

Europe is a major [tourist](#) destination and according to the UNWTO¹, five of the [European Union \(EU\)](#) Member States are in the world's top-10 destinations for holiday-makers. As a result, [tourism](#) plays an important role in terms of its economic and employment potential, while presenting social and environmental implications. These two characteristics drive the demand for reliable and harmonised statistics within this field.

Tourism can also be a significant factor in the development of European regions. Infrastructure created for tourism purposes contributes to local development, while jobs that are created or maintained can help counteract industrial or rural decline. ' [Sustainable](#) tourism' involves the preservation and enhancement of cultural and natural heritage, ranging from the arts, to local gastronomy, or the preservation of biodiversity.

A renewed EU tourism policy

In 2006, the [European Commission](#) adopted a Communication titled ' [A renewed EU tourism policy: towards a stronger partnership for European tourism](#) ' (COM(2006) 134 final). It addressed a range of challenges that will shape tourism in the coming years, including Europe's ageing population, growing external competition, consumer demand for more specialised tourism, and the need to develop more sustainable and environmentally-friendly tourism practices. It argued that more competitive tourism supply and sustainable destinations would help raise tourist satisfaction and secure Europe's position as the world's leading tourist destination. It was followed in October 2007 by another Communication, titled ' [Agenda for a sustainable and competitive European tourism](#) ' (COM(2007) 621 final), which proposed actions in relation to the sustainable management of destinations, the integration of sustainability concerns by businesses, and the awareness of sustainability issues among tourists.

Tourism and the Lisbon Treaty

The [Lisbon Treaty](#) acknowledged the importance of tourism — outlining a specific competence for the EU in this field and allowing for decisions to be taken by a qualified majority. An article within the Treaty specifies that the EU 'shall complement the action of the Member States in the tourism sector, in particular by promoting the competitiveness of Union undertakings in that sector'. ' [Europe, the world's No 1 tourist destination — a new political framework for tourism in Europe](#) ' (COM(2010) 352 final) was adopted by the European Commission in June 2010. This Communication seeks to encourage a coordinated approach for initiatives linked to tourism and defined a new framework for actions to increase the competitiveness of tourism and its capacity for sustainable growth. It proposed a number of European or multinational initiatives — including a consolidation of the socioeconomic knowledge base for tourism — aimed at achieving these objectives.

[Eurostat](#) publishes [tourism statistics](#) relating to capacity and occupancy of [tourist accommodation establishments](#) and tourism demand by European residents, collected and compiled by the national statistical authorities.

¹ [UNWTO Tourism Highlights](#)

See also

- [All articles on tourism](#)

Dedicated section

- [Tourism](#)

Publications

- [Recent Eurostat publications on tourism](#)

Legislation

- [European Commission COM\(2007\)621 - 'Agenda for a sustainable and competitive European tourism'](#)

External links

- [European Commission Tourism Policy](#)