



**Groupe des Unions Nationales des Agences et Organismes de Voyages de l'UE**  
**Group of National Travel Agents' and Tour Operators' Associations within the EU**  
Association Internationale sans but lucratif

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## ECTAA position with regard to ISO project to develop tourism standards

ECTAA opposes the development of standards for tourism services for the following reasons:

I. **Standards are not desirable**, notably because of the following:

- The development of standards must be industry driven - so far there has been a great opposition from European and international industry partners against this project.
- The scope of the standardization project is too broad – the work items proposed so far cover numerous sub-sectors and concentrate on different criteria (quality, safety, hygiene, accessibility). If these criteria cannot be easily quantified and measured, there is little use in producing standards.
- Standardization of tourism services is very difficult to achieve at international level taking into consideration the diversity of cultural, climatic, geographical characteristics and the purpose they serve (business versus leisure, first class versus low budget, etc.) – this will lead to the lowest common denominator, which will not be useful at all.
- Regional / national standards are already well established and are better adapted to the specificities of the regions they serve. There is no need to harmonize such standards.
- The cost of compliance with standards has never been analyzed for the industry, which contains predominantly small and micro-enterprises.
- Standards are not adapted to the continuously changing business, technical and legal environment of the tourism industry.

II. **Standards are not needed** as in Europe there are numerous legislations and codes of good conduct, which safeguard the consumers' interests in terms of providing them with the required information, and where relevant, assistance and compensation:

- Council Directive 90/314/EEC of 13 June 1990 on package travel, package holidays and package tours sets out **minimum standards in terms of information to the customer, contract terms and obligations as well as liability of the organizer / retailer** (see details below). This legislation enables customers to make an informed choice and to seek assistance and compensation, where the services supplied deviate from the contract.
- Code of conduct on unfair contract terms in package travel arrangements defines best practices for travel package contracts, among other regarding **information provided before contract conclusion, information in brochures**, information on travel insurance, principles for cancellation of or withdrawal from the contract, including in case of disruptive events, etc.
- Directive 2005/29/EC on unfair commercial practices prohibits “sharp practices”, such as pressure selling, misleading marketing and unfair advertising.
- Numerous air passenger rights legislations impose a number of obligations on travel agents and tour operators to **provide information to the customers and to offer, where relevant, assistance** and compensation as well as alternative arrangements in case of disruptive

events. Similar passenger rights legislations are in the process of adoption for the other modes of transport:

- The various passenger rights legislations include provisions for **Persons with Reduced Mobility** (PRMs) to guarantee the principle of **non-discrimination, access, assistance and proper information**.

The package travel Directive is currently under revision. No standards should be developed until the revision is completed to prevent contradicting or overlapping standards.

Any new standard must be preceded by a thorough **business impact assessment** to carefully weigh potential benefits against compliance costs of tourism enterprises, which are predominantly small and mirco-enterprises.