



110th DGINS CONFERENCE

22-23 OCTOBER 2025 | SPLIT | CROATIA

European Tourism Statistics:

A Forward Looking and Innovative Response to 21st Century User Needs

Thank you for submitting your abstract(s) before 15 September 2025 to DGINS.2025@dzs.hr

Abstract title

TSA compilation in Flanders and Belgium: methodology, sources, difficulties and solutions in constructing the TSA tables, user relevance as a policy instrument.

Subject area

- Session 1: Choosing the right tourism package (users' perspective and information needs...)
- Session 2: Cooking class – exploring new ingredients and recipes (innovative practices)
- Session 3a: Excursions to exotic locations – a. Measuring the economic importance of tourism / TSA
- Session 3b: Excursions to exotic locations – b. Measuring the sustainability of tourism
- Session 4: Our next trip ... where do tourism statistics want to travel, how and when? (future orientations)

Organisation, authors and contact

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Executive summary

Given its experience with the Tourism Satellite Account (TSA) of the Flemish Region, the Flanders Statistics Authority was asked by Eurostat to compile the Belgian TSA. The results of the third Belgian TSA (2022 reference year) were submitted to Eurostat in spring 2025.

The methodology as described in the manual "Tourism Satellite Account: Recommended Methodological Framework" (UNWTO, OECD & Eurostat, 2008) is applied to construct the TSAs of both the Flemish Region and Belgium. A wide range of sources is used, including surveys, national or regional accounts, and administrative data.

Statbel, the Belgian statistical office, conducts several extensive tourism surveys. As tourism comes under the responsibility of the Regions, several regional studies and surveys are also carried out that provide a more detailed insight into tourism within each Region. As a result, partly different sources are used for regional and national TSAs.

The presentation focuses on the sources used, as well as the difficulties and solutions in constructing the various TSA tables, and includes the 2022 results for the Belgian TSA. Challenges and suggestions for improvement were added when possible.



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Abstract

1. Introduction: objective, key focus, problem statement

A Tourism Satellite Account (TSA) is an internationally recognised instrument for indicating the economic significance of tourism. Since tourism comes under the responsibility of the Regions in Belgium, they took the first steps towards constructing a TSA. A TSA has been drawn up for the Flemish Region every two years since the 2008 measurement year (except in 2020 due to COVID-19), using the methodological approach as described in the manual “Tourism Satellite Account: Recommended Methodological Framework” (UNWTO, OECD & Eurostat, 2008).

Given this experience, Eurostat asked the Flanders Statistics Authority to build the first Belgian TSA for 2016. The Flanders Statistics Authority has constructed the Belgian TSA three times already (for 2016, 2019 and 2022), in collaboration with the tourism administrations of the other Regions in Belgium and with the Belgian Statistical Office Statbel.

The Belgian TSA consists of TSA Tables 1, 2, 4, 5, 6 and 7. The presentation will focus on the methodology and sources used, as well as the difficulties and solutions in constructing the various TSA tables. The 2022 results are included at all times.

2. Approach and methodology

The methodology as described in the manual “Tourism Satellite Account: Recommended Methodological Framework” (UNWTO, OECD & Eurostat, 2008) is applied to construct the TSAs of both the Flemish Region and Belgium.

A wide range of sources is used, including surveys, national or regional accounts, and administrative data. The Belgian statistical office Statbel conducts several extensive tourism surveys. As tourism comes under the responsibility of the Regions, several regional studies and surveys are also carried out that provide a more detailed insight into tourism within each Region.

As a result, partly different sources are used for regional and national TSAs. The Regions in Belgium attract different types of visitors. For instance, Flanders has a coastal area, whereas Brussels mainly attracts urban tourists, and Wallonia is popular among those seeking tranquillity and nature.

Therefore, the challenge is to ensure that all these types of tourists and their expenditure are estimated accurately in the Belgian TSA based on the available source material, while simultaneously guaranteeing methodological consistency and avoiding double-counting.

3. Results and practical applications

3.1 Tourism Consumption

TSA Tables 1, 2 and 4 are compiled on the consumption side.

Since each Region attracts distinct types of visitors and has its own tourism policy, numerous different surveys and research projects are conducted. This section of the Belgian TSA is constructed using as many Belgian data sources as possible in order to ensure methodological consistency and prevent double-counting. Data from regional studies were only added where necessary.

Statbel's national accommodation statistics, were used for the volume of overnight tourists, while regional data from the Flemish, Brussels-Capital and Walloon Regions were consulted for the volume of day tourists. In addition, the amount spent by Belgian tourists in rented accommodation was based on travel research conducted by Statbel, whereas regional data were used to calculate second-home tourism expenditure. Eurostat's figures were used for foreign tourism expenditure in Belgium. National figures were available for other components of tourism consumption, such as subsidies that benefit individual tourists and expenditure on tourism durables.

When all components of tourism consumption were added up, total expenditure amounted to €24 billion in 2022. Tourism expenditure accounted for €19.7 billion, or 82% of total tourism consumption in 2022. Belgian tourists spent nearly €15.5 billion, and foreign tourists spent €4.2 billion in Belgium. The other components of tourism consumption amounted to €4.4 billion. These include the imputed rent for tourists staying for free in their second home or that of family or friends (€2 billion), subsidies that benefit individual tourists (€1.4 billion), and expenditure on durable tourism goods (€834 million).

Given the variety of sources used and the components selected for tourism consumption, the results of tourism consumption in the regional TSAs cannot always be compared with those in the national TSA.

3.2 Tourism Supply

The sources used for the national and regional TSAs are more closely aligned on the supply side. The supply and use tables (SUTs) from the interregional input-output tables are used for the regional TSA, whereas the SUTs from the national accounts are applied to the national TSA.

Because more detailed industry information is needed than the SUTs can provide, several variables from these SUTs were adjusted using labour statistics. For example, museums, zoos, libraries and archives are all grouped together within a certain SUT group, while only museums and zoos are part of the tourism sector. To exclude the share of libraries and archives, the total figures are reduced in proportion to the total wage bill in this subcategory within the larger group. The decision to use the total wage bill, so as to only include a share of a specific SUT group, is one possibility to adjust the SUTs; other regions or countries may approach this differently, which could reduce comparability.

3.3 Economic Indicators

Several economic indicators can be calculated based on the tourism consumption data and the supply data of the various tourism industries.

The Gross Value Added of Tourism Industries (GVATI) includes the total value added generated by the tourism sector, regardless of whether it is consumed by tourists or non-tourists. This indicator thus adds up the gross value added of anything that is produced in the tourism sector. At the same time, it excludes the gross value added of non-tourism industries, even though they may also provide products consumed by tourists. In short, it concerns the gross value added of the tourism supply as calculated in TSA Table 5. The gross value added of the tourism industry in Belgium was €21.9 billion, or 5.8% of the total gross value added in Belgium in 2022.



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Given that the sources for the Belgian national and regional TSAs are relatively easy to align, these figures can indeed be compared. However, the condition is that the tourism sector must be delineated in exactly the same way in the different cases. This is not always the case when comparing different countries. Although the theoretical framework for the TSA and the definition of the tourism sector are established at the European level, countries still have quite a lot of freedom to either include or exclude certain country-specific characteristic industries. For example, they may choose to include the healthcare sector, given that there are numerous sanatoriums and this is a form of medical tourism (preventive and rehabilitation care).

The Tourism Direct Gross Value Added (TDGVA) includes the value added by both tourism industries and other industries, but only for the share that tourists actually consume within these sectors. This indicator thus excludes production consumed by non-tourists across all industries. In short, it concerns the gross value added generated by direct tourism consumption. In 2022, the direct gross value added of tourism in Belgium amounted to €7.5 billion, or 2.0% of the country's total gross value added. More than two thirds of the tourism direct gross value added is generated by tourism industries. One third of the gross value added is realised outside of the core tourism industries.

The tourism direct gross value added is the most widely used indicator for comparing countries internationally. This measure is at the core of the Tourism Satellite Account (TSA), as it ensures that this supply is linked to the demand side and therefore to actual tourism consumption. The impact of how the tourism sector is delineated is less pronounced when using this indicator to compare countries. However, it should be kept in mind that different countries also use different sources to map tourism consumption.

Employment in the tourism industries encompasses all jobs within the tourism industries. The figures for employment in these tourism industries are based on data from the National Social Security Office (annual average across four points in 2022) and the National Institute for the Social Security of the Self-Employed (as of 31 December 2022). In 2022, Belgium's tourism sector accounted for a total of 263,386 employee jobs and 140,942 jobs for self-employed individuals and their assistants (including managers). Compared to the total number of jobs in Belgium, tourism jobs represented 6.2% of all employee positions and 11.4% of all self-employed jobs.

To compare employment in the tourism industries across countries, the total number of jobs is considered, adding together both employee and self-employed positions. For Belgium, this results in 404,328 jobs in tourism, accounting for 7.4% of all jobs in the country.

4. Conclusions and implications

Given its experience with the Regional TSA of the Flemish Region, the Flanders Statistics Authority was asked to compile the Belgian TSA. The results of the third Belgian TSA (2022 reference year) were submitted to Eurostat in spring 2025.

In 2022, total tourism consumption in Belgium amounted to 24 billion euros. On the supply side, tourism industries accounted for 5.8% of Belgium's total gross value added in 2022, equivalent to €21.9 billion. Bringing together consumption and supply data allows for the calculation of the tourism direct gross value added. This refers to the value added generated directly as a result of tourism consumption, whether in tourism industries or other sectors. In 2022, the tourism direct gross value added in Belgium amounted to €7.5 billion, or 2.0% of the country's total gross value added. In terms of employment, tourism represented 7.4% of total employment in Belgium in 2022, which corresponds to 263,386 employee jobs and 140,942 jobs for self-employed individuals.

Experience with both national and regional TSAs has revealed several challenges and areas for improvement. For example, there remains a need for transparency and alignment of the sources, definitions and delineations used so that results can be validly compared. Integrating new and alternative forms of tourism and tourism consumption into the TSA, such as overnight stays in informal accommodations, second homes or via digital platforms, also continues to be a challenge. These types of tourist behaviours are often more difficult to capture because they require additional research and innovative methodologies, which may lead to increased costs and organisational complexity.

Enhanced cooperation and data sharing between statistical agencies — within and between countries, or with Eurostat — could help resolve data gaps and improve the comparability of figures across regions and countries. Furthermore, leveraging digital data sources, such as mobile phone data, payment data or online booking platforms, offers new opportunities to collect up-to-date and detailed information on tourist flows and expenditure.

Despite these challenges and potential improvements, the TSA remains an indispensable tool for both regions and countries to robustly quantify the economic significance of tourism and monitor the effects of policy measures at the sector level. Not only economic indicators, but also many results and sub-results regarding consumption by different tourist groups, provide important information for policymakers.

Moreover, the uniform TSA methodology, as established at the European level, facilitates international comparisons between countries. This is crucial within the framework of European tourism policy and for identifying best practices and trends within the sector.

5. References or relevant links

- UNSD, United Nations Statistics Division, WTO, World Tourism Organization, OECD, Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development & Eurostat (2008). *2008 Tourism Satellite Account (TSA): Recommended Methodological Framework*.
- Most recent TSA Flemish Region:
Weekers, K. (2024). *De economische betekenis van toerisme in Vlaanderen in 2022*. Rapport Statistiek Vlaanderen 2024/1. Brussel: Statistiek Vlaanderen. <https://www.vlaanderen.be/publicaties/de-economische-betekenis-van-toerisme-in-vlaanderen>
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Weekers, K. (2025). *De economische betekenis van toerisme in België in 2022*. Rapport Statistiek Vlaanderen 2025/X Brussel: Statistiek Vlaanderen. <https://www.vlaanderen.be/publicaties/de-economische-betekenis-van-toerisme-in-België> (to be published after the Eurostat report)