

## **ECTAA backs EU passenger package, but flags competition risks**

Brussels, 13 May 2026 – ECTAA welcomes today’s adoption by the European Commission of the new passenger package, including proposals on Rail Ticketing, Multimodal Digital Mobility Services (MDMS) and revised Rail Passenger Rights. The package reflects the Commission’s ambition to promote more sustainable rail and multimodal travel across Europe while improving the passenger experience.

While these objectives are both commendable and long overdue, ECTAA questions whether the proposed measures will ultimately deliver a truly competitive, open and consumer-friendly multimodal market — particularly in relation to the proposed Rail Ticketing Regulation.

The proposal has the potential to significantly improve consumers’ access to rail services across Europe. By introducing fair, reasonable and non-discriminatory (FRAND) access conditions for rail operators, it could enable independent travel intermediaries to access rail content on equal terms, thereby increasing transparency, consumer choice and innovation in rail distribution.

Consumers increasingly expect to compare and combine travel options across rail operators, transport modes and ancillary services on a single platform. Better access to rail content is therefore essential to building a genuinely integrated European mobility market.

However, ECTAA has identified several important concerns that deserve careful scrutiny during the legislative process.

First, ECTAA believes FRAND principles should not be limited to rail transport. While concerns surrounding dominant rail operators are well documented, similar anti-competitive practices are increasingly visible in air transport and other mobility sectors. The recent Ryanair antitrust case in Italy illustrates how dominant carriers can impose unfair commercial conditions on independent distributors, to the detriment of competition, innovation and consumer choice.

ECTAA therefore calls on legislators to ensure that FRAND principles apply consistently across all transport sectors whenever dominant market players impose unfair conditions on weaker commercial partners.

“Ensuring fair access to rail content is an important and welcome step for consumers and independent travel distributors alike. However, the same market failures exist in air transport and should be addressed consistently. FRAND principles should apply whenever dominant operators impose unfair conditions on weaker market participants, regardless of the transport mode,” said Eric Drésin, Secretary General of ECTAA.

ECTAA also expresses concern about provisions requiring dominant railway undertakings to open their own retail platforms to competing rail services in order to increase the visibility of new entrants.

While greater competition between rail operators could positively impact prices and service quality, such measures risk further strengthening the market power of incumbent operators by turning their platforms into the primary gateways for rail distribution.

ECTAA warns that this could unintentionally accelerate market concentration by reinforcing the direct distribution power of dominant operators, while weakening independent travel intermediaries that provide consumers with impartial comparison tools, transparency and access to competing services across multiple operators and transport modes.

Any regulatory framework that indirectly favours vertically integrated dominant operators risks reducing distribution diversity and undermining innovation over the longer term.

“We are concerned that some of the proposed measures could unintentionally create ‘super competitors’, to the detriment of independent travel intermediaries that cannot compete with the brand recognition and customer reach of dominant transport operators,” said Eric Drésin.

In the same vein, the proposed MDMS Regulation aims to address the market power of certain MDMS providers in their relationships with transport operators, yet comparable safeguards are not foreseen for dominant transport operators outside the rail sector. This appears disproportionate given that concentration levels are considerably higher in the transport sector, whereas the distribution market remains highly fragmented and consists predominantly of small and medium-sized enterprises.

ECTAA therefore calls on the co-legislators to carry out a thorough assessment of the competitive impact of the legislative proposals adopted today and to avoid measures that could inadvertently undermine independent distribution channels or further entrench dominant market positions.

- END -

#### **ECTAA**

ECTAA represents the interests of 80,000 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.

**Press contact:** Christian Möller – +32 2 644 34 50 | @ECTAAEurope (LinkedIn)