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## The place, role and features of tourism in the economy of the EU (Major factors and trends influencing the situation of the sector)

Tourism has grown rapidly during the last decades; it became the world's largest growing industry and an integral part of modern life. The sector is still expanding at an exponential rate. The evolution of international travel is opening up new opportunities for European destinations to make use of their tourism potential and improve existing ones. Travel and tourism encourage vast investments in new infrastructure. In addition the development of tourism directly affects other sectors, and it has great importance to growth, earnings and employment.

Following a brief overview of tourism in the world, the study focuses on EU, including the role that tourism plays in its economy. The purpose of this study was to discuss the present state and potential of tourism in the EU and to explore the EU15's attitude toward tourism. The author overviews the situation of the travel industry of EU countries and investigates other EU policies and programmes affecting tourism (where the interests of this powerful sector are taken into account). Undoubtedly tourism has an influence over the development of the whole of Europe. While the industry must meet the challenge of competitiveness, what will be the characteristics of future European tourism activities? Will the EU make capital out of its comparative advantages?

In conclusion, the discussion underlines a number of trends in the international market and examines how some of these - being driven by market opportunities - can prove advantageous to EU's tourism development.

The unstoppable growth of tourism contributes to strengthening of economic and social cohesion in the Union, guides to sustainable and the balanced development of European economic activities. However, the findings of this study draft many dilemma.

In the future overall European Community measures are to be implemented to assist tourism at union level, and in order to contribute to competitiveness in world tourism. Finally, common interests within the EU may lead to recognizing tourism policy and strategy.