up to date by other methods.

- They aim at providing SME's with **relevant skills, knowledge and tools to enable them to steer their own business development and competitiveness.**

- They have a high degree of **interaction**, including the businesses in the process, discussing in groups, and exchanging experiences, rather than learning through listening to lectures and reading books.

- They focus on a **wide range of operational and strategic development areas,** for example attracting and communicating with potential guests, how to create a physically better environment, how to better host guests once on site and managing customer care once they have left.

6.4. Examples of good business training programmes/initiatives

The following five examples of good business training programmes have proven successful, and represent a diverse mix of programmes (both geographically and thematically). There are many more examples available and a listing can also be found in Appendix 1, this list is merely intended to provide a view of the wide range of suitable programmes. Businesses should assess what kind of training they need to improve their quality and search for suitable local alternatives.

6.4.1 Kurbits Business Development Programme, Sweden

Kurbits is a national business development programme, specially adapted for the tourism industry. The programme process spans a 6-month period, including one meeting per month under the guidance of a specially trained process leader. Meetings are held in a workshop format, alternating new information with inspiration, cases and tools. External speakers and experts are also invited to the meetings to share their knowledge and experience. Between meetings, each participant receives personal coaching on-site at their respective businesses and works with practical tools to help implement their action plans. Kurbits was developed in 2008 by the Regional Development Council of Dalarna County in cooperation with the University of Dalarna and the Swedish Travel and Tourist Industry Federation (RTS).

For more information: http://www.kurbits.org/en

6.4.2. AdventureEDU, Adventure Travel Trade Association, International

AdventureEDU provides training for governments, associations and individual companies seeking to deliver the best adventure travel experiences in a safe and sustainable way. The programme focuses on areas such as who is today's adventure traveller, what do recent changes in the adventure industry mean for businesses and destinations, how to improve the quality and safety of adventure travel experiences, how to assess resources and construct distinctive adventure travel experiences, how to manage adventure tourism business risk, how to create the best online and offline marketing strategies for adventure businesses, and how to bring public and private partners together to foster a thriving market. Training is offered through in-destination training, expert designed online courses, partner training programmes and educational webinars.

For more information: http://www.adventuretravel.biz/education/adventure-edu/

6.4.3. Q Label, Belgium

Q Label is a programme aimed at improving standards and performance in the hotels, restaurants, attractions and leisure businesses along the Flemish coast. To ensure that standards and performance levels continue to improve for the long term, a group of business coaches has been trained – a team of tourism professionals from across Belgium – to run and administer the scheme. The results have been impressive – by July 2014, over 150 tourism businesses had been awarded the prestigious ‘Q Label’ quality standard and the scheme continues to go from strength to strength.

For more information: http://www.westtoer.be/nl/q-label

6.4.4. Authentic Bulgaria

Authentic Bulgaria is a development project that has the potential to build entrepreneurial skills and simultaneously, provide a suitable market response to the (latent) demand for alternative tourism products. Authentic Bulgaria is a network of quality certified independent hotels, guesthouses and bed and breakfasts throughout Bulgaria. The initiative is funded by USAID (United States Agency for International Development) and currently has approximately eighty fully assessed members. Assessment for being awarded a quality mark (bronze, silver or gold, with the possibility of also being awarded a rose for distinction) is based on seven criteria that include amenities, customer service, cultural aspects and business skills. Though there is scope for improvement, the network also offers a degree of business support/skills development for owner-managers.

For more information: www.authenticbulgaria.org and
http://www.oecd.org/cfe/tourism/40239549.pdf

6.4.5. Age-Friendly business recognition programme, Ireland

The Age-Friendly business recognition programme consists of a quality model for improving financial prosperity of retail and tourism businesses, as well as improving the quality of service for older adults. The National Business Recognition Programme is aimed at local businesses in counties where the Age-Friendly Cities & Counties programme is currently in operation.

Its aims are to:

- Recognise the efforts and improvements made by local business to provide more Age-friendly services and products
- Facilitate local businesses to further tap into an existing and growing market segment
- Share and collate online ‘best practice’ learned for wider dissemination

The implementation of the programme aims to ensure a lasting legacy of business lead initiatives that will improve the lives of older people. It highlights simple, low-cost, yet impactful practices to make a business age-friendly. Examples include making a business easier to find, enter, move around in and make purchases in.

Businesses can market themselves as Age-friendly Business and join the Age-friendly Business community to learn how to attract and retain their customer base.

For more information: http://agefriendlyireland.ie/resources/af-business/

7. Promoting tourism in Europe

7.1 Europe, the world's no 1 tourism destination

In June 2010, the European Commission adopted a framework policy entitled *'Europe, the world's No. 1 tourist destination – a new political framework for tourism in Europe'*. This framework set out a new strategy and action plan for tourism in the EU. Four priorities for action were identified:

1. To stimulate competitiveness in the European tourism sector
2. To promote the development of sustainable, responsible and high-quality tourism
3. To consolidate Europe's image as a collection of sustainable, high-quality destinations
4. To maximise the potential of EU financial policies for developing tourism.[25]

In implementing the above priorities, a number of marketing activities have been carried out at the EU level, in particular to promote Europe as "the world's number 1 tourist destination". Feedback received suggests that promoting Europe as one destination is the not the most powerful way to attract tourists to the region, though. There are several reasons for this.

Firstly, one of the major strengths of Europe as a destination is its diversity. Tourists are attracted by the different cultures, foods, experiences, history, scenery and more of the various countries. The risk in bringing together all these reasons-to-travel to showcase Europe's richness is that the offer becomes too broad and fails in targeting specific travellers with products that match their specific desires. In communication terms, when the content is for everybody, then it reaches nobody.

Secondly, the majority of trips that happen in Europe stem primarily from European countries, where "Europe" as a destination brand does not exist, nor does it need. The European traveller seeks other high-quality destinations based on a specific country's offerings that respond to their travel motivations.

It is worth noting though, that when targeting the markets of other continents, such as Asia or USA, "Europe" is a relevant brand. However it is already a very strong and well-understood brand, and Europe is considered a well-established destination among these global markets. So this is perhaps not where further brand building of "Europe" is required as a priority for tourism growth in the low and medium seasons.

The work that has been undertaken since the European Commission started to work to raise the awareness of Europe's top destinations has, nonetheless, created a strong platform that operators can use, as relevant, to market their respective travel offers, in the context this strong export destination.

7.2 Existing stakeholders and initiatives

In addition to the points made in 7.1 above, there are a number of planned, on-going and completed initiatives listed in Chapter 3 that focus on Europe as a tourist destination. There are also market-driven activities being carried out to increase growth in the tourism industry, and numerous stakeholders, such as the ETOA (European Tourism Association), one of the foremost trade associations for tour operators and suppliers in Europe, have organised a variety of events that sell Europe to the world.

Furthermore, companies such as Grand European Travel, Ving, Road Scholar (Elderhostel) realised early on the potential of the increasingly seasoned mature traveller and guest. These companies

[25] http://ec.europa.eu/growth/sectors/tourism/policy-overview/index_en.htm

already offer accommodation and activities for the mature traveller, simplify travel for multi-generational travellers and offer clear benefits during low season travelling.[26]

All the above puts into question whether the goal of EU funded projects should be to communicate Europe as a holistic destination brand.

7.3 Good examples of communication/marketing

There are lessons to be learnt from the purpose and actions of the various destinations for National Tourism Boards (NTB's). These NTB's focus on their specific mission and collaborate with other stakeholders as needed. This is particularly important in third world markets, where joint promotion and packaging is often successful. This, together with travel and visa regulations, makes it easier for a traveller to visit more countries during their chosen holiday. Collaboration across NTB's requires a knowledge and acceptance that one's own country success can be achieved by cooperating with the neighbouring country, rather than competing with it for tourism. This concept is called "co-compete" and is a way to build on the strengths of a diversified portfolio and subsequently create a better guest experience. A good example of this is Icelandair, which on the same flight ticket offers the traveller a stay of up to one week in Iceland, en route to or from a destination.[27] A traveller from the US can enjoy a longer stop-over in Iceland on their way to any of Icelandair's 28 European destinations with the same flight ticket. This initiative is seen as good practice both in product development and communication/marketing.

Another good example of cross-border cooperation within Europe is the "The Balkans" where Albania, Kosovo and Macedonia, have partnered to develop their communication and product innovation jointly in the region.[28] In this initiative, the countries operate the distribution chain directly together, from education and business training for SME's, inviting the leading media groups for fam-trips and organising B2B workshops globally. [29]

7.4. Communication challenges

Communication has changed significantly over the last 20 years. Nowadays, it is the guest who decides what is communicated and how a brand is perceived. Owners of brands and travel offerings have started to adapt their communication, to varying degrees of success.

Before search engines were the preferred tools for selecting a destination, tour operators could create an image through a travel brochure and word of mouth. These days have long since passed. The mature generation is familiar and comfortable with the digitised world nowadays, using it to keep in touch with children and grandchildren, for example. However, the degree of digital capability varies greatly in the mature generation from country to country. This is important for tourism providers to keep in mind so that they do not only rely on digital channels to share information, and thereby miss capturing their part of the growing mature traveller segment. With this in mind, a destination's role as a tour operator remains important, as a secure supplier of composite travels. [30]

The research publication "*Seniors' travel constraints and their coping source*" describes the difference in the travel behaviours of guests at a mature age, in comparison to the youth market. The main difference is that this consumer market lives in the knowledge that life is finite and that this removes the driving force for long-term goals, which are more quantitative rather than qualitative. The mature traveller gathers experiences that are here and now, while material purchases are less important to them. These mature travellers also have less interest in meeting

[26] http://www.etoa.org/
[27] https://www.icelandair.us/flights/stopover/?pos=US&lang=en
[28] https://www.youtube.com/watch?list=PLM8bF6fy45lAsHwR_M0vxPE4qSkLNLU3L&v=l55YjMpvtzc
[29] https://www.adventuretravel.biz/events/adventureweek/balkans/

[30] Results of the public consultation "european tourism of the future" 2013.

new social contacts, choosing instead to spend time with those they already know, or in many ways share the same perspective with. This is an important aspect to embed in marketing strategies aimed at the mature guest, particularly in product development. Additionally, communication to the mature traveller also needs to highlight factors related to accessibility and convenience frequently. However, communication of “accessibility” needs to be subtle, just one of the travel reasons that mature guests look for, and embedded into existing platforms that guests already use, such as TripAdvisor.

Immense changes have occurred since the inception of social media in the communication chain and today new tools for marketing are constantly being invented. Regardless, Word of Mouth (WOM) has long been one of the most important channels for successful communication. The difference today is that WOM has become digital, and opinions are accepted by viewers who messengers do not know, but who share the same values and preferences. Consequently, such information has become acknowledged and accepted as a valid source for reviews and advice.[31]

For businesses, it has become critically important to include digital communication as a key component of marketing and communication strategies, rather than using analogue communication for spreading information. The most significant and common digital tool available is the smart phone, with communication messages being adapted to be delivered, understood and managed through the mobile screen. Customers are increasingly demanding seamless solutions, to be able to switch between different screens and applications. Business must be where the consumer is, and let the consumer do their communication, and of utmost importance for the consumer is free wi-fi and network access.

Regardless of today’s communication trends, be they digitalisation, online marketing, content marketing or social media, successful communication still starts with the consumer’s ‘why.’ Why does the traveller in the targeted age group choose to travel? For all stakeholders within any sector, communicating a “why” that matches the traveller’s motivation or interests, irrespective of age, will drive demand.[32] [33]

7.5. The greater you know the customer the more you stand to gain

As previously mentioned, everything hinges on having as much knowledge of the guest as possible. This poses a major challenge for the tourism industry where consumers shifted to new ways of communicating very early on. The implication for small business entrepreneurs is that they need to continuously update their knowledge and skills related to these new channels and methods of guest communication. This does not necessarily mean that the companies themselves should always manage the communication process. However knowing of and working with partners and experts in the communications field is often unfamiliar to small business owners too.

Since communication in the tourism industry largely takes place through social media, guest experiences are very transparent and largely consumer-communicated. For a tourism company, it is important to be where the guest already is and to be able to handle booking behaviour and payment in an entirely new way. This has given rise to the rapid development of OTA’s and other business models. Today, many travellers begin their journeys without having any pre-booked accommodation or transport – instead they book along the way as they travel. For tourism companies, this creates a lot of uncertainty and difficulty in planning for staffing and purchasing.

Guests also demand the ability to communicate in real time with suppliers. Again this is problematic for small businesses, which are often too preoccupied with delivering their respective products to be able to respond immediately. With today’s social media channels, the opinion of a disappointed

[31] https://www.researchgate.net/publication/277304941_CURRENT_TRENDS_IN_MARKETING_COMMUNICATION_AND_THEIR_APPLICATION_TO_TOURISM

[32] https://www.startwithwhy.com/

[33] https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/harnessing-power-people-media-inspired-iceland-da%C3%B0i-gu%C3%B0j%C3%B3nsson?trk=prof-post

guest today can reach larger numbers of potential guests, and lead to catastrophic consequences for small businesses. It’s clear therefore that understanding how guests communicate their experiences is essential. When today’s consumers have less patience and the ability to move on to the next provider, every tourism entrepreneur needs to be able to deliver their message clearly, and at the same time handle any mistakes effectively.[34]

[34] Information and communication technologies in tourism 2016, Alessandro Inversini & Roland Schegg.

Part II – Current and future low and mid season tourism demand, and its impact on jobs and economic growth

8. Trends & behaviour of the over 55's

8.1 The mature consumer

It's important to keep in mind that the older population of travellers does not necessarily look or behave as they may traditionally have done. The older generation of today can be classed as "mature people", who experience a "third golden age", a group of people with more energy, physical health and stable finances and who prioritise continued mental and physical wellbeing.

The mature consumer is estimated to be a sizable market. According to Euromonitor, the global population of 65+ is estimated to be around 626 million people in 2016, out of a global population of 7.3 billion. Characteristics of this market are: retired from work, have the financial means to travel, perhaps become entrepreneurs, work with hobby-related activities or advance their retirement age. Their financial assets vary, however, this is a consumer that presents opportunity for the industry, and a number of individuals have already taken advantage of the potential of targeted offers and promotions. It is important to understand the diverse needs of this target group, whose demands and wants vary greatly from one individual to the next. Many of the older generation have high standards for their food and cultural experiences and it is of utmost importance to understand their desires linked to perceived good deals. The same applies with convenience, as age-friendly trips often involve long bus transportation or other types of sedentary guiding. This offering may have been intended to allow travellers to see as much as possible as simply as possible, but equally it can pose the threat of a disappointed guest.

One clear feature is that the mature population prioritises and selects destinations that enable their financial resources to last longer. While some travellers have well-paid pensions, there is a big portion of this market that does not have the same financial ability, and as a result chooses to stay in places where the money lasts longer. This leaves an imprint on the economy, in terms of consumption as a whole, but also becomes apparent in the tourism industry.

Previously, the slower digital acceptance of the mature generation has been an obstacle that has required the industry to find alternate ways to reach different audiences. However, the current trend clearly shows a more digitally aware behaviour, and the Internet and social media have become a natural way to keep in touch and plan everyday life and leisure even for the mature generation. Importantly, by improving their digital skills, elderly people now have an opportunity to be more participative in broader aspects of society, and avoid digital exclusion.[35]

8.2 Culture tourism

Culture is an important reason to travel. For many years, Europe has been a key destination for culturally interested travellers wanting to see and enjoy Europe's history and cultural heritage. During recent years, cultural tourism has become somewhat more creative, with tourists becoming more participative in the experience and contributing to new cultural formats. A number of examples include: tourists participating in the local culture and the daily lives of the locals, greater contact/sharing between "suppliers" and "consumers", increased importance of authentic and real experiences, and the possibility to learn and create for oneself as a tourist. This trend also provides an opportunity for culture to continue to develop with the help of tourism as interested tourists appreciate the local culture and folklore that exists and are willing to pay for them. Cultural tourism also includes the growing "volunteer tourism" market, in which the tourist assists and works as part of the tourist experience.

[35] Euromonitor International, Top 10 global consumer trend for 2016, Daphne Kasriel-Alexander

In connection with the increased interest in culture and creativity, there's great potential in the "cultural routes" that have been developed in Europe, for example focused on gastronomy and history. These tours are a way for companies and destinations to develop products and increase profitability using their existing cultural assets. To develop this concept and create growth and employment, existing folklore, stories and history need to be preserved and made available to companies, for example, so that they can package it to increase guest satisfaction and thereby increase profitability.[36]

8.3 Adventure tourism (nature+culture+activity)

Another area that continues to grow and contribute to sustainable development of the tourism industry is so-called "adventure tourism". This type of tourism can in its simplicity, be seen as the opposite of mass tourism in terms of its consideration for social, environmental and economical factors. The UNWTO, in cooperation with ATTA (Adventure Travel Trade Association), has produced a report describing what adventure tourism is, how it affects host destinations economically and how it preserves nature and culture, rather than exploits them. Exploitation is one of the most common concerns regarding growth in the tourism industry. From a seasonal perspective, this segment is particularly interesting since travel mainly occurs outside the mass touristic flows and destinations.

Today, there is no exact definition of adventure tourism in UNWTO's literature, but ATTA defines adventure tourism as: a trip that includes a minimum of two of the following three elements: physical activity, the natural environment and cultural immersion. The UNWTO's Secretary General Taleb Rifai has also said, "For companies and destinations, adventure travel attracts visitors outside of peak season, highlights the natural and cultural values of a destination, thereby promoting its preservation, helps differentiate the destination against the competition and creates resilient and committed travellers."

One of the most important aspects in valuing the profitability of the tourist industry is also to calculate how much of the money spent actually comes into the local economy. The United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) has produced statistics showing that in most all-inclusive packages, flights, hotels and other international companies account for 80% of the cost of mass tourism packages. From US$ 100, only an estimated US$ 5 goes into the visited destination, a figure that varies between different places in the world. In contrast, a total of 65.6% of the money spent on a trip remained in the visited destination from an adventure package, based on a review ATTA carried out in 2014.

Adventure tourism is often built on local conditions, culture, nature and the local population. As a result, tourism to the destination is more likely to strengthen the various sustainability factors. In terms of economics, there is a marked difference in the amount of consumption that actually takes place in the visited destination. This in turn leads to an increase in employment and strengthening in social and cultural factors through showcasing the authenticity and uniqueness of the location.[37]

8.4. Health tourism

Another form of tourism that is relevant for the older generation is medical or health tourism. This involves people travelling with the intention of receiving some form of medical treatment – anything from dental care to cosmetic surgery. Often, patients from more developed countries travel to less developed countries to access cheaper medical care, which is facilitated by cheap flights and online information.[38]

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[36] https://www.academia.edu/9491857/Tourism_trends_The_convergence_of _culture_and_tourism

[37] http://cf.cdn.unwto.org/sites/all/files/pdf/final_1global_report_on_adventure_tourism.pdf
[38] https://www.oecd.org/els/health-systems/48723982.pdf

The availability of medical treatment (hospital, health centre or similar) is also more generally relevant for age-friendly travel. For some travellers existence of, or distance to, a health care facility can be a crucial factor when choosing a destination or hotel, especially for those with diseases or other health concerns.

"The GERAS project" in Cyprus is an example of an initiative centred around the medical and health care demands of the mature generation. The project involves setting up a healthy ageing community, focusing on the 55+ generation, as a place of part time or permanent residency, in a fully serviced environment, with a Greek village character.

To bring a social community effect to the village, GERAS offers medical, care and healthy ageing services as the basis for attracting residents/guests. [39]

8.5. Seniors' travel constraints

The article "Seniors' travel constraints and their coping strategies"[40] presents a model for how different types of limitations and levels of tolerable constraint affects the mature traveller's choice of activities and destinations. The article showcases both travel to the destination and also constraints in the actual location. These types of constraints need to influence work related to the accessibility of the travel experience, product development and also communication towards the target group. In terms of communication, imagery plays a key role and needs to be carefully selected so that the target group can identify itself with the people in the picture. This poses a challenge since few people want to identify with an older audience.

From a product development perspective, it is important that the product owners understand the need to always be one step ahead in providing information, so that the guest does not feel exposed to insecurity or uncertainty. For example, the wrong information about the clothing requirements for activities, or guided tours unavailable in a guest's own language are common reasons for mature traveller dissatisfaction.

In "*Marketing for Senior Travellers: segmentation, travel behaviour and the marketing mix*," Dr. Aija van der Steina presents factors that are important when developing and marketing products for the mature target group. Trust and relationships are important throughout the service chain. Make it "senior-friendly", for example regarding information, seating, staff and quality. Operators should ensure that privacy needs are met and that there is time and easily accessible places to rest. [41]

[39] Dr. Uwe Klein, Health Care Strategy Int. http://www.healthcsi.de/

[40] http://jtr.sagepub.com/content/54/1/80.full.pdf+html

[41] http://www.tourage.eu/uploads/podkarpackie%20conference/Aija_van_der_Steina_TOURAGE_Marketing%20for%20seniors.pdf

9. Research focusing on age-friendly and low season tourism

This chapter presents some existing research focused on age-friendly and low season tourism. The objective is to provide general knowledge and perspectives to underpin recommendations to help increase the competiveness of tourism during low to mid-season periods.

9.1 Age-friendly tourism

A considerable body of empirical evidence has been accumulated regarding the importance of travelling in later life. Researchers have explored a wide range of topics, such as understanding the travel decision-making processes among the elderly, comparing the travel behaviours of elderly tourists with those of younger tourists, identifying subgroups within the elderly market segment and investigating the effect of travel experience on elderly life satisfaction.

Over the past decades, models of active and successful aging have emerged in many countries as the foremost policy responses to challenges related to an aging population. Tourism is perceived as an important component in the quest for active living in later life. Research has shown that significant psychological and physical benefits can accrue from travelling. As life expectancies rise and large population concentrations enter their retirement years, accommodating the elderly is becoming an increasingly significant factor in various businesses in the tourism industry.

A growing number of elderly people are seeking active, fulfilling and adventurous travel experiences upon retirement. The tourism industries have the potential to serve this lucrative market and make significant differences in the quality of these travellers' lives. In fact, different trends related to aging have emerged. In many countries, the tourism industries have been seeking ways to ensure that their infrastructure and products are accessible to the elderly, and that they can enjoy the destinations with equity and dignity. To help cities become more "age-friendly," the World Health Organization (WHO) prepared a document in 2007 called 'Global Age-Friendly Cities: A Global Guide.' In recent years, specific tourist products targeting the elderly have been developed, such as medical and wellness tourism and root-searching tourism. Although the elderly constitutes a large and constantly growing market with significant buying potential, tourism offers for this age group are relatively limited due to its heterogeneity (i.e., differences in social economic status, health conditions, needs, interests and travel experiences). This diversity may also explain the varying conclusions from travel, leisure, and hospitality studies on the elderly population.

In the *International Journal of Hospitality Management* (2016:53, pp 133–144), Kam Hunga and Jiaying Lub published a state-of-the-art article named *Active living in later life*, where they carry out a review of studies on aging in hospitality and tourism journals. They conclude that during the last three decades 6 of the main tourism journals have published a total of 52 articles focusing on tourism and the elderly. The articles define the elderly as slightly different, but they are mostly based on the traditional chorological model using calendar years to measure age. The review suggests 60 – 65 years old as the transition into late adulthood, and 65 years and above as the age at which one is qualified to receive benefits according to law. The main conclusions from most of the studies discuss the significant market size and purchasing power as well as demographic growth and forecasts related to the elderly. The studies also demonstrate that consumer behaviours of the elderly differ from other groups on the travel market.

However, one cannot consider the elderly as a homogenous group. Several researchers have suggested that the holidaymaking behaviour of the elderly market can be segmented into the 55 - 65 age group, and the over 65 group, based on their income and health. In addition to age, other factors have also been used to segment the elderly groups, including reasons for travel, constraints, satisfaction and past travel experience.

A comparison study aiming to show similarities and differences between elderly and non-elderly travellers concludes that older residents are generally as favourably disposed to tourism as their younger counterparts and they appear to enjoy many of the same events as the general population. No supplementary facilities are required with the exception of those related to health. Furthermore, one common type of pleasure trip taken by both groups is to visit friends and relatives. Expectations regarding hotels, food and transportation are approximately the same. The study also states that satisfaction with restaurant service is more important for the mature group than for the younger group, and thus mature consumers tend to be more loyal than others. Essentially, this comparison report shows that older travellers are in most ways just the same as other travel groups.

To summarise research on age-friendly tourism, one can understand the aging customer in tourism contexts from one of two perspectives: the elderly as an individual traveller or the elderly as a homogenous segment of the travel market. Based on the tourism research of recent decades it is logical, and more strategic, to develop age-friendly tourism shaped on the expectations, needs and travel locations of the elderly as a more heterogeneous group of individuals.

9.2 Low season tourism

Seasonal variation in demand is a reality for most tourism destinations. Seasonality has long been recognised as one of the most distinctive features of tourism, and after the movement of people on a temporary basis, may be the most typical characteristic of tourism on a global basis. The phenomena has frequently been viewed as a major problem for the tourism industry, and has been held responsible for creating or exacerbating a number of difficulties faced by the industry, including problems in gaining access to capital, obtaining and holding full-time staff, low returns on investment causing subsequent high risk in operations, and for problems relating to peaking and overuse of facilities. Conversely, it has also been blamed for the under-utilisation of these resources and facilities, often preventing tourism being accepted as a viable economic activity in many areas. It is not surprising, therefore, that considerable efforts have been made by both public and private sectors to attempt to reduce seasonality in destination areas through a variety of approaches.

Seasonality in tourism is a key topic in academic literature. It has been studied for decades by a number of authors, as well as by policy makers in the tourism sector. Tourism seasonality can be defined as the temporal imbalance in the phenomenon of tourism, which may be expressed in terms of numbers of visitors, expenditure of visitors, traffic on motorways and other forms of transportation, employment and admissions to attractions. The number of tourists – that is, the arrivals or the presence of tourists – is a measure of the *quantitative* dimension of the demand, while their expenditure measures the *economic* value of the demand for the tourism destination. We can distinguish different causes of seasonality in tourism: natural causes, which are beyond the control of decision-makers (climatic factors such as temperature, sunlight, rainfall); and institutional causes, a combination of religious, social and cultural factors, which are partially under the control of the decision-makers (i.e. the schedule of school holidays or the planning and scheduling of festivals).

Seasonality has economic impacts in terms of private and social costs that usually largely exceed the few benefits. The private costs are paid by each of the agents involved: private producers, final consumers and workers. Private producers (i.e. hotels, restaurants) yield a lower return on the capital invested if their investments are tailored to the peak-season demand, suffering from a high level of under-exploited capacity and fixed costs in the off-seasons. The final consumers of the destination, both tourists and residents, pay higher prices for any kind of product and service they buy in the peak season. The workers in the tourism sector typically accept seasonal jobs, without the usual protection required by labour contracts, and long periods of unemployment. However, under certain circumstances, tourism seasonality can produce some private benefits for example, in rural areas, where tourism and agriculture are complementary, and in any destination where the rate of unemployment is high and the opportunity-cost of labour is low.

The social costs of seasonality related to local public utilities (i.e., water supply, waste management and traffic management) cause dissatisfaction in residents and in tourists alike, due to peak-season tourism congestion. Social costs are also linked to the pressure of tourism on the environment and that tourism could be unsustainable for the destination if it overruns the carrying capacity of the site, and causes irreversible damage for present and future generations. On the contrary, in the case of strong attractions (e.g. Paris, Venice or Barcelona) that do not usually suffer from seasonality but experience very high tourism pressure throughout the year, seasonality could bring some benefits because in the off-seasons the local communities could enjoy some respite from tourists.

The empirical literature on the economic determinants of tourism seasonality looks at both the demand and the supply side. Empirical research, using official data on arrivals, identifies tourists' income, price (relative price and exchange rate for foreign tourists) and substitute prices as determinants of the seasonal variation of the demand. Other determinants, such as consumer characteristics and preferences, social and cultural interests, are mentioned in empirical literature and some of these characteristics (e.g., age, provenance) have been studied by several researchers.

Large disparities in visitor numbers and revenue for many attractions require innovations in product development and market diversification outside the peak tourist season for suppliers to maintain adequate levels of turnover. In some cases, the lack of cost effectiveness and desirability to operate through the off-peak season, where demand is insufficient, often result in partial or even complete shutdown. While lifestyle entrepreneurs may proactively plan a shutdown period, others may seek to remain open throughout the low season. For policy makers and marketers, a supply of attractions open throughout the low season supports efforts to address seasonality of demand as destinations can then be marketed in more innovative ways to new and existing markets, and thereby stabilise or grow regional economies.

10. The tourism industry – economic contribution, statistics and seasonality

“International tourism reached new heights in 2015. The robust performance of the sector is contributing to economic growth and job creation in many parts of the world. It is thus critical for countries to promote policies that foster the continued growth of tourism, including travel facilitation, human resources development and sustainability (…) 2015 results were influenced by exchange rates, oil prices and natural and manmade crises in many parts of the world. As the current environment highlights in a particular manner the issues of safety and security, we should recall that tourism development greatly depends upon our collective capacity to promote safe, secure and seamless travel. In this respect, UNWTO urges governments to include tourism administrations in their national security planning, structures and procedures, not only to ensure that the sector’s exposure to threats is minimised but also to maximise the sector’s ability to support security and facilitation, as seamless and safe travel can and should go hand in hand”.
(UNWTO Secretary-General, Taleb Rifai) [42]

10.1. Estimated contribution to employment and economic growth

International tourism arrivals grew by 4.4% in 2015 and reached a total of 1,184 million. This means 50 million more tourists travelled to international destinations around the world compared to 2014. Arrivals in Europe in 2015 reached 609 million, a growth of 5% compared to 2014. This infographic, shared by the UNWTO provides a clear idea of why tourism matters in the world economy.

Although these figures may be perceived to be high, a lot more is expected in the coming years regarding the significance of tourism in terms of the labour market and economic growth worldwide.[43]

[42] http://media.unwto.org/press-release/2016-01-18/international-tourist-arrivals-4-reach-record-12-billion-2015

[43] http://media.unwto.org/content/infographics

10.1.1. How to define the contribution of tourism to employment and economic growth

The economic impact of tourism can be defined in different ways. The WTTC methodology of total contribution, taking all direct, indirect and induced impacts into account is used for the purposes of this report (see below).

The information below (*Direct Contribution* and *Total Contribution*) has been taken from the report *Travel & Tourism Economic Impact 2015 World*[44])

Direct Contribution
The direct contribution of Travel & Tourism to GDP reflects the 'internal' spending on Travel & Tourism (total spending within a particular country on Travel & Tourism by residents and non-residents for business and leisure purposes) as well as government 'individual' spending - spending by government on Travel & Tourism services directly linked to visitors, such as cultural (eg. museums) or recreational (eg. national parks).

The direct contribution of Travel & Tourism to GDP is calculated to be consistent with the output, as expressed in National Accounting, of tourism-characteristic sectors such as hotels, airlines, airports, travel agents and leisure and recreation services that deal directly with tourists. The direct contribution of Travel & Tourism to GDP is calculated from total internal spending by 'netting out' the purchases made by the different tourism industries. This measure is consistent with the definition of Tourism GDP, specified in the 2008 Tourism Satellite Account: Recommended Methodological Framework (TSA: RMF 2008).

Total Contribution
The total contribution of Travel & Tourism includes its 'wider impacts' (ie. the indirect and induced impacts) on the economy. The 'indirect' contribution includes the GDP and jobs supported by:

- *Travel & Tourism investment spending – an important aspect of both current and future activity that includes investment activity such as the purchase of new aircraft and construction of new hotels;*
- *Government 'collective' spending, which helps Travel & Tourism activity in many different ways as it is made on behalf of the 'community at large' – e.g. tourism marketing and promotion, aviation, administration, security services, resort area security services, resort area sanitation services, etc.;*
- *Domestic purchases of goods and services by the sectors dealing directly with tourists - including, for example, purchases of food and cleaning services by hotels, of fuel and catering services by airlines, and IT services by travel agents.*

The 'induced' contribution measures the GDP and jobs supported by the spending of those who are directly or indirectly employed by the Travel & Tourism sector.

10.1.2. Tourism contribution to employment and growth (GDP) in 2015

To make the estimated future contribution by tourism to employment and growth relatable, below is a summary of the 2015 statistics regarding travel and tourism contribution to world GDP and employment:

- The direct contribution to world GDP from travel and tourism was US$ 2.2 trillion. The total contribution, including indirect and induced effects, was US$ 7.2 trillion (almost 9% of total GDP). The sector's total contribution to the world economy grew 3.1% this year, which is faster than the wider economic growth of 2.3%.

[44] https://www.wttc.org/-/media/files/reports/economic%20impact%20research/regional%202015/world2015.pdf

- Travel and tourism directly supported 108 million jobs. Including indirect and induced employment, the sector supported 284 million jobs, or 1 out of 11 of all jobs in the world. Total contribution to employment grew by 2.6% this year.[45]

10.1.3. Estimated future contribution – A forecast to 2025

- The direct contribution of travel and tourism to GDP is forecast to rise by 3.9% pa, from 2015 - 2025, to US$ 3,593.2bn (3.3% of total GDP) in 2025. The total contribution in 2025 is forecast to rise by 3.8% pa to US$ 11,381.9bn (10.5% of GDP).
- Travel & tourism direct support to jobs is forecast to rise by 2.0% pa to 130,694,000 jobs (3.9% of total employment) in 2025. Including jobs indirectly supported by the industry, this is expected to rise by 2.3% pa to 356,911,000 jobs in 2025 (10.7% of total).[46]

World	2014 USDbn[1]	2014 % of total	2015 Growth[2]	2025 USDbn[1]	2025 % of total	2025 Growth[3]
Direct contribution to GDP	2,364.8	3.1	3.7	3,593.2	3.3	3.9
Total contribution to GDP	7,580.9	9.8	3.7	11,381.9	10.5	3.8
Direct contribution to employment[4]	105,408	3.6	2.0	130,694	3.9	2.0
Total contribution to employment[4]	276,845	9.4	2.6	356,911	10.7	2.3
Visitor exports	1,383.8	5.7	2.8	2,140.1	5.6	4.2
Domestic spending	3,642.1	4.7	3.7	5,465.0	4.1	3.8
Leisure spending	3,850.2	2.3	3.3	5,928.8	2.5	4.1
Business spending	1,175.7	0.7	4.0	1,679.0	0.7	3.2
Capital investment	814.4	4.3	4.8	1,336.4	4.9	4.6

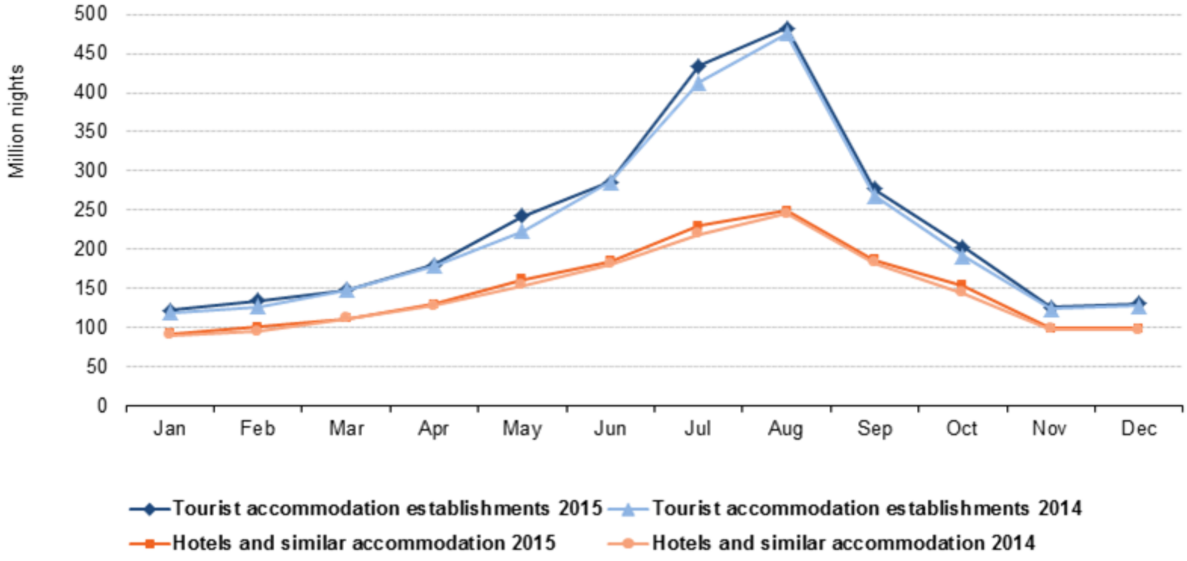
[1]2014 constant prices & exchange rates; [2]2015 real growth adjusted for inflation (%); [3]2015-2025 annualised real growth adjusted for inflation (%); [4]'000 jobs

45 http://www.wttc.org/-/media/files/reports/economic%20impact%20research/2016%20documents/economic%20impact%20summary%202016_a4%20web.pdf
46 https://www.wttc.org/-/media/files/reports/economic%20impact%20research/regional%202015/world2015.pdf

10.2. Measuring seasonality in tourism

10.2.1. Tourism in the EU

Graph 1: Nights spent at tourist accommodation establishments in EU28 during 2015 and 2014:



Graph source: Eurostat[47]

This information indicates that the demand for tourist accommodation establishments in EU member states generally peaks during the summer months (June - September). It also shows a general growth in nights spent between 2014 and 2015. This growth is stated country by country in the following table which also indicates that the EU in total experienced a growth of 3.2% 2014 - 2015.

Table 1: Nights spent at tourist accommodation establishments, January to December 2015 and January to December 2014

47 http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/File:Evolution_of_the_number_of_nights_spent_at_EU-28_tourist_accommodation_establishments,_January_to_December_2015_and_January_to_December_2014_(Million_nights).png

	January to December 2015		January to December 2014		2015/2014 change (%)	
	Tourist accommodation establishments(¹)	Hotels and similar accommodation	Tourist accommodation establishments(¹)	Hotels and similar accommodation	Tourist accommodation establishments(¹)	Hotels and similar accommodation
EU-28(²)	2 765 922	1 795 696	2 679 479	1 741 632	3.2	3.1
Belgium	38 151(b)	18 962(b)	32 606	19 008	:b	:b
Bulgaria	21 398	19 655	21 698	19 983	-1.4	-1.6
Czech Republic	47 246	34 445	42 947	31 687	10.0	8.7
Denmark	30 811	15 020	29 647	13 780	3.9	9.0
Germany	378 991	272 511	367 054	263 393	3.3	3.5
Estonia	5 782	4 747	5 809	4 806	-0.5	-1.2
Ireland	:u	:u	:u	:u	:	:
Greece	96 030	74 466	95 116	73 952	1.0	0.7
Spain	422 065	308 237	403 722	295 344	4.5	4.4
France	413 602	208 226	402 246	201 894	2.8	3.1
Croatia	71 348	22 173	66 125	21 004	7.9	5.6
Italy	384 980	259 686	378 176	255 252	1.8	1.7
Cyprus	14 266	14 264	13 715	13 690	4.0	4.2
Latvia	4 110	3 374	4 158	3 308	-1.2	2.0
Lithuania	6 557	3 613	6 465	3 543	1.4	2.0
Luxembourg	:u	:u	2 868	1 699	:	:
Hungary	26 905	20 855	26 054	20 072	3.3	3.9
Malta	8 916	8 674	8 784	8 535	1.5	1.6
Netherlands	103 604	41 554	100 882	39 975	2.7	3.9
Austria	113 366	87 266	110 441	85 311	2.6	2.3
Poland	71 234	38 805	66 580	35 649	7.0	8.9
Portugal	55 527	48 891	55 310	47 672	0.4	2.6
Romania	23 442	19 746	20 230	17 317	15.9	14.0
Slovenia	9 899	6 583	9 223	6 232	7.3	5.6
Slovakia	12 111	8 361	10 780	7 308	12.3	14.4
Finland	19 778	16 113	19 801	16 003	-0.1	0.7
Sweden	54 715	33 909	52 280	31 074	4.7	9.1
United Kingdom	:u	:u	296 966	179 242	:	:
Iceland	6 711	4 120	5 490	3 287	22.2	25.3
Liechtenstein	112	91	132	110	-15.4	-16.9
Norway	31 653	21 666	30 314	20 435	4.4	6.0
Switzerland	:	35 628	:	35 695	:	-0.2
Montenegro	11 055	2 856	9 554	2 682	15.7	6.5
FYR of Macedonia	1 640	1 242	1 519	1 084	8.0	14.6
Serbia	6 619	4 373	5 954	3 858	11.2	13.4
Turkey	:	:	:	128 504	:	:

(¹) Tourist accommodation establishments include groups 55.1, 55.2 and 55.3 of NACE Rev.2 (cf. Methodological notes).
(²) EU-28 aggregate for 2015: estimated for the purpose of this publication.
"b" - break in time series.
":" - data not available.
"u" - low reliability.

Table source: Eurostat[48]

10.2.2. A selection of indicators

There is currently no uniform system for measuring seasonality patterns that is applicable to all destinations. There are, however, a number of different indicators that can be used. A selection of the most commonly used indicators that have proven to be effective is presented below.

Arrivals (or Departures)
Fluctuations in arrivals is one way of describing a destination's seasonality patterns. The higher the variation in demand between different periods, the higher the seasonality (provided that businesses maintain full availability all year round). The number of departures can also describe tourism seasonality in terms of variations in demand. By looking at the departures, domestic or outbound in a specific area (the EU for instance), one can gain knowledge of travel patterns – when people

48 http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/File:Nights_spent_at_tourist_accommodation_establishments,_January_to_December_2015_and_January_to_December_2014_(Thousand_nights).png

actually take trips. However, this information does not automatically coincide with seasonality on the supply-side, as residents might travel outside the area measured and also since arrivals from outside the area measured are not counted. Measurements of arrivals or departures are usually related to transportation (arrivals/departures at airports for example). This does not however take non-commercial transportation (private cars for instance) into account.

Nights spent
Nights spent at tourism accommodation establishments is another way of measuring seasonality patterns. However, this does not take non-commercial accommodation into account, such as tourists staying with friends and family, nor it is possible to count accommodation nights mediated by the C2C-market, such as couch surfing.

Pricing
Measurements and comparisons of prices (of accommodation, transport or other tourism-related businesses) over periods of time in a destination can provide an estimation of tourism seasonality periods. High prices indicate peak season (high demand) while low prices indicate low season (low demand). Prices are set high in peak season to benefit from the high demand, maximising revenues, while providing discounted prices during low season to stimulate demand.

Business economic indicators
Variations in demand can also be described by comparing tourism-related businesses' turnover or earnings between different periods. However, as the pricing might differ between periods, this does not automatically correspond to numbers of visitors, but still provides a reasonable idea of levels of demand.

Availability
Businesses tend to limit their opening hours or close their services completely during low season to avoid the risk of not covering their costs due to low demand. An estimation of seasonality can be made by looking at overall differences in service availability over time.

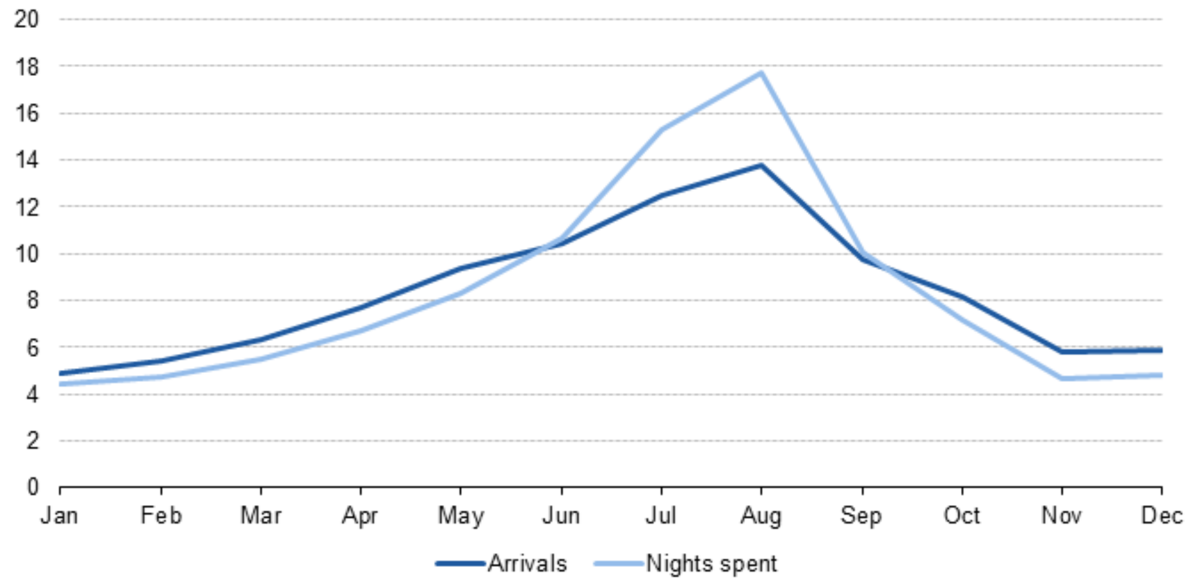
Big data
Through big data analysis, different variables related to seasonality (for example web traffic, search words, supply and demand, social media engagement, transport statistics) can be measured.

10.2.3. Seasonal variations in tourism demand in the EU

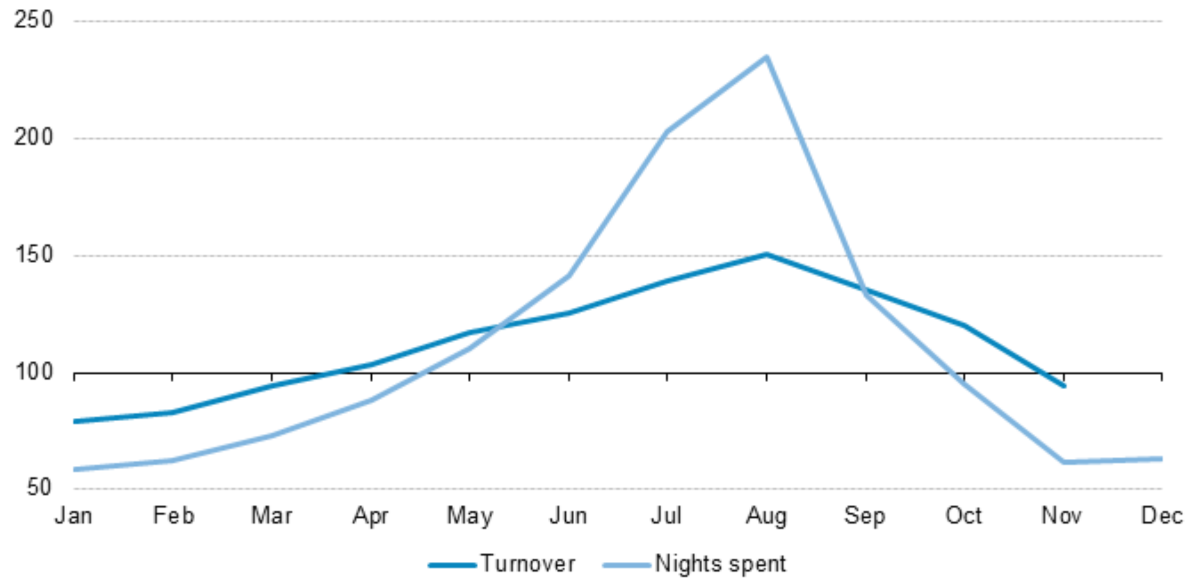
The following graphs (nr 2-7) from Eurostat[49] illustrate the 2014 seasonal variations in tourism demand in different EU countries. The statistics here are based on arrivals and nights spent in tourist accommodation establishments as the method of measurement. However, seasonality in accommodation establishments' turnover also correlates well with the occupancy, see graph 3. Graph 2 shows that tourism demand in Europe is generally highest in the summer months of June, July and August, peaking at the end of July to the beginning of August. Graphs 4, 5 and 6 show seasonality patterns of countries with low, medium and high seasonality respectively, while graph 7 shows an example of a bimodal pattern with summer and winter peaks. All figures illustrate the complexity of seasonality and the local differences across the EU. At an even more local level, for example in a city, variations in demand may differ between weekdays and weekends, creating a weekly seasonality. The conclusion from this data is that when examining tourism seasonality at the EU level, consideration must be given to local differences, and it cannot be assumed that all destinations struggle with their visitor levels in a similar period. To present an even more extreme example, graph 8 shows the seasonality pattern from one specific winter destination.

Graph 2: Monthly distribution of the total number of arrivals and nights spent at tourist accommodation establishments, EU28, 2014, (%)

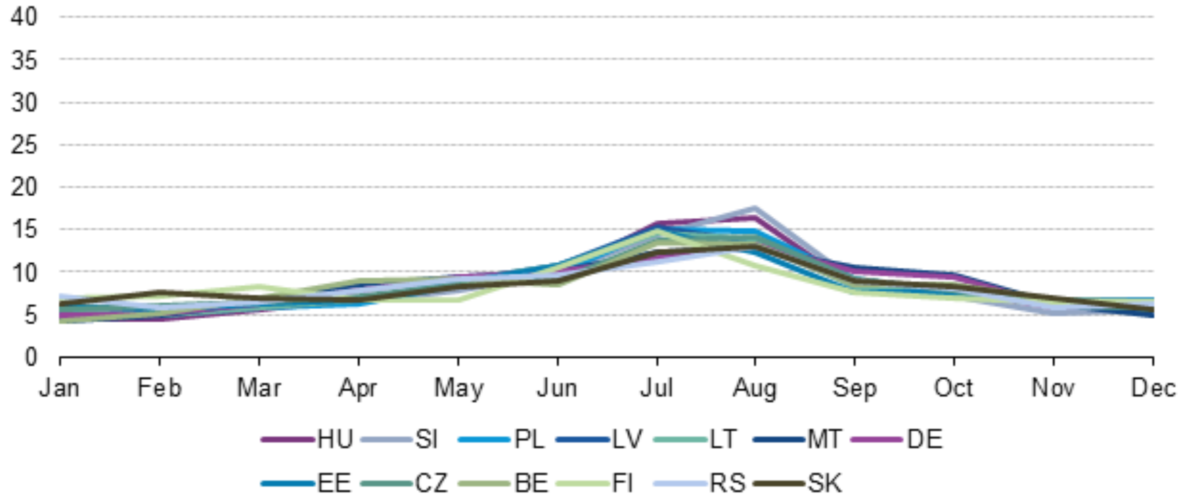
[49] All graphs: http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Seasonality_in_the_tourist_accommodation_sector



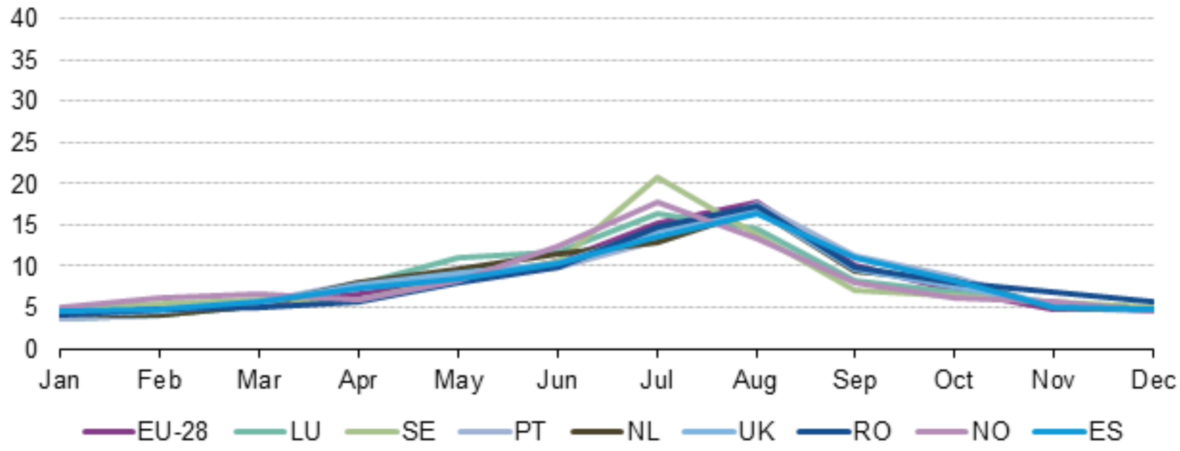
Graph 3: Monthly working day adjusted turnover and monthly nights spent at tourist accommodation establishments.



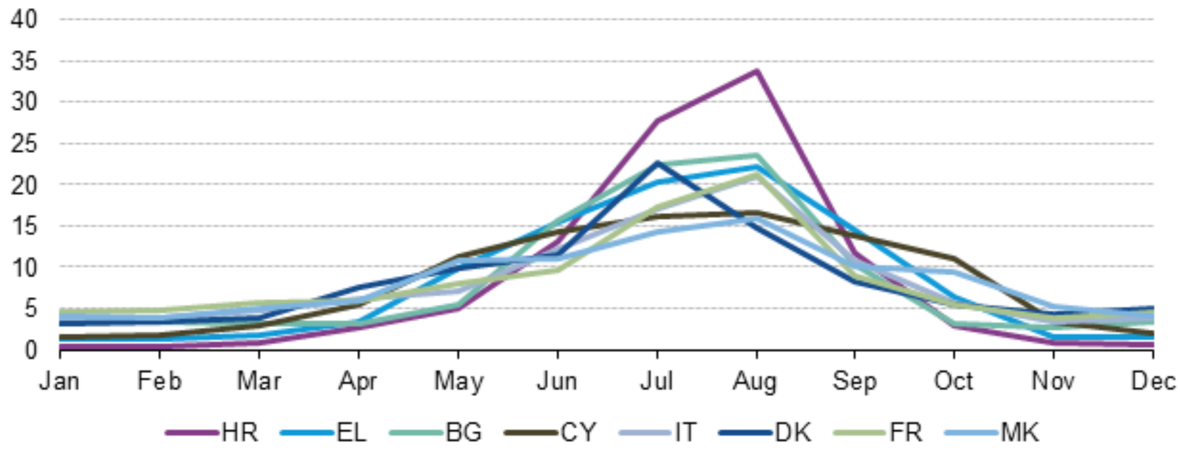
Graph 4: Monthly distribution of nights spent in tourist accommodation establishments (countries with low seasonality), 2014, (%)



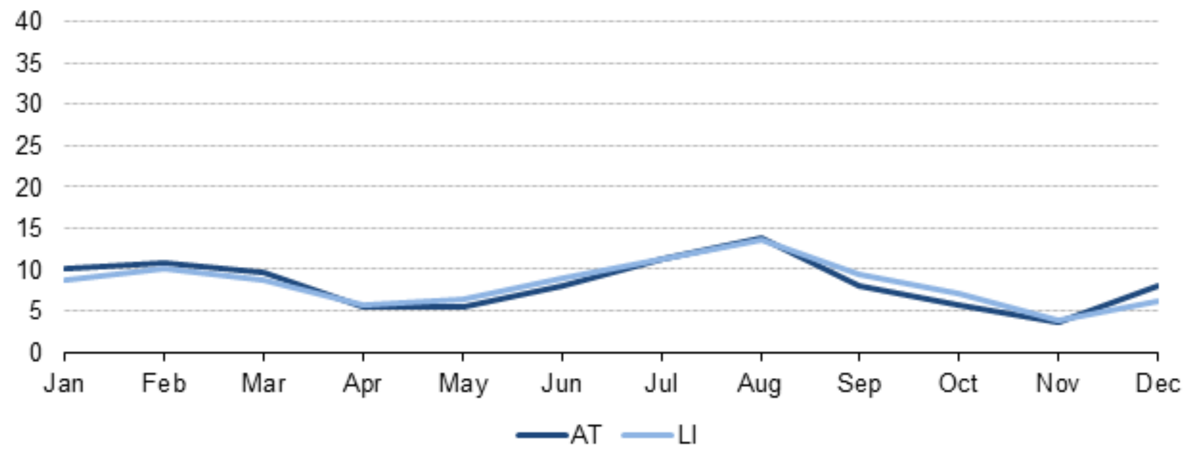
Graph 5: Monthly distribution of nights spent in tourist accommodation establishments (countries with medium seasonality), 2014, (%)



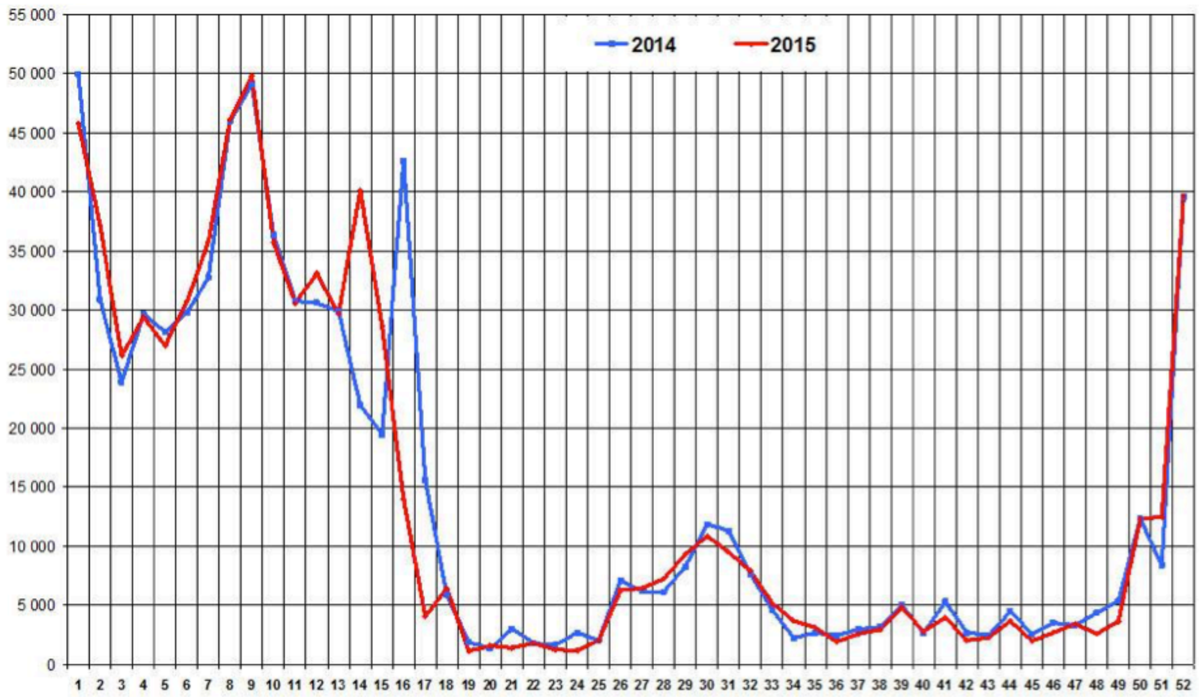
Graph 6: Monthly distribution of nights spent in tourist accommodation establishments (countries with high seasonality), 2014, (%)



Graph 7: Monthly distribution of nights spent in tourist accommodation establishments (bimodal pattern with summer and winter peak), 2014, (%)



Graph 8: Weekly distribution of nights spent in tourist accommodation establishments in 2014 and 2015 in a skiing resort. [50]

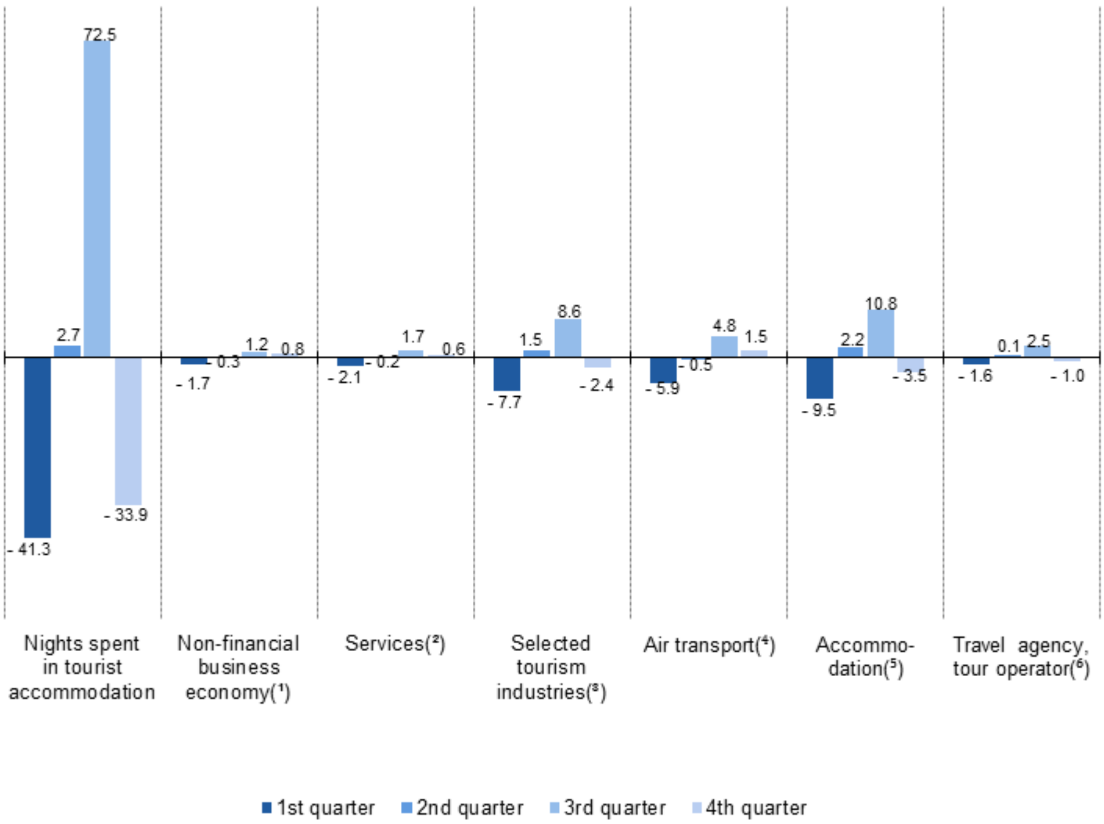


10.2.4. Seasonality in tourism employment

The high seasonality in tourism activity is not entirely reflected in tourism employment numbers. The number of nights spent in tourist accommodation is 2.9 times higher in the third quarter of the year (peak quarter) than in the first quarter (the lowest quarter). This applies to nearly all member states. However, tourism employment is 1.2 times higher in the peak quarter than in the lowest quarter, which mostly affects the accommodation sector where peak quarter employment is 10.8% higher than the annual average. Air transport is 4.8% higher and travel agencies and tour operators 2.5% higher (see graphs 9 and 10 below). Still, this seasonal variation pattern in tourism employment can be regarded as significant.

[50] file:///Users/user/Downloads/%C3%85res%20utveckling%202000_2015%20%202016-04-13%202.pdf

Graph 9: Seasonal variation in nights spent in tourism accommodation and in employment by economic activity, EU28 2014 (% deviation compared with the annual average)



(¹) NACE sections: B-N_S95_X_K (Total business economy; repair of computers, personal and household goods; except financial and insurance activities).
(²) NACE sections: H-J, L-N and NACE division S95.
(³) NACE divisions: H51, I55 and N79.
(⁴) NACE division H51.
(⁵) NACE division I55.
(⁶) NACE division N79.
Note: Full description of economic activities covered, see under "Data sources and availability".

Graph source: Eurostat[51]

[51] http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/File:Seasonal_variation_in_nights_spent_in_tourist_accommodation_and_in_employment_by_economic_activity,_EU-28,_2014,_(%25_deviation_compared_with_the_annual_average)_.png

Graph 10: Seasonal variation in occupancy of tourist accommodation and in employment by economic activity, 2014 (% deviation compared with the annual average)

	Variation in occupancy - nights spent in tourist accommodation (% deviation compared with the annual average)					Selected tourism industries(3)					Air transport(4)					Accommodation(5)					Travel agency, tour operator(6)				
	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Var(7)	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Var(7)	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Var(7)	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Var(7)	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Var(7)
EU-28	-41	3	72	-34	2.9	-8	1	9	-2	1.2	-6	0	5	2	1.1	-10	2	11	-3	1.2	-2	0	3	-1	1.0
Belgium	-34	6	41	-13	2.1	22	-24	-5	6	1.6	36	-35	0	-1	2.1	15	-22	-4	12	1.5	28	-15	-12	-1	1.5
Bulgaria	-60	-2	125	-63	6.0	-18	-5	26	-4	1.5	:u	:u	:u	:u	1.8	-21	-3	33	-9	1.7	-7(u)	-10(u)	8(u)	9(u)	1.2
Czech Republic	-27	-1	49	-21	2.0	-4	0	6	-2	1.1	17	-4	19	-31	1.7	-4	-1	4	2	1.1	-12	5	7	0	1.2
Denmark	-55	16	81	-42	4.0	-7	2	9	-4	1.2	-4	-8	15	-2	1.3	-13	5	13	-5	1.3	9	3	-8	-4	1.2
Germany	-35	9	40	-14	2.1	-4	4	1	0	1.1	4	8	-7	-6	1.2	-7	5	1	1	1.1	0	-2	2	-1	1.0
Estonia	-29	5	39	-15	2.0	-8	-12	17	2	1.3	:	:	:	:	:	4	-13	11	-1	1.3	:u	-7(u)	29(u)	41(u)	3.8
Ireland	:	:	:	:	:	-8	1	6	1	1.2	-16	4	5	7	1.3	-8	1	6	0	1.2	4	-1	2	-5	1.1
Greece(8)	-82	21	120	-60	12.0	-33	6	25	1	1.9	-25	2	-3	26	1.7	-39	7	34	-3	2.2	-14	7	5	3	1.2
Spain	-40	4	63	-28	2.7	-15	2	16	-2	1.4	-2	-3	3	2	1.1	-17	3	19	-5	1.4	-17	-2	11	8	1.3
France	-40	-5	90	-44	3.4	-7	0	10	-3	1.2	-18	-9	15	12	1.4	-5	3	9	-7	1.2	2	0	9	-11	1.2
Croatia	-93	-17	194	-83	41.9	-24	-16	43	-3	1.9	:u	:u	36(u)	64(u)	4.3	-31	-13	48	-5	2.1	25(u)	-33(u)	8(u)	0(u)	1.9
Italy	-49	1	97	-49	3.9	-12	6	21	-15	1.4	-16	11	18	-13	1.4	-14	5	24	-16	1.5	-4	9	7	-12	1.2
Cyprus	-75	28	84	-36	7.3	-28	10	22	-4	1.7	18(u)	-5(u)	-11(u)	-2(u)	1.3	-33	12	27	-6	1.9	-34(u)	7(u)	20	7(u)	1.8
Latvia	-33	6	49	-21	2.2	-48	17	18	12	2.3	:u	12(u)	23(u)	11(u)	2.2	-53	23	20	10	2.6	-38(u)	9	12	17	1.9
Lithuania	-30	5	46	-21	2.1	-1	-7	3	5	1.1	:u	:u	:u	:u	7.0	3	-20(u)	6	11	1.4	:u	:u	:u	:u	1.3
Luxembourg	-48	22	56	-31	3.0	-8	-29	27	10	1.8	22	-22	-28	29	1.8	-38	-67(u)	117	-12	6.6	-20(u)	77	:u	13(u)	5.7
Hungary	-43	3	62	-22	2.9	-6	0	5	2	1.1	10	-4	-15	8	1.3	-9	-3	6	7	1.2	-5	12	10	-18	1.4
Malta	-37	12	43	-17	2.3	-10	4	18	-12	1.3	-39	-11	38	12	2.3	0	10	11	-21	1.4	-37(u)	-9	37	9	2.2
Netherlands	-47	18	57	-27	3.0	-9	-1	4	6	1.2	-9	-5	4	10	1.2	-10	1	7	2	1.2	-5	-1	-4	11	1.2
Austria	22	-24	32	-30	1.9	2	1	4	-7	1.1	-3	-6	-1	10	1.2	4	1	4	-9	1.1	-1	1	6	-6	1.1
Poland	-32	-1	56	-22	2.3	4	2	-3	-4	1.1	4(u)	4(u)	-17(u)	8(u)	1.3	1	4	2	-6	1.1	18	-5	-13	0	1.4
Portugal	-47	7	68	-28	3.1	-15	-5	18	3	1.4	-10	-12	20	2	1.4	-19	-3	20	1	1.5	-5	-13	7	10	1.3
Romania	-45	-5	68	-17	3.0	6	5	-1	-10	1.2	:u	12(u)	:u	7(u)	1.4	1	6	5	-12	1.2	37	-4	-24(u)	-9	1.8
Slovenia	-31	-4	63	-28	2.4	6	8	-3	-11	1.2	75(u)	:u	:u	:u	3.1	7	7	-5	-9	1.2	-7(u)	14	9	-16(u)	1.4
Slovakia	-17	-4	37	-16	1.6	-1	-4	-1	5	1.1	13(u)	4(u)	8(u)	:u	1.5	-4	-2	0	6	1.1	24	-30(u)	-20(u)	26	1.8
Finland	-11	-3	34	-20	1.7	-4	9	2	-7	1.2	-8	18	1	-12	1.3	-4	8	12	-16	1.3	2	2	-28(u)	24	1.7
Sweden	-36	0	70	-34	2.7	-2	2	7	-7	1.2	7	7	-9	-5	1.2	-10	-1	14	-3	1.3	17	8	-4	-21	1.5
United Kingdom	-44	9	64	-29	2.9	-5	1	5	0	1.1	-8	2	8	-1	1.2	-5	0	5	0	1.1	-4	1	1	2	1.1
Iceland	-51	-2	100	-47	4.1	-10	2	9	-2	1.2	-14	-7	6	15	1.3	6	7	3	-16	1.3	-32	4	23	5	1.8
Liechtenstein	11	-16	37	-32	2.0	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:
Norway	-28	7	56	-34	2.4	-6	-4	4	6	1.1	4	10	-6	-8	1.2	-11	-7	8	10	1.2	0	-8	-2	11	1.2
Switzerland(8)	-3	-8	30	-19	1.6	-12	-8	10	11	1.3	-10	-24	14	21	1.6	-12	-3	8	7	1.2	-15	-17	14	18	1.4
Montenegro	-91	-36	213	-86	36.3	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:
FYR of Macedonia	-48	12	61	-25	3.1	-13	14	2	-3	1.3	:	:	:	:	:	-16	8	15	-8	1.4	-11	30	-27	8	1.8
Serbia	-22	7	33	-19	1.7	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:
Turkey(8)	-47	25	50	-28	2.8	-12	13	5	-5	1.3	6	-3	-7	4	1.1	-15	17	6	-8	1.4	-5	-1	2	4	1.1

(1) NACE sections: B-N_S95_X_K (Total business economy; repair of computers, personal and household goods; except financial and insurance activities).

(2) NACE sections: H-J, L-N and NACE division S95.

(3) NACE divisions: H51, I55 and N79.

(4) NACE division H51.

(5) NACE division I55.

(6) NACE division N79.

(7) Indication of the level of seasonal variation calculated as the value for the peak quarter divided by the value for the trough quarter.

(8) Occupancy was calculated on the basis of data for hotels and similar accommodation instead of total tourist accommodation.

Note: Full description of economic activities covered, see under "Data sources and availability".

":" - Not available.

"u" - Low reliability.

Graph source: Eurostat[52]

10.3. Estimated potential of tourism demand in low and medium seasons

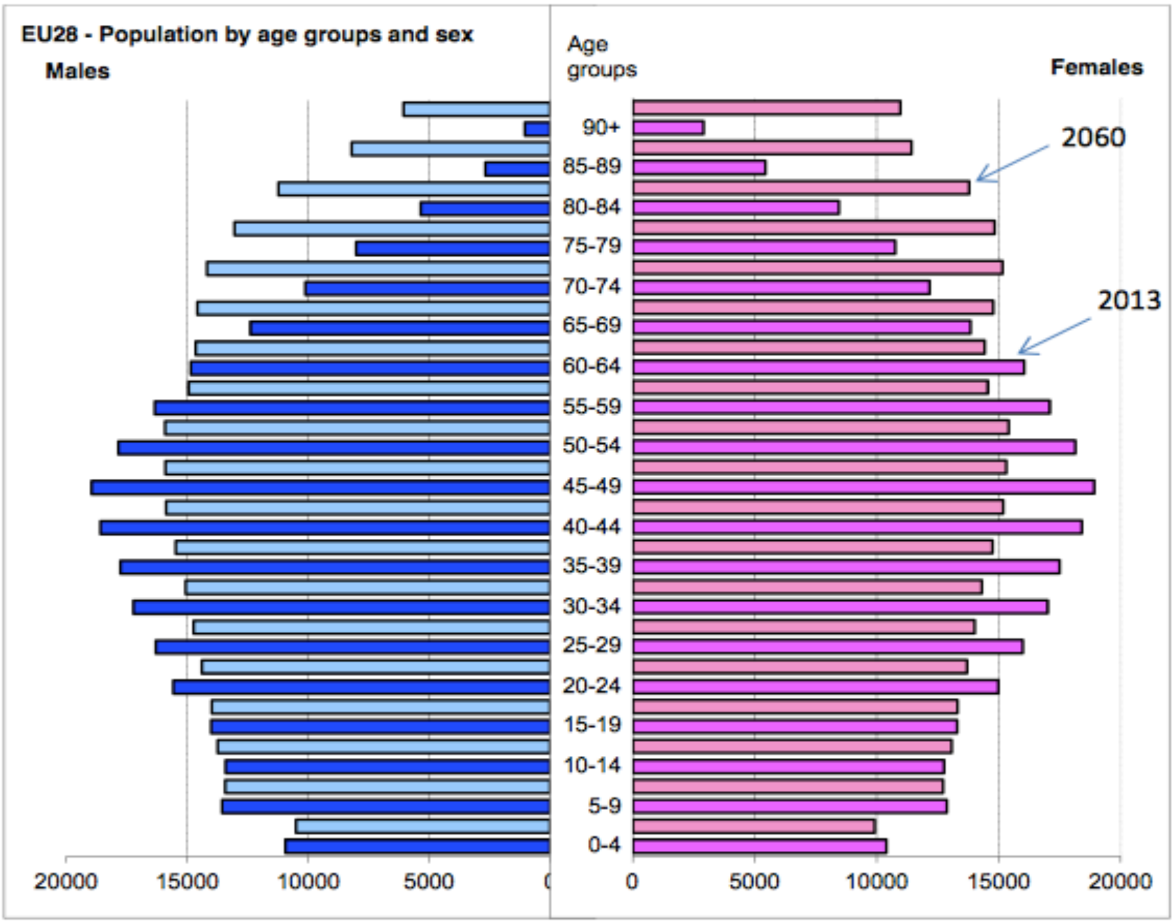
10.3.1. Age-friendly tourism during low and medium seasons

Potential tourism demand in low and medium seasons can be viewed from two different perspectives. The first is by potential demand from market segments that are generally more available to travel during the off-peak season, such as seniors and youths. The second is demand for activities or motivations-for-travelling that is not season-bound, such as medical, religious, business, cultural and shopping tourism. As stated above, this report focuses mainly on the first perspective and in particular the senior market.

[52] http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/File:Seasonal_variation_in_occupancy_of_tourist_accommodation_and_in_employment_by_economic_activity,_2014,_(%25_deviation_compared_with_the_annual_average).png

As previously described, seniors constitute a market with the potential to even out seasonality in tourism, since they have resources in terms of both time and money to travel during the off-peak season. Moreover, interest in travelling is growing among seniors, which was confirmed by the participants in the EULSTIB initiative. This was also the conclusion of a Eurostat study from 2012 showing that seniors aged 65+ in Europe spent a third more on tourism in 2011 compared to 2006. Interestingly, this was also during a period of financial crisis that affected the tourism industry negatively. The number of tourists decreased during this period of time in all age groups, apart from the over 65's, which saw a growth of 10%. Nonetheless, a relatively low share of the 65+ age group participated in tourism during these years (46% compared to 52% of the population in general). This may suggest that important growth potential remains in this age group.[53]
The fact that seniors are expected to constitute a greater share of the total population in the future is also a reason to target this segment to ensure future economic growth. According to Eurostat EUROPOP2013 data, by 2060 the total EU population is projected to be somewhat larger, but significantly older than currently. The proportion of young people (aged 0-14) is projected to remain more or less constant by 2060 in the EU28 area (approximately 15%), while the proportion of those aged 15-64 will decrease (from 66% to 57%). The +65 group on the other hand will become much larger, from 18% to 28% and the share of the +80 group will increase from 5% to 12%. See graph 9 from Eurostat:[54]

Graph 9: EU28 Population by age groups and sex



The question is, do seniors want to travel in the low and medium season? The ESCAPE project described above partially aimed to find out. A tailored questionnaire was carried out to understand

[53] http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/documents/3433488/5585284/KS-SF-12-043-EN.PDF/0d45fd84-d6ad-4584-a800-2ac868f17e0c?version=1.0
[54] http://ec.europa.eu/economy_finance/publications/european_economy/2014/pdf/ee8_en.pdf

the basic needs and expectations of tourists aged 55+. 904 people from more than 20 countries replied to the questionnaire. One question related to respondents preferred season of travel.[55]

Q10. When do you prefer to travel?		
Answer Options	**Response Percent**	**Response Count**
a) Spring	31,8%	375
b) Summer	36,6%	431
c) Autumn	16,1%	190
d) Winter	5,0%	59

Even though summer was cited as the preferred season (almost 37% of respondents), travelling in spring was almost as appealing (almost 32% of respondents). As previously discussed, tourism seasons differ significantly locally, but from a general EU perspective, where peak season generally occurs in the summer months, the information that many seniors actually prefer to travel during spring (with autumn also fairly popular) can be seen as encouraging.

10.3.2. Forecasting tourism arrivals in general

According to the UNWTO's report *Tourism Towards 2030*, the number of international tourist arrivals worldwide is expected to increase by an average of 3.3% a year over the period 2010 to 2030 (2.3% in Europe). In absolute numbers, international tourist arrivals will increase by approximately 43 million a year, compared with an average increase of 28 million a year during the period 1995 to 2010. At the estimated rate of growth, international tourist arrivals worldwide are expected to reach 1.4 billion by 2020 and 1.8 billion by the year 2030. International tourist arrivals in the emerging economy destinations (such as Central and Eastern Europe) will grow at twice the rate (+4.4% a year) of that in the advanced economy destinations (2.2% a year).[56]

10.3.3. Planned initiative: Silver economy study

An in-depth study on the potential of the "silver economy" is being carried out between March 2016 to February 2017. This study will:

- **Estimate the potential size** of the European Silver Economy from now until 2025 in terms of markets, economic growth potential and impact on GDP.
- Provide an overview of current and planned Silver Economy related **initiatives** in Europe.
- Develop the **ten most promising cases** related to the European Silver Economy where innovation can create new jobs and economic growth, while helping to address the societal challenge of demographic change.
- Develop **policy recommendations** at the EU level regarding how to best grow the European Silver Economy.

[55] http://www.age-platform.eu/images/ESCAPE_Needs_and_expectations_FINAL.pdf
[56] http://www.e-unwto.org/doi/book/10.18111/9789284416899

Part III – Policy and business recommendations

11. Conclusions

Previous and current initiatives in low/mid season tourism and age-friendly tourism
The EU has supported many different initiatives in the field of low season and age-friendly tourism. The initiatives have proved to be successful in a number of ways, although the different consortia have not fully taken advantage of learning from each other, exchanging experiences and building on each other's results. There have occasionally also been gaps between the requirements stated in the project calls and the most pertinent needs of the tourism industry and/or the market.

The EULSTIB initiative
The EULSTIB initiative has offered a good opportunity for the participants to network, exchange ideas on age-friendly tourism, meet each other at conferences and collect and share documents. However, the low participation in the EULSTIB evaluation questionnaire, together with the previous low level of involvement in the Action Groups, indicates that participants are not able or willing to commit as required.

Senior travellers as a solution to tourism seasonality
Data shows that there is great potential in attracting the +55's as one solution for increasing tourism during low and mid seasons. There is wide consensus on this idea, however there are varying views on the best way to attract this market segment. Nonetheless, recognising diversity within the segment and not targeting seniors as a homogenous group is essential for success.

Improve the offer
To remain competitive, continuous progress and skills development is needed, primarily for product suppliers but also for operators along the entire tourism distribution chain. Shifting or increasing demands from the consumer require flexibility as well as a range of individually targeted solutions to satisfy guests. Action is needed at all levels including market studies, monitoring of trends, and use of customer (guest) surveys as critical tools to support the best way of working. Work may be most beneficial if carried out by co-owned groups of companies as the knowledge gained is often more valuable to clusters of companies that can take advantage of it together.

Skills development
There is a need for accessible and tailored skills development, primarily for tourism SME's. This can have a significant impact on continued growth in the tourism industry, in particular during low and mid seasons. Irrespective of geography, target group or market, satisfying the needs of SME's to improve their competencies creates long-term positive results that are not limited to any specific field.

Facilitate cooperation mechanisms
In order to establish proper governance that enables growth, all initiatives need to be coordinated to a greater extent in the future. This way lessons can be shared between the initiatives and mistakes made in one initiative are not repeated in others.

One crucial piece of work is to raise awareness of the various growth initiatives and come to a common agreement on prioritised growth areas, such as age-friendly tourism.

However, businesses tend to manage all themes or prioritised target groups simultaneously, as this generates revenues in all seasons. It is therefore important that the various initiatives are not run in isolation but coordinated, and that priorities are shared and agreed.

12. Final recommendations for increasing tourism demand in low and mid seasons

The main results and recommendations have been derived from the work carried out under the EULSTIB initiative as well as the compilation of this report. They can be summarised by the following 10 points:

12.1. EU role

12.1.1. Initiatives for tourism development

The tourism industry is comprised of a wide range of public and private stakeholders, directly or indirectly connected in some way to tourism. For the most part, the EU, has a supporting, coordinating and complementary function in relation to this industry. The EU's role in targeting specific issues in the industry, such as seasonality, may be more effective if clarified. The results of this report indicate that the role of the EU in this context should be to focus on strengthening initiatives that provide the industry tools, methods and skills to "help itself" and create long term impacts that are sustained beyond the duration of the projects. The EU is not best positioned to support initiatives that encompass activities that are better carried out by the industry itself, for example, marketing, product development, B2C websites, etc. The EU delivers most value by supporting the industry with financial means for business training, research and other initiatives that enable such activities, and this should be its focus.

12.1.2. Remove the obstacles

The EU, in cooperation with the industry, should identify the largest obstacles (legal, economic, social, etc.) to improving tourism flows in the low and medium seasons and prioritise removing these obstacles. There are a number of areas where the EU could make a significant difference, for example related to Shenguen and VISAs, to facilitate travel to and within the area for third countries. If the EU were to support new innovative solutions for travelling within European countries, tax-reductions and accessibility of transport such as train and air transportation, this would go a long way to removing this obstacle.

12.2. Designing future EU initiatives for tourism development

12.2.1 Establish learning processes between different initiatives and control of what has been done before

As discussed in chapter 5, a better system for learning from previous project results, before starting new ones, would maximise the potential of new initiatives. Furthermore, when several similar projects are implemented concurrently, inter-project learning and communication between the projects is crucial to ensure a good exchange of experiences. Processes should exist to promote experience and knowledge exchange between relevant actors, this will help prevent 'reinventing the wheel' and accelerate tourism development.

12.2.2. Focus on facilitating for the industry rather than supporting individual initiatives

Identifying and focusing on the tools, infrastructure, methods, structural changes etc. that enable the tourism industry as a whole will be critical to success in counteracting tourism seasonality. This should be a higher priority than supporting individual initiatives. By focusing on relevant issues facing the tourism industry, the EU should aim to bring about the conditions for SME's to operate and improve their businesses, rather than create competition by supporting individual products, networks, platforms, websites and so on.

12.2.3. Ensure that EU co-funded projects under different programmes focus on what is truly needed

Future project calls related to tourism development will have a greater impact if they are more clearly targeted at addressing the most pertinent needs of the industry and/or the market. Subsequently, such projects need to focus on delivering benefits at the right levels of the tourism value chain (see point 10) and strengthening the relevant stakeholders. Supporting initiatives that, for instance, create transnational products or web-based B2C platforms that do not correspond to what the market actually wants or needs, will not create the significant and long-term effects desired. Similarly, for example, while collecting best practice is valuable, the results will most likely not reach the SME's who actually need them, but rather remain in reports held by different organisations, public stakeholders, DMOs, etc. Instead, to create longer term benefits, EU financial programmes related to tourism should be designed to strengthen SMEs' own skill sets and expertise, and provide them with the right tools to take responsibility for their own success and growth. Additionally, as previously mentioned, a more flexible approach to project time frames would enable the consortia to maximise project results.

12.2.4. Focus on strengthening the SMEs' own skills and expertise

This report finds that equipping tourism SME's to develop and sharpen their businesses themselves is a key success factor for industry growth. This bottom-up approach to development is important for stimulating true SME engagement and achieving sustainable results. The best method for doing this is considered to be by supporting business training programmes, networks, mentor programmes, and so on. These activities should be focused on the real needs and behaviours of tourists, be innovative and future-oriented, be research-based and be able to interest and motivate tourism SME's. In terms of training, a broad range of business development courses are needed, for example in market communication, product development, sustainability, accessibility, profitability, customer knowledge and how to be effective.

Importantly, efforts and financial structures that are made available for this objective, with the exception of investments, should be decentralised as far as possible. This will enable the wide range of service and product providing SME's that are the face of tourism across Europe to get access to the training they need locally. This is an essential step for increasing the diversity of quality tourism products available across Europe.

12.2.5. Make the "best practice" easily accessible for relevant stakeholders

Best practice initiatives and innovative ideas need to be made available and communicated to the stakeholders that have most to learn from them. For a report like this, for example, this means targeting the right people (SME's) and placing the resulting information in the communication channels that they already use. For all the initiatives considered in this report, there needs to be a solid communication plan for sharing the results and interacting with the key stakeholders. Furthermore, communication of and interaction with the results needs to happen at local, regional and national levels, not at a European level, depending on the stakeholders. Otherwise, there is a risk that valuable best practice is not taken advantage of beyond a smaller circle of familiar EU stakeholders.

12.2.6. Separate the problem from the solutions

During the process of compiling this report, it has become apparent that, in some instances, there is confusion between the problem and solutions in terms of tourism seasonality. The problem to be addressed through EU facilitation is the existence of low and medium seasons in tourism, resulting in uneven levels of employment and instable economic growth. This problem of seasonality can be solved through a range of different strategies and solutions. Stimulating more travel within the senior segment is one solution only, and is not a problem to be addressed in, and of, itself. This clear definition of the problem needs to remain in focus at the EU-level.

12.3. Age-friendly tourism

12.3.1. Target and understand tourists by interest rather than age

Trying to understand and target seniors based on their age only has proven to be an ineffective segmentation approach. Seniors are as heterogeneous as any other age group and should instead be targeted as individuals based on their interests. While this group does have the potential to help smooth out seasonal fluctuations, tapping into that potential successfully will require future initiatives to be designed from a better understanding of the segment. It is also important to note that many seniors do not wish to engage in tourism especially designed to be age-friendly, but rather participate in tourism on the same conditions as anybody else. The offerings may need to be adapted for higher levels of accessibility, comfort and safety, but they do not necessarily need to be positioned as "age-friendly".

12.4. Promoting tourism in Europe

For the greatest impact, European tourism communication should operate as communicative ecosystem in which different stakeholders and levels of the value chain have a role and purpose. We recommend the following for successfully working with communication:

12.4.1 Identify when to promote Europe as a single destination and when not to

This report largely recommends avoiding promoting Europe as a single destination. There are three main reasons that drive this conclusion. Firstly, tourists from long haul markets desire to travel to *specific* destinations/countries in Europe, and do not mentally regard Europe as a single destination. Secondly, a large portion of the travel in Europe is done by people *within* Europe, travelling between countries and regions. Thirdly, the strength in European countries as tourist destinations lies within their diversity, not similarities, and this, therefore, is an important factor to highlight and communicate. Nonetheless, Europe should still work as a political destination, cooperating on different subjects as previously described, facilitating structures and improving conditions for tourism where common interests exist.

12.4.2. Recommendations for SME's

- Clearly identify the guest, what are the driving forces for the guest experiences and where do they look for travel inspiration ideas? To find out, SME's should ask their guests directly through simple questions or surveys, for example.
- Take a holistic approach to communication. Make sure there's a common thread, or key theme that is communicated from the time the guest starts investigating the destination/product, through booking, on-site visitor experience, and post-visit care, feedback and new offers, etc.
- Find out who else is in the communication system, such as other similar entrepreneurs, destinations or regions. It is often more effective to invest in joint marketing efforts, rather than buying singular adverts, for example. A small business is seldom enough motivation for a specific trip.
- Seek expert assistance for market segmentation and/or communication. Remember to brief the digital agency thoroughly about the guest/market that you want to reach; this will enable them to help you most effectively.
- To make your destination really stand out from the crowd, don't use the buzzword expressions that everybody else uses in communication. [57]

[57] http://www.rogerbrooksinternational.com/2011/06/02/jettison-the-generic%E2%84%A2/

12.4.3. Recommendations for the regional and national levels

- Identify obstacles that make it difficult for the guest to achieve the experience desired and focus on removing them. A powerful approach is to be a guest in one's own destination, or alternatively employ "mystery shoppers" to test what does not work.
- Provide very clear information. Most stakeholders today have well-developed web platforms and social media channels. However, as a guest it is still challenging to understand how to get from one point to another, or to know where the best stops are on a walking tour. This applies even more so, when working with the mature audience, when the degree of accessibility is a strong determinant of where and how they travel. Vague or unclear information regarding accessibility factors, requirements etc. can rapidly lead to decreased guest satisfaction. The challenge here is that information is usually supplied by locals who live and work in the destination, and for whom the concerns are non-issues.
- Collaborate with other regions, in line with guests' demands, in order to make experiences more attractive.
- Focus on interests rather than the market. Today people increasingly prefer to socialise with others who share the same interest rather than geographic origin.