



**June 2024**

What's happening in Brussels

#### **Results of the 2024 European Parliament election**

The 2024 European Parliament election took place from 6 to 9 June. The [provisional results](#) show that the EPP will be maintaining its position as leading force in the European Parliament, while Socialists, Greens, Liberals and the far-left have lost seats. Right-wing parties gained ground in the European Parliament, though less than predicted. Despite the significant wins and losses, no single bloc emerged with an overall majority in the European Parliament. Centrist parties are now working to form a coalition to support a second term of Ursula von der Leyen as Commission President.

#### **EU Schengen visa becomes more expensive!**

From 11 June 2024, non-EU travellers requiring a visa to travel to the 26 Schengen states will have to pay 90€ for a visa, instead of 80€ as before (with exception of visa facilitation countries). If the Schengen state uses a service provider for handling visa applications, this could add another 45€, bringing the Schengen visa cost up to 135€. See general overview [here](#). This increase happens despite the fact that Schengen visa applications were still 40% lower than in 2019. The Schengen visa is comparatively cheaper than the US, on par with Canada, but more expensive than Australia, New Zealand and Japan.

#### **Pragmatic approach of Council on multi-modal passenger rights**

The Council is continuing its review of the legislative [proposal](#) introducing passenger rights for multi-modal journeys. It is considering some positive amendments for travel intermediaries, such as increasing the passenger refund processing time from 14 to 30 days, which is more

realistic. In terms of the obligation for travel intermediaries to share passenger contact details with carriers for the purpose of communicating operational disruption information, which is commercially sensitive data, the Council is considering including an option for intermediaries to transfer such information themselves, rather than having to share the contact details with the carriers.

#### **Another court case defining ‘extraordinary circumstances’**

In the [case C 385/23](#), the referring court asks the European Court to determine whether an unexpected and unprecedented technical failure, which affects a new aircraft recently put into service and which is caused by a hidden design defect recognized by the manufacturer after the cancellation of the flight, constitutes a "extraordinary circumstance" within the meaning of Article 5(3) of Regulation 261/2004. The Court recalls that technical failures are not in themselves “extraordinary circumstances”, unless they are caused by a hidden design defect affecting flight safety. It also specifies that the moment of revelation of the hidden defect by the manufacturer is irrelevant. Consequently, the occurrence of a technical failure due to a hidden design defect constitutes a "extraordinary circumstance" if the manufacturer recognizes subsequent to the cancellation of the flight that this failure affects all aircrafts of the same type and the safety of the flight.

#### **Advocate General issues opinion on parity clauses in Booking.com case**

Since mid-2020, German hotels and Booking.com have been conducting a legal dispute before the District Court of Amsterdam. Hotels are claiming damages resulting from the violation of EU competition law through the use of so-called wide and narrow best price clauses. Booking.com argued that the best price clauses were necessary for the functioning of hotel booking portals, as they would prevent "unfaithful" free-riding by hotels. For this reason, those best price clauses could not be regarded as restrictive of competition. In addition, Booking.com argued that hotel booking portals are in direct competition with search and metasearch engines as well as the hotels’ own distribution. Therefore, Booking.com's market share is ultimately so small that the conduct of Booking.com cannot cause any damage to competition. In spring 2023, the District Court of Amsterdam referred two questions to the European Court of Justice for clarification. In his [opinion](#), the Advocate General proposes to define the market for OTA activities and suggests that parity clauses imposed by OTAs should only be considered ancillary restrictions if they are essential and proportionate to ensure the economic viability of the OTA. The final decision will be taken by the European Court, which may take a few more months.

#### **Update of EU Air Safety List “blacklist”**

On 30 May 2024, the Commission has updated the EU Air Safety List, which is the list of airlines that are subject to an operating ban or operational restrictions within the European Union,

because they do not meet international safety standards. The updated Air Safety List can be found here. Following this latest update, a total of 128 airlines are banned from EU skies:

- 100 airlines certified in 15 different States, due to inadequate safety oversight by the aviation authorities from these States;
- 22 airlines certified in Russia, as well as 6 individual airlines from other States, based on serious safety deficiencies identified: Air Zimbabwe (Zimbabwe), Avior Airlines (Venezuela), Blue Wing Airlines (Suriname), Iran Aseman Airlines (Iran), Fly Baghdad (Iraq) and Iraqi Airways (Iraq). Two additional airlines are subject to operational restrictions and can only fly to the EU with specific aircraft types: Iran Air (Iran) and Air Koryo (North Korea).

Travel agents and tour operators have the obligation under Regulation 2111/2005 to bring the EU Air Safety List to the attention of the passenger. Where the passenger has a contract with a tour operator for a flight operated outside of the EU by a carrier entered onto the Air Safety List, the passenger is entitled to re-routing or refund.

### **PTD: ECTAA meets with Belgian and Hungarian Council presidencies**

On 10 June, ECTAA and other European tourism industry representatives discussed concerns with the Belgian and Hungarian Presidencies of the Council about the European Commission's proposal to revise the Package Travel Directive. Key points included:

1. **Definitions:** The Belgian Presidency acknowledged concerns about expanding package definitions.
2. **Pre-payments:** The BE Presidency didn't explain its current position and just reported the Commission's position that the provision on limiting pre-payments is flexible, easing potential cashflow issues for organizers.
3. **Contract Termination and Travellers' Rights:** The Presidency finds including the "place of residence" for contract termination in extraordinary circumstances excessive but supports keeping the "place of departure" due to relevant jurisprudence. They resist creating an exhaustive list of triggering circumstances.
4. **Vouchers:** The Presidency disagrees with removing automatic refunds upon voucher expiration and supports refunds corresponding to the original trip amount.
5. **Insolvency Protection:** Feedback is requested on the average refund time for consumers.
6. **B2B Refunds:** Feedback is also requested on feasible deadlines, noting no room to make provisions more stringent as organizers must exercise their rights with service providers.

Overall, the Presidencies have not provided much information on their current position. More information should be available in the working documents.

In the frame of the ECTAA Travel Industry Ambassador Programme, we are happy to introduce:

**Gabriele Milani, Ambassador**

Gabriele Milani, National Director of Fto, a young and innovative association that represents the entire supply chain of organized tourism and counts among its members many leading companies in the sector.



Gabriele graduated from the University of Pisa in Economics and began his career as a senior auditor at Arthur Andersen. He then spent 14 years at Autogrill Group, the multinational catering company based in Italy that operates airports, highways, and train stations, where he held the positions of CFO, sales director, and COO.

From 2013 to 2016 he took on two prestigious positions for the city of Milan as F&B manager of Expo Milan and project leader of the new Casa Milan headquarter. Other roles include CFO and board member of an Italian architectural facilities company and general manager of a start-up company operating as a travel agency guarantee fund in the Italian tourism market.

He recently contributed his support and experience gained in Milan to the preparatory work of the Russell Partnership Collection team, F&B strategic advisor for Expo 2020 Dubai. Gabriele's experience in key positions across various business sectors, from finance to operations, has enabled him to enhance his strategic insight into processes and skills.

Preferred Destination



**What treasures did journalists and bloggers from Romania discover in Northwest Bulgaria during a tourist tour?**

In May, shortly after one of the most significant holidays for all Eastern Orthodox Christians - Easter, the Ministry of Tourism of Bulgaria opened the doors to the magic of the Northwest of the country by organizing a fascinating promotional and sightseeing tour for Romanian journalists, influencers, and tour operators. The initiative is part of a large-scale advertising campaign by the Ministry, which includes the promotion of well-known as well as less popular

tourist sites and attractions in the country, among visitors to Bulgaria from all over the world. The purpose of the tour, which is also included in the Ministry's overall advertising campaign, is to increase foreigners' interest towards the tourism opportunities in Bulgaria, and in this case - to reveal the riches and unique attractions that the Northwest region offers to lovers of ecological, cultural, historical, urban, rural, gourmet, SPA & Wellness tourism. More information [here](#)



### **An Eco-Trip along the Bulgarian Black Sea coast**

The Bulgarian Black Sea coast is one of the most suitable destinations for ecological tourism. Here you can find some of the most beautiful and clean beaches and forests, home to many animals and plants that you can't encounter anywhere else, as well as some of the most developed medical centers in the country. View more [here](#)



### Events

#### **Online workshop 'Modernizing payment services and opening financial services data (PSD3)'**

The Commission proposed in June 2023 to revise the current Payment Services Directive (PSD2) which will become PSD3 and establish, in addition, a Payment Services Regulation (PSR). In

addition, it foresees a legislative framework for clear rights and obligations to manage customer data sharing. The current draft of the Payment Services Regulation (PSR) could impose significant additional requirements on the European travel industry, possibly requiring major changes to existing travel industry IT systems. Moreover, the draft also fails to account for the extensive use of solutions and services from non-EU countries that are present in our industry. ECTAA and DRV have organised an online workshop on 18 June, to review the challenges created by the proposal, the initiatives taken at national levels and identify a workplan. Minutes & further information will be send to the Members.

**Webinar ‘What’s on the cards for European tourism this summer?’**

ETOA is organising a webinar on 26 June 2024 from 11h-12h CEST looking at what summer 2024 is looking like for tourism to Europe: Where are visitors coming from, and where are they going? ForwardKeys will take a data-driven look at the latest trends, preferences and key events, with a focus on inbound and intra-European travel. Registrations are possible [here](#).

Save the Date

**26 June:** Webinar of ETOA: What’s on the cards for European tourism this summer? [registration](#)

**9 July (TBC) :** ECTAA - AITO meeting, a year of cooperation with Ukraine (online)

**16-17 September:** IATA PAPGJC, Geneva

**8-10 October:** World Aviation Festival, Amsterdam

**24-25 October:** 129th ECTAA semi-annual meeting, Sofia/Bulgaria

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