TOURISM

Since December 2009, tourism policy has had its own legal basis. However, it still does not have a separate budget either under the ongoing multiannual financial framework (MFF) for 2014-2020 or in the latest proposal for the 2021-2027 MFF.

LEGAL BASIS

Article 6(d) and Title XXII, Article 195 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU).

OBJECTIVES

The EU’s tourism industry in the strict sense of the term (traditional providers of holidays and tourism services) is made up of 2.3 million businesses, primarily small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), employing an estimated 12.3 million people. In 2014, one in 10 enterprises in the European non-financial business economy belonged to the tourism industries. In 2018, the ‘travel and tourism’ sector directly contributed 3.9% to EU GDP and accounted for 5.1% of the total labour force (which equates to some 11.9 million jobs). When its close links with other economic sectors are taken into account, the tourism sector’s figures increase significantly (10.3% of GDP and 11.7% of total employment, which equates to 27.3 million workers).

In 2017, the number of international tourist arrivals reached 1.32 billion worldwide (+7%), 671 million of which, or 51% of the market (+8%), were in Europe. A long-term study by the World Tourism Organisation (UNWTO) forecasts more modest growth in European tourism, to an estimated 744 million tourists (+1.8%), or 41.1% of the global market, over the period to 2030.

Tourism policy is also a means by which the EU can pursue broader employment and growth objectives. The environmental dimension of tourism will gain in significance over time, and is already reflected in projects involving sustainable, responsible and ethical tourism.

RESULTS

A. General policy

Since the European Council of 21 June 1999 on the topic of ‘tourism and employment’, the EU has paid more attention to tourism’s contribution to employment in Europe. In its communication entitled ‘Working together for the future of European tourism’ (COM(2001) 0665), the European Commission proposed an operational
framework and measures to boost the EU tourism industry. The Council resolution of 21 May 2002 on the future of tourism endorsed the Commission’s approach and, having set the goal of making Europe a top tourist destination, quickly led to closer cooperation between public and private stakeholders in the EU tourism industry.

On that basis, the Commission then implemented a wide range of measures. The following are examples of the fruits of this strategy:

— Tourism Satellite Accounts (TSA) for each Member State, with the ultimate aim of presenting the first European satellite account;
— The launch of a portal to promote Europe as a tourist destination;
— The holding, since 2002, of an annual European Tourism Forum (in 2018, the 17th forum was held in Vienna, Austria, on ‘Designing Tourism for Quality of Life and Value Added’).

Since 2001, the Commission has published several communications, the most recent one in 2014, setting out its policy guidelines for the development of the tourism sector. These are:

— (COM(2007) 0621) of 19 October 2007 — Agenda for a sustainable and competitive European tourism — which set out how sustainable development could ensure the long-term competitiveness of tourism and announced a three-yearly set of preparatory activities;
— (COM(2010) 0352) of 30 June 2010 — Europe, the world’s No 1 tourist destination — a new political framework for tourism in Europe — which analyses the factors which make the European tourism industry competitive and the obstacles to its sustainable development.
— (COM(2012) 0649) of 7 November 2012 — Implementation and development of the common visa policy to spur growth in the EU — which seeks to bring about an increase in the number of tourists from third countries visiting the EU by establishing a common visa policy.

B. Special measures

1. In the interests of tourists (travellers and/or holidaymakers)

These measures include steps to make border crossing easier and protect both the health and safety and the material interests of tourists. Among them are Council Recommendation 86/666/EEC on fire safety in hotels, Directive 2008/122/EC on timeshare properties, and Directive (EU) 2015/230 on package travel and linked travel arrangements. In addition, regulations have been adopted on passenger rights in all areas of transport (2.2.3). Further examples of the connection between tourism and other areas of EU competence are provided, inter alia, by Directive 2006/7/EC of 15 February 2006 concerning the management of bathing water quality and repealing Directive 76/160/EEC, in the interests of target groups or priority subjects.
At Parliament’s request, the Commission has launched initiatives in the form of five preparatory programmes on targeted topical issues for European tourism.

The ‘Eden’ initiative focuses on promoting European tourist ‘destinations of excellence’, in other words little-known or emerging destinations which observe sustainability principles. The funding for this preparatory programme expired in 2011, but the Commission has continued to implement the initiative under the programme for the Competitiveness of Enterprises and Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (COSME).

The ‘Calypso’ initiative focuses on social tourism for senior citizens, underprivileged young people, disadvantaged families and persons with reduced mobility. The aim is to enable as many people as possible to travel, while at the same time helping to even out seasonal imbalances. The programme enabled the co-financing of several transnational partnerships aimed at creating social tourism cooperation and exchange mechanisms. Among other actions, the EU supported the setting up of an e-Calypso platform linking supply and demand for socially inclusive tourism holidays.

The ‘Sustainable Tourism’ programme includes the ‘Green Belt’ (6 800 km of paths from the Barents Sea to the Black Sea), the aim of which is to promote the transformation of the former Iron Curtain into a cross-border network of walking and cycle paths. For an assessment of the ‘Eurovelo’ circuits — a network of 14 long-distance ‘veloroutes’ managed by the European Cyclists’ Federation — see the updated version (2012) of Parliament’s study on the network of European cycle paths.

The EU is also co-financing cross-border sustainable tourism projects to diversify tourism options in Europe. For example, a recent invitation to tender (19 July 2018) was launched under COSME to support the development and promotion of transnational thematic tourism products, exploiting synergies between tourism and the cultural and creative industries. Under the COSME umbrella, various other initiatives have been launched. They include:

— Supporting competitive and sustainable growth in the tourism sector (2017);
— Promoting and developing products and services in the sport and wellness sectors as well as supporting Europe’s cultural and industrial heritage (2015);
— Facilitating EU transnational tourism flows for senior citizens and young people in the low and medium seasons (2014); and
— Maximising synergies between tourism and high-end and creative industries (2014).

2. In the interests of the tourist industry and the regions, and for responsible tourism

The regions are ideally placed to develop tourism in a sustainable way and make European destinations more attractive. The Commission also supports the creation of networks between the main European tourist regions. In July 2009, NECSTouR, an open network of European tourist regions, was established to serve as a platform for exchanges of knowledge and innovative solutions in the area of competitive and sustainable tourism. The EU has offered and offers a range of sources of funding to help tourism make a contribution to regional development and employment in the regions concerned: the ERDF for sustainable projects linked to tourism, the Interreg
programme, the Cohesion Fund for environmental and transport infrastructure, the ESF for employment, the Leonardo da Vinci programme for professional training, the EAFRD for diversification of the rural economy, the EFF for conversion to ecotourism, the Competitiveness and Innovation Framework Programme (CIP), and the 7th Framework Programme for Research (FP7). In that connection, under the multiannual financial framework (MFF) for the 2014-2020 period the COSME programme has taken over from the CIP and Horizon 2020 has taken over from FP7.

Under the 2014-2020 MFF, EUR 2.3 billion were allocated to the COSME programme. Thanks to the leverage this budget offers, it should be possible to mobilise up to EUR 25 billion in financing from financial intermediaries over the seven-year period. The programme for 2018 has a total budget of EUR 319 million, of which some 60% is allocated to financial instruments and some 20% to activities promoting enterprises’ access to markets, the two main priorities of the programme. Harmonised statistics on tourism have been compiled in the EU since 1996. Regulation (EU) No 692/2011 of 6 July 2011 established a common framework for the systematic development, production and dissemination of European statistics on tourism collected in the Member States. In 2013, the Commission created a Virtual Tourism Monitoring Centre to coordinate the collection and storage of data and to guarantee a greater degree of synergy between the levels at which tourism policy decisions are taken. In its communications (COM(1996) 0547) of 27 November 1996 and COM(1999) 0262) of 26 May 1999, the Commission announced and developed an EU campaign against sex tourism involving children (for prevention and violations see below).

3. Other focused measures

More recently, the EU decided to designate 2018 as the EU-China Tourism Year. China is one of the EU’s biggest and fastest-growing source markets. The Year aims to promote lesser-known destinations, improve travel and tourism experiences, foster economic cooperation and encourage progress on visa facilitation and air connectivity. The European Commission also organised a Showcase Conference on Tourism that took place in Brussels on 19 March 2019.

ROLE OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

As long ago as in December 1996, Parliament lent its backing to an EU tourism measure by approving the first multiannual ‘Philoxenia’ programme (1997-2000), which was later abandoned as a result of the Council’s failure to reach a unanimous decision.

In its resolution of 30 March 2000 on the implementation of measures to combat child sex tourism (OJ C 378, 29.12.2000, p. 80), Parliament called on the Member States to introduce universally binding extraterritorial laws which would make it possible to investigate, bring legal proceedings against and punish people who while abroad commit illegal acts involving the sexual exploitation of children. On 27 October 2011, it adopted a legislative resolution (P7_TA(2011)0468) on the proposal for a directive combating the sexual abuse and sexual exploitation of children. Under the terms of Directive 2011/93/EU of 13 December 2011 (OJ L 335, 17.12.2011, p. 1), child sex tourism is now a criminal offence throughout the EU; in particular, Article 21 of that
directive makes provision for national measures to prevent or prohibit the organisation of travel for the purpose of committing this type of offence.

Well before the entry into force of the Treaty of Lisbon, Parliament had adopted a series of resolutions on the Commission guidelines and initiatives concerning tourism, the most noteworthy of which are those of 8 September 2005 on ‘New prospects and new challenges for sustainable European tourism’, of 29 November 2007 on ‘A renewed EU tourism policy: Towards a stronger partnership for European Tourism’, and of 16 December 2008 on the regional development aspects of the impact of tourism on coastal regions. Parliament thus addressed the impact that visa policy has on tourism and supported the promotion of European tourist destinations.

It also proposed the creation of a European Heritage label and the establishment of a cross-border cycle route along the former Iron Curtain, and encouraged the sector to diversify its supply of services in order to respond to seasonal fluctuations in tourist numbers.

After the Treaty of Lisbon entered into force, on 27 September 2011 Parliament adopted a resolution (OJ C 56 E, 26.2.2013, p. 41) based on an own-initiative report entitled ‘Europe, the world’s No 1 tourist destination’. While supporting the 21-point policy strategy presented by the Commission, Parliament wishes to promote competitive, modern, high-quality and sustainable tourism that is accessible to all, by focusing on Europe’s multiculturalism. MEPs stressed the importance of measures taken in other sectors, such as employment, taxation or consumer rights, which could have a decisive impact on tourism.

Parliament’s call for a specific programme for tourism under the 2014-2020 MFF was rejected by the Council, however. Similarly, in December 2014 the Commission was forced to withdraw a recommendation on a set of non-binding European principles on the quality of tourism services, which it had presented to the Council in February 2014. This was despite the fact that it had Parliament’s support for a ‘European tourism quality label’ (paragraph 25 of resolution of 27 September 2011 and paragraph 53 of resolution of 29 October 2015 on new challenges and concepts for the promotion of tourism in Europe (OJ C 355, 20.10.2017, p. 71)).

On 27 October 2015, Parliament adopted at second reading a legislative resolution with a view to the adoption of a new directive which seeks to enhance the protection of travellers undertaking package tours and repeals Directive 90/314/EEC (P8_TA(2015)0366). On 29 October 2015, Parliament adopted a resolution on new challenges and concepts for the promotion of tourism in Europe. It concerns the digitisation of distribution channels, the development of the new sharing economy sector, changing consumer behaviour, the need to attract and retain skilled staff, demographic change, and seasonality. In it, Parliament calls on the Commission to present a new tourism strategy to replace or update the communication of 30 June 2010 entitled ‘Europe, the world’s No 1 tourist destination’; calls for the creation of a budget line for tourism in the next multiannual financial framework; and encourages the European executive to work in partnership with the European Travel Commission (ETC) in order to maintain Europe’s primacy in the tourism industry, potentially through the creation of the label ‘Destination Europe 2020’, which would comprise a series of
marketing, branding and promotional initiatives for Europe, thus implementing the long-term strategy launched by the Commission in February 2014 which was later rejected by the Council (see above).

The European Parliament's Tourism Intergroup and its Committee on Transport and Tourism hold occasional discussions with representatives of international tourism bodies. During the latest meeting with the UNWTO Secretary-General in February 2018, Parliament and the UNWTO signed a memorandum for cooperation focused on advancing sustainable tourism across Europe. The intergroup has also called for a more consistent tourism policy, and raised the issue of a separate EU budget line for tourism. In a 2015 resolution on tourism, Parliament encouraged the Commission to continue to deepen the promotion of Europe as the top tourist destination. It furthermore emphasised the importance of the European tourism brand and called for increased cooperation with international bodies to develop new transnational and pan-European tourism products.

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