

DRAFT ANNUAL TOURISM REPORTING TEMPLATE

1. INTRODUCTION

Council Decision 86/664/EEC of 22 December 1986¹ establishing a consultation and cooperation procedure in the field of tourism foresees that “each Member State shall send the Commission, once a year, a report on the most significant measures it has taken and, as far as possible, on measures it is considering taking in the provision of services for tourists which could have consequences for travellers from the other Member States”.

With the publication of the “Agenda for a sustainable and competitive European tourism”, the Commission announced that “in order to strengthen the collaboration with and among Member States, their current annual reporting through the Tourism Advisory Committee (TAC) will be used to facilitate the exchange and the dissemination of information about how their policies and actions safeguard the sustainability of tourism”.

This Communication was welcomed by the Competitiveness Council conclusions (22nd-23rd November 2007) and by the Presidency Conclusions of the Brussels European Council of 14th December 2007.

The main aims for the reporting process are:

- to be able to monitor the level of implementation of the “Agenda for a sustainable and competitive European tourism” by Member States;
- to facilitate the exchange of experiences among member States with regard to how they tackle issues which are important for the competitiveness and sustainability of European tourism.

MS reports referring to year n shall be sent to the European Commission by the end of February of year $n+1$.

If the reports are sent in English, the deadline is shifted to the end of April.

2. ORGANISATIONAL STRUCTURE

This section should provide an overview of the main organisational structure to illustrate how tourism is organised and managed, to identify linkages and to identify the engagement of other organisations/stakeholders.

The information required will only need to be prepared fully in year 1 as it will subsequently only be necessary to provide details of any changes.

¹ Official Journal L 384, 31/12/1986 P. 0052 – 0053.

2.1 Please identify the National Bodies responsible for tourism (Ministry and also any separate/related National Tourism Organisation), including key areas of responsibility, and their relationship to other national bodies. (maximum of 1.000 characters)

The Ministry of Economics of the Republic of Latvia is the National Tourism Administration of Latvia.

The main tasks of the Ministry of Economics in the field of tourism are as follows:

- to develop tourism state policy, and to organise and co-ordinate the implementation thereof;
- to develop draft legislation and draft regulatory enactments;
- to represent the State's interests in the tourism industry;
- to plan State aid to the tourism industry;
- to prepare and implement international agreements regarding co-operation in the field of tourism, as well as to co-ordinate the development of international projects.

The Latvian Tourism Development Agency is a state administrative institution under the supervision of the Minister for Economics. The Agency has been established in order to implement the state policy of tourism development.

The Agency has the following functions:

- to ensure the implementation of the Latvian tourism development policy;
- to implement measures promoting tourism;
- to introduce tourism development projects of the public and private partnership;
- to attract financial resources for tourism development;
- to perform the introduction of quality management in the tourism sector, as well as the conformity assessment of the Latvian tourism and the providers of services and merchants related thereto;
- to participate in implementation of international co-operation agreements in the tourism sector.

2.2 Please, describe what organisations/agencies are used to deliver services at the national and regional level and the services that they deliver. (maximum 800 characters)

The Latvian Tourism Development Agency is responsible for the promotion of Latvia as an attractive tourist destination at both the national and international level.

Besides, local tourism is developed and facilitated by four regional tourism associations. Also tourist information centres and tourist information points mainly administrated by local municipalities, offer tourism information services for domestic and foreign tourists in the whole territory of Latvia.

2.3 Please, describe which other bodies and organisations are involved at the national level and the process for involving them. (maximum 800 characters)

The Latvian Tourism Advisory Council, established in 1997 is a consultative council, which promotes cooperation and partnership between the public sector and non-governmental organizations, engaged in the elaboration and implementation processes of tourism state policy.

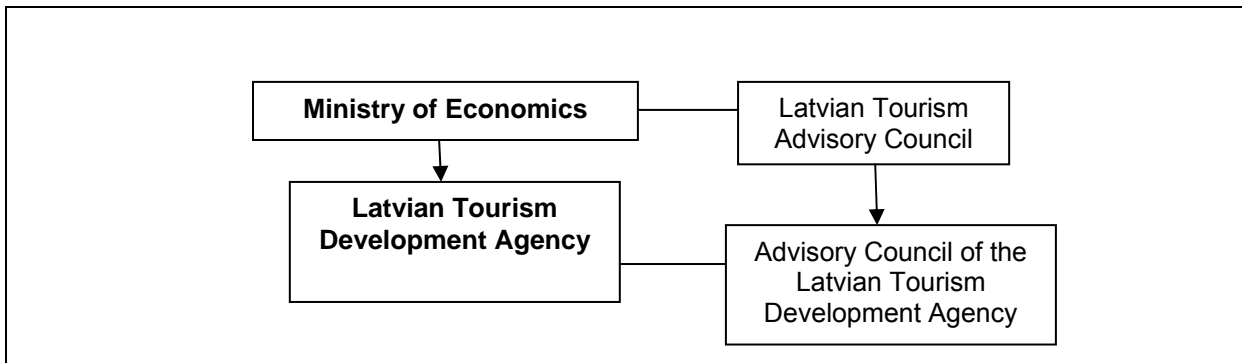
The Advisory Council of the Latvian State Development Agency has been established in 2009 to consult on state tourism marketing activities. The council unites the representatives from the major tourism and marketing associations.

There are several important tourism associations which participate in the work of the Latvian Tourism Advisory Council:

- Latvian Association of Tourism Information Organizations "LATTŪRINFO";
- Association of Latvian Travel Agents and Operators;
- The Association of Hotels and Restaurants of Latvia;
- Rural tourism association "Countryside Traveller";
- Association of Latvia's Castles, Palaces and Manors;
- Latvian Camping Association;

- Latvian Youth Hostel Association;
- Latvian Tour Guide Association;
- Latvian Professional Tour Guide Association;
- Association of Major Cities of Latvia
- E-tourism Association of Latvia;
- Tourism Education Association of Latvia;
- Latvian Association of Kurortology;
- 4 regional associations (Vidzeme, Kurzeme, Latgale, Zemgale).

2.4 Please provide a diagram/organogram of the organisational structure for tourism identifying the relationship between national, regional and local bodies. Provide also a short description of the core responsibilities and competencies of each of the organisations. Include also information regarding the direct and indirect links between other departments, stakeholder organisations and unions. Information about mechanisms of decision making process participation from outsider organisations, e.g. forums, advisory committees is also requested. (maximum of 2.000 characters)



2.5 Please provide information about financial data, including spend/budget on tourism as a percentage of overall government spend/budget, the level of national funding support for tourism marketing, the amount of EU funding support made available for tourism and data concerning the support to SMEs and Destinations. (500 characters)

As tourism is a subsectoral export industry, it is financed through different sectors.

The budget for tourism under the state budget program “The implementation of tourism policy” was 528 592 lats or 752 122 Euros in the year of 2010 (the exchange rate (in lats) 1 EUR=0.7098 LVL).

3. POLICIES AND STRATEGIES

3.1 Is there a current National Strategy for tourism? Yes X No

If yes, please, provide information in bullet point format about the key aims, objectives and priorities of the strategy highlighting those that are designed to address sustainability issues in economic, environmental and social terms in particular those related in the six aims included in the Agenda. In preparing the tourism strategy, explain how consideration has been given to the 9 principles set out in the Agenda (para2.3 p5) and given in the appendix. (maximum 1.000 characters)

Nevertheless there is no national Strategy for tourism, tourism has been considered as one of the prior export sectors of Latvia, and several actions to facilitate the growth of the industry are included in several action plans and strategic documents - Declaration of the Intended Activities of the Cabinet of Ministers, the Action plan of the Ministry of Economics, the Action Plan to Improve the Business Environment etc.

In 2010 the Latvian Tourism Development Agency in cooperation with tourism associations and tourism educational institutions elaborated the **Latvian Tourism Marketing Strategy 2010-2015**. The document introduces the new concept of tourism development, proposing main tourism target markets and the new communication platform. According to the Strategy the new brand of Latvia as well as the new slogan "*Best enjoyed slowly*" has been introduced.

3.2 Who was the initiator and who is responsible for its implementation? (maximum 200 characters)

The Ministry of Economics is the responsible institution for the elaboration of tourism policy, but Latvian Tourism Development Agency is responsible for the implementation of tourism policy.

3.3 How is the strategy monitored and how often? (maximum 500 characters)

The Latvian Tourism Marketing Strategy 2010-2015 is monitored annually.

3.4 What tourism specific legislation exists? (maximum 500 characters)

- Tourism Law (17 September 1998)
- Cabinet Regulations No.353 Regarding the Rights and Duties of Tourism Operators, Tourism Agents and Clients, the Procedures for the Preparation and Implementation of a Package Tourism Service, the Information to be Provided to a Client and the Procedures for Deposition of Security Guarantee of Money (13 April 2010)
- Cabinet Regulations No.226 Procedures for the Completion, Storage and Transferral of Declaration Forms of Aliens (3 April 2007)
- Cabinet Regulations No.936 Latvian Tourism Development Agency (16 November 2004)
- Cabinet regulations No.666 Latvian Tourism Advisory Council (25 November 2003)

4. MEASURES AND INITIATIVES

This section provides Member States with an opportunity to outline specific initiatives and policies that are or are going to be adopted to manage and develop tourism activity in ways which respond to the key challenges of the Agenda and which fall within the six main aims of the Agenda itself.

1 Economic prosperity

- a. To ensure the long term competitiveness, viability and prosperity of tourism enterprises and destinations.
- b. To provide quality employment opportunities, offering fair pay and conditions for all employees and avoiding all forms of discrimination.

2 Social equity and cohesion

- a. To enhance the quality of life of local communities through tourism, and engage them in its planning and management
- b. To provide a safe, satisfying and fulfilling experience for visitors, available to all without discrimination by gender, race, religion, disability or in other ways.

3 Environmental and cultural protection

- a. To minimise pollution and degradation of the global and local environment and the use of scarce resources by tourism activities.
- b. To maintain and strengthen cultural richness and biodiversity and contribute to their appreciation and conservation.

4.1 Please set out, briefly, the steps which have been or will be taken, if any, to address the 7 key challenges for the delivery of sustainable and competitive tourism, covered in the TSG report and referred to in the 'Agenda'.

4.1.1 Reducing the seasonality of demand. (maximum 200 characters)

The Latvian Tourism Marketing Strategy 2010-2015 determines that reducing the seasonality is one of the marketing targets to be reached till 2015. This target can be reached by positioning Latvia in foreign markets as a tourist destination which provides a wide range of tourism products and services throughout the year.

4.1.2 Addressing the impact of tourism transport. (maximum 200 characters)

RIGA International Airport is the largest international aviation company in the Baltic's and the main air traffic centre in this region offering regular passenger, cargo and postal delivery to the cities of Europe and world. In 2010 the International airport Riga continued to develop its infrastructure to satisfy the need of its clients.

In 2010 RIGA International Airport received the Emerging Market Airports Award (EMA) in the Best Airport category handling up to five million passengers per year.

National aviation company *airBaltic* is fast growing and receives acknowledgement also outside the Baltic states. Year by year it implements new destinations – in 2010 reaching the number of 73 destinations worldwide.

4.1.3 Improving the quality of tourism jobs. (maximum 200 characters)

To advance the performance of employees engaged in tourism sector, human resource development was stimulated: support and consultations about tourism educational programs and professional standards were given; accreditation process of educational institutions and programs was coordinated.

The Latvian Tourism Development Agency organized several meetings, seminars, and lectures on tourism issues for the representatives of education institutions. There was also provided informative support for students working on their study works. Representatives of the Ministry of Economics also frequently attended the presentations of bachelor and master thesis.

4.1.4 Maintaining and enhancing community prosperity and the quality of life, in the face of change. (maximum 200 characters)

With the support of EU ERDF resources through the sub-activity 3.4.2.1.2 "Development of Cycling Tourism Product of National Importance" in 2010 continued the implementation of projects with an aim to develop velorout infrastructure.

There was also implemented a cross-border co-operation project "Tour de LatEst" within the Baltic Sea Region Programme 2007-2013, the main objective of which is to promote the competitiveness of North Latvia and South Estonia in European tourism market by expanding the offer of tourism products and services. In the frame of the project several cycling routes around Latvia and Estonia were created with the total length of 1000 km.

4.1.5 Minimising resource use and the production of waste. (maximum 200 characters)

Country and village houses, vacation cottages, guest houses and campings in Latvia practising environment-friendly management can apply for the environmental quality label called the "Green Certificate". This eco-label certifies that the establishment offers healthy recreation in clean and tidy rural environment. It is issued by the professional rural tourism association "Countryside Traveller".

At the same time Foundation for environmental education issues also "Blue flag" certificates for the public beaches and "Green key" certificate for the accommodation establishments – hotels, guest houses and campings.

4.1.6 Conserving and giving value to natural and cultural heritage. (maximum 200 characters)

Latvia's natural and cultural heritage is a key attractor of overseas visitors and visitors from the domestic market. According to the Latvian Tourism Marketing Strategy 2010-2015 nature tourism is acknowledged as one of the strategic tourism products of Latvia.

There are many activities and projects every year carried out concerning nature protection. One of the most active associations dealing with nature protection issues in tourism is professional rural tourism association "Countryside Traveller".

4.1.7 Making holidays available to all. (maximum 200 characters)

The development of environment accessibility system is a key element of sustainable tourism.

The Internet site www.videspieejamiba.lv is elaborated with the support of the Ministry of Economics. The main goal of the site:

- to inform the society about the standards, accepted in order to ensure environment accessibility;
- to provide information on environment accessibility in Latvia and in the world.

4.2 As key challenges may change over time, please identify any other areas that are becoming a new challenge. (maximum 600 characters)

Due to the global financial crises the main challenge for Latvia was to work on the renewal of tourism flows to and within Latvia to be able to recover the industry.

4.3 Please identify and describe a specific initiative, which is related to the 7 key challenges, that is innovative/ successful and which would be of interest to or of help to other Member States. (maximum 2.000 characters)

In 2010 the Latvian Tourism Development Agency developed the Latvian Tourism Marketing Strategy 2010-2015, specifying the foreign target markets and the strategic tourism products of Latvia. According to the Strategy these products are: cultural tourism, nature tourism and products with a high added value (for example, medical tourism).

The pilot project of tourism service quality system "Q-Latvia" was implemented, that stressed out the quality problems to work with within the sector. The pilot project was the first step on the implementation of the voluntary quality system throughout Latvia.

The development of the national tourism portal of Latvia also continued in 2010. As a result a new tourism portal www.latvia.travel was created, offering comprehensive and detailed tourism information for foreign travellers.

5. MECHANISMS FOR IMPLEMENTATION

Three mechanisms for implementing the Agenda were identified in the “Agenda”: sustainable destinations, sustainable businesses and responsible tourists.

5.1 Sustainable destinations: What support is given to strengthen destination management at the regional/ destination level (supportive policy environment, knowledge networks, training programmes, establishment of measures/indicators for benchmarking, etc.)? (maximum 600 characters)

Sustainability is acknowledged as a crucial element for the development of tourism in Latvia. According to the Latvian Tourism marketing Strategy 2010-2015 sustainability is set as one of the core values of Latvia’s tourism products. The new Latvian slogan “Best enjoyed slowly” fully discloses Latvia as an attractive and green tourist destination.

Therefore Latvia continued to participate in the project ““European Destinations of Excellence” (EDEN), which promotes sustainable tourism development models across the European Union. Thus Latvia ensures wide publicity for its best and most sustainable tourist destinations.

The theme of EDEN was “Aquatic Tourism” in 2010. As the most outstanding destination of Latvia was acknowledged Sea Resort Jūrmala, which is the largest resort city in the Baltic States, located 25km away from Riga (the capital of Latvia). It is known for its natural treasures – the mild climate, sea, healthy air, curative mud and mineral water.

5.2 Sustainable businesses: What support is given to strengthen the sustainability and competitiveness of businesses (supportive policy environment, orientation of business support services to sustainability, training, financial incentives, etc.)? (maximum 600 characters)

In order to strengthen the competitiveness and the quality of Latvian hospitality sector, the Latvian Tourism Development Agency in co-operation with the University of Applied Sciences and the University of Agriculture of Latvia published a “Handbook on Hospitality”. The book will serve as a guide and a source of knowledge for those already working in the hospitality sector, as well as for current and emerging owners of hotels or restaurants.

The Latvian Tourism Development Agency in collaboration with the rural tourism association “Countryside Traveller” organized seminars about composition of new tourism products. Also the Ministry of Economics organized several informative events for Latvian tourism entrepreneurs. The biggest of them was Latvian Tourism Forum 2010 during which interested parties could get acquainted with individualities and characteristics of German and Russian tourism markets.

5.3 Responsible tourists: What support is given to promote responsible choices by tourists (e.g. sustainability in education, national marketing and media campaigns, promotion of certification schemes)? (maximum 600 characters)

Raising awareness of natural and historical heritage, as well as encouraging respectful attitude towards surrounding environment is an effective way to advance the responsibility of tourists.

“The Great Baltic Travel”, organized jointly by Latvian, Lithuanian and Estonian national tourism organizations is a campaign for adventure in Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania. Travellers are invited to discover unique sightseeing, historical buildings, architectural beauties, adventure and water parks, museums and areas of outstanding natural beauty in the Baltic countries. The campaign took place for the fourth time in 2010 with a purpose to popularise new tourism products, as well as get acquainted with the tourism supply, and facilitate local tourism development of the Baltic region.

6. DATA AND INDICATORS

Eurostat will provide, as an annex, the key statistical data required to support the reporting process covering around 20 indicators². These are mainly related to the aim of 'economic prosperity'.

Please, identify indicators that are being used or developed which could add to the range of information being provided by Eurostat, particularly in relation to social and environmental issues (other indicators from the TSG report, visitors/ residents satisfaction, etc.). (maximum 500 characters)

The current 20 indicators are sufficient to provide the statistical information of Latvian economic prosperity.

7. COMPLEMENTARY ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

If necessary use the following box to provide additional complementary information that has not already been covered.

² These indicators have been selected from the 50 TSG indicators on the basis of the possibility to calculate them at the European level.

APPENDIX

Principles of sustainable tourism:

- **Taking a holistic and integrated approach**

All the various impacts of tourism should be taken into account in its planning and development. Furthermore, tourism should be well balanced and integrated with a whole range of activities that affect society and the environment.

- **Planning for the long term**

Sustainable development is about taking care of the needs of future generations as well as our own. Long term planning requires the ability to sustain actions over time.

- **Achieving an appropriate pace and rhythm of development**

The level, pace and shape of development should reflect and respect the character, resources and needs of host communities and destinations.

- **Involving all stakeholders**

A sustainable approach requires widespread and committed participation in decision making and practical implementation by all those implicated in the outcome.

- **Using best available knowledge**

Policies and actions should be informed by the latest and best knowledge available. Information on tourism trends and impacts, and skills and experience, should be shared across Europe.

- **Minimising and managing risk – the precautionary principle**

Where there is uncertainty about outcomes, there should be full evaluation and preventative action should be taken to avoid damage to the environment or society.

- **Reflecting impacts in costs – user and polluter pays**

Prices should reflect the real costs to society of consumption and production activities. This has implications not simply for pollution but for charging for the use of facilities that have significant management costs attached to them.

- **Setting and respecting limits, where appropriate**

The carrying capacity of individual sites and wider areas should be recognised, with a readiness and ability to limit, where and when appropriate, the amount of tourism development and volume of tourist flows.

- **Undertaking continuous monitoring**

Sustainability is all about understanding impacts and being alert to them all the time, so that the necessary changes and improvements can be made.