

High-level conference on **tourism**

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EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT THINK TANK – TOPICAL DIGEST

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As the third-largest economic activity in the EU, tourism is a major source of economic growth, regional development and employment. Although the sector was badly affected by the recent economic crisis, tourism has proved resilient, as witnessed by the growing number of visitors to the EU. Nonetheless, the industry faces a number of challenges and mounting competition, including from emerging non-European destinations, whose share in the global tourist market is gradually increasing.

Major challenges for the tourism industry and policy responses

Briefing by Vasilis Margaras, European Parliamentary Research Service, May 2017

Tourism is the third largest economic sector in the European Union. It employs an estimated total of 17 million people, and its overall contribution to the economy is close to 10 % of EU gross domestic product. This briefing outlines the various challenges the sector faces, as well as the policy responses and measures taken at EU level.

Celebrating European year of cultural heritage in 2018

At a glance note by Magdalena Pasikowska-Schnass, European Parliamentary Research Service, September 2017

Following a recommendation from the European Parliament, 2018 will be dedicated to celebrating European cultural heritage and its role in the continent's shared history and values.

Sources of EU funding for tourism-related activities

At a glance note by Vasilis Margaras, European Parliamentary Research Service, July 2017

No specific EU fund is dedicated to tourism as such. However a number of EU funds may be harnessed in support of tourism-related activities. This note provides a short overview of the principal potential sources of EU funding for different actors, such as public bodies, companies, SMEs, research organisations, universities, non-governmental organisations, and tourism cluster initiatives.

Sustainable tourism: the environmental dimension

Briefing by Vivienne Halleux, European Parliamentary Research Service, March 2017

Tourism has a special, two-way relationship with the environment. On the one hand, the quality of the environment is essential to tourism's success; on the other hand, tourism can create significant pressures and impacts on the environment. Potential adverse effects of tourism development relate to three main areas: strain on natural resources; pollution; and physical impacts, typically involving the degradation of ecosystems. Climate change and tourism are closely interlinked. While the tourism sector contributes to greenhouse gas emissions, for the most part derived from the transport of tourists, it also faces profound impacts from global warming.

Tourism and the sharing economy

Briefing by Maria Juul, European Parliamentary Research Service, January 2017

The tourism sector is one of the most affected by the rise of the sharing economy. Arguably, the sharing economy has a positive impact on tourism, as well as a negative one. Advocates propose that the sharing economy provides easy access to a wide range of services that are often of higher quality and more affordable than those provided by traditional business counterparts. Critics, on the other hand, claim that the sharing economy provides unfair competition, reduces job security, avoids taxes, and poses a threat to compliance with safety, health, and disability standards.

[Low cost air carriers and tourism](#)

At a glance note by Ariane Debyser, European Parliamentary Research Service, July 2017

The liberalisation of air transport and the development of low-cost carriers has led to lower fares and wider access to air transport, which, in many countries, is a catalyst for tourism development. As low-cost carriers in the EU have experienced substantial growth, serving mostly short-haul destinations, they are increasingly looking into investing in the long-haul market for their future development.

[Research for the EP Committee on Transport and Tourism – Health tourism in the EU: a general investigation](#)

Study by European Parliament's Policy Department for Structural and Cohesion Policies, June 2016

The study defines and explores health tourism and its three main components: medical, wellness, and spa tourism. Health tourism comprises around 5 % of general tourism in the EU28 and contributes approximately 0.3 % to the EU economy. Health tourism has a much higher domestic share than general tourism does. Increasing the share of health tourism may reduce tourism seasonality, improve sustainability and labour quality, and may help to reduce health costs through prevention measures and decreased pharmaceutical consumption.

[Research for the EP Committee on Transport and Tourism – From responsible best practices to sustainable tourism development](#)

Study by European Parliament's Policy Department for Structural and Cohesion Policies, March 2016

This report explores sustainable development in EU tourism and concludes that there is a lack of up-to-date data concerning both the environmental and social effects of tourism. Furthermore, most sustainable tourism initiatives depend on public funding, highlighting the industry's failure to internalise sustainable development costs.

[The Cost of Non Europe in the Sharing Economy: Economic, Social and Legal Challenges and Opportunities](#)

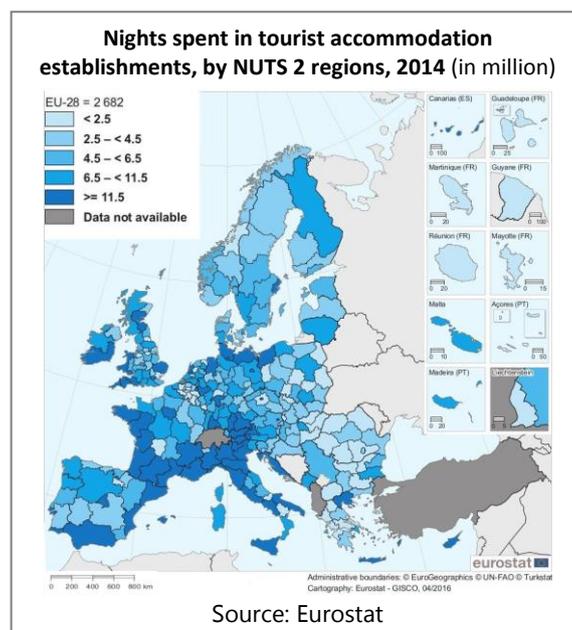
Study by Pierre Goudin, European Parliamentary Research Service, January 2016

This 'Cost of Non-Europe' study examines the current economic, social and legal state of play regarding the sharing economy in the European Union, and identifies the cost of a lack of further European action in this field.

[Fact Sheets on the European Union: Tourism](#)

Fact sheet by Christina Ratcliff, European Parliament's Policy Department for Structural and Cohesion Policies, June 2017

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