

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.

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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

The Ministry has the function of the National Tourism Administration in Latvia. The main functions are:

- to develop, coordinate and implement tourism development state policy;
- to develop tourism legislation and policy planning documents;
- to represent the State's interests in the tourism sector;
- to plan State aid to the tourism sector;
- 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;
- to cooperate with local and international tourism organizations and institutions .

Latvian Tourism Development Agency (hereafter – Agency)

The Agency is the National Tourism Organization in Latvia. The Agency is a state institution supervised by the Ministry of Economics and is responsible for tourism policy implementation: marketing and promoting Latvia as an attractive tourist destination. The main functions are following:

- tourism marketing and public relations activities;
- tourism product development and promotion;
- realization of PPP projects in tourism sector;
- attraction of financial resources.

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)

To promote Latvia as a tourist destination both in national and international level Latvian Tourism Development Agency has:

- 4 regional bureaus (in Kurzeme, Zemgale, Latgale and Vidzeme);
- Latvian Tourism Information Bureau (in Riga);
- 4 Latvian Tourism Bureaus - abroad: in Finland (Helsinki), UK (London), Sweden (Stockholm) and Russia (Moscow), as well as joint Baltic Tourist Office in Germany (Berlin) co financed together with Estonian and Lithuanian state agencies .

Besides, tourism is facilitated by 92 tourism bureaus, tourism centres, and tourism points, located in the whole territory of Latvia, administrated by local municipalities and other authorities.

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

In order to ensure effective partnership and participation of tourism industry in the development of the tourism state policy, **Latvian Tourism Advisory Council** was established in 1997.

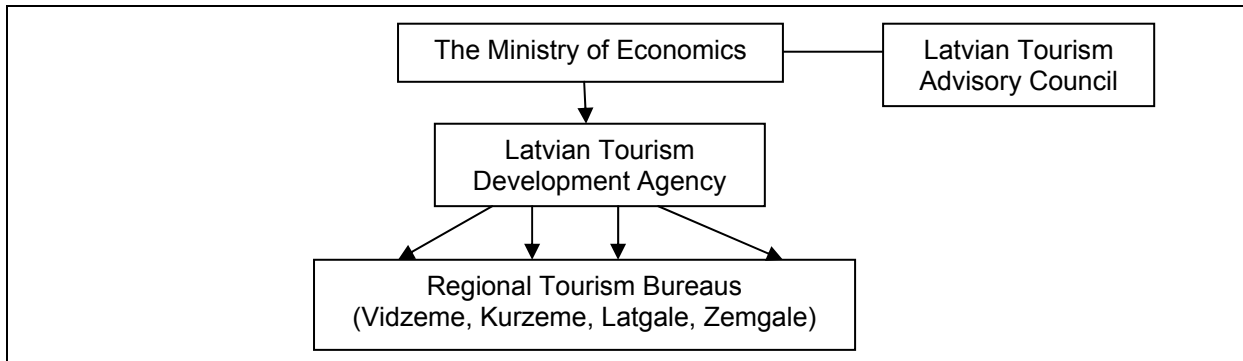
Besides participation in the Latvian Tourism Advisory Council tourism associations and other non-governmental organizations participate in elaboration and implementation of the tourism state policy nationally and locally. The major tourism associations are following:

- Association of Latvian Travel Agents;
- Latvian Hotel and Restaurant Association;
- Latvian Rural Tourism Association;
- Latvian Youth Hostels Association;

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- Latvian Professional Tour Guide Association;
- Latvian Tour Guide Association;
- Latvian Association of Tourist Information Organizations “LATTURINFO”;
- Latvian Campsite Association;
- Tourism Education Association of Latvia;
- e-tourism Association of Latvia;
- Ecotourism Union of Latvia;
- Inspiration Riga - Riga Convention Bureau;
- [Kūrortpilsētu asociācija](#)
- [Lielo pilsētu asociācija](#)
- 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)

LVL 1.28 million (EUR 1.82 million)² were allocated directly for implementation of the state budget programme “Implementation of Tourism Policy” in 2008, which are applied in accordance with the priorities set in the Guidelines of Tourism Development Policy of Latvia in order to strengthen positions of Latvia as a tourist destination, improve tourism infrastructure, promotion of development of new tourism products and expansion of co-operation.

A considerable contribution to development of Latvian economy is made by the European Union Structural Funds. In the planning period of 2007–2013 the financial resources of the European Regional Development Fund are following:

Measure 3.4.2 “Tourism”

Activity 3.4.2.1 “Development of Tourism Product of National Importance”

Sub-activity 3.4.2.1.1 “Maintenance and Renewal of Town Planning Monuments of National Importance and Infrastructure Adjustment to Develop a Tourism Product”

Amount of ERDF financing – LVL 10 542 060 (EUR 15 000 000)

² Latvian Bank exchange rate 1 EUR= 0.702804 LVL (28 April 2009)

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Sub-activity 3.4.2.1.2 "Development of Cycling Tourism Product of National Importance"

Amount of ERDF financing – LVL 4 919 628 (EUR 7 000 000)

3. POLICIES AND STRATEGIES

3.1 Is there a current National Strategy for tourism? Yes 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)

Guidelines of Tourism Development Policy of Latvia are a medium-term policy planning document, defining the basic principles and the goal of tourism development policy for 2004-2008, to increase the share of tourism in Gross Domestic Product of Latvia.

To achieve this goal, the following actions are identified:

- positioning of Latvia as a safe and recognizable tourist destination;
- stimulation of incoming and domestic tourism;
- promotion of co-operation.

In order to ensure achievement of objectives set in the Guidelines, **Tourism Development Programme of Latvia for 2006–2008** was elaborated (approved 5 July 2006).

Specific activities promoting tourism development in the framework of the allocated state budget are determined in the annual action plan. **Action Plan of Latvian Tourism Development for 2008** (approved 9 July 2008) is developed in accordance with the directions of activity set in the Guidelines and Programme and includes particular measures for promotion of tourism development, as well as prescribes responsible institutions, expected financing, performance deadlines and performance assessment indicators. The action plan also includes a comparative report regarding achievement of the particular goals within the period from 2004–2007.

In 2008 the Ministry of Economics has started the work on the new medium-term tourism policy planning document for the period 2009-2015.

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

Latvian Tourism Development Agency is the implementer of different tourism activities supervised by the Ministry of Economics of the Republic of Latvia as the initiator of the tourism policy.

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

The Ministry of Economics prepares an annual **Informative Report**.

The aforementioned report gives an informative account on the implementation process of the Guidelines of Tourism Development Policy of Latvia, Tourism Development Programme and the previous year's Action Plan of Latvian Tourism Development, displaying achievements of the performance and determined efforts.

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

- Tourism Law (17 September 1998, amendments 1999, 2002, 2003, 2006)
- Cabinet Regulations No.943 Procedures for the Certification and Provision of Services of Tourist Guides (20 November 2008) - *These Regulations shall come into force on 1 July 2009.*

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- Cabinet Regulations No.226 Procedures for the Completion, Storage and Transferral of Declaration Forms of Aliens (3 April 2007, amendments 2008)
- Cabinet Regulations No.67 Procedures for the Preparation and Implementation of a Package Tourism Service, Information to Be Provided to a Client, and the Rights and Duties of a Package Tourism Service Provider and a Client (23 January 2007, amendments 2008, 2009)
- Cabinet Regulations No.1017 Database of Tourism Services Providers (19 December 2006, amendments 2008)
- Cabinet Regulations No.936 Latvian Tourism Development Agency (16 November 2004, amendments 2008)
- Cabinet regulations No.666 Latvian Tourism Advisory Council (25 November 2003, amendments 2008)
- Cabinet Regulations No.204 By-law for Tourism Fund (22 April 2004)

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)

Promotion of various tourism products and services in order to meet the interests of both domestic and foreign tourists. There was organized a campaign called "The Great Baltic Marathon", the most important goal of which was to introduce new and also well known tourist spots in the Baltic States and to encourage to visit them, as well as to develop the local tourism in the region. Besides, different

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marketing activities to promote tourism products and services to avoid seasonality were carried out.

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

Great attention was turned to the improvement of tourism infrastructure. Significant investments were made to improve the infrastructure of state roads of different importance, as well as the transport system was optimized and the road safety in populated areas improved. There was also regular and close cooperation with the national airline company AirBaltic.

Besides, in 2008 Riga International Airport completed the reconstruction works of the runway and illumination system having lengthened it by 650 meters and reaching the length of 3200 meters. The new runway allows attending of any type of airplanes that is a precondition for commencement of intercontinental flights.

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

To advance the performance of employees engaged in tourism, 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. 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)

To ensure the tourism quality management, a tourism service quality system Q-Latvia had been developed. Q-Latvia will help to reduce the amount of complaints, facilitate growth of positive tourist comments, repeated visits, improve co-operation among tourism companies and create a positive image of Latvia.

There was also established a free hotline "Tourist Hotline – 22033000" in order to provide safe tourism in Latvia, enabling to inform foreign tourists of different conflict situations related to tourism service providers in Latvia, as well as provide round-the-clock informative assistance.

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

To raise the awareness of the significance of environment protection and the importance of environmentally friendly economic activities, broadcast program "Green Property" was implemented.

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

To maintain the national heritage, several activities were carried out: the program of investigation, conservation and restoration of cultural monuments was implemented and 102 agreements were concluded.

Regarding utilisation of ERDF resources the sub-activity 3.4.2.1.1 "Maintenance and Renewal of Town Planning Monuments of National Importance and Infrastructure Adjustment to Develop a Tourism Product" was introduced, the potential investment locations of which were – town planning monuments of national importance in compliance with the list of the State Inspection for Heritage Protection as of January 1, 2007.

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

Significant attention was turned to the improvement of tourism infrastructure to make it friendlier to tourists.

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

The ability to maintain competitiveness during the time of global financial crisis can be recognized as the main challenge for Latvia. When joining the EU in 2004, Latvia gained the competitive advantage by being comparatively undiscovered, wherewith captivating and interesting tourist destination. 5 years have passed; Latvia is no more an unknown place in Europe. Moreover, Europe itself has started of losing its position as the leading tourist destination in the world. Due to that, it is becoming more important for Latvian tourism industry to find new ways to remain competitive.

Secondly, it is significant to develop not only innovative, but also sustainable tourism products and services to stay competitive, contemporary and environmentally friendly simultaneously.

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 order to promote implementation of the directions of activity set in the Guidelines of Tourism Development Policy of Latvia, which involves promotion of Latvia as a recognizable tourist destination and stimulation of incoming tourism, Latvian Tourism Development Agency launched the development of a tourism service quality system Q-Latvia. The Swiss tourism service quality system was used and adapted as a basis for establishment of the quality system. The enterprises directly and indirectly involved in the provision of tourism services may voluntarily participate in Q-Latvia. Upon introduction of Q-Latvia, particular attention within the activity of tourism service providers will be focused on hospitality and clients, their wishes and assessment, as well as on increased understanding of enterprises on importance of the service quality and means of its provision. It is expected that Q-Latvia will help to reduce the amount of complaints, facilitate growth of positive tourist comments, repeated visits, improve co-operation among companies within the sector and create a positive image of Latvia as a tourist destination. The Agency will provide marketing activities for the companies having obtained Q-Latvia certificate.

Besides, a free hotline "Tourist Hotline – 22033000" was established in order to provide safe tourism in Latvia, enabling to inform foreign tourists of different conflict situations related to tourism service providers in Latvia, as well as provide round-the-clock informative assistance. In addition, popularisation measures of the phone line are carried out.

There were also improvements of the technical system and content of the state tourism portal www.latviatourism.lv. A new design of the portal, as well as content concept were developed by including new sections in it, for example, "Latvian experts recommend", "Event calendar", "Photo and video bank". Information in 14 languages is provided in the portal.

Latvian Tourism Development Agency also carries out other annual marketing activities which are updated every year to satisfy the latest needs of tourists.

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 regarding the national tourism policy of Latvia. Therefore Latvia continued participating in the EC project "European Destinations of Excellence" in the framework whereof wide publicity is ensured for the best travel destination of Latvia.

In 2008, the topic of EDEN project was "Tourism and Intangible Heritage". A project application was

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prepared and approved by the European Commission, and therefore a competition was also organised in 2008 on the best Latvian tourist destination, as well as 13 applications assessed. The application "Latgale Potters – Stoneware Masters" submitted by Rēzekne District Council was acknowledged as the most outstanding in Latvia.

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 the period of 2007-2013 it was planned to attract the financial resources of the European Regional Development Fund for Measure 3.4.2 "Tourism", the goal of which is to promote the strengthening of Latvia as a tourist destination and the increase of competitiveness creating favourable conditions for complex and sustainable development of tourism products of national importance. Two Activities were planned within the framework of the measure: "Development of Tourism Product of National Importance" and "Development of Tourism Information System".

Yet only two Sub-activities are carried out: "Maintenance and Renewal of Town Planning Monuments of National Importance and Infrastructure Adjustment to Develop a Tourism Product" and "Development of Cycling Tourism Product of National Importance".

They promote development of cultural tourism products of national importance by ensuring internationally recognised improvement of tourism infrastructure regarding Latvian cultural and historical values and facilitate development of bikeway infrastructure and observing requirements for ensuring tourist safety and tourism resource sustainability.

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. As a good example "The Great Baltic Marathon" could be mentioned.

This travel campaign of the Baltic States was organised jointly with the Lithuanian and Estonian national tourism organisations already for the second year 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. 36 tourism objects were included in the marathon (12 from each country) visited by about 10 000 tourists.

6. DATA AND INDICATORS

Eurostat will provide, as an annex, the key statistical data required to support the reporting process covering around 20 indicators³. 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

³ These indicators have been selected from the 50 TSG indicators on the basis of the possibility to calculate them at the European level.

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

Elaboration of the Guidelines of Tourism Development Policy of Latvia for 2009–2015 was started in the year 2008. Simultaneously the development of 2-year Action plan was started.

This draft document sets strategic directions for sustainable and competitive development of the tourism sector by promoting the growth of the state export capacity and positioning of Latvia as the leading travel destination in the Baltic Sea Region, thereby increasing the tourist flow and income from tourism, as well as promoting development of Latvian national economy, economic and social welfare of population and international integration in general.

Due to economic slowdown and current administrative reforms which means reducing all the administrative expenditure, there are also structural changes in the tourism administration, especially on the regional and international 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.