



February 2024

Dear readers, as we mark the one-year anniversary of our monthly newsletter, we appreciate your ongoing interest and involvement in our content. Over the past year, we've strived to provide informative and diverse articles, and we want to take this opportunity to express our gratitude for your continued support. As we reflect on the past year, we are open to receiving your feedback. Whether it's on specific articles, suggestions for improvement, or ideas for future topics, your insights are valuable to us. We welcome your comments and look forward to hearing your thoughts as we continue to evolve and enhance our newsletter. Thank you for being part of our community, and here's to another year of informative content.

What's happening in Brussels

Court of Justice once again interprets EU law on compensation for air passengers

Passengers who did not present themselves for boarding for a flight which arrived with a long delay or who purchased a ticket for an alternative flight and arrived at the destination with a delay of less than three hours are not entitled to fixed compensation under Regulation 261/2004 on air passenger rights, ruled the Court of Justice of the European Union in a judgment delivered on Thursday 25 January. In the Court's view, a passenger who did not go to the airport did not suffer a loss of time that needs to be compensated. Links to the Court's judgments are available here: [Case C-474/22](#) and [Case C-54/23](#).

Fate of sustainability due diligence proposal in the air

The Council and the European Parliament reached a political agreement on the Corporate Sustainability Due Diligence Directive proposal last December, however it now seems that a number of Member States are no longer backing this agreement. Last week Germany and Italy signalled that they would abstain from voting, which together with other sceptics such as Finland and Austria would effectively block the proposal. The file will be back on the Council agenda next week.

Joint statement calling for a competitive European airline market

ECTAA is signatory to a joint statement calling for a competitive European airline market. The five signatories represent consumers, passengers, indirect distribution players, travel technology and airports. The statement was also sent as a letter to Margrete Vestager, Executive Vice President of the European Commission and Commissioner for Competition. Background is the increasing consolidation trend amongst European airlines with upcoming decisions on the acquisitions of ITA Airways by Lufthansa and Air Europa by IAG. You will find the statement [here](#). You will also find this on LinkedIn [here](#).

Spanish Royale Decree postponed until 01/10/2024

Spanish Royal Decree 933/2021 provides that persons or companies (including EU intermediaries) offering accommodation and/or car rental services in Spain must provide a very extensive list of personal data to Spanish law enforcement authorities. It came into force on 1 January 2023, with an initial adaptation period until 1 June 2023. This period has been extended to 1 October 2024. The adaptation period has already been extended several times due to the technical complexity of the subject, the development and volume of processing operations involved in its implementation, and the need to maintain a high level of guarantees and safeguards for the rights of all obligated parties and data subjects.

IATA Corner

Exchange between PAPGJC delegates and local APJC delegates

The secretariat has set up a call in which ECTAA's PAPGJC agent delegates and local APJC delegates can exchange. This call will take place on Wednesday, 27 March from 10:00-11:30 CET. An outlook invite with Teams link was already

shared. During the call PAPGJC delegates will inform about the discussions held at the next PAPGJC meeting on 4/5 March and exchange on the currently most discussed items at the different local APJCs. The reason for this call is that not all local Agency Programme Joint Councils (APJCs) are aware of the discussions being held at the Passenger Agency Programme Global Joint Council (PAPGJC). This has led to situations where local APJCs were presented items as having been "agreed at PAPGJC" while in reality items were only presented at PAPGJC with agent representatives openly criticizing them. To avoid such miscommunication as much as possible, the exchange between PAPGJC agent delegates and local APJCs should be improved.

PCI DSS compliance

There is an interesting new video about "PCI DSS Compliance as a Travel Agency" produced by AltexSoft. The video provides a great overview in just 14 minutes and it can be watched [here](#). The Payment Card Industry Data Security Standard (PCI DSS) is the global standard for the protection of payment card data. All merchants accepting card payment need to be compliant. This is also very important for all IATA accredited agents that are required to comply with this standard. Providing an incorrect declaration has strong and costly consequences for them. In November ECTAA together with the cyber security company VikingCloud organized a free webinar on PCI DSS and the full recording as well as the slides can still be accessed [here](#).

Sustainability Corner

Open call for applications for SMEs in coastal areas in DK, IT, PT, SL, LT

COASTOUR is a project co-funded by the EU, which aims to develop a sustainability monitoring framework and open-access self-assessment tool to monitor the sustainability performance of at least 80 SMEs in the tourism sector across 5 countries, whilst boosting their awareness, development and capacity in the area of sustainable innovations. The project has launched a call for applications to help tourism SMEs, including travel agents and tour operators, to become more sustainable, by providing financial support towards sustainability certification/audit, new product development (feasibility study, pilot testing), sustainability expertise, cost for technological tools/solutions, etc. Only SMEs from DK, IT, PT, SL and LT in predominantly rural / coastal zones can apply for a maximum funding of 9.000€. The call is open until 12 March. More information is available [here](#).

Environmental Labelling Scheme for airlines

The European Union Aviation Safety Agency (EASA) will be launching an Environmental Labelling Scheme, the aim of which is to provide passengers with trustworthy and harmonised environmental information about their flights. Taking part in the Environmental Labelling Scheme will be voluntary for airlines. Airlines that choose to opt in will be required to submit flight data for all flights that fall under the scope of the initiative to EASA. They cannot choose to submit data only for certain routes. A further requirement for those who have opted in is that they need to display the result in their booking systems and so ensure that this information reaches the passengers. EASA is launching an early adopters' plan for interested airlines. More information is available [here](#).

Events



ECTAA Travel Payment Summit –Last chance to register

In less than a week, on 21 February, the first ECTAA Travel Payment Summit will take place in Brussels. More than 80 participants have already registered – travel and payment experts, policymakers, representatives of OTAs, TMCs, airlines, payment providers and stakeholders from the EU bubble. The event will shed light on the complexities of travel payment and support the understanding of the different roles in the travel value chain when it comes to money flows and the impact for the risk management. Discussions beyond siloes that often exist should help to have open and meaningful conversations. ECTAA has been dedicated to monitoring issues around payment in travel for many years, recognizing its pivotal role within businesses and the entire travel industry. Payment, whether in B2C or B2B scenarios, directly impact risk management of companies, fundamentally influencing the entire travel ecosystem. It is also intertwining with other relevant aspects like customer experience. An adept payment strategy not only mitigates risks but also enables higher revenues and heightened

customer satisfaction, constituting a linchpin for sustainable growth within the industry. Within the labyrinth of travel and payment complexities, regulatory frameworks, especially the EU legislation (e.g. PTD, passenger rights), loom large, setting the tone and guidelines for the industry's operational landscape. A strong participation from indirect distribution players ((online) travel agencies, TMCs, consolidators, tour operators etc.) is needed to push our messages and the success of the event. Travel companies that are member of an ECTAA member association benefit from a reduced price of 49 Euro plus VAT. More information on the event is available [here](#) and the direct link to register is [here](#).

Publications

WTTC launched Call to Action ahead of 2024 elections

On 14 February the World Travel & Tourism Council (WTTC) has issued a 'Call to Action' in Brussels, urging the EU to support the Travel & Tourism sector, employing over 22 million people and contributing €1.4 trillion to the EU's economy. The Call to Action emphasizes a sustainable future, urging the EU to conduct policy impact assessments on environmental legislation and collaborate with the sector to achieve net-zero emissions targets. The WTTC also advocates for streamlined travel policies, including visa-free travel and the implementation of the delayed Entry-Exit System. Additionally, the digitalization of the sector is highlighted, with a call for accelerated adoption of cutting-edge technologies, including contactless travel and innovative AI implementation. WTTC stresses the importance of these measures for sustained sector growth, attracting talent, and fostering global prosperity. The 'Call to Action for the Next European Political Cycle' is available [here](#).

European tourism draws close to pre-pandemic levels in 2023

According to the latest edition of the 'European Tourism Trends & Prospects' quarterly report released on 13 February, two-thirds of European destinations are reporting either a full recovery or recording arrivals and/or overnights within 10% of pre-pandemic levels. Among these, Southern European destinations continue to be the frontrunners. In contrast, Eastern European destinations bordering Russia experienced a slower rebound. The rebound in

both arrivals and nights across Europe is occurring against the backdrop of inflation affecting both the industry and tourists alike. In Q4 2023, inflation surged by 23% compared to 2019 levels, with particularly pronounced increases seen in tourism-related expenses such as international flights (+49%), package holidays (+47%), and hotel prices (+35%). See full report [here](#).

Passenger traffic reaches nearly 95% of pre-pandemic levels in 2023

Airport Council International have reported that European airports have welcomed 2.3 billion passengers in 2023. Passenger traffic surged by +19% over 2022, thus standing just -5.4% below pre-pandemic (2019) volumes. The increase was very much driven by international passenger traffic (+21%), which grew at almost twice the pace of domestic passenger traffic (+11.7%). While many airports achieved absolute passenger traffic records, a large majority still lagged behind their pre-pandemic volumes. The top 5 European airports in 2023 were London-Heathrow, Istanbul, Paris-CDG, Amsterdam-Schiphol and Madrid.

ECTAA Insights

In memorium – Maya Filipova

It is with great sadness that we announce that Maya Filipova, ABTTA's Executive Director and ECTAA Director for many years, has passed away after a long struggle with a severe illness. She gave more than 20 years of her life to the Bulgarian and European travel industry. She will always be keenly remembered as a very experienced, competent and kind person. We lose a fond colleague and friend.



Travel

Industry

Ambassador

Programme

After 18 months of thorough preparation, we are pleased to announce the launch of the Travel Industry Ambassador Programme. This initiative aims to highlight the dynamism and innovation within the travel industry sector by showcasing innovative travel agents and tour operators who are making significant contributions to the future of travel. The ECTAA's Ambassador Programme prioritizes knowledge development, offering ambassadors a series of workshops and interactive sessions to enhance their communication skills, navigate challenging topics, build a robust digital presence, and engage with EU policymakers. The program also provides valuable networking opportunities. By the end of 2024, ambassadors will be well-equipped to support ECTAA and its member associations in advocating for the travel sector. Ambassadors will have access to influential professionals, fostering meaningful connections and building strategic partnerships. This initiative is actively supported by industry partners, including Visa, Mastercard, Trust My Group, Perseuss-Actuary, Visit Bulgaria, and Mize, whose support is crucial to the success of the program. The inaugural ECTAA Travel Industry Ambassadors include professionals from Sweden, Italy, Belgium, Finland, Ukraine, and The Netherlands. The program still has available spots and is open to individuals working for a travel agency, a tour operator, or a member organization of ECTAA. If you are interested in joining, please contact the ECTAA secretariat (secretariat@ectaa.org), which will assist you in initiating your application.

Save the Date

20 February: Executive Board meeting
21 February: ECTAA Travel Payment Summit, Brussels - [registration](#)
4-5 March: IATA PAPGJC meeting, Madrid
29-31 May: ASTA Travel Convention 2024, Dallas/USA
13-14 June: 128th ECTAA semi-annual meeting, Braşov/Romania
24-25 October (TBC): 129th ECTAA semi-annual meeting, Sofia/Bulgaria

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CONTACT US

ECTAA AISBL
Rue Dautzenberg 36
1050 Brussels
Belgium

Transparency Register : 88072891086-36
T: +32 2 644 34 50
E: secretariat@ectaa.org



E-mailing services by [IDmailing.eu](https://www.idmailing.eu)