

PRESS RELEASE

Investigation into airline cancellation practices should be accelerated

Brussels, 08 March 2021 - **eu travel tech**, the industry association for technology travel services and **ECTAA**, the European travel agents' and tour operators' association, today welcomed the European Commission decision to launch an investigation, together with the Consumer Protection Cooperation Network, on airline cancellation practices during the COVID-19 pandemic¹.

As it is well noted by the Commission, travel restrictions applied by countries during the Coronavirus health crisis have led to mass cancellations of flights, which have disrupted the travel plans of millions of Europeans. In this context, a number of airlines have repeatedly failed to comply with their obligation to refund customers in a timely manner (7 days) or imposed vouchers in lieu of refunds, either directly or via their travel agents.,

The investigation into non-compliant airlines is welcome, but eu travel tech and ECTAA urge the Commission and the CPC Network to accelerate their investigations and to take rigorous enforcement measures against those airlines that are consistently failing to comply with their obligations of offering a refund.

Said ECTAA President, Pawel Niewiadomski: *"Enforcement authorities have to act quickly. This practice is not only damaging for consumers across Europe, who are denied their legal right to be refunded for their unhonored tickets, but it also negatively impacts all companies through which tickets are sold."* Indeed, travel agents are seeing airlines refusing on no grounds to process billions of euros in outstanding refunds for their customers, ultimately putting these businesses under financial and reputational pressure as travellers are claiming their refund through them.

The airlines' breach has not gone unnoticed. The European Court of Auditor has announced an audit on air passenger rights during the Covid19 crisis. The aim is to assess how effectively the Commission has been safeguarding passenger rights and whether the EU's current legal framework on passenger rights is adequate to deal with such crises.²

Emmanuel Mounier, Secretary-General of eu travel tech said: *"we are aware that these are unprecedented times for everyone and especially for the travel industry. However, the challenging environment does not justify overlooking consumer rights and implementing consumer-harming practices."*

¹ https://ec.europa.eu/info/live-work-travel-eu/consumer-rights-and-complaints/enforcement-consumer-protection/coordinated-actions_en

² https://www.eca.europa.eu/Lists/News/NEWS2103_03/INAP_air_passenger_rights_EN.pdf

eu travel tech

We welcome the decision by the European Commission by which it commits to investigate airline cancellation practices that harm both consumer rights and travel technology businesses, and hope that it will enforce the necessary actions to avoid these unfair practices from happening again in the future.

We are glad that the Commission has heard our concerns and are committed to continue working alongside them and any other relevant body for the benefit of travellers and the overall travel ecosystem”.

-ENDS-

About eu travel tech

eu travel tech represents the interests of travel technology companies. eu travel tech uses its position at the centre of the travel and tourism sector to promote a consumer-driven, innovative and competitive industry that is transparent and sustainable. Our membership spans Global Distribution Systems (GDSs), Online Travel Agencies (OTA), Travel Management Companies in business travel (TMCs) and metasearch sites. For more information on eu travel tech and policy priorities, please visit www.eutraveltch.eu

About ECTAA

ECTAA represents some 70,000 travel agents and tour operators in Europe, which provide consultancy and sell transport, accommodation, leisure and other tourism services as well as combined products to leisure and business customers. More about our activities, please visit www.ectaa.eu

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