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PRESS RELEASE

## EUROPEAN TOURISM MAINTAINS GROWTH MOMENTUM

**Brussels, 27 February 2014.** European destinations grew by a robust 5% in 2013, which is well above the most optimistic projections. According to the latest ETC report "European Tourism in 2013 – Trends & Prospects", confidence is growing in the sector, as some of the factors underlying growth will persist into the next year. The ETC expects international tourism to grow between 3% and 4% in 2014. With a joint effort, the public and private sector can consolidate this growth path and secure Europe a long-term position as the world's number 1 destination.

European tourism reached new peak levels in 2013 and experienced the fourth consecutive year of growth. Growth spread across virtually all European destinations and accelerated as the year progressed, mainly due to strong summer travel demand from large outbound markets, such as Spain and the UK. Confidence is growing in the European tourism sector, as reflected in key industry indicators. "European tourism has a bright future ahead" said Eduardo Santander, ETC Executive Director during the Destination Europe 2020 conference, held in Brussels on the 12th of February. Nonetheless, "competition is tough", echoed Pedro Ortún, Director for Tourism of the European Commission, "but European destinations have by far all the means to stand out as the most attractive, diverse and unique destinations worldwide".

In 2013, Europe received 29 million international visitors more than in the previous year, reaching 563 million arrivals, according to UNWTO figures<sup>1</sup>. In relative terms, this means a robust growth of 5%. Faster-than-average growth is reported by Europe's five largest destinations. France consolidates its position growing by a solid 8%. An unprecedented 60 million international tourists visited Spain (+6%), while in Italy (+3%) stagnation seems to be over, at least in terms of inbound travel. Tourism to Turkey (+10%) grew fast despite protests during the central months of the year, while Germany (+4%) remains on a steady growth path and hits the 30 million mark in foreign visitors. Stunning two-digit growth is reported by a remarkably high number of smaller destinations. Iceland is the best-in-class performer, with a 21% increase in foreign visits, followed by Latvia (+14%), Serbia (+13%), Greece (+12%), Slovakia and Malta (both +10%).

Key industry indicators point to an increasing confidence in the European tourism sector. European hotel occupancy growth outpaced all other world regions throughout 2013, and raising pricing power is indicative of growing confidence in the tourism sector. Air seat capacity increased throughout the year as a further indication of industry expectations of ongoing growth in demand.

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<sup>1</sup> UNWTO World Tourism Barometer, vol. 12, January 2014.

## Solid foundations for future growth

Overall, ETC expects international tourism to grow between 3% and 4% in 2014. As the Eurozone area is turning the corner from recession to recovery, according to the IMF<sup>2</sup>, the intra-European market is expected to support tourism growth throughout 2014. Russia is also expected to further consolidate its significance as outbound travel market, as its rising middle-class becomes more acquainted and independent with travel.

Among long-haul markets, the US is expected to remain the powerhouse of long-haul tourism demand for Europe, while China will keep on leading growth in relative terms. Mega-events and the overall policy environment might instead lead to a softer growth of outbound travel from Brazil. Large-scale initiatives, such as the Winter Olympics in Russia or Germany's UNESCO Word Heritage Year, will contribute to keep attention for European destinations high.

*The full report can be downloaded from ETC's corporate website under the following link: <http://www.etc-corporate.org/reports/tourism-trends>.*

### **Note to editors:**

*The European Travel Commission is an association of National Tourism Organisations (NTOs). It was created in 1948 to promote Europe as a tourism destination to the long-haul markets outside Europe, originally in the USA and later in Canada, Latin America and Asia. It currently has 33 member NTOs, including 8 from outside the European Union. ETC is an independent body which is financed entirely by annual membership contributions and partnership funding.*

*Together with the European Commission, ETC has designed the "Destination Europe 2020" initiative, a program designed to involve the entire tourism industry in defining a long-term strategy for Europe as a tourist destination.*

*Europe is the world's No. 1 tourist destination with 563 million international arrivals and more than 50% of the market share of worldwide tourism*

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**For further information:** ETC's corporate website [www.etc-corporate.org](http://www.etc-corporate.org) is aimed at industry, government and educational personnel interested in tourism to Europe. Tourists seeking travel-specific information and ideas are directed to ETC's consumer portal [www.visiteurope.com](http://www.visiteurope.com).

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<sup>2</sup> Source: <http://www.imf.org/external/pubs/ft/weo/2014/update/01>.