

Tourism



Relevance of gender in the policy area

Tourism is the third largest socio-economic sector in the EU. Research shows that tourism has become one of the main income generators in both developed and developing countries, with business volumes that equal or surpass oil exports, food products or the car industry. The United Nations World Tourism Organisation (UNWTO) estimates the impact of tourism in the world economy as 9% of the world's gross domestic product (GDP).

While its contribution to economic and social development is widely acknowledged in the literature, over the years little attention has been paid to how the tourism industry benefits women and men, as well as to the relation between tourism and gender equality. According to the World Tourism Organisation (UNWTO), tourism presents both opportunities and challenges for women, which makes the gender equality perspective highly relevant.

From the opportunities perspective, tourism can contribute to gender equality in several ways:

- 1 Offering important employment possibilities. According to the International Labour Organisation (ILO), tourism represents an entry point into the labour market, especially for women, young people, migrant workers and rural populations, particularly in developing or less developed countries. In fact, worldwide, women make up between 60% and 70% of all workers in the tourism industry. In 2011, the EU-28 women's participation in the overall tourism workforce stood at 56%, compared to a participation rate of 46% in the EU economy as a whole. Furthermore, tourism is closely linked to other sectors (transport, food, environment, local handicrafts, etc.) and can create more jobs in these areas. Moreover, numerous tourism jobs are flexible and can be carried out at different locations, such as the home, the workplace or in the community. Tourism also offers part-time and shift work, which can support work–life balance.
- 2 Increasing women's participation in community life and decision-making. Some studies reveal that women's participation in tourism enterprises not only contributes to decreasing individual and household poverty but can also change the way decisions are made at work and in the community. Women, who previously felt lacking in status and power, gain increased standing and self-esteem within society through their economic empowerment and access to decision-making.
- 3 Increasing women's economic empowerment and access to resources. The tourism sector has a considerable potential for the development of entrepreneurial activity, especially because most tourism businesses are small- and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs). In addition, cooperation between sustainable rural tourism and arts and craft trades can be established, which can help to preserve cultural heritage and develop local economies. Funding entrepreneurship initiatives targeting women artists and craftswomen could be a policy measure aimed at promoting women's empowerment and, at the same time, contributing to the preservation of cultural heritage. Many women are experts in specific crafts that are typical of certain regions in a country, but lack knowledge on how to transform this activity into a profitable business. Supporting them in organising their own small business would create an opportunity to generate income and give visibility to the cultural heritage of the country.

The tourism sector faces several challenges that can negatively affect women's presence in this sector. In particular, as in many sectors, labour market segregation in the tourism industry is a challenge: women are concentrated in low-paid jobs. In addition, women's presence in decision-making positions is not particularly high. As beneficiaries of the tourist industry, women are more likely than men to declare that they are not planning to go on holiday due to personal or financial reasons, or that, when they go on holiday, they visit friends and relatives. Furthermore, several studies reveal links between tourism and the sex industry, which could make women more vulnerable to sexual exploitation.

The following gender gaps need to be addressed:

- gender segregation in the labour market
- women's low representation in decision-making within tourism businesses
- gender stereotypes and travelling
- risks of gender-based violence.

Issues of gender inequalities in the policy area

Gender segregation in the labour market

Women are well represented in the tourism labour market. In the EU in 2013, women represented over 50% of the workforce in travel agencies or tour and accommodation/food services, and over 25% of workers in the air transport sector. However, women are more represented than men in low-skilled and poorly paid jobs. For instance, women are over-represented in lower-skilled and lower-paid areas of hotel, catering and tourism (HCT) work, particularly in areas such as housekeeping and some customer service areas. On the other hand, they are under-represented in kitchen work and in areas such as engineering and security.

Women are also more often employed in part-time and temporary jobs. Furthermore, both ILO and UNWTO studies on women's employment in the tourism field reveal that women tend to perform unpaid activities in the tourism sector such as cleaning and cooking, especially in family businesses (e.g. bed-and-breakfast establishments in family homes).

Unpaid work in family businesses

Women carry out a large amount of unpaid work in family tourism businesses. This type of work reflects stereotypical gender roles within the family. Besides the burden that a tourist family business might place on a woman, unpaid and undeclared activities performed informally by women do not provide legal protection or allow women access to social protection and health measures (e.g. there are no social benefits attached to the activities and, in the event of an accident, it will not be considered as an injury caused by a work activity).

According to the ILO and UNWTO, women in the tourism sector are employed in jobs that generally replicate gender segregation in domestic work and family care. For instance, some managers in the hotel and accommodation industry report that “women working carrying out cleaning jobs had been performing this work for many years in their own homes and that they were highly proficient workers’. These managers believed that male room attendants would be inclined to possess less experience and would be less efficient than their female counterparts”.

Women’s low representation in decision-making within tourism businesses

The segregation of women in the labour market also impacts negatively on their participation in the decision-making process: women make up only 21% of the board members of EU businesses. This gap is even wider in the tourism sector. For instance, a survey covering 78 tourism companies with information publicly available (including international tour operators, airlines and cruise ships, hotel groups and international professional associations and certification bodies) indicates that women make up 18.5% of all board members, i.e. 99 women out of a total of 526 positions. Furthermore, in the hospitality industry, women hold less than 40% of all managerial and supervisory positions.

The failure to use women’s talent to the best effect within the hospitality industry is considered to be one of the main challenges in this field. However, the same remark can be extended to the entire tourism sector.

A combination of factors prevents women from progressing to executive positions in tourism ([Baum, T., Cheung, C., 2015], [Equality for tourism, 2013]):

cultural traditions that prescribe traditional gender roles and responsibilities at home and in the workplace, that see women segregated into low-paid jobs and prevent them

from progressing to executive levels within companies
workplace culture that reinforces these stereotypes
discrimination against women at all stages of the recruitment process, despite the
existence of equal opportunity laws.

Gender stereotypes and travelling

Travel decisions are largely related to gender, life cycle and economic status. Factors such as work, and family and household obligations determine the amount and quality of time available for leisure and tourism and, in some instances, act as constraints for certain individuals. Research on gender and tourism reveals that these constraints are higher for women than for men. Economic resources, care duties and societal norms are the most relevant factors that influence women's travel and its quality. The 2013 Eurobarometer survey reveals that women are more likely than men to mention financial reasons (49% v. 43%) among the main reasons for not travelling.

Women also declare more often than men (26% v. 20%) that they do not travel for personal reasons. Men are more likely not to travel for career-related reasons (5% v. 10%). This reflects gender imbalances in family care and domestic work. The 2014 European Commission report Gender equality in the workforce: reconciling work, private and family life in Europe, underlines that the transition from the man-breadwinner/woman-carer model towards a model based on the equal division of family and domestic work has not yet taken place. Furthermore, the European Commission study points out that, given the multiple roles women still have in societies, they spend a large amount of time engaged in domestic work even when they are the sole earner.

Risks of gender-based violence in tourism

Sexual exploitation and trafficking in human beings sometimes occur in the tourism industry, putting girls and women at particular risk of violence and abuse. Several studies conducted on gender-based violence in the tourism sector in northern Europe reveal that women are more subject to sexual harassment and other types of gender-based violence than men in this sector:

A 2015 survey of 1,650 members of the hospitality industry in Denmark points out that 24% of all workers had experienced sexual harassment in the previous 12 months, of which 27% were women and 19% men.

In Finland, a 2015 survey on sexual harassment in the tourism sector reveals that 38% of the respondents had experienced sexual harassment from customers (45% of these respondents were women, and 16% were men). Furthermore, the survey shows that

certain occupations, such as bartenders, waiters and hotel cleaners, are highly vulnerable to sexual harassment, as are workers who do not have fixed employment contracts.

In Norway, a study on working conditions in the bar and restaurant sector reveals that 20% of women workers in the industry had experienced some form of sexual harassment in the previous 12 months, mainly on the part of customers, and out of these, 5% had been absent from work due to sexual harassment.

According to official health and safety statistics in Sweden, 11% of workers in the hotel and restaurant industry had experienced sexual harassment on the part of customers in the previous 12 months, while 6% had experienced sexual harassment on the part of colleagues or managers.

Sexual harassment in the workplace and other types of gender-based violence in the tourism sector can have serious consequences, which can be categorised as societal, organisational and individual. Research carried out by EIGE on gender-based violence shows that the cost of gender-based violence to the EU can be estimated to amount to €225 billion.

Gender equality policy objectives at EU and international level

EU level

The European Union makes mention of tourism in its treaties of 1992. Article 3 of the Treaty on European Union (TEU) foresaw that the EU could take measures in the areas of energy, civil protection and tourism. Furthermore, the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (Article 195) states that EU action in tourism should focus on creating a favourable environment for tourism sector development and promoting cooperation between Member States. The EU can only support, coordinate and/or supplement actions of Member States in this sector. However, it should be noted that, as a sector, tourism is influenced by and/or related to other sectors (e.g. competitiveness, transport, agriculture, culture, regional development, etc.) in which the EU has exclusive competences or shares powers with Member States. The EU thus legislates on issues that are unrelated to tourism (in the strict sense of the term), but which directly or indirectly affect tourism development.

European Commission

Even though European Commission action on tourism does not directly tackle gender issues, its intervention in other fields is particularly relevant for mainstreaming gender in the tourism sector.

One of the most relevant Commission actions that impacts upon gender equality in the tourism sector relates to entrepreneurship policies, as acknowledged by the 2003 Commission Communication Basic orientations for the sustainability of the European tourism: “EU action to promote entrepreneurship and SMEs, such as business support measures and networks, access to finance and measures in favour of small businesses and specific target groups, can help foster sustainable tourism enterprises”. The main European Commission gender equality objectives in entrepreneurship support are deployed within the instruments listed below.

The 2008 Small Business Act ([2]): better access to finance for women; development of entrepreneurial networks for women and targeted support measures.

Regulation no. 800/2008, which extends the granting of state aid to new enterprises created by women and has supported the creation of networks of women entrepreneurs.

The Entrepreneurship 2020 Action Plan, adopted in 2012, urges Member States to design and implement national strategies for women’s entrepreneurship, aiming to increase the share of women-led companies; to collect sex-disaggregated data and produce annual updates on the state of women entrepreneurs nationally; to continue and expand the existing networks of female entrepreneurship ambassadors and mentors for women entrepreneurs; and to implement policies enabling women to achieve an adequate work–life balance.

Within the priority Equal economic independence, the EU Strategy for equality between women and men 2010 – 2015, adopted in 2010, includes references to women entrepreneurship.

Regional development, and in particular EU funds, is another intervention area where the Commission priorities indirectly tackle gender equality in the tourism sector. Tourism is a specific objective of the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF), which also promotes social infrastructure aimed, inter alia, at ensuring a better work–life balance. This is relevant to women in the tourism sector, considering the traditional gendered care roles and the specificities of the sector (e.g. working hours).

Gender equality and tourism development in rural areas are 2 of the objectives of the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD). The European Commission regulation for the EAFRD specifies that: 1) projects that bring together agriculture and rural tourism, through the promotion of sustainable and responsible tourism in rural areas, and natural and cultural heritage, should be encouraged; and 2) projects focused on women's entrepreneurship in rural areas should be encouraged and that sub-programmes funded by the EAFRD should also focus on women in rural areas.

Furthermore, gender equality is at the centre of the European Social Fund (ESF). The main European Commission gender equality priorities promoted by ESF funding and relevant for gender equality in the tourism sector are as follows: increasing the sustainable participation and progress of women in employment; reducing gender-based segregation; combating gender stereotypes in the labour market; and promoting the reconciliation of work and personal life for all as well as the equal sharing of care responsibilities between men and women in the case of the ESF.

It is also worth noting European Commission action against gender-based violence, which can contribute to fighting tourism-related sexual violence against women and children. Some of the most relevant actions taken by the Commission in this field are:

The Communication A strengthened commitment to equality between women and men – a women's charter COM(2010) 78 on, inter alia, the fight against gender-based violence

EC Directive 2011/99 of the European protection order and Regulation 606/2013 on mutual recognition of protection measures in civil matters

EC Directive 2011/92/EU on combating sexual abuse and sexual exploitation of children and child pornography

Directive 2012/29/EU on common minimum standards on the rights, support and protection of victims of crime (including women)

The Justice, rights, equality and citizenship programme 2014 – 2020, promoting gender equality and gender mainstreaming and the fight against gender-based violence.

The European Parliament's resolution on the Commission's Communication to the Council, the European Parliament, the Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions on working together for the future of European tourism (COM(2001) 665 – C5-0077/2002 – 2002/2038(COS)) can be considered as an intervention to support gender mainstreaming in the tourism sector. In this resolution, the European Parliament emphasises the need to make good use of all human resources and to adopt policies to encourage disabled people, older people and women to participate in and have access to the tourism labour market, in particular by creating social infrastructures (such as nursery schools) for working mothers of children aged between 0 and 3 years. It also calls on the Member States to adopt positive tax measures to encourage entrepreneurship among women and young people, family firms, micro-businesses and SMEs and to encourage their access to new technologies and 'learning areas'.

International level

At the international level, the United Nations World Tourism Organisation (UNWTO) has taken several actions to promote gender equality in the tourism sector, as detailed below.

United Nations (UNWTO)

Article 2 of the UN Global Code of Ethics for Tourism, a resolution adopted in 2001 by the General Assembly, mentions that tourism activities should respect the equality of women and men.

Furthermore, through its ethics and social dimensions of tourism programme, and in partnership with UN Women, UNWTO has been working to make gender issues visible in the tourism industry by promoting gender equality and women's empowerment and encouraging Member States to mainstream gender issues in their respective tourism policies. This commitment resulted in the promotion of a specific action plan on gender in tourism ([3]). The plan aims to develop 2 specific programmes: a gender mainstreaming programme for the public and private sectors of the tourism industry and the women in tourism empowerment programme. The latter focuses on the following issues: employment skills; supply chains; career advancement; gender awareness.

UNWTO has also taken action to prevent sexual harassment and violence against children in tourism. These measures, set out below, are highly relevant for girls, who are more often victims of tourism-related sexual violence.

In October 1995, UNWTO took a stand against the sexual exploitation of children in tourism by unanimously adopting the statement on the prevention of organised sex tourism.

In August 1996, at the Stockholm congress against commercial sexual exploitation of children, UNWTO introduced its agenda for action, which urged all participants to mobilise the business sector, including the tourism industry, against the use of its networks and establishments for the commercial sexual exploitation of children, to promote better cooperation, and to encourage the establishment of national and international coalitions to this effect.

In 1997, UNWTO launched a task force against child sex tourism, which went on to launch the international No child sex tourism campaign to combat the commercial sexual abuse of children in tourism by raising awareness of this unacceptable phenomenon. During its first phase (1997 – 2007), the focus of the task force was the prevention of sexual exploitation of children in tourism. In March 2007, the mandate of the task force was extended to cover all forms of exploitation of minors in tourism, including child labour and child trafficking. In 2011 its name was changed to World Tourism Network on Child Protection.

In 1998, UNWTO supported the drafting of the code of conduct for the protection of children from sexual exploitation in travel and tourism.

Policy cycle in tourism

The gender dimension can be integrated in all phases of the policy cycle. For a detailed description of how gender can be mainstreamed in each phase of the policy cycle visit EIGE's Gender mainstreaming platform.

Below, you can find useful resources and practical examples for mainstreaming gender into regional development. They are organised according to the most relevant phase of the policy cycle they may serve.

Practical examples of gender mainstreaming in tourism **United Nations (UNWTO)**

The Women in Tourism Empowerment Programme (WITEP) sets a precedent for establishing tourism as a tool for the promotion of gender equality and women's empowerment, using gender analysis and gender training to tackle inequality and gender-based discrimination in the tourism industry. The overall goal of the programme is to promote women's economic empowerment in tourism through partnerships with hotel chains and other stakeholders. This involves improving employment/ entrepreneurship opportunities for women by facilitating their access to jobs and/or participation in supply chains, and by creating possibilities for career advancement. WITEP has 4 main components: employment skills, supply chain, career advancement and gender awareness.

Iceland

The city of Reykjavík undertook different measures to sustain gender mainstreaming in the tourism sector, among which was an analysis of the city's website Better Reykjavík from a gender perspective and awarding grants for culture and tourism from a gender perspective. Furthermore, it also promoted a gender budgeting process, tackling also the tourism sector.

At national level, in 2006 the Ministry for Economic and Social Affairs promoted the project Gender budgeting: where justice and fairness go hand in hand with economic wellbeing. The project includes a gender budgeting of the funds allocated to different ministries, among which are energy, industry and tourism. The project has been running since 2006.

Italy

The Pink Route programme, promoted by the Committee of Female Entrepreneurs of the Chamber of Commerce of Piacenza, enhanced women's support in the tourism sector. The programme offered support to women wishing to enter the sector, starting from the project idea creation until its implementation and dissemination.

Austria

The apprentice coaching programme was launched in some regions in 2012. The purpose of this professional external monitoring is to reduce the apprenticeship dropout rate and increase the success rate. Apprentices and trainers are accompanied and advised by external coaches. In 2013, a new support for adult apprenticeships was implemented in the form of subsidies for companies that took on adult apprentices. Following a positive evaluation, the programme was extended nationwide in 2014, with plans to provide specific supports to young people from a migrant background, young women in non-traditional jobs, and small and medium enterprises.

EC Directive 90/134/EEC

EC Directive 90/134/EEC Package travel, package holidays and package tours (under revision).

Read it [here](#).

1990 - 1990

Working together for the future of European tourism (COM(2001) 665 final)

Commission Communication to the Council, the European Parliament, the Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions: Working together for the future of European tourism (COM(2001) 665 final). Read it [here](#).

2001 - 2001

Working together for the future of European tourism

European Parliament Resolution on the Commission Communication to the Council, the European Parliament, the Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions on working together for the future of European tourism (COM(2001) 665 – C5-0077/2002 – 2002/2038 (COS)). Read it [here](#).

2002 - 2002

Communication on basic orientations for the sustainability of European tourism

Communication from the Commission to the Council, the European Parliament, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions (COM(2003) 716 final). Basic orientations for the sustainability of European tourism. Read it [here](#).

2003 - 2003

Directive 2005/29/EC

Directive 2005/29/EC concerning unfair business-to-consumer commercial practices in the internal market and amending Council Directive 84/450/EEC, Directives 97/7/EC, 98/27/EC and 2002/65/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council and Regulation (EC) No 2006/2004 of the European Parliament and of the Council (Unfair Commercial Practices Directive). Read it [here](#).

2005 - 2005

A renewed EU tourism policy: Towards a stronger partnership for European tourism

Communication from the Commission (COM(2006) 134 final) A renewed EU tourism policy: Towards a stronger partnership for European tourism. Read it [here](#).

2006 - 2006

Agenda for a sustainable and competitive European tourism

Communication from the Commission (COM(2007) 621 final). Agenda for a sustainable and competitive European tourism. Read it [here](#).

2007 - 2007

Communication on a new political framework for tourism in Europe

Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions (COM(2010) 352 final) Europe, the world's No 1 tourist destination – a new political framework for tourism in Europe. Read it [here](#).

2010 - 2010

Current policy priorities at EU level

The European Commission 2010 Communication [Europe, the world's No 1 tourist destination – a new political framework for tourism in Europe](#), includes the main priorities for EU action in the tourism field:

- stimulate competitiveness in the European tourism sector
- promote development of sustainable, responsible, high-quality tourism
- consolidate Europe's image as a collection of sustainable, high-quality destinations
- maximise the potential of EU financial policies for developing tourism.

Tourism policy is directly or indirectly influenced by a large number of other European policies (such as transport, competition, internal market, taxation, consumer protection, environment, employment and training, culture or regional and rural development). Therefore, the European Commission aims at ensuring a better integration of tourism into its various policies and guaranteeing that the proper application of the legislation in force releases the sector's full competitive potential. Efforts will be made to coordinate the various policies concerned in order to ensure that the interests and needs of the tourism industry are fully taken into account when formulating and implementing its policies.

An implementation rolling plan of the [Tourism Action Framework](#) has been developed in order to outline major tourism-related initiatives to be implemented in collaboration with national, regional and local public authorities, tourism associations and other public/private tourism stakeholders. In 2015, the Commission is expected to adopt a new Communication on tourism defining the future priorities in the tourism sector. The Communication draft was discussed at the Spain Global Tourism Forum in January 2015. The priorities on which the next EU strategy in the tourism field is expected to focus are:

- simplify and streamline the regulatory and administrative frameworks for tourism
- promote the digitalisation of tourism SMEs
- improve professional skills in the tourism sector
- promote sustainable and responsible tourism
- reduce tourism seasonality
- promote multimodality and transport connectivity
- contribute to the joint promotion of Europe as a tourist destination, in particular in third countries
- improve tourism governance.

Many of these are a continuation of the previous priorities, while some are reflecting the changes in the sector.

It should be underlined that tourism is not a standalone sector, but is a sector made of different subsectors. Therefore, strategies/programmes promoted by the EU in other sectors are also relevant for tourism development. Among the most relevant, it's worth recalling:

EU programme for competitiveness of enterprises and small- and medium-sized enterprises (COSME) which also targets tourism. The main aim of the programme is to improve framework conditions for the competitiveness and sustainability of EU enterprises, and in particular SMEs, including those in the tourism sector. In 2015, the programme allocated €9 million for the following objectives in the tourism sector: increase tourism demand; diversify the tourism offer; enhance tourism quality sustainability; improve accessibility; develop skills, information and innovation; increase the visibility of Europe as a tourism destination as well as the diversity of its destinations; improve socio-economic knowledge.

The EU 2011 White Paper Roadmap to a single [European transport area – towards a competitive resource efficient transport system](#) aims to improve travel in the EU through making travel more sustainable, safe, secure and efficient. Furthermore, it also aims to increase the capacity to carry a growing number of passengers, reduce traffic congestion and develop the transport infrastructure in the EU through the TEN-T projects. Furthermore, the [Regulation 1315/2013 on Union guidelines for the development of the trans-European transport network](#) mentions that TEN-T projects should seek synergies with other policies, among which also tourism.

In 2014, [the Commission presented a proposal for a new visa policy](#) in order to simplify travelling to Europe and sustain the development of the tourism sector. Among the measures proposed, the most relevant for tourism are: simplification of the short-stay visa applications to meet growing demand; introduction of mandatory criteria for obtaining a multiple entry visa (MEV) valid for 3 years and subsequently for 5 years for 'VIS registered regular' travellers; the introduction of a touring visa.

Tourism also represents one of the issues tackled by the European funds, and in particular by ERDF. [The ERDF regulation](#) foresees that, in order to maximise their contribution to the objective of supporting employment-friendly growth, activities supporting sustainable tourism, culture and natural heritage should be part of a territorial strategy for specific areas, including the conversion of declining industrial regions.

Want to know more?