

Sources of EU funding for tourism-related activities

There is no specific EU fund dedicated to tourism as such. However, although not strictly focused on tourism, a number of EU funds may help to boost its prospects and address its challenges. Depending on the priorities of each EU funding programme, various legal entities (such as public bodies, companies, SMEs, research organisations, universities, non-governmental organisations and tourism cluster initiatives) may benefit from EU funding in order to run activities that may have a positive impact on tourism.

EU-related funds

A number of funding opportunities for projects related to tourism can be explored through the existing European structural and investment ([ESI funds](#)) and other EU funding sources described below. The list is only indicative, as further opportunities may arise in the future.

European Regional Development Fund (ERDF)

Tourism-related actions that may be eligible for [ERDF](#) support include, among other things, tourism-related research, technological innovation, clusters, development of ICT programmes, development of high value-added products related to niche markets (for instance, ecotourism, health, cultural, gastronomic and sports tourism), activities for connecting coastal regions to the hinterland, small-scale sustainable tourism infrastructure, promotion of entrepreneurship and vocational training activities.

Cohesion Fund (CF)

The [CF](#) is aimed at Member States whose gross national income (GNI) per inhabitant is less than 90 % of the EU average. The CF focuses on transport and environmental infrastructure. With regard to transport, it can support the trans-European transport networks ([TEN-T](#)) or other priority projects of European interest, as identified by the EU. It can also support infrastructure projects. In the field of the environment, projects related to energy (such as use of renewable energy) or transport (such as development of rail transport or strengthening of public transport), also qualify for CF support.

Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD)

The [EAFRD](#) is applicable to rural areas and it aims, among other things, at contributing to farm diversification into non-agricultural activities, to developing non-agricultural SMEs in rural areas, to promoting sustainable and responsible tourism, and to restoring and upgrading the cultural and natural heritage of villages and rural landscapes.

European Social Fund (ESF)

The [ESF](#) can be used to support training of company staff in case of restructuring or a lack of qualified workers, as well as training of people in difficulty or from disadvantaged groups, to get better skills and jobs. It can also support mutual learning, the creation of networks, and the dissemination and promotion of good practices in the domain of social innovation.

European Maritime and Fisheries Fund (EMFF)

The [EMFF](#) supports the promotion of economic growth, social inclusion and the creation of jobs. It also supports labour mobility in coastal communities and the diversification of activities within fisheries and into other sectors of the maritime economy. It can also support studies, conferences, networking activities and the acquisition of new professional skills, enabling professionals from the fisheries sector to enter into tourism activities or to carry out complementary activities in the field of tourism.



LIFE programme

[LIFE](#) supports environmental and nature conservation projects throughout the EU, which may consequently constitute poles of tourist attraction. The priority areas of its sub-programme for the environment are: environment and resource efficiency, nature and biodiversity, and environmental governance. Protection of particularly ecologically important areas may also be eligible for LIFE support.

Creative Europe programme

The [Creative Europe programme](#) consists of three sub-programmes: 'Culture', applicable to the cultural and creative sectors; 'Media', for the audiovisual industries; and the 'Cross-sector' sub-programme, for joint projects between the cultural/creative sectors and the audiovisual industries. The programme encourages the development of transnational projects and cooperation networks. The [European capitals of culture](#) initiative is also part of the programme.

European Fund for Strategic Investments (EFSI) and other opportunities

The [EFSI](#) supports SMEs and mid-cap firms, utilities, public-sector entities, banks and investment funds. It could be further explored to fund tourism-related businesses. Companies active in the field of tourism may profit from various other programmes. For instance, [COSME](#) promotes entrepreneurship notably thanks to the [Erasmus for young entrepreneurs](#) exchange scheme. Educational activities related to tourism may benefit from [Erasmus+](#), aimed at boosting skills and employability as well as modernising education and training. Erasmus+ also supports the organisation of European sports events. Academic research projects related to tourism can be implemented through the [Horizon 2020](#) programme. The new programme for employment and social innovation, [EaSI](#), may also be useful.

To facilitate beneficiaries' access to EU funding, EPRS has prepared a [Guide to EU Funding](#) for the 2014-2020 period, covering major sources of EU funding by relevant sector.

The European Parliament's position on EU tourism

The Parliament's Committee on Transport and Tourism (TRAN) has a [Tourism Task Force](#), which focuses on tourism-related issues. In April 2015, TRAN organised a [hearing](#), bringing together major industry stakeholders to discuss ways to maintain Europe's position as the world's top tourism destination.

In a 2015 [resolution](#) on 'New challenges and concepts for the promotion of tourism in Europe', (rapporteur: Isabella De Monte, S&D, Italy), Parliament encourages the Commission to examine the possibility of creating a section within the next multiannual financial framework ([MFF](#)), dedicated exclusively to tourism, and calls for a new Commission strategy on EU tourism to replace or update the 2010 communication. It insists on stepping up efforts to improve Europe's branding as a tourist destination and on creating pan-European and transnational tourism products and services. It makes suggestions on achieving high-quality tourism products and on unlocking the potential of coastal and marine tourism. The resolution calls on the Commission to promote sustainable, responsible and eco-friendly tourism in cooperation with strategic partners. Analysing the challenges emerging from the sharing economy, it recommends that consideration be given to establishing an appropriate regulatory framework. Finally, it offers a number of possible ideas for promoting further digitalisation in tourism-related businesses.

In its 2011 [resolution](#) on 'Europe, the world's No 1 tourist destination – a new political framework for tourism in Europe' (rapporteur: Carlo Fidanza, EPP, Italy), Parliament makes a number of suggestions for achieving competitive modern and sustainable tourism. It deplores the lack of coherence within the Commission with regard to tourism policy, and considers it essential that the Commission should arrange for a coordinating and integrating approach among the directorates-general concerned. Furthermore, it suggests developing a long-term strategy for more coordinated and simplified visa procedures. It asks the Commission to promote a specific initiative to gradually harmonise the accommodation classification systems (for facilities such as hotels, guesthouses, rented rooms), through the identification of common criteria.

A number of MEPs have also set up an [intergroup](#) on 'European tourism development, cultural heritage, ways of St James and other European cultural routes'.