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**REPORT FROM THE COMMISSION TO THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND
THE COUNCIL**

**on the implementation of Regulation (EU) No 692/2011 of the European Parliament and
of the Council concerning European statistics on tourism**

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1. INTRODUCTION

Regulation (EU) No 692/2011 on European tourism statistics¹ established a common framework for the systematic development, production and dissemination of statistics on tourism in the European Union. It reflected the changes in the nature of the tourism economy and of tourist behaviour that had occurred since the entry into force of Council Directive 95/57/EC,² and it responded to the ensuing changes in user needs.

Article 7 of the Regulation states that: *‘By 12 August 2016 and every 5 years thereafter, the Commission shall submit an evaluation report to the European Parliament and to the Council on the statistics compiled pursuant to this Regulation and, in particular, on their relevance and the burden on business’.*

The present report is the first report submitted pursuant to the above article.

Section 2 of this report gives an overview of European statistics on tourism, in particular the requirements laid down in the Regulation.

Section 3 gives an overview of and rationale for the implementing measures and delegated acts adopted.

Section 4 takes stock of how the Regulation has been implemented, with reference to the established quality criteria for official statistics.

Section 5 focuses on measures taken to reduce the burden on businesses.

Section 6, finally, takes a forward look at measures that could be considered with a view to update the legal framework, in light of the conclusions of earlier sections. It also assesses the impact that new user needs and new data sources could have on the system of tourism statistics set out in the Regulation.

¹ Regulation (EU) No 692/2011 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 6 July 2011 concerning European statistics on tourism and repealing Council Directive 95/57/EC (OJ L 192, 22.7.2011, p. 17).

² Council Directive 95/57/EC of 23 November 1995 on the collection of statistical information in the field of tourism (OJ L 291, 6.12.1995, p. 32).

2. OVERVIEW OF EUROPEAN STATISTICS ON TOURISM

The European Union's tourism industry occupies an important place in the economy of all Member States, with tourist activities representing a large source of employment. Any assessment of its competitiveness requires a good knowledge of the volume of tourism, its characteristics, the profile of the tourist, the level of tourism expenditure and the benefits for European economies. Regulation (EU) No 692/2011 on European tourism statistics is the primary basis for official, harmonised statistics on tourism supply and demand. The Regulation covers, on the one hand, data on capacity and occupancy of EU tourist accommodation establishments and, on the other, data on trips made by EU residents. The first is typically collected from businesses in the accommodation sector (monthly and annual data transmitted by Member States to the Commission, in the form of aggregate tables); the latter is typically collected via household surveys (annual data transmitted, partly in the form of aggregate tables, partly in the form of microdata).

Outside the strict scope of the Regulation, Eurostat regularly releases tourism-related information of a more economic nature based on related business or social statistics.

Comprehensive data sets, summary tables and corresponding articles are available on the Eurostat website, easily accessible via the tourism statistics domain³.

3. IMPLEMENTING MEASURES AND DELEGATED ACTS

Regulation (EU) 692/2011 stipulates that the Commission is to define, in the form of implementing acts, the arrangements for and structure of the quality reports (Article 6(4)) and the practical arrangements for the transmission of data (Articles 9(2) and 9(3)). For this purpose, *Commission Implementing Regulation (EU) No 1051/2011* was adopted.⁴

Regulation (EU) No 692/2011 empowers the Commission to adopt delegated acts:

- amending the definitions to reflect changes to international definitions (Article 2(2));
- amending the deadlines for data transmission to take account of economic, social and technical developments (Article 9(5)); and
- adapting the Annexes to take account of economic, social and technical developments. The Commission may not, however, change provisions in the Annexes on the optional nature of the required data and the limitation of the scope (Article 3(2)).

³ <http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/tourism>

⁴ Commission Implementing Regulation (EU) No 1051/2011 of 20 October 2011 implementing Regulation (EU) No 692/2011 of the European Parliament and of the Council concerning European statistics on tourism, as regards the structure of the quality reports and the transmission of the data (OJ L 276, 21.10.2011, p. 13), amended by Commission Implementing Regulation (EU) No 81/2013 of 29 January 2013 amending Implementing Regulation (EU) No 1051/2011 as regards the microdata files for the transmission of data (OJ L 28, 30.1.2013, p.1).

So far, the Commission has adopted one delegated act, *Commission Delegated Regulation (EU) No 253/2013*,⁵ which amended certain definitions relating to educational attainment, to reflect changes made to the International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED).

As required under Article 11(2) of Regulation (EU) No 692/2011, a report in respect of the delegation of power was adopted by the Commission on 20 January 2016.⁶

4. IMPLEMENTATION OF THE REGULATION

Pursuant to Regulation (EU) No 692/2011, Member States collect, compile, process and transmit harmonised statistics on tourism supply and demand. The Commission assesses the quality of the transmitted data and publishes the data on the Eurostat website in the form of tables, multi-dimensional databases or analytical articles. This section evaluates the implementation of the Regulation based on standard quality criteria for European statistics.

4.1. Relevance

Relevance refers to the degree to which statistics meet the current and potential needs of users.

Better addressing user needs is a main objective of Regulation (EU) No 692/2011. The European statistics on tourism that are currently produced have improved the completeness and timeliness with which data are now available to users. For example, most of the monthly data are transmitted within 8 weeks after the reference month whereas previously the transmission deadline was 3 to 6 months. The Regulation better captures the changed nature of tourism behaviour, which includes the growing importance of short trips and same-day visits, the increasing importance of non-rented accommodation or accommodation in smaller establishments, and the growing impact of the internet on tourist bookings and on the tourism industry.

The Regulation also requires the transmission of microdata to the Commission for part of the data. As compared with the transmission of aggregated data, this innovation enables a more detailed and flexible analysis of economic and social phenomena in the tourism sector. Tourism in Europe has a predominantly intra-European dimension. This means that the microdata coming from harmonised European statistics on the demand for outbound tourism provides a source of statistics on inbound tourism demand for the Member State of destination, without imposing any additional burden and avoiding any duplicated observation of tourism flows. Eurostat has produced analytical reports on inbound tourism based on outbound flows observed by other countries. However, the availability of data is — for some countries — hampered by the low sample size of trips from certain origin countries, which affects in particular data availability for less popular destination countries. A number of countries are exploring if this source could be used to partly replace current (expensive)

⁵ Commission Delegated Regulation (EU) No 253/2013 of 15 January 2013 amending Annex II to Regulation (EU) No 692/2011 of the European Parliament and of the Council, as regards adaptations following the revision of the International Standard Classification of Education ISCED in relation to the variables and breakdowns to be submitted (OJ L 79, 21.3.2013, p. 5).

⁶ COM(2016) 4.

border surveys or as input for other official statistics (e.g. the travel item of the balance of payments statistics services account).

It is important to make sure that European statistics can, in the future, assess the macroeconomic importance of tourism and its impact on the environment. To do so, Article 5 of Regulation (EU) No 692/2011 refers to pilot studies on the development, production and dissemination of harmonised tables for tourism satellite accounts and to the development of data showing the effects of tourism on the environment. As regards the harmonised tables, Eurostat asked Member States to transmit, on a voluntary basis, available national data on the macroeconomic dimension of tourism (using the internationally accepted framework of tourism satellite accounts). The results were published in publicly available working papers. This is a significant step towards harmonised data at EU level. As regards the environment aspect, Eurostat is following up the work carried out by the European Environment Agency, the OECD and the UN World Tourism Organisation, among others, and provides data input to indicator systems on sustainable tourism. However, given the pressure on resources to implement the Regulation's requirements for regular data production, the putting in place of a broader programme of pilot studies was not feasible in recent years.

User feedback following the entry into force of the Regulation and the increased data output has generally been positive. The European statistics on tourism are supporting the decision-making of European businesses, of local, regional and national administrations and of European institutions or other international stakeholders (OECD, UN World Tourism Organisation). Notwithstanding the achievements of the Regulation up to now, gaps in European tourism statistics remain, such as in the areas of better coverage of the (macro)economic dimension and of new phenomena in the tourism sector (e.g. the sharing economy).

4.2. Accuracy

Accuracy refers to the closeness of estimates to the unknown true values.

In line with the subsidiarity principle, Member States are free to decide the most efficient and effective ways of collecting and processing the data, in accordance with national systems and available national sources, subject to the condition that 'Member States shall take any measures they deem appropriate to maintain the quality of the results' (Article 8).

Each year, Member States provide a report on the quality of the data. These metadata reports are available on the Eurostat website. More detailed quality reports are available for internal use only.

Since the entry into force of the Regulation, the request for more data validation to be done by Member States has improved overall data quality (including a reduction in missing data). More sophisticated data validation services (adding consistency checks for year-to-year and intra-database data) have further improved the quality of results.

Nevertheless, certain accuracy issues remain and need continued monitoring.

The data on capacity and occupancy of tourist accommodation establishments (usually collected from businesses) can show some under-coverage, namely entities not included in the register. A more harmonised approach for the use of thresholds (see also Section 5) has reduced these

inconsistencies across the EU. Furthermore, work has been done to better align the registers held by tourism administrations with the general business register established in national statistical offices. In recent years, the growing use of rented accommodations via so-called sharing-economy platforms has put the coverage issue in the spotlight. Its measurement will be a challenge in the years to come.

Data on tourism trips (collected from households) are based on sample surveys and can be affected by the known limitations of such sample surveys: sampling error (only a subset of the population is observed) and non-sampling error (e.g. non-response errors). One particular issue affecting tourism statistics is the recall bias or memory effect — this leads to underestimating the true tourism flows due to an unintended under-reporting by respondents. Guidelines aiming at minimising this effect have been provided to Member States in the Methodological Manual for Tourism Statistics (see also Section 4.6).

4.3. Timeliness and punctuality

Timeliness refers to the period between the availability of the information and the event or phenomenon it describes; punctuality refers to the time lapse between the date of the release of the data and the target date by which the data should have been delivered.

Tourism data are not released following strict target dates or release calendars, but on a continuous basis at the pace of the reception and validation of data received from Member States. In general, within a few days after the data transmission to the Commission, the statistics are available to users. Recent revisions to the Eurostat internal production system led to a faster release of figures covering all Member States.

Regulation (EU) No 692/2011 has fostered the improved timeliness of tourism statistics through shortened transmission deadlines. Member States have performed well in meeting the shortened transmission deadlines with more than 90 % of monthly datasets arriving before the deadline. Only 1.5 % of the data is arriving with more than a one-week delay. As regards the more comprehensive annual data, 86 % of the accommodation data arrives within the six months deadline; for data on trips (including microdata files) a few Member States record a delay exceeding one week. In all cases, improvements were observed since the first reference year under the Regulation. Exceptional cases where data are not delivered are closely followed via the compliance monitoring used in the European Statistical System.

4.5. Accessibility and clarity

Accessibility and clarity refer to the conditions and means by which users can obtain, use and interpret data.

All data provided by Member States, and the respective aggregates for the EU as a whole, are freely available on Eurostat's website.⁷ For reasons of confidentiality, the microdata is used for compiling detailed tables that are then published. However, under very strict conditions and subject to approval of the Member States, microdata can in the future be made available for research purposes.

⁷ <http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/tourism/>.

Users can access European statistics on tourism via three main channels on the Eurostat website:

1. Under the heading ‘Tables’, pre-defined two-dimensional tables cover the most common data needs in a quick and very clear way for less frequent or less specialised users.
2. Under the heading ‘Database’, multi-dimensional tables are available that allow users to make more advanced and detailed queries on the data. Upon user request, Eurostat provides customised extractions to answer very specialised or detailed data needs.
3. Regularly updated articles provide an easy entry to tourism statistics, combining graphs, tables and analysis on a wide range of tourism-related subjects.

Several times a year, data releases are accompanied with widely distributed press releases. The data obtained under Regulation (EU) No 692/2011 is often complemented with other sources of official statistics in order to present a more comprehensive picture of the economic or employment development of tourism industries. In addition, tourism statistics contribute to general Eurostat publications such as the Regional Yearbook. Internal monitoring reports of Eurostat website activity frequently rank tourism statistics among the most consulted areas of European statistics. This underlines the relevance and accessibility of the data. For instance, in number of page visits in 2015, the tourism article in the Regional Yearbook ranked second, after the regional GDP figures.

Accessibility and clarity of tourism statistics is also promoted by using modern visualisation tools that give users a quick snapshot of tourism features. Such tools have been embedded in the Virtual Tourism Observatory maintained by the European Commission.

4.6. Comparability

Comparability refers to measurement of the impact of differences in applied statistical concepts, measurement tools and procedures where statistics are compared between geographical areas, sectoral domains or over time.

European tourism statistics draw on a high degree of harmonisation of concepts, definitions, classifications and methodologies. Methodological issues are discussed in the dedicated Working Group on Tourism Statistics, which also encourages the exchange of experiences and common practices within and outside the European Union.

To ensure the harmonisation, Regulation (EU) No 692/2011 laid down basic principles on definitions (Article 2), subjects covered and characteristics of the required data (Article 3) and scope of observation (Article 4). The basis for the day-to-day harmonisation work is the Methodological Manual for Tourism Statistics (Article 10). This manual is prepared by Eurostat — in close cooperation with Member States — and contains recommended guidelines for the production of tourism statistics. A first edition of the manual was released in 2011. Two major revisions have been released since then. The manual has proven to be a very hands-on repository for harmonising statistics within the EU. It is also a reference document for data users and producers of tourism statistics outside the EU. The latter contributes to Eurostat’s mission to be the leading provider of high-quality statistics on Europe.

Tourism statistics are fairly comparable over time and across countries and regions. The transition from Directive 95/57/EC to Regulation (EU) No 692/2011 caused only a minor break in series for most countries. Such breaks are documented for users through the metadata on the Eurostat website or in relevant publications.

4.7. Coherence

Coherence refers to the degree to which the data can be reliably combined in different ways and for various uses.

To the extent possible, European tourism statistics indicate a good degree of coherence with data produced by national and international organisations. Cross-domain cooperation within the European Statistical System has also contributed to the coherence of tourism statistics with related data in the economic, business or social areas.

Internally, the Commission's data validation services applied for tourism statistics guarantee coherence between monthly and annual data, between figures on participation in tourism and population statistics, or between the different characteristics of tourism trips.

5. MEASURES TAKEN TO REDUCE BURDEN ON BUSINESSES

Reducing the response burden on the parties responsible for providing statistical data, in particular SMEs, is fostered via three main channels.

Firstly, Article 8 of Regulation (EU) No 692/2011 allows Member States to rely on the following data sources: surveys, administrative data, and appropriate statistical estimation procedures. A number of countries collect data from businesses (for example on the capacity and occupancy of tourist accommodation establishments) via a sample survey (instead of an exhaustive census). Other countries make use of administrative data held by the local authorities, instead of directly addressing suppliers of accommodation.

Secondly, Annex I to the Regulation allows Member States to limit the scope of observation as laid down in Article 4(a) to include only establishments above a certain capacity threshold (namely those having 10 or more bed places). Those Member States accounting for less than 1 % of the total annual number of nights spent at tourist accommodation establishments in the EU can further reduce the scope of observation by only including those having 20 or more bed places. This latter threshold is applied to 12 Member States. This limitation of scope exempts many SMEs active in the tourist accommodation sector from the reporting obligation under the Regulation.

Finally, to allow flexibility concerning the data sources used, a breakdown of accommodation occupancy data by size class was made optional.

6. OUTLOOK

6.1. Maintaining the relevance and quality of European statistics on tourism

The data required under Regulation (EU) No 692/2011 should reflect evolving user needs in the light of changes in the tourism sector while taking into account the burden on data providers.

In the medium term, this could possibly require amendments to the Regulation, for instance to update certain variables and breakdowns, to insert new requirements or to discontinue current requirements that are now considered of lower priority. Regarding the latter, this could possibly apply to the optional or triennial data requirements or to the annual metadata and quality reporting. During this process, the outcomes of pilot studies (Article 5 of the Regulation) will also need to be taken into consideration (in particular for better and more regularly assessing the macroeconomic importance of tourism and its impact on the environment).

Any initiative or proposal will focus on quality, in combination with perceived user relevance, and on the impact on burden reduction for administrations or businesses.

Such amendments will also explore further synergies with other statistical domains (e.g. travel surveys, international trade in services, use of integrated registers). In the coming years, the position of tourism statistics in the modernised systems of business statistics and social statistics will also need to be reassessed. This concerns in particular the integration of tourism statistics into two planned framework regulations, one for integrating business statistics and the other for integrated European social statistics.

6.2. Impact of new sources and methods

In recent years, tourism statistics has been a frontrunner within the European Statistical System as regards exploring new data sources and methods. For example, a study was conducted exploring the feasibility of using mobile positioning data for tourism statistics. Big data offer a big potential for tourism statistics: information obtained from mobile network operators, from booking or reservation systems, from search engines and internet activities, from electronic payment cards or from social media could all feed data into a system of tourism statistics. Over a longer term, such new data sources could lead to a revolution rather than an evolution in the way European tourism statistics will be produced. The partial shift from data collection to data connection will become a major challenge for producers of statistics. However, this shift has the potential to provide richer and timelier knowledge on tourism with a better detailed breakdown by time and place. These new methods will most likely be more cost-efficient and lower the burden on businesses. The use of new methods and sources, besides the existing more traditional surveys, will contribute to better understanding aspects of the tourism sector that were previously less — or not — covered (for instance new forms of rented accommodation in the so-called sharing economy).

6.3. Extending tourism statistics to additional countries

Further implementation of Regulation (EU) No 692/2011 in the EU and EFTA Member States will continue to focus on quality improvements and burden management. In addition, activities will continue with a view to setting up a system for the development, production and dissemination of European statistics on tourism in candidate countries and potential candidate countries. Given the importance of the tourism sector for the economies and labour markets of many countries that are eligible for the Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance, the alignment of their statistical system to the body of EU law on tourism statistics is of high importance.

7. CONCLUSIONS

In a joint effort with Member States, the implementation of Regulation (EU) No 692/2011 led to more and better data output of high-quality statistics on tourism. Since 2012, completeness and timeliness of the data have improved significantly.

The European Tourism Statistics envisaged under the Regulation can be considered as up and running, and providing relevant data to the tourism industry's various stakeholders and to local, regional, national or international administrations. However, as tourism behaviour and the structure of the tourism sector constantly change, and as new data sources and methods become available, a close monitoring of the current production and output of Regulation (EU) No 692/2011 will remain an important challenge during the coming five years.