



# European tourism policy: Its evolution and structure



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## HIGHLIGHTS

- EC tourism policy-making responds to the creation of the Internal Market.
- The current European strategy endows the strategy conceived in the 80's–90's.
- Tourism is a “tool” for sustainable growth and competitiveness, not a full policy.
- The sustainable development principle in the Treaties lays the policy foundations.
- EC competence and EU legislature have eroded Member States' sovereignty.

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## ABSTRACT

This article reviews the procedural complexity of tourism policy-making by the European Commission leading up to the 2010 Communication. Initially, the European Commission had to present interventions affecting tourism as a community action or measure; intended to assist in the implementation of the Internal Market. Later, integration of the sustainable development principle into European Treaties established a framework for governance and a foundation for tourism policy, and the Lisbon Treaty in 2007 established a European policy that explicitly related to tourism, albeit a complementary competence in character. This article highlights a lack of leadership from the Member States throughout the process and contrasts this with the self-serving, driving force of the Commission in making tourism policy that focuses primarily on promotional actions. Consequently, the Commission has not created a robust, dynamic, flexible European model for tourism, designed in a way to best serve the needs of the Member States.

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## 1. Introduction

Since the end of the Second World War, tourism has been a stable and continuous driver of economic growth in Europe. It has not, however, always been openly welcomed by European Institutions. Only since 2007, when the treaties which reformed the European Union were finally implemented, has there been clearly formulated tourism policy, promoted by the European Commission (EC). That it should have taken so long was partly because Member States were reluctant to relinquish part of their domestic powers to the EU and partly because of the nature of tourism. This article narrates the increasing recognition given to tourism within the EU framework until the creation of the European Tourism Policy.

To understand how this policy was formed requires a

comprehensive review of the successes and failures of relevant EC initiatives. The pattern is one of policy created and enacted following EC initiatives by means of internal actions such as Communications. In rare cases, the regulatory initiatives gave birth to Directives, Decisions, Resolutions and Recommendations. The roles of the European Parliament (EP) and the Council of the European Union (COUNCIL) are relevant to the discussion as they are both institutions involved in the legislation process. In addition, the European Economic Social Committee (EESC) and the Committee of the Regions (CoR) were involved as consultative bodies of the European Union, although their acts were not legally binding. EU decision making is complex and the full institutional arrangements are not described within this paper; Lodge (1996) identified at least eight legislative procedures impacting tourism, Manente, Minghetti, and Montaguti (2013) show how multiple EU policies affect tourism, while Wallace, Pollack, and Young (2010) provided a more current and detailed account of the European policy

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institutional map and instruments. For quick reference, a list of key institutions mentioned in this paper is given in [Table 1](#).

## 2. Tourism policy provided by the internal market

We shall first review how tourism was used as a soft target to incentivise Member States to embrace the Internal Market ([Robinson, 1993](#)). The internal market, also known as the single market, was an ambitious, and often controversial, project that would remove sovereignty from the states ([Garrett, 1992](#)). The integration process led to a gradual transformation from state to

shared sovereignty between Member States and European institutions. Raising awareness of the importance of the tourism trade, helped to achieve the Union's objectives for the whole of Europe, as was addressed in the Treaty of Maastricht and subsequently, fully incorporated into the Treaty of Amsterdam. The European Commission and the European Council Acts, which formed the framework of European Tourism Governance for this period, can be found in [Table 2](#).

**Table 1**

Acts from the European Commission and the European Council, in relation to the Internal Market, up to 1992.

| European acts building the European tourism policy   | Significance for/Impact on European tourism policy   | Legal framework  |
|--|--|--|
| COM (82)385 final, Communication on "Initial guidelines for a Community policy on tourism" (ISBN: 92-825-3227-5)   | a) It recognised the importance of tourism in the achievement of the Community's aims. The EC outlined its approach in everything relating to the field of tourism within the Common Market.<br>b) The Council recognised tourism as an action to be considered as an additional instrument for European integration through the COUNCIL RESOLUTION 84/C 115/01; of 10.04.1984. Brussels, 30.4.1984, OJ C115.  | TEEC 1957 art 2;<br>TEEC 1957 art 253;   |
| <a href="#">COUNCIL RESOLUTION 1983</a> ; on "the continuation and implementation of a European policy and action program on the Environment (1982–1986)". Brussels, 17.2.1983, OJ C46, p1-6 | It recognised that environmental impacts should be considered within the framework of the regional, industrial, transport, <i>tourism</i> , energy and agricultural policies.  |  |
| COM (83) 451 final, Proposal for a Council recommendation on "fire safety in existing hotels". Brussels 21.2.1984, OJ C 49, p7   | COUNCIL RECOMMENDATION 86/666/EEC, Brussels 31.12.1986, OJ L384, p 60 on fire safety in existing hotels, 22.12.1986  | Council Resolution 84/C 115/01;  |
| COM (86) 32 final, for a Council Recommendation on "standardized information on hotels". Brussels 14.5.1986, OJ C114, p8-10  | COUNCIL RECOMMENDATION 86/665/ECC, Brussels 31.12.1986, OJ L384, p54-59 on standardised information on hotels, 22.12.1986  | Council Resolution 84/C 115/01;  |
| COM (86) 32 final, Communication on "Community action in the field of tourism. Brussels, 14.5.1986, OJ C 114 (ISSN 0337-3677)  | a) It set out how <i>community action</i> was to be understood in the context of tourism sector.<br>b) First budget allocation for tourism in Europe.<br>c) EC WORKING PAPER SEC (88) 1580 final, Brussels 8.11.1988 on priority action to be taken in the Tourism sector.<br>d) COUNCIL DIRECTIVE 95/57 EC of 23.11.1995 on the collection of statistical information in the field of tourism.<br>e) (COM (94) 582 final, Brussels, 04.1.1995 proposal for a Council Directive on "the collection of statistical information in the field of tourism".                                  | COM (82)385 final;<br><a href="#">Single European Act 1985</a> (SEA);<br>White Paper on completing the Internal Market<br>COM(85) 310 final; |
| COM (86) 32 final, Proposal for a Council Decision "establishing a Consultation and Coordination Procedure in the field of tourism". Brussels, 14.5.1986, OJ C 114, p11                      | COUNCIL DECISION 86/664/EEC of 22.12.1986, Brussels, 31.12.1986, OJ L 384 p. 52–53 on establishing a Consultation and Co-operation Procedure in the field of tourism.  | TEEC art 235;<br>Council Resolution 84/C 115/01;   |
| COM (86) 32 final, Proposal for a Council Resolution on "a better seasonal and geographical distribution of tourism". Brussels 14.5.1986, OJ C 114, p7                                       | a) It invited Member States to take measures relating to tourism (assessed the risks of saturation, promoting tourism to develop specific areas).<br>b) COUNCIL RESOLUTION 86/C 340/01, Brussels 22.12.1986, OJ C 340, p. 1–2 on a better seasonal and geographical distribution of tourism.   | Council Resolution 84/C 115/01;  |
| COUNCIL RESOLUTION 86/C; concerning "the future orientations of the policy of the EEC for the Protection and Promotion of Consumers interests 1986". OJ C 167 p1-2                           | a) It established a "new impetus" programme providing consumers a high level of safety and health protection and an increased ability to benefit from the Community market.<br>b) COUNCIL DIRECTIVE 97/7/EC, Brussels, 20.05.1997, OJ L 144, 04.06.1997, p19 – 27 on the protection of consumers in respect of distance contracts, of 20 may 1997.<br>c) COUNCIL DIRECTIVE 90/314/EEC, Brussels 23.6.1990, JO L158, p-59 –64 on package Travel, package Holidays and package Tours, amended by 2008/122/CE directive of the European Parliament and of the Council, Brussels, 03.2.2009. | TEEC art 2;  |
| Conclusions of the European Council (Rhodes) 1988, Conclusions of the European Council 2–3 December 1988   | The Council declared the role that the EC should play within the international community to meet the objective of completing the Internal Market.  | Internal rules of the European Council;  |
| COM (88) 413 final, Communication on "an Action programme for the European Tourism year (1990)". OJ C 293 p12, Brussels 17.11.1988   | COUNCIL DECISION 89/293/18 ECC, Brussels, 17.11.1988 OJ C293, p.12 –56 (Press Release IP/89/891 23/11/1989) on an Action programme for the European Tourism year (1990).   | TEEC art 235;  |
| COM (90) 438 final, Communication on "a Community action to promote rural tourism. Brussels 12.10.1990   | It introduced geographical criteria for tourism development; and it referred to ERDF to enhance the effects of the regional programmes for developing tourism.   |  |
| COM (91) 97 final, Communication on "a Community action plan to assist tourism. Brussels 24.4.1991   | a) It referred to the subsidiarity principle and European citizenship, introduced by the Maastricht Treaty.<br>b) It considered different tourism markets within Europe.<br>c) It mentioned the need for tourism statistics in Europe.<br>d) COUNCIL DECISION 92/421 CEE, Brussels, 13.8.1992, OJ L231, p.26 –32 on a Community Action plan to assist tourism.   | TEEC art 235;  |

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