

PRESS RELEASE

Safety comes first for coach tourism

Supporting the efforts of the European Institutions to customise driving and rest time rules for the coach tourism sector, IRU – together with the European Travel Agents' and Tour Operators' Associations (ECTAA) and the European Tourism Association (ETOA) – highlights safety first in improvements to coach services.

Safety is paramount to coach tourism – something which is reinforced by the sector's high safety record and the fact that buses and coaches are the safest mode of transport in the EU. According to Eurostat figures, fatalities resulting from traffic accidents involving buses and coaches have halved since 2006 showing the sector's continuous improvement in and commitment to road safety.

Coach travel is different to other transport activities, with driving patterns allowing drivers to rest during the frequent and lengthy stops determined by the tour programme. Most driving is concentrated within the first and last day of a tour.

Matthias Maedge, who leads IRU's work in the EU, says: "Coach tourism is a business delivered by people for people. Road safety is not something that can be negotiated and every traffic accident is one too many. Specific and improved rules for coach tourism operators and drivers would lift barriers to a better service."

IRU's call for a more flexible approach to weekly rest periods and the 12-day, currently being proposed at institutional level, is based on this pattern (see [IRU proposals](#), pages 5-6). There is no evidence to suggest that the approach would lead to increased driver fatigue or accident risk. Rather, more flexibility in managing the daily driving times could lead to less stress for the driver in performing daily tasks.

Mr Maedge continues, "We are pleased to see the European Institutions recognise the unique characteristics of this sector. The social dialogue with trade unions should continue, with conclusions based on factual evidence and mutual understanding that safety comes first for all parties involved. Employers in road transport have mutual interests with drivers. We need each other."

Tim Fairhurst, Director of Policy at ETOA, adds: "Coach tourism drives growth from Europe's key long-haul origin markets, whose visitors typically visit more than one country. The new proposals would allow greater fleet efficiency without compromising safety. The changes are timely and welcome."

Merike Hallik, President of ECTAA, concludes: "The well-being and safety of drivers and passengers are top priorities for our sector. The specific rules needed for the good operation of our industry is by no means a threat to safety."

Notes to Editors:

IRU is the world's road transport organisation, promoting economic growth, prosperity and safety through the sustainable mobility of people and goods. Founded in 1948, IRU has members and activities in more than 100 countries. www.iru.org

ETOA is a leading trade association for tour operators and suppliers in European destinations, from global brands to local independent businesses. Over 900 members deliver more than €12bn of business annually within Europe and include tour and online operators, intermediaries and wholesalers; European tourist boards, hotels, attractions, technology companies and other tourism and business service providers. www.etoa.org

ECTAA regroups 36 national associations of travel agents and tour operators of 30 European and 4 non-European countries. It represents an industry of 70.000 enterprises employing some 500.000 people. www.ectaa.org

Publication date: 28 February 2018

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