

PRESS RELEASE

Agreement on enforcement of passenger rights undermine travel intermediaries' role and services

Brussels, 29 June 2026. ECTAA, the European Travel Agents' and Tour Operators' Associations, expresses serious concern following the provisional agreement reached between the Council and the European Parliament on new rules to strengthen the enforcement of passenger rights across the EU.

While ECTAA supports strong and effective passenger protection, the agreed provisions on reimbursement in case of transport cancellations raise significant concerns over the disproportionate impact the new regulations will have on independent travel intermediaries.

Under the new rules, passengers would be entitled to full reimbursement, including any intermediation fees, in the event of a flight cancellation. This approach fails to recognize the distinct and valuable services provided by independent travel intermediaries, which are separate from the transport service itself.

Travel intermediaries play a crucial role in ensuring transparency and choice in the transport market. They provide impartial advice, enable comparisons across multiple carriers, construct complex itineraries, and facilitate the booking of additional travel services. For corporate clients, they also deliver essential services such as reporting, travel policy management, and duty of care. In times of disruption, intermediaries are often the first point of contact, offering active support to affected travellers.

Customers knowingly choose to use indirect distribution channels and are fully aware of the benefits and services. The agreed rules disregard this informed choice and create an unjust outcome.

By requiring intermediaries to refund their service fees in cases of flight cancellations—events entirely outside their control—the new framework effectively forces them to work without remuneration. Intermediaries would not only be expected to manage the refund process without compensation but would also lose the payment for services already fully delivered.

The limited exemption foreseen for micro-enterprises fails to address the situation of the thousands of travel intermediaries who employ more than ten people and will be directly impacted.

ECTAA had advocated for a more reasonable approach, wherein an intermediary would clearly inform the customer at the time of sale exactly which amount would be reimbursable in case of a cancellation while preserving fair remuneration for services rendered. Instead, the co-legislators have opted for a punitive measure.

“It is very disappointing to see that the European co-legislators do not recognize the value that independent travel intermediaries provide to consumers,” said ECTAA President Heli Mäki-Fränti.

“Expecting intermediaries to refund their remuneration for services already delivered, while managing cancellations beyond their control, is fundamentally unfair.”

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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.

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