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Summary of Eurostat Activities concerning Tourism Statistics

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SUMMARY OF EUROSTAT ACTIVITIES CONCERNING TOURISM STATISTICS

Introduction

The economic, social and cultural importance of tourism has been recognised by the Community institutions since the beginning of the eighties. Over the years tourism has been supported by numerous Community actions and aware that an essential prerequisite for Community action to support tourism is a thorough knowledge of basic statistics the Community institutions have emphasised the need for the European Union to play an active role in the production and dissemination of harmonised tourism statistics.

Since 1987 the Commission has worked on developing tourism statistics. The initial works favoured the collection and analysis of statistical information on tourism, the elaboration of an annual publication and co-operation with the OECD and the World Tourism Organisation (WTO). It was soon recognised that the greatest difficulty in preparing and publishing statistics on tourism at Community level is due to the fact that data collected at national level are not fully comparable and the concepts and methods used vary from one Member State to another.

The Council Decision on a two year tourism statistics action programme 1991 - 1992

In 1990 the Council confirmed the need the establish a Community reference framework for the compilation of tourism statistics by harmonising the concepts and methods used by the Member States. The Council Decision of 17 December 1990[1] set out the objectives of the action within the two year programme as follows :

- **Analysis and evaluation of the long-term needs of the main users** (Community Institutions, National administrations, international organisations and economic operators) with regard to tourism statistics;
- **collection and dissemination of existing data on tourism;**
- **analysis of the systems that exist in the member countries** and those used by international organisations;
- **preparation of a Community methodological manual** for the compilation of Community tourism statistics.

In view of the creation of the European Economic Area, these actions were conducted by the 12 European Union (EU) member states (Belgium, Denmark, Germany, Greece, Spain, France, Ireland, Italy, Luxemburg, Netherlands, Portugal, United Kingdom) and the European Free Trade Association (EFTA) member states (Austria, Finland, Iceland, Norway, Sweden, Liechtenstein, Switzerland).

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[1]   OJ No L358,21.12.90,p.89

The Final report to the Council concerning the two year tourism statistics action programme

In its Final report to the Council, the European Parliament, and the Economic and Social Committee[2], the Commission summarised the results of the actions undertaken and presented the conclusions and proposals for future advancement in developing Community statistics on tourism.

The consultations conducted during the period of implementation throughout the two-year programme provided evidence of a unanimous consensus for the establishment of a coherent statistical system for tourism at European level.

Understanding the **needs of users** is a basic essential requirement when producing statistics. Throughout the period of the programme more than a thousand users, both in the public and private sector, as well as international bodies were consulted. They all expressed a need for **statistical information on tourism that is reliable, comparable and available at short notice** in order that:

- they might **improve upon the planning and implementation of strategies** vis-à-vis the reinforcement of the Internal Market and the creation of the European Economic Area; and
- **assess the impact of specific measures** in the field of tourism.

The **users gave priority** to the following aspects:

- **monitoring the main activities connected with tourism supply** using structural and performance indicators;
- **evaluating the micro and macro-economic importance** of tourism activities;
- **analysing the structure of tourism demand** in general, including business tourism.

The **study of existing statistical systems and available data** in the EC/EFTA Member States pointed to the fact that all the Member States collect statistical information on tourism. The differences in methodology used and scope covered by the Member States are linked to structural characteristics both in terms of the propensity to develop tourism and to geographical conditions.

Development of a tourism methodology at European level

The development of a methodological reference framework for tourism statistics at European level is seen to have several benefits :

- **maximise the benefit to users** by ensuring the comparability and reliability of statistical information by providing guidelines in definitions, classifications and methods on data collection;

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[2]   COM (93) 345 final, 01.09.93

- the existence of comparable data by different countries will **stimulate the use and exchange of statistical information** by developing appropriate tools of analysis which can support decision making;
- for the providers of information the framework will **offer a practical working document as a basic harmonisation tool** for developing official European statistics and a guidance for all other providers of information;

The main aspects taken into account when developing the methodology were :

- existing statistical systems in EU/EFTA member states and international practices (especially the WTO and the OECD);
- users' needs for statistical information on tourism.

Since tourism is a complex phenomenon which touches most economic sectors various broad approaches had to be considered and although the methodology developed is not in itself exhaustive, it is broad enough to provide a useful tool for the collection of data carried out by both the private and public sector.

The various topics for methodological elaboration were presented in specific reports and referred notably to basic statistics on tourism supply and demand, emerging forms of tourism such as cultural and rural tourism, and indicators monitoring the economic and environmental impact of tourism.

With these reports the **general methodological framework** was elaborated by integrating also the users need report and the analysis of statistical systems in the EC/EFTA member countries.

The methodological analysis conducted during the course of the 1991-1992 work programme considerably increased the rate of progress of the work carried out at international level on tourism statistics. Although the results were not exhaustive, they nevertheless provided the basis for a reference framework for statistics on tourism at Community and European level.

Actions and developments undertaken since 1993

After 1992, further development of the works conducted by Eurostat on tourism statistics have supported by the Council Decision of 13 July 1992 on a Community action plan to assist tourism[3] (covering a period of three years starting from 1 January 1993), which recognises that the development of tourism statistics is a priority, and the Council Decision of 22 July 1993 on the framework programme for priority actions in the field of statistical information 1993 - 1997[4].

The **Final Report** concerning the two year tourism statistics action programme stated in its conclusions the actions which were to be undertaken after 1992. These actions are

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[3]   OJ L231, of 13.08.092, p.26
[4]   OJ L219 of 28.08.93, p.1

based on the results of the programme and on the orientations given by the EU/EFTA Working Group on Tourism Statistics, as well as by the Directors-General of the National Statistical Offices and by the Tourism Management Committee. The actions take into account the need to apply a pragmatic approach consistent with the principle of subsidiarity. This implies the **consolidation of work already undertaken and the development of flexible but coherent monitoring instruments** which optimise the use of the existing statistical systems.

With these considerations in mind, the **priority actions undertaken since 1993** have focused on :

- The **completion and consolidation of the methodology** for tourism statistics, in view of **setting down a Commission Recommendation** to establish a Community methodological framework for Tourism statistics (compatible with international standards) which sets the foundations for establishing comparable data on tourism at EEA level.
- **Organising and adding value to existing data** in order to disseminate harmonised statistics, with the aim to establish this action within a legal framework (**Council Directive**).

Concerning the first priority action, the methodological works are in the process of being completed and consolidated. The specific reports and the General Framework have been reviewed to ensure that they are consistent with one another. They have also been revised to ensure that they are compatible with international (WTO) and Community standards (e.g. NACE, CPA). In addition, in view of the increasing interest in business tourism, a methodological analysis is currently being prepared on congress and conference tourism. A document concerning the implementation of the methodology developed by Eurostat is also currently being drafted.

Proposal for a Recommendation : consolidation and wide spread dissemination of the Eurostat tourism methodology

A Recommendation is needed to fully consolidate the work carried out on the methodology and optimise the results obtained. It will also maximise the advantages gained by the users by ensuring that facts and figures on tourism are comparable and reliable, and at the same time facilitate the introduction of methods of data collection by providing guidelines on the methods and definitions which should be used.

Establishing the methodology within a recognised legal framework is not only of use to EEA countries but equally to all countries wishing to develop their national tourism statistics within harmonised international references.

The **WTO Resolutions** adopted by the United Nations in March 1993 are a first step in establishing internationally recognised basic terms and definitions on tourism statistics. The Community Recommendation, which takes as its starting point the WTO Recommendations and more precisely defines and adapts these to the European context,

will provide a more comprehensive reference document for the elaboration of comparable statistics.

The Commission Recommendation is currently being prepared which presents concisely the main methodological definitions and aspects to be applied when striving to collect harmonised data on tourism. It sets down the essential preliminary concepts to be taken into account and divides the methodology into four parts : **basic methodology** (demand, supply), **specific forms of tourism** (cultural, rural), **statistics related to tourism** (economic systems, environment), and finally part 4 considers the **features and uses of creating an integrated statistical information system**. An outline of the content of the Recommendation is presented in the annex to this paper.

The creation of an International Forum on Tourism Statistics

Another project related to the development of the methodology undertaken by Eurostat has been to assist interested member states in the organisation of international seminars involving national authorities, experts, and professional associations. In this context an **appropriate exchange of views and experiences** on the current development of tourism statistics can be achieved and major **technical problems** toward the establishment of harmonised tourism statistics can be debated. The forum is also represents a platform to receive **feedback on the practical application of the methodology** developed and thus validate and further improve the methodology.

The first of its kind was organised by Eurostat in collaboration with the OECD and hosted by the Austrian National Statistical Office in Vienna from 6 to 8 June 1994. Participation was a on voluntary self financing basis and many participants presented discussion papers. All parties were satisfied with the results of the forum and Eurostat is currently preparing the publication of the papers discussed. In view of the success of the forum the next will be hosted by the Italian National Statistical Office in Rome in the spring of 1995.

Proposal for a Council Directive on Tourism statistics

The other main operational conclusion of the Final report to the Council concerning the two year tourism statistics action programme was the need to establish a appropriate **legal framework for the collection of information on tourism in the European Economic Area**. It was decided that a Council Directive should be elaborated to provide a common framework to regroup the various actions which are being carried out at national level and channel efforts at present deployed in a fragmented way.

The **aim of the directive is to harmonise and improve the statistics produced by the Member States** (most of which are already existing) in order to **set up a more efficient and uniform system** of information on tourism supply and demand. Thus this directive sets down the structure for the gradual establishment of a comprehensive system of information on tourism. It has been conceived with a view to satisfy a large range of users with essential priority information on tourism, whilst ensuring that the extra burden and costs on the National Statistical Authorities and enterprises remain limited.

The Directive was elaborated over the past two years by the Commission in close collaboration with the EU/EFTA member states and has been approved by the General Directors of the National Statistical Offices. At the last informal Tourism meeting of the Council of Ministers on 15 April 1994, the member states emphasised their support for the continued development of tourism statistics at Community level, and recognised the **need to establish a directive on basic tourism demand and supply in order to gain quick and easy access to reliable and comparable information** on tourism.

It is planned to submit the Directive and Recommendation to the Council and Commission respectively by the end of this year. In this way, member states will have at their disposal an officially recognised European methodological reference with which to work with for the implementation of the directive.

Wide-spread dissemination of statistical information on tourism

Eurostat has been publishing an **Tourism statistics Yearbook since 1987** and also provides users with data through **magnetic and electronic mediums**. Eurostat has for the past two years produced a **CD-ROM** which includes a section devoted to tourism statistics. Eurostat also published a **high quality textual publication** on tourism in Europe analysing the data and describing the tourism phenomenon in each of the member states of the European Union (EU). A updated version including also the European Free Trade Association (EFTA) countries will be published this Autumn.

ANNEX 1: TABLE OF CONTENT OF THE PROPOSED RECOMMENDATION ON TOURISM STATISTICS METHODOLOGY

PART II : SPECIFIC FORMS OF TOURISM

PART III : STATISTICS RELATED TO TOURISM (IMPACT)