

Agenda item: 4.1

Usual environment and country practices in its determination

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I. The concept of usual environment

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The concept of “usual environment” according to IRTS 2008, para 2.21 is defined as the geographical area (though not necessarily a contiguous one) within which an individual conducts his/her regular life routines.

This concept is used to include in statistical observation only those travelers who move outside their usual environment and can be considered visitors if they meet other criteria.

Key IRTS 2008 recommendations are presented below (paragraph numbers retained).

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2.23. The purpose of introducing the concept of usual environment is **to exclude** from visitors those travelers **commuting regularly between their place of usual residence and place of work or study, or frequently visiting places** within their current life routine, for instance homes of friends or relatives, shopping centres, religious, health- care or any other facilities that might be at a substantial distance away or in a different administrative area but are regularly and frequently visited.

2.24. Based on the prevalent habits of movements, it is recommended that each country define the precise meaning of what is termed “regular” and “frequent” in the context of its tourism statistics.

2.25. The usual environment of an individual includes **the place of usual residence of the household to which he/she belongs, his/her own place of work or study and any other place that he/she visits regularly and frequently**, even when this place is located far away from his/her place of usual residence.

2.26. Each household has a principal dwelling (sometimes also designated as main or primary home), **usually defined with reference to time spent there**, whose location defines the country of residence and place of usual residence of this household and of all its members.

All other dwellings (owned or leased by the household) are considered **secondary** dwellings.

2.33 The term tourism visit refers to a stay in a place visited during a tourism trip. The stay does not need to be overnight to qualify as a tourism visit. Nevertheless, the notion of stay supposes that there is a stop. Entering a geographical area without stopping there does not qualify as a visit to that area. **It is recommended that countries define the minimum duration of stops to be considered as tourism visits.**

This is important for recording of excursionists (same-day visitors)

2.34. Observing tourism trips and visits is not the same as observing visitors, as an individual might make more than one trip or visit during the period of observation. In the statistics for the three forms of tourism, the term visitor is often used instead of tourism visit or tourism trip. **It is recommended that these concepts be clearly defined and differentiated in the statistical operations and presentation of the information.**

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2.27. A vacation home (sometimes also designated as a holiday home) is a secondary dwelling that is visited by the members of the household mostly for purposes of recreation, vacation or any other form of leisure. **Trips should not be so frequent and the duration of the stay so large as to turn the secondary dwelling into the principal dwelling of the visitor.**

2.28. Trips to vacation homes are usually tourism trips. Recognizing the growing importance of these trips in an increasing number of countries, and because of the specificities of the corresponding expenditure and activities, tourism statistics compilers are encouraged to measure them separately for analytical purposes and cross-country comparisons.

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2.50. Some countries leave it to the respondent to decide whether a trip taken qualifies as a tourism trip. However, in order to ensure comparability between responses within the country and over time, **it is recommended that national statistical offices, tourism authorities and/or other organizations with direct responsibility for tourism statistics be encouraged to establish national criteria to operationalize the concept of “usual environment”.**

2.51. Because the measurement of flows of visitors and of all associated variables is highly sensitive to the definition of the usual environment, it is further recommended that neighboring countries or **countries belonging to supranational organizations consult with each other in order to ensure compilation of comparable statistics.**

II. IRTS 2008 recommendations on criteria of usual environment

2.52. There are often differences in density of population, transportation accessibility, cultural behaviors, proximity to national or administrative borders, etc., between countries. These differences hinder the development of a unique worldwide statistical determination of the usual environment of an individual.

Nevertheless, the determination of the usual environment should be based on the following criteria:

- (a) Frequency of the trip;**
- (b) Duration of the trip;**
- (c) The crossing of administrative or national borders;**
- (d) Distance from the place of usual residence.**

IRTS 2008 recommends that countries themselves develop detailed definitions of usual environment.

In addition to using the frequency and duration criteria to determine the usual environment, **it is recommended that in practice the crossing of administrative borders be combined with the distance criterion.**

This is recommended for the following reasons:

- (a) Administrative units might have very different sizes even within a country;**
- (b) Metropolitan areas may stretch over administrative borders even though they represent a compact or contiguous geographical area;**
- (c) The place of usual residence of some individuals may be very close to the administrative borders so that their crossing might not be relevant for tourism analysis.**

III. Some regional and country practices

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Examples of defining usual environment

Results of the UNWTO/Canada study (2002, 29 countries). Countries mostly use:

Administrative border and distance: 20 countries

Administrative border, distance and frequency: 13 countries

Example: Slovenia –distance 25 km from place of residence and 24 hours of absence, frequency – less than 10 times per quarter

Only distance:

Australia: 40 км

Canada: 80 км

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EUROSTAT was exploring, in recent years, a possibility to develop a detailed general definition of usual environment on the basis of objective criteria, but concluded that it is practically impossible and that countries should:

- 1. Apply national criteria and that**
- 2. Subjective perception of traveler should be taken into account.**

Eurostat recommends that the household and border surveys should focus on subjective perception of respondent and on his/her spontaneous response under condition that respondent is explained what is understood as usual environment and tourism.

Eurostat recommends that EU member states apply so called “cascade” system, that is apply several criteria in the order of their preference.

The following order of the criteria is recommended:

1. Crossing of administrative borders (visits outside municipality).;
2. Duration of the visit;
3. Frequency of the visit;
4. Purpose of the visit, that is whether the visit is part of daily routine of the traveler.

Methodological manual for tourism statistics, 2012, v.1.2 , page 33

Eurostat recommends that criteria for establishing usual environment can be different for tourists (overnight visitors) and excursionists (same-day visitors)

For example, in order to consider a traveler as an excursionists it is recommended that the traveler is outside the usual environment for at least 3 hours.

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Other examples of Eurostat recommendations:

Considered as tourism:

- a. Trips to do shopping if they last on average more than 3 hours and are undertaken less frequently than once per week, on average.
- b. Visits to medical facility if they last on average more than 3 hours and are undertaken less frequently than once per week on average
- c. If during the trip outside his/her municipality to the places included in the usual environment, the person visited other places and such visits comply with points (a) and (b) these visits should be treated as tourism

For example, if a person visits once a week a sick relative in a neighboring municipality, such trips are not tourism. However, if in addition to taken care of the sick that person visited from time to time a nearby museum or place of pilgrimage, theses secondary visits are tourism.

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Developing a good operational definition of
usual environment requires time and
experimentation

**Thank you very much for your
attention!**