



ECTAA NEWSLETTER

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Mastercard



October, 2024

What's happening in Brussels

Passenger rights in focus of Parliament

ECTAA has been invited to speak at the public hearing on the passenger rights package organised by the European Parliament Committee on Transport and Tourism (TRAN) on 18 November. We will be intervening on the proposal on multimodal passenger rights. The latter is introducing rights for passengers in case of missed connections due to delay or cancellation of the first leg of a multimodal journey, unless the customer has been informed that he/she is purchasing separate tickets for the journey. It also clarifies the refund rules when a travel intermediary is involved in the selling multimodal journeys. ECTAA advocates for realistic regulations that do not impose passenger rights obligations on intermediaries, who do not have any control over the operation of the transport services part of the multimodal journeys – see position paper [here](#).

Travelling without a passport or ID card will be possible in future!

The European Commission has adopted [legislative proposals](#) to introduce a common framework for the use of digital travel credentials and a new EU Digital Travel application. These digital travel credentials are essentially a digital version of the data stored on passports and identity cards, including facial images but not fingerprints. Travelers will be able to store these credentials on their mobile phones, making travel more convenient. This will make border checks faster, if travellers submit their credentials in advance. It will reduce waiting times at airports and borders.

The EU Digital Travel app will be available for all EU and non-EU citizens with a biometric passport or EU identity card travelling to or from the Schengen Area, but not before 2030.

Commission proposes an EU Flight Emission Label

The European Commission launched a [public consultation](#) on a proposal to create an 'EU Flight Emissions Label'. The draft regulation aims to provide passengers with reliable and harmonised environmental information, according to the Commission. When booking online, passengers will be able to consult standardised data on the carbon footprint of flights within the European

Union. The consultation is open until 22 October. Once finalised, the system should be available for voluntary use by airlines from 2025.

European Court rules on parity clauses of Booking.com

Initially, hotels were restricted from offering lower prices on their own channels due to a "wide parity" clause, but since 2015, this has been limited to their own sales channels. German courts have ruled that these price parity clauses violate EU competition law, a view supported by the German Federal Cartel Office. The Amsterdam District Court has referred questions to the Court of Justice regarding the legality of these clauses under EU competition rules. The Court acknowledged that while Booking.com enhances competition by offering consumers a wide range of options, it remains unclear whether the price parity clauses are necessary or proportionate for its business model. Both wide and narrow parity clauses could potentially stifle competition and disadvantage smaller platforms, raising concerns about their economic viability. The judgment is available [here](#).



Commission launches dedicated website to support the sustainable and digital transition of tourism

In the frame of the Transition Pathway for Tourism, which is a plan jointly created with actors of the tourism ecosystem detailing key actions, targets and conditions to achieve the green and digital transitions and long-term resilience of the sector, the Commission has launched a [dedicated platform](#) providing access to information and promoting collaboration among industry leaders, public authorities, and other key stakeholders to support the transition plans. The platform provides information such as pledges, best practices, projects, including SME funding opportunities, as well as learning resources and event notifications.

Adapted ECTAA position on passenger rights

ECTAA has slightly reworked its position on the enforcement of unimodal passenger rights and the multimodal passenger rights to reflect that the Regulations should also apply to tickets that are part of a package and that refunds should be made to the original form of payment (thus the package organizer). In light of the upcoming Working Party on Transport meeting on 15 October, the secretariat shared a model letter for members to send to their national ministries together with the amended position including the aspects from the latest Presidency compromise proposal of 8 October. The Working Party on Transport will discuss the "Proposal for a Regulation amending Regulations (EC) No 261/2004, (EC) No 1107/2006, (EU) No 1177/20, (EU) No 181/2011 and (EU) 2021/782 as regards enforcement of passenger rights in the Union".

The following issues are most important:

1. Right to reimbursement also for tickets that form part of a package. The clarification in article 8a that "the air carrier shall reimburse the intermediary ...through the same

payment method which was used at the time of booking”, there are no obstacles for air carriers to reimburse package tickets as well under the air passenger rights regulation while preventing fraud, illegitimate refunds etc.

2. Reimbursement when the ticket was booked through an intermediary – the process is unrealistic and the timelines do not correspond with payment flows and processes between airlines and intermediaries
3. Intermediaries should receive the same information from airlines as the passenger. Should intermediaries have systems in place to inform their customers on all relevant changes, they should not have to share the contact details of passenger. There are further practical problems around passenger vs. customer contact details

The amended position was also shared with the transport attachés of the permanent representations of all member states.

Spanish Royal Decree – one last postponement until 2 December

Thanks to the action of ECTAA members at national, Spanish and EU level, the application of the Royal Decree has been postponed until 2 December. However, the Ministry of the Interior held a meeting with representatives of the Spanish travel industry on 4 October, during which it noted that the Decree would be implemented on 2 December and that no further postponement would be granted. The Ministry confirmed that no additional data would be collected by the subjects of the decree in addition to the data already collected (in particular for hotels and car rental companies). It seems increasingly likely that the decree will only apply to companies established in Spain (at least for the time being). Moreover, the platform is only accessible to Spanish companies (the e id system is only available to Spanish residents). So far, the travel industry has only received verbal information and nothing in writing. The Ministry of the Interior has confirmed that no legal instrument will be adopted by 2 December, so the decree will be fully applicable and most of ECTAA's questions will remain unanswered on 2 December. ECTAA, together with other EU partners, is in the process of further engaging with the Spanish authorities and the European Committee in order to obtain better guarantees and a more proportionate text in the end.

EP event – On track for much more than a market

On 1 October there was an event in the European Parliament “on track for much more than a market” hosted by MEP and EPP Vice-President Massimiliano Salini. The event was organized by the Jacques Delors Institute and CER. Participating were several MEPs of the TRAN Committee from the different political groups (EPP, S&D, Renew, Green, ECR and P/E). Enrico Letta made a short presentation of his report “Much more than a Market” and made connections with rail issues. Two panel discussions took place on “Rail as a key integration tool for national markets” and “Rail for better mobility in a greener, strategically autonomous Europe”.

There was a general consensus that rail needs high investments to play a more important role. Especially high speed rail connections should be more supported and funded. A borderless Europe is far from reality in rail. To achieve more, “collaboration is key and anything can be achieved with all actors on board”. Regretted by many was also the lack of competitiveness in rail. Practical challenges remain lacking interoperability and digitalization. Europe as a densely populated continent has an enormous potential for rail.

Facial recognition checks by Ryanair prompt EU data protection inquiry

Ryanair customers booking flights with the low-cost airline may be subjected to facial recognition checks. The Irish Data Protection Commission (DPC) is investigating whether this practice constitutes harassment and possibly violates EU law. The DPC has reported receiving numerous complaints from customers regarding Ryanair's policies. Passengers who booked through intermediaries, rather than directly on the airline's website, were later required to confirm their identity again, including through facial recognition, according to DPC Chief Graham Doyle. The inquiry will assess whether such procedures align with European Union and European Economic Area (EEA) data protection laws. There are concerns that this may breach the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR). The investigation will not only focus on Ireland but will also have a cross-border scope.



Sustainability Corner

Carbon calculator Klimalink is going live and ready for use

[Klimalink](#) is a one-stop platform which displays the carbon footprint of individual travel components and entire trips at the point of sale. Arrival and departure by flight, bus and train can be compared, as well as different accommodation and hire car categories and will at a later date also provide data for cruises and activities. The added value lies in the availability of all relevant emissions calculations in a single data source (one-stop platform). From here, the emissions data is transferred via interfaces to the common information and booking systems in the travel industry. Tour operators can use the emission data to put together more climate-friendly holidays and sales staff can provide targeted advice on more climate-friendly options. The methodology for the carbon calculation was elaborated by Futouris in cooperation with academia and the industry and has is complying with ISO 14083 for quantifying and reporting greenhouse gas emissions in the transport sector. This project has been supported by the travel trade associations DRV (Germany), ÖRV (Austria), SRV (Switzerland) and ULAV (Luxembourg) The Klimalink is now available for free use [here](#).



UN Tourism launches ESG framework for tourism businesses

In partnership with the University of Oxford SDG Impact Lab and with support of easyJet holidays, UN Tourism is working on the development of a harmonised Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) Framework tailored specifically for the tourism sector. A first concept was presented at an inaugural event of the ESG Framework for Tourism Businesses on 1 October in Madrid, bringing together worldwide experts in the ESG space. Attendees debated key aspects of the Framework and proposed critical items for future action. Industry representatives stressed the need to keep it simple and look at data points of existing tourism sustainability certification schemes and upcoming EU legislation on sustainability reporting requirements. Moving forward, UN Tourism will set up an ESG Advisory Panel to further develop the framework, which should then be tested in 2025 and 2026.

Publications

A4E Study criticizes high market concentration and poor consumer practices amongst OTAs

A new [study](#) by Airlines for Europe (A4E) highlights significant market concentration in the travel intermediary sector, suggesting that consumers may suffer from unfair practices. Conducted by Syntesia, the report indicates a shift in airline ticket distribution, with Online Travel Agents (OTAs) and Meta Search Engines gaining ground over traditional Global Distribution Systems (GDS). Key findings from the study include:

- OTA prices for identical itineraries were, on average, nearly 25% higher than booking directly with airlines
- Consumers face hidden mark-ups and charges, often falsely attributed to airlines
- Services offered for free by airlines, such as SMS updates, are sold by OTAs at a cost
- Two OTAs control 50% of the European market for OTAs
- Three companies dominate 95% of the GDS market, with one controlling 60–65% in Western Europe

A4E is advocating that OTAs should have similar consumer protection obligations as airlines, notably in the context of the recently adopted passenger rights proposals.

ETC - International travellers eye Europe for cultural immersion, but cost remains a key barrier

The [Long-Haul Travel Barometer](#) 3/2024 of the European Travel Commission (ETC), which explores the sentiment and preferences of travellers regarding long-haul travel to Europe, reveals that 58% of respondents plan to travel long-haul in the last four months of the year,

with 40% anticipating a visit to Europe. This represents a 4% decline compared to the same period last year. Affordability is a primary barrier to travel to Europe. Safety, iconic landmarks and quality infrastructure are the top three criteria for selecting a European holiday destination. Travellers are increasingly drawn to authentic travel experiences as they seek a deeper understanding of the local culture.



CER - Rail Sector works on seamless rail ticketing

The Community of European Railway and Infrastructure Companies (CER) has released its [fourth progress report](#) on the [Ticketing Roadmap](#), aimed at enhancing passenger experiences by 2025 and 2030. Railways are extending booking horizons and taking on commercial risks to improve international ticketing, though further focus is needed on harmonizing ticketing conditions. A new real-time information platform is being developed, expected to launch in early 2025, which will enhance access to information across the European rail network. The rollout of the Open Sales & Distribution Model (OSDM), elaborated by railway undertakings and ticket vendors, in Sweden shows progress in standardizing ticket distribution across transport modes. For reminder, ECTAA is participating in a number of rail stakeholder fora to push for more efficient and less costly rail distribution.

ERIKS LINGEBERZINS

Managing Director Baltic Vision & Chairman ALTA

Eriks Lingeberzins is the Managing Director and Member of the Board at Balticvision Riga Ltd., an incoming tour operator in Riga, Latvia. Since September 2011, he has managed daily operations, financial control, customer and supplier relations, and coordinated services between the head office and local representatives in Poland. Since April 2019, Lingeberzins has been the Dean of Faculty at Turiba University, overseeing curriculum development and ensuring alignment with industry standards. He represents the faculty in professional industry institutions and supervises the departments of hospitality and languages.

In the tourism sector, he serves as Chairman of the Board at ALTA (Association of Latvian Travel Agents and Operators), focusing on tourism policies and collaboration with universities. At Turiba University, he is also an Assistant Professor and Director of the Strategic Tourism Management program, leading the Tourism Research Center.

Lingeberzins' previous roles include Travel Consultant and Sales Department Manager at Via Hansa Tours Ltd. He holds a Doctorate in Economics from Turiba University, specializing in tourism enterprise management, and a Master's degree in Social Sciences from Riga Stradins University.



ECTAA Insights

ECTAA 129th Semi-Annual Meeting on Your Mobile Phone!

We have the pleasure to announce that ECTAA partnered with Vamoos, the app to get all your information on the event on your mobile phone. Although fantastic at adapting for events, Vamoos is the app for travel companies, transforming the way their clients explore the world. They've seen fantastic results from their clients including Explore Worldwide, [Black Tomato](#) and Scott Dunn. They use Vamoos to deliver powerful itineraries and documents, improve client communication and boost brand visibility. Use a QR code (Android or Apple) and login with:

User ID: ECTAA

Passcode: bmsofia

Google Play



Apple store



Events

ECTIAA

SAVE THE DATE!

Join us on our
**TRAVEL PROTECTION
SUMMIT**

19 February 2025
At the Hilton Bruxelles Grand Place

MARK YOUR CALENDARS

Greek Tourism Exhibition Philoxenia – Hotelia is looking for hosted buyers

The European Travel Commission is organising webinar on "European Tourism – Trends and Prospects" for Q3 2024 on 16 October at 14h30 CEST, which will feature insights from Tourism Economics on the latest trends in the tourism sector across Europe, focusing on issues such as overtourism. Amadeus will also present current aviation trends affecting inbound tourism and air traffic performance during the summer months. Registration is available [here](#).

Webinar - Weathering the storm: the evolution of European tourism in a changing climate

The "Together for EU Tourism" (T4T) Commission expert group is hosting a webinar titled "Weathering the storm: the evolution of European tourism in a changing climate" on October 18, 2024, from 10:00 to 12:30 CET. The webinar aims to raise awareness about the impacts of climate change on European tourism, showcasing affected destinations and sharing effective adaptation strategies. Discussion topics will include trends and climate hotspots in Europe, as well as best practices and challenges faced by various destinations due to climate-related issues like global warming and water scarcity. The event is open to all interested participants, encouraging widespread [registration](#) and sharing of the link within networks. A draft agenda is available in the registration link. For reminder, ECTAA is part of the T4T expert group on sustainable tourism.

Invitation to WTAAA Global Gathering 8-11 November, Greece

WTAAA and HATTA (the Hellenic Association of Travel and Tourist Agencies) will jointly hold on 8 November the first WTAAA open session for national members of regional associations of WTAAA (i.e. ECTAA in Europe, Folatur in South America and FATA in Asia). This open session aims at sharing information on new tools improving destination knowledge developed in Greece in the last years, as well as at providing unbeatable networking opportunities with partner organisations from around the world. The open session will be followed by a post-meeting tour in Crete from Saturday 9 November to Monday 11 November. HATTA has kindly decided to host guests, which are members of ECTAA, FOLATUR and FATA for their whole stay in Greece. For more information, please consult the programme . To register please send an email to secretariat@ectaa.org

Preferred Destination

The logo for ECTAA (European Commission of Travel Agencies) features the letters 'ECTAA' in a bold, blue, sans-serif font. A yellow swoosh underline is positioned beneath the 'E' and 'C'.

Preferred
Destination

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What makes Bulgaria a popular wine destination in Europe?

Bulgaria is one of the most popular wine destinations in Europe and with good reason. Wine tourism in the country emerged in the 1990s. At that time, it sounded exotic, elegant, and luxurious. Nowadays, however, day visits as well as weekend breaks to some of Bulgaria's wineries are increasingly popular among Bulgarians and visitors alike. This is due to the centuries-old traditions in wine production, as well as the excellent modern conditions for wine tourism that Bulgaria offers throughout the year. The autumn period is particularly attractive and if you are oenophiles, or simply like to have a glass of wine in the evening, you should not delay in scheduling your holiday and plan a visit to a Bulgarian winery. This is the perfect season for wine tourism in the country - the countryside is covered by a canopy of vibrant colours, the grape harvest is in full swing, and the new vintage will turn into flavourful wine or brandy. Imagine it raining outside and you are sitting with your loved ones enjoying a fragrant aged wine, settled in a cosy setting with an authentic atmosphere - sounds almost idyllic, doesn't it? [Read more](#)



Save the Date

24-25 October 2024 129th Semi-Annual meeting in Sofia
8 November 2024 1st WTAAA Global Meeting Open Session in Athens
18 February 2025 ECTAA Committees Meeting, Brussels
19 February 2025 ECTAA Travel Protection Summit in Brussels

Let's unlock Europe's travel potential
Click below and read our 2024-2029 manifesto

ECTAA

Let's **unlock**
Europe's travel potential.

MANIFESTO

2024

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