

FOR A COMPETITIVE, TRANSPARENT AND SUSTAINABLE TRAVEL MARKET

2019-2024

Priorities for the EU Institutions

ECTAA

THE EUROPEAN TRAVEL AGENTS'
AND TOUR OPERATORS' ASSOCIATIONS

Travel and tourism are an important driver of economic and social development in Europe. The sector stimulates economic growth by generating income, employment and investment in Europe, and through its exports to origin markets worldwide.

It helps to sustain our cultural and natural heritage, provides revenue to fund facilities and infrastructure enjoyed by visitors and residents, and promotes an awareness of a common European identity and citizenship distinguished by its diversity.

10,3%
of EU GDP



3rd largest
economic activity in the EU



THE TRAVEL AND TOURISM INDUSTRY IN EUROPE

560 million
International tourist arrivals



400 billion EUR
visitor exports



3,4 million
companies, mainly SME's



27,3 million
employees

WHAT IS ECTAA?

ECTAA is the European umbrella organisation of travel agents and tour operators across Europe. Members are the national associations of 27 Member States of the European Union, as well as Switzerland and Norway. ECTAA's mission is to drive growth and competitiveness in the European travel industry by working with members to inform and shape the debate in the European institutions and industry bodies.

ECTAA represents some **70,000 travel agents and tour operators** in Europe, which sell transport, accommodation, leisure and other tourism services as well as combined products to leisure and business customers. Travel agents and tour operators generate an estimated **turnover of €170 billion** and they account for approximately **500.000 employees**.

Each year travel agents issue **300 million air tickets** on scheduled flights and they sell approximately **120 million of prearranged** and **90 million dynamic travel packages**.

Transparency and neutrality

Consumers want transparency. An ever growing abundance of travel offers and possibilities create a growing need for guidance and advice. Travel agents and tour operators are experts that help consumers find the most suitable offer, save time and money and avoid disadvantageous choices. Using the latest in computer reservation technology, travel agents and tour operators can access the most up-to-date information and offer a neutral display of rates to consumers.

Assistance and care

Booking through a travel agent or tour operator offers a high level of consumer protection to travellers, thanks to a wide range of EU legislations protecting them at every step of their trip. Flights, accommodation, a guided tour or all of them combined, in the event of a disruption, travel agents and tour operator will inform, take care and provide assistance to travellers, and under certain circumstances pay compensation.

Sustainable tourism

Tourism can be a catalyst for growth and employment. But if it is not managed well, tourism can have negative impacts leading to the decline of a destination. Travel agents and tour operators play a vital role in affecting changes in behaviours and attitudes towards more responsible forms of tourism. They also help offer more sustainable tourism products, using high environmental and social performance indicators in their selection of suppliers.

Seamless travel

Travel agents and tour operators are professionals with qualifications, know-how and skills to assist travellers with all their travel needs. They are commonly seen as a 'one stop shop' for all travel arrangements, including booking of travel and insurance protection, visa applications, information on foreign travel requirements, custom-designed trips, etc. They offer a whole range of services so that customers can travel from A to Z with peace of mind.



WHAT TRAVEL AGENTS AND TOUR OPERATORS STAND FOR

WHAT IS NEEDED FROM THE

To ensure a competitive and transparent travel market in the interest of consumers and businesses alike, we call on EU decision-makers to act on the following:

Thorough review of the legislation on air ticket distribution

Two pieces of legislation are essential for consumers when buying air tickets. On the one hand, Regulation 1008/2008 on operation of air services, which aims, among other, to ensure price transparency, access to fares and consumer choice. It also prohibits airlines to discriminate consumers and agents based on their nationality or residence. On the other hand, Regulation 80/2009 on a Code of Conduct for Computerised Reservation Systems (CRSs), which aims to ensure that consumers have neutral and non-discriminatory access to fares provided by airlines through CRSs. These legislation need to be reviewed: new players (like meta-search engines, Google, etc.) are outside the scope of the legislation, unbundling of fares makes a meaningful comparison no longer possible and offers available in the regulated booking channels are reduced... **ECTAA calls on the EU policy-makers to adapt these legislations to the new market realities providing consumers with a truly neutral and unbiased display of fares, irrespective of the booking channel, allowing a proper comparison of airline offers.**

Consumer protection against airline insolvencies

In the last 2 years, there have been 36 airline failures, including large airlines such as Air Berlin, Monarch Airlines, Niki, Aigle Azur, etc. There is currently no obligation on airlines to put up guarantees for the refund and repatriation of stranded passengers when they go bankrupt. This is a serious consumer detriment. It is also distorting competition between airlines and tour operators which need to take out professional liability insurance to protect their customers against supplier failures, such as airlines, on top of the obligation to provide guarantees against their own insolvency. **ECTAA calls on the EU regulators to provide adequate consumer protection against airline insolvencies and level the playing field between airlines and tour operators.**

Setting tourism at core of EU policies

Tourism's contribution to EU employment and GDP is crucial. Its potential for growth will only be realised with coordinated support from policy makers and other stakeholders. However, the sector's economic contribution is at risk from competitive pressure and complacency about Europe's continued appeal. Tourism must be an EU priority at a senior level in order to succeed. **ECTAA calls on the Commission, the Council and the Parliament to create a budget line or fund dedicated to tourism and to carry out a review of all policies with an impact on tourism. This should include consultation of all stakeholders of the tourism sector.**

EUROPEAN UNION INSTITUTIONS

Proper enforcement of the Package Travel Directive

Consumers benefit from extensive consumer protection when buying a combination of travel services, such as clear information, refund and repatriation in case of the organiser's insolvency, redress if any of the elements of the package are not properly performed, etc. Since July 2018, this protection is not only granted if consumers buy a 'traditional' package holiday, but also if they buy linked travel arrangements, for example when the traveller books a flight on a website and is then invited to book a hotel on a different website. However enterprises in the travel sector have adapted their business model to escape their obligations when selling a combination of travel services. **ECTAA calls on the Commission and Member States to properly enforce the new rules on all actors in the market to ensure that consumers are adequately protected.**

Reform of the special VAT rules for travel agents

The 6th VAT Directive adopted in 1977 introduced special VAT rules for travel agents. The market has changed fundamentally since then. ECTAA has been calling for a review of the special VAT scheme for many years. This is supported by a study carried out by KPMG on behalf of the European Commission. The study concludes that the special rules for travel agents should be maintained, but that a review is necessary to address the distortions of competition, ensure a fair allocation of VAT revenues between Member States and make the rules future proof. **ECTAA calls on the Commission and the Council to modernise the special VAT scheme for travel agents.**

Balanced approach in the adoption of the Directive proposal on representative action – 'collective redress'

In 2018 the Commission adopted a Directive proposal to enable qualified entities, which represent the collective interest of consumers, to seek remedy through representative actions against infringements of Union law. Consumer protection is crucial for ECTAA. However, it **calls on EU regulators to introduce additional safeguards to prevent abusive and false claims.** The travel industry has witnessed situations where unscrupulous claims management companies have encouraged holidaymakers to submit fraudulent sickness claims to tour operators when returning back from holiday. **ECTAA is also calling for more transparency of funding of qualified entities and an equal treatment of transport and package travel legislation when it comes to the scope of the Directive.**

ECTAA Full Members

- AUSTRIA** Österreichischer ReiseVerband ★ www.oerv.at
AUSTRIA Wirtschaftskammer Österreich ★ www.wko.at
BELGIUM Fédération de l'Industrie du Tourisme ★ www.fit-fti.be
BULGARIA Асоциация на Българските Туроператори и Туристически Агенти ★ www.abtta.com
CROATIA Udruga hrvatskih putničkih agencija ★ www.uhpa.hr
CROATIA Hrvatska Gospodarska Komora ★ www.hgk.hr
CYPRUS Association of Cyprus Travel Agents ★ www.acta.org.cy
CZECH REPUBLIC Asociace Českých Cestovních Kanceláří a Agentur ★ www.accka.cz
DENMARK Danmarks Rejsebureau Forening ★ www.drf-dk.dk
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FINLAND Suomen Matkatoimistoalan Liitto ry ★ www.smal.fi
FRANCE Les Entreprises du Voyage ★ www.entreprisesduvoyage.org
GERMANY Deutscher ReiseVerband e.V. ★ www.driv.de
GREECE Σύνδεσμος των εν Ελλάδι Τουριστικών και Ταξιδιωτικών Γραφείων ★ www.hatta.gr
HUNGARY Magyar Utazási Irodák Szövetsége ★ www.muisz.com
IRELAND Irish Travel Agents Association ★ www.itaa.ie
ITALY Confturismo / Confcommercio ★ www.confturismo.it
LATVIA Latvijas Tūrisma Aģentu un Operatoru Asociācija ★ www.alta.net.lv
LITHUANIA Nacionalė Turizmo Verslo Asociacija ★ www.ntva.lt
MALTA Federated Association of Travel & Tourism Agents ★ www.fatta.org
THE NETHERLANDS Algemene Nederlandse Vereniging van Reisondernemingen ★ www.anvr.nl
NORWAY The Norwegian Travel Trade Section ★ www.virke.no
POLAND Polska Izba Turystyki ★ www.pit.org.pl
PORTUGAL Associação Portuguesa das Agências de Viagens e Turismo ★ www.apavt.net.pt
ROMANIA Asociata Nationala a Agentiilor de Turism ★ www.anat.ro
SLOVAKIA Slovenská asociácia cestovních kancelárií a cestovních agentúr ★ www.sacka.eu
SLOVENIA Združenje Turističnih Agencij Slovenije ★ www.ztas.org
SPAIN Asociación Corporativa de Agencias de Viajes Especializadas ★ www.acave.travel
SWEDEN Svenska resebyrå- och arrangörsföreningen ★ www.srf-org.se
SWITZERLAND Schweizerischer Reise-Verband ★ www.srv.ch
UNITED KINGDOM The Travel Association ★ www.abta.com

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