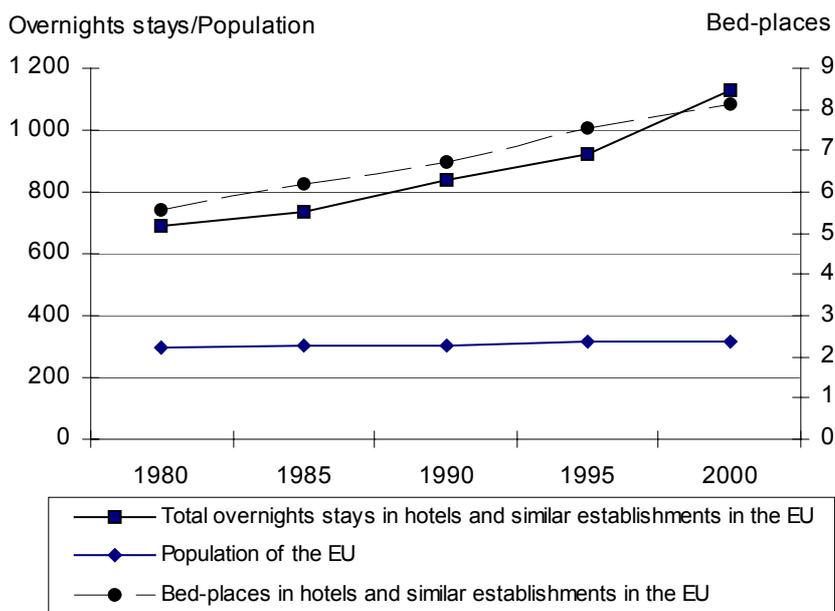


Tourism and the environment

Hans-Werner Schmidt

Graph 1: Changes in bed-places¹⁾ and total overnight stays²⁾ in hotels and similar establishments in the EU (millions)



Note: 1) EU excluding the United Kingdom and Luxembourg; 2) EU excluding the United Kingdom

The rise of tourism over the past 20 years

An analysis of changes in tourism in the European Union over the past 20 years shows that numbers of bed-places and overnight stays have increased markedly. This growth is not a reflection of population growth. Between 1980 and 2000, overnight stays in hotels and similar establishments alone rose by just under 64% in the European Union countries (excluding United Kingdom) whilst the population rose by only 6.2%. Over the same period, Belgium, Germany, Spain, France, Ireland, the Netherlands, Portugal, Finland and Sweden all recorded an increase of over 50% in overnight stays in hotels and similar establishments. Over a shorter period (between 1995 and 2000), total overnight stays in the fifteen Union countries rose by 24.2%.

Between 1980 and 2000, the number of bed-places in hotels and similar establishments in the EU countries (excluding the United Kingdom and Luxembourg) rose by 28%. Many countries - Germany, France, Portugal and Sweden, for example - recorded an increase of over 50% in their bed place capacity during that period. Between 1995 and 2000, the number of bed-places available in hotels and similar establishments rose by 8% in the 15 Union countries and by almost 10% in Germany and the United Kingdom. This boom in tourism had both a direct and an indirect impact on the environment, involving several variables.

Commentaries: M.Mballa & N.Kirwan. Layout: N.Muller & S.Blino.

Statistics in focus

INDUSTRY, TRADE AND SERVICES

THEME 4 – 40/2002

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The tourism boom and its impact on the environment

As with many other economic activities, the expansion of tourism has had both a direct and an indirect impact on the environment. Conventional tourism can only expand where there is a large-scale and varied transport infrastructure (roads, motorways, airports, ports, marinas, etc.), and the building of this infrastructure in itself has an impact on the environment. Although tourism may be considered to be indirectly responsible at this level, it is directly responsible for the infrastructure set up to provide services especially for tourists, such as hotels and restaurants, shopping centres and leisure complexes (golf courses, swimming pools, amusement parks, etc.).

The fact that tourism is very much a seasonal activity has a direct impact on the environment. This seasonal aspect helps to determine the supply of accommodation for tourists and leads to a concentration of tourism in certain places at certain times, which inevitably also has an impact on environmental variables such as energy consumption, water supply, waste water production, waste generation and air pollution. This analysis attempts to make a statistical link between the development of tourism and some of these environmental variables.

Where supply is concerned, the fact that tourism is seasonal in many cases leads to a high concentration of tourist accommodation because the same sites offer different kinds of attraction. If tourism is seasonal, accommodation has to be built on a large scale to cope with the high season, and hence space is not used rationally. The uncontrolled proliferation of accommodation for tourists has a direct impact on the environment. This is a particularly sensitive issue in fragile areas such as coastal, mountain and rural regions.

The various types of accommodation for tourists do not all have the same impact on the environment. Under the Directive on the assessment of the effects of certain public and private projects on the environment (Directive 85/337/EEC amended by 97/11/EC), an environmental impact assessment is mandatory before certain tourism and leisure establishments (holiday villages and hotel complexes outside urban areas, camp sites and caravan sites) can be built. In the Union countries, hotels in urban areas must generally comply with very strict specifications, and have the advantage of integrating well into the urban environment. Campsites have the advantage of being the least environmentally damaging type of accommodation, especially when they are open only part of the year.

Since tourism is simply one economic activity among many, however, it is difficult to quantify its real impact on the environment. One particularly important point is that numerous recent initiatives by the tourist industry have shown that it is aware of environmental issues (see: "Sustainable tourism and Natura 2000: Guidelines, initiatives and good practices in Europe" published by the Environment DG and the European Commission on 28 October 2000).

Tourism density

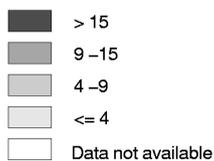
The rise in tourism has a more obvious impact on the environment in areas of very high tourist density, and these areas need to be considered separately. The density of tourism - business as well as private - in a given region may be considered from the point of view of the pressure which the accommodation on offer exerts on the region (supply approach)¹ and from the point of view of the tourist flows to the area (demand approach). To make comparisons easier, supply and demand may be expressed as a function of either area (km²) or population, as in Table 1.

In terms of supply, Luxembourg, with 25 bed-places/km² and 14.8 bed-places/100 inhabitants, has high density, as do Belgium (20.7 bed-places/km² and 6.2 bed-places/100 inhabitants) and the Netherlands (33.7 bed-places/km² and 7.2 bed-places/100 inhabitants). In fact, both approaches (symbolised by an index) have their limitations. The area index is less appropriate for countries such as Finland and Sweden, which have large uninhabited areas, whereas the population index tends to overvalue areas with a low population. Because of these limitations, the two approaches are complementary.

The high density, in terms of overnight stays in Austria (1081.7 overnight stays/km² and 11.2 overnight stays/inhabitant), confirms that already shown in terms of bed-places. The numbers of overnight stays in Italy (1124.7 overnight stays/km²) and the Netherlands (2398.4 overnight stays/km²) also reflect high density.

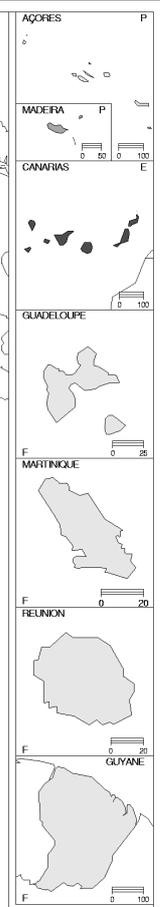
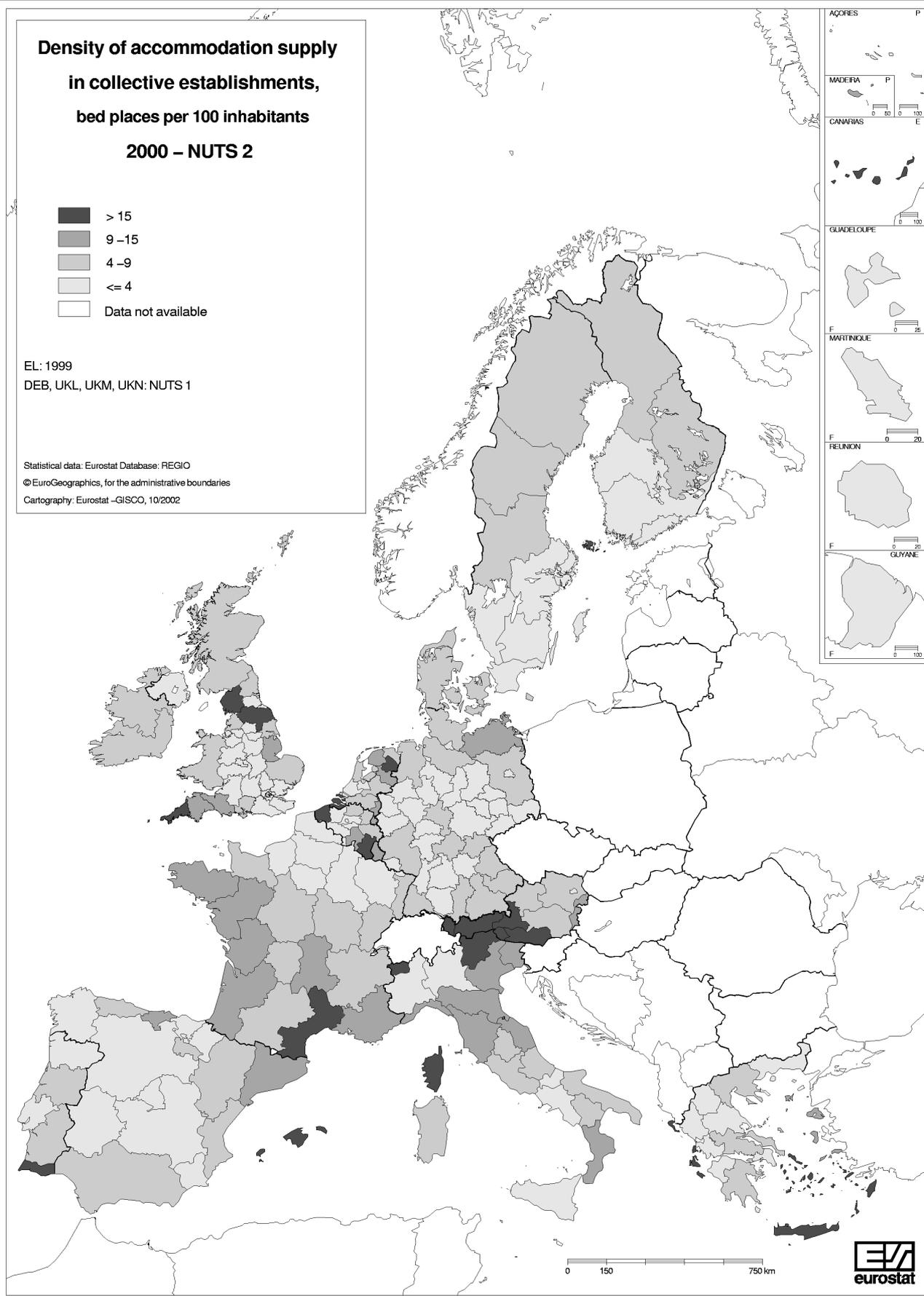
¹) Defert's Tourist Function Index, quoted by Douglas Pearce in "Geography of Tourism", Nathan, 1993, p.175.

**Density of accommodation supply
in collective establishments,
bed places per 100 inhabitants
2000 – NUTS 2**



EL: 1999
DEB, UKL, UKM, UKN: NUTS 1

Statistical data: Eurostat Database: REGIO
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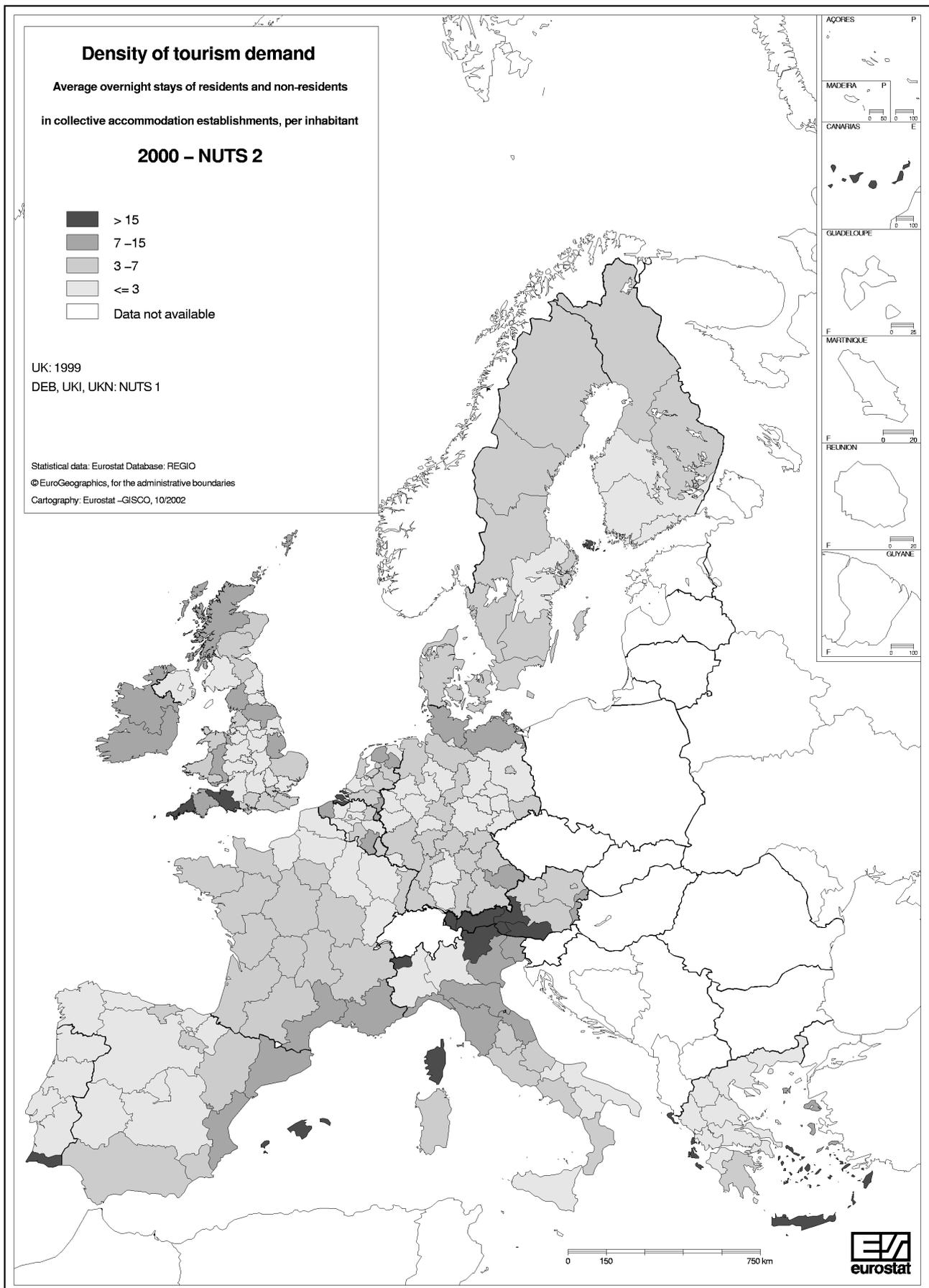


Table 1: Tourism density in terms of bed-places and overnight stays in collective accommodation establishments, 2000

	Area km ²	Inhabitants/ km ²	Bed-places/ km ²	Bed-places/ Inhabitants (*)	Overnights stays/ Area km ²	Overnights stays/ Inhabitants
B	30 518	335.5	20.7	6.2	957.3	2.9
DK	43 094	123.7	8.9	7.2	584.2	4.7
D	357 020	230.1	8.6	3.7	836.1	3.6
EL ¹⁾	131 626	80.2	5.3	6.6	475.3	5.9
E	504 790	78.7	5.2	6.6	682.8	8.7
F	543 965	108.0	7.6	7.1	523.3	4.8
IRL	70 273	53.7	2.8	5.2	601.5	11.2
I	301 316	191.4	13.0	6.8	1 124.7	5.9
L	2 586	168.5	25.0	14.8	993.8	5.9
NL	33 882	468.2	33.7	7.2	2 398.4	5.1
A	83 859	96.6	11.1	11.5	1 081.7	11.2
P	91 906	111.0	5.3	4.8	456.5	4.1
FIN	304 530	17.0	0.5	2.9	52.7	3.1
S	410 934	21.6	0.6	2.9	96.9	4.5
UK ²⁾	243 820	244.5	11.7	4.8	978.9	4.0

(*) per 100 inhabitants 1) 1999 2) 1998

A regional analysis (NUTS 2 level) of density in relation to population shows that in Belgium the Province of Luxembourg stands out (with the highest density of supply at 32.9 bed-places per 100 inhabitants and 10.7 overnight stays per inhabitant). In Germany, it is Mecklenburg-Vorpommern, with 13.3 bed-places/100 inhabitants and 10.4 overnight stays/inhabitant). In Greece, it is Notio Aigaió (56.4 bed-places/100 inhabitants and 64.1 overnight stays/inhabitant). In Spain, it is the Islas Baleares (55.2 bed-places/100 inhabitants and 87.1 overnight stays/inhabitant). In France, Corsica has the highest figures (39.2 bed-places/100 inhabitants and 22.6 overnight stays/inhabitant). In Ireland, it is the Border, Midlands and Western (5.6 bed-places/100 inhabitants) and Southern and Eastern regions (9 overnight stays/inhabitant). In Italy, it is Valle d'Aosta (43.6 bed-places/100 inhabitants) and Trentino-Alto Adige (39.4 overnight stays/inhabitant). In the Netherlands, it is the Zeeland region (29.2 bed-places/100 inhabitants and 17.4 overnight stays/inhabitant). In Austria, Tirol has the highest figures (39.8 bed-places/100 inhabitants and 45.5 overnight stays/inhabitant). In Portugal, it is the Algarve (33.4 bed-places/100 inhabitants and 43.1 overnight stays/inhabitant), in Finland Åland (19.5 bed-places/100 inhabitants and 18.3 overnight stays/inhabitant) and in Sweden Mellersta Norrland (6.1 bed-places/100 inhabitants and 6.5 overnight stays/inhabitant). In the United Kingdom, it is Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly (29.6 bed-places/100 inhabitants and 28 overnight stays/inhabitant). This regional analysis is illustrated on the previous pages by maps showing accommodation supply and tourism demand densities.

Table 2: Density of tourism supply and demand in collective accommodation establishments in relation to the population of the region concerned

	Supply: Density of bed-places per one hundred inhabitants				Demand: Density of overnights stays per inhabitant			
	Minimum		Maximum		Minimum		Maximum	
	Region	%	Region	%	Region	%	Region	%
B	Brabant Wallon	1.3	Luxembourg (B)	32.9	Hainaut	0.3	Luxembourg (B)	10.7
D	Düsseldorf	1.2	Mecklenburg-Vorpommern	13.3	Saarland	1.2	Mecklenburg-Vorpommern	10.4
EL ¹⁾	Dytiki Makedonia	1.2	Notio Aigaió	56.4	Dytiki Makedonia	1.3	Notio Aigaió	64.1
E	Pais Vasco	1.5	Islas Baleares	55.2	Pais Vasco	1.5	Islas Baleares	87.1
F ²⁾	Haute-Normandie	2.6	Corse	39.2	Picardie	1.6	Corse	22.6
IRL	Southern and Eastern	5.1	Border, Midlands and Western	5.6	Border, Midlands and Western	8.1	Southern and Eastern	9.0
I	Sicilia	2.5	Valle d'Aosta	43.6	Piemonte	1.9	Trentino-Alto Adige	39.4
NL	Zuid-Holland	2.4	Zeeland	29.2	Utrecht	1.8	Zeeland	17.4
A	Wien	2.8	Tirol	39.8	Niederösterreich	3.4	Tirol	45.5
P	Açores (PT)	1.8	Algarve	33.4	Norte	1.2	Algarve	43.1
FIN	Uusimaa (suuralue)	1.8	Åland	19.5	Etelä-Suomi	2.4	Åland	18.3
S	Östra Mellansverige	1.9	Mellersta Norrland	6.1	Östra Mellansverige	2.9	Mellersta Norrland	6.5
UK ³⁾	Outer London	0.9	Cornwall and Isles of Scilly	29.6	South Yorkshire	0.7	Cornwall and Isles of Scilly	28.0

1) 1999 for supply 2) Metropolitan France 3) 1999 for demand

It is interesting to tie in with this approach the tourist concentration rates of each region in a country. In terms of total overnight stays in collective accommodation establishments in 2000, the region which played host to the largest number of tourists at national level was:

- In Belgium, West-Vlaanderen with 27.7%;
- In Germany, Oberbayern with 9.2%;
- In Greece, Notio Eyeo with 28.1%;
- In Spain, Islas Baleares with 19.7%;
- In France, Ile de France with 22.1%;
- In Ireland, the Southern and Eastern region with 59.3%;
- In Italy, Veneto with 16.2%;
- In the Netherlands, Noord Holland with 21%;
- In Austria, Tyrol with 33.6%;
- In Portugal, the Algarve with 40%;
- In Finland, Etelä-Suomi with 26.7%;
- In Sweden, Västsverige with 20.3%;
- In the United Kingdom, Dorset and Somerset with 7.2%.

Impact of tourism on levels of waste and electricity consumption

Despite the difficulties of quantifying the real impact of tourism on the environment (the problems of delimiting tourism activities and the lack of detailed data), a first tentative attempt is shown below. Any increase in the number of tourists undoubtedly has an impact on environmental variables such as waste emissions and energy consumption (in terms of volume and local level).

Differences between levels of services-sector electricity consumption in the region with the highest concentration of overnight stays (in terms of percentage of the national total) and levels in the region with the lowest percentage give some indication of the part played by tourism. One case in point would be Greece, where the differences in the annual consumption of electricity in services are particularly noticeable when the Dytiki Makedonia region (0.6 megawatt hours per inhabitant) is compared with the Notio Aigaio region (1.8 megawatt hours per inhabitant).

Data on the French, Italian and Spanish regions confirm this link between the density of tourism in a given locality and the level of electricity consumption in the services sector. However an analysis at the differences, in the case of the German and Dutch regions does not indicate such a link. The Dutch regions also call into question the causal link between the pressure of tourism and the level of waste collected by the municipalities. But the fact must be stressed that the waste collected does not come from tourism alone: other sources, such as industry, also contribute.

It is difficult to quantify the pressure of tourism on the environment, since energy consumption in the services sector is not broken down, neither is the quantity of waste collected by the municipalities. However, in the case of the variables studied, the differences between the regions with the highest tourism density and those with the lowest density do suggest a causal link between the pressure of tourism on the one hand and a high level of electricity consumption and waste emission on the other.

Tableau 3: Comparison of energy consumption and waste emission in selected regions (latest available year)

Country	NUTS 2 region	Proportion of total overnights stays of the country (in 2000)	Overnights stays/ Inhabitant	Consumption of electricity by services (gigawatt hours)	Consumption of electricity by services (megawatt hours) /inhabitant	Waste collected by municipalities (1000 t)	Waste tonne/ inhabitant
EL ¹⁾	Dytiki Makedonia	0.6%	1.3	175	0.6	:	:
	Notio Aigaio	28.1%	50.5	492	1.8	:	:
E ²⁾	La Rioja	0.3%	3.9	230	0.9	125	0.5
	Islas Baleares	19.7%	87.1	1 604	2.2	614	0.8
F ¹⁾	Limousin	0.8%	2.8	548	0.8	331	0.5
	Provence-Alpes-Côte d'Azur	12.5%	8.6	5 055	1.1	3 171	0.7
I ³⁾	Molise	0.2%	1.3	252	0.8	112	0.3
	Veneto	16.2%	9.5	4 037	0.9	2 025	0.5
D ³⁾	Trentino-Alto Adige	10.9%	38.3	1 118	1.2	510	0.6
	Bremen	0.5%	2.6	956	1.4	:	:
NL ⁴⁾	Bayern*	23.3%	5.6	14 960	1.3	:	:
	Groningen	1.4%	1.1	1 153	2.1	370	0.7
	Noord-Holland	21.0%	4.0	4 425	1.8	1 451	0.6

*NUTS 1

Energy: (1) 1996 (2) 1997 (3) 1995 (4) 1992

Waste: Spain, Italy (1998), Netherlands (1997)

The impact of tourism on air and water pollution

Transport is one of the motors for growth in the tourism industry. The extent to which sites are attractive ties in closely with ease of access. As a previous publication clearly showed (Statistics in Focus: "How the Europeans go on holiday", Theme 4 –15/2002), the most important mode of transport for tourism in the European Union is the private or hire car. The car is expected to become even more popular, and to remain so for the long term, essentially for two reasons: tourists in the Union are tending to spend holidays closer to home and to go in for more short breaks.

Numerous studies (including the OECD study on "Programme on sustainable consumption: household tourism travel: trends, environmental impacts and policy responses", April 2002) have clearly shown the impact of mobile air pollution sources (road, air, rail and sea transport) in the Union countries. The rise of tourism depends very much on the use of some of these mobile sources.

With many pollutants emitted by such sources (CO, CO₂, NO_x, etc.), it is difficult to quantify the real impact of tourism, since statistics on emissions cover all reasons for use of the sources. Tourism is simply one reason among many.

Data on waste water in inhabitant equivalents (IE) (the total waste water generated by point sources, design capacities of treatment plants and the actual utilisation of those capacities) would appear to show a positive correlation with the rise in tourism in all countries except Greece. This tendency is also confirmed by data on the public water supply, except in Sweden.

Table 4: Waste water generation and treatment capacity compared with water supply in the regions (NUTS 2) (latest available year)

Country	NUTS 2 Region	Proportion of total overnights stays of the country	Waste water generated by point sources Total (1000 IE)	Capacity of public waste water treatment plants		Public water supply	
				Design capacity (1000 IE)	Actual utilisation (1000 IE)	Total (mio m ³ /year)	m ³ /year/inhabitant
D ¹⁾	Bremen	0.4%	213	1 612	1 469	41	60.3
	Oberbayern	9.3%	414	9 443	5 467	295	74.5
EL ²⁾	Ipeiros	1.6%	:	137	69	:	:
	Notio Aigaio	26.6%	:	127	83	:	:
I ³⁾	Molise	0.2%	787	201	189	:	:
	Veneto	14.2%	14 027	6 114	5 409	:	:
NL ⁴⁾	Groningen	1.4%	809	826	636	49	87.8
	Noord-Holland	2.1.4%	3 478	3 755	3 629	217	87.9
A ²⁾	Burgenland	2.1%	497	823	466	25	90.1
	Tirol	33.0%	1 173	1 840	1 056	70	105.8
S ²⁾	Mellersta Norrland	6.3%	:	499	308	40	105.3
	Västsverige	19.9%	:	2 598	1 523	151	85.7

1) 1995 2) 1998 3) 1991 4) 1996. Capacity: Netherlands (1997), Italy (1992). Water supply: Sweden (1995), Austria (1996).

➤ ESSENTIAL INFORMATION – METHODOLOGICAL NOTES

CONCEPTS AND DEFINITIONS

Tourism

The activities of persons travelling to and staying in places outside their usual environment for not more than twelve consecutive months, for leisure, business or other purposes.

Total overnight stays (by residents and non-residents)

All nights spent by travellers or for which guests have been registered in a collective or private accommodation establishment. The persons concerned need not be physically present.

Collective accommodation establishment

Any establishment which provides overnight accommodation for a traveller in a room or other unit, but the number of places it provides must be greater than a specified minimum for groups of persons exceeding a single family unit and all the places in the establishment must come under

a common commercial-type management, even if it is non-profit-making.

Hotels and similar establishments

Hotels, apartment hotels, motels, roadside inns, beach hotels and other similar establishments which provide hotel services including more than bed-making and cleaning of the room and sanitary facilities. Similar establishments are other similar types of accommodation which is let per room and has a limited number of hotel-type services, including bed-making and cleaning of rooms and sanitary facilities, on a daily basis.

Other collective accommodation establishments

Any establishment intended for holiday-makers, which may be non-profit-making, which has a single management with a minimum of common services (not including daily bed-making). Accommodation other than rooms may be provided (apartments, campsites, dormitories).

Further information:

➤ Reference publications

Title Dynamic Regional Tourism (Statistics in focus)
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➤ Databases

NewCronos, Domain Tourism (theme 4)
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