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# Spain welcomed record 60.4 mn tourists in 2013

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Spain welcomed a record 60.4 million foreign tourists in 2013, according to estimates released Wednesday by Exceltur, the association of the tourist sector.

Tourist activity in Spain grew last year by 0.6 percent and was responsible for the creation of 22,394 jobs, thanks "exclusively" to the growth of external demand, whereby the sector managed to compensate for a new decline in domestic tourism.

Regarding the latest estimates, Exceltur executive vice president Jose Luis Zoreda warned that one should not succumb "either to euphoria or to complacency" because 2013 closed in real terms with a level of tourist activity 9 points below that at the beginning of the economic crisis in 2007.

Spain also benefitted from the crisis in the eastern Mediterranean, he said.

Exceltur emphasized the instability in Egypt, which lost 2.5 million potential tourists in 2013, compared to the three million Spain gained.

Domestic tourism fell last year to a level below that of 2004, although it showed signs of recovery during the fourth quarter.

With regard to 2014, Zoreda announced that tourism will once again be the engine of the country's economic growth increasing on the order of 1.8 percent "quite a bit above the increase of 0.6 percent that today ... analysts estimate for the entire Spanish economy."

In 2014, about 78.9 percent of Spanish businessmen in the tourist sector expect to increase their level of sales and 74.6 expect to improve their operating margins. *EFE*