

..in five minutes..

22 December 2011

PIC.TURISM – does this name ring a bell? Not yet...but you will hear a lot about it in the coming months.

PIC.TURISM stands for *Platform for ICT in Tourism*. It is a service contract that has been awarded by the EU to ECTAA, together with four other industry and research partners, for the creation of a common architecture of business processes and data exchange models. The project submitted by ECTAA and its partners was selected among a number of competing proposals and is a clear recognition of the role of ECTAA as one of the major European trade organizations in Brussels.

In a nutshell, the main idea behind the project is to stimulate the use of ICT along the tourism value chain, facilitating the interoperability among different ICT solutions and systems. For the retail sector this means a concrete opportunity to expand and differentiate its offer to customers in an increasingly segmented market whilst improving good commercial relationships among tourism service suppliers. The platform will also include a secured B2B payment system between suppliers and distributors.

The project will start in January 2012 and last 30 months. The Members and all tourism enterprises will be closely associated and actively involved from the very beginning in the project. They will also be able to test directly the proposed architecture and provide feedback during the various pilot phases.

With Christmas at our doorstep, I take the opportunity on behalf of all my colleagues at the ECTAA Secretariat to wish you and your families a Merry Christmas and a very Happy and Prosperous New Year 2012!

Michel de Blust

IATA affairs: Agents have rights concerning their identification in PaxIS and similar products

In the frame of ECTAA/GEFTA's complaint against IATA, the European Commission addressed a Statement of Objections to IATA on 18 November 2011 concerning agents' identification in PaxIS and similar products. If IATA attempts to contact accredited agents to obtain their agreement to be identified in its intelligence and statistics products, accredited agents should have the right to refuse this. Members are invited to circulate to IATA accredited agents an information note aiming at raising agents' awareness about their rights.

For more details, see e-mail sent on 22 December 2011

IATA affairs: Recruitment process for IATA Travel Agency Commissioner opened

IATA, UFTAA, WTAAA and ECTAA are currently recruiting for a Travel Agency Commissioner responsible for Europe, Africa, Middle East. Interested candidates should have experience in the travel industry, possess a good knowledge of the IATA Passenger Agency Programme, be fluent in English and another language, have a legal background or experience gained in dispute resolution. Applications can be sent to jobs@wtaaa.org by 15 January 2012.

For more details, see e-mail sent on 14 December 2011

Transport: More alignment of passenger rights across modes of transport

The Commission has published a Communication on passenger rights in all modes of transport, which summarises the rights and principles which apply to all modes. It highlights the need to move in the

future towards a multi-modal approach in this area and therefore to work towards greater convergence between passenger rights for the different modes of transport.

For more details, see e-mail sent on 21 December 2011 or consult the [Communication](#)

Air transport: Tell us how the passenger rights' rules should be changed

In parallel to the Communication on passenger rights (see above), the Commission has launched a major online public consultation which aims to gather stakeholders' views on possible shortcomings of the Regulation 261/2004, and on the options to improve its application, either via non-legislative measures or via a revision of the Regulation. It covers also other issues such as loss or damage of luggage, advance rescheduling, 'no show' policy (sequential use of coupons), refund of taxes, fees and charges, etc. Members will be asked for contributions soon.

For more details, see e-mail sent on 21 December 2011 or go to the [public consultation](#)

Air transport: EP likely to demand more rights

The EP will issue an own initiative report on established air passenger rights. The report presented on 19 December in the TRAN Committee contains a number of points raised by ECTAA on price transparency, sequential use of coupons, airline insolvency. However, it also contains proposals that may make Regulation 261/2004 more burdensome on airlines, tour operators and travel agents. Members have been invited to send a model letter with amendment proposals to their MEPs before the 12th of January 2012.

For more details, see e-mail sent on 23 December 2011 or consult the [EP draft report](#)

Air transport: The blacklist of unsafe carriers has been updated

The EU has updated its blacklist of carriers found to be unsafe from operating in European airspace. It is reminded that travel agents and tour operators have the obligation to bring this list to the attention of the customer.

For more details, see e-mail sent on 7 December 2011 or consult the [EU blacklist](#)

Air transport: Low level of compliance with air ticket price transparency rules

A recently completed EU study shows that there is a low level of compliance of investigated airlines' and travel agents' websites with the EU rules on air ticket price transparency. The study concludes that airlines performed slightly better than travel agents, but does not take into consideration that agents depend on the information and instructions provided by airlines. The study makes recommendations for policy options, such as better dealing with *de facto* unavoidable charges, having the initial price include additional services bought by the majority of passengers, and possibly making airlines disclose information on ancillary charges to third parties.

For more details, see e-mail sent on 15 November 2011

Air transport: Minimum quality standards introduced for groundhandling services

The Commission has adopted an 'airport package' on 1 December, which includes a Regulation proposal revising the existing groundhandling rules. The Regulation proposal introduces minimum quality standards for groundhandlers. Members have been invited to inform the Secretariat whether the proposals to enhance the overall quality of groundhandling services are sufficient to address the problems reported to tour operators.

For more details, see e-mail sent on 14 December 2011 or consult the [Regulation proposal](#)

Package Travel Directive: ECTAA continues its reflection on package travel Directive revision

ECTAA has met with the Cabinet of Commissioner Reding concerning the state of play of the revision of the Package Travel Directive. A proposal for revision is scheduled for the end of 2012. All options for revision remain open. ECTAA Members have decided to continue the reflection on the three options considered, namely maintain status quo, repeal the Directive or amend it. Members' contributions are welcome until 27 January 2012.

The European Parliament has commissioned a research study on the implementation of the Package Travel Directive.

For more details, see e-mail sent on 10 November and 21 December 2011

Insurance mediation: Commission receptive to simple declaration system for ancillary intermediation

The European Commission is not willing to maintain full exemptions for travel insurance mediation in the revised Directive on insurance mediation. However, it may consider ECTAA's proposal for a simple declaration system for ancillary intermediation in a separate chapter of the Directive, thereby avoiding that travel insurance intermediaries have to comply with all the requirements on professional indemnity insurance, complaints, redress, information, etc.

For more details, see e-mail sent on 18 November 2011

Directive on professional qualifications: EP calls for the reduction of the number of regulated professions

The EP considered excluding tourism from this general statement, but thanks to the intervention of ECTAA and its Members, this exclusion was omitted in the final vote of the EP Resolution on the implementation of the Professional Qualifications Directive. Another positive aspect is that the Resolution expresses support for exempting from a prior declaration requirement, service providers who provide their services exclusively to consumers escorted by them to other Member States. Tour guides are explicitly referred to as a profession that should be exempted.

For more details, see e-mail sent on 18 November 2011 or consult the [EP Resolution](#)

Destinations: Court has ruled against the introduction of the Maldivian Airport Departure Charge

The new airport departure charge of USD27 to be collected from all departing passengers from Malé airport (Ibrahim Nasir International airport), Maldives, on flights scheduled after the 1st January 2012 has been successfully challenged in Court, as it did not go through a legislative procedure. Less than 10 days before the introduction of the new charge, the Maldivian authorities have not communicated whether this airport departure tax will be collected or not. ECTAA is in contact with the Maldivian authorities.

Consular protection: Making the right of unrepresented EU citizens to consular protection clearer and more operational

This is one of the objectives of the recently adopted Directive proposal on consular protection, which lays down the cooperation and coordination measures necessary to facilitate consular protection for unrepresented EU citizens. Members can send their comments by the 18th of January 2012.

For more details, see e-mail sent on 20 December 2011 or consult the [Directive proposal](#)

Dispute settlement: Legislative proposals to make out of court dispute resolution easier for consumers

The European Commission has adopted two legislative proposals to ensure that all EU consumers can solve their problems without going to court, regardless of the kind of product or service purchased and regardless of where they bought it in the EU. A specific ADR entity in each retail sector is not foreseen. For online consumers, the Commission wants to create an EU-wide single online platform, which will allow solving contractual disputes entirely online within 30 days. Members have been invited to inform the Secretariat by 16 January 2012 whether these legislative proposals raise any major concerns.

For more details, see e-mail sent on 22 December 2011 or consult the proposals ([ADR](#) and [online dispute resolution](#))

Contract law: Common European Sales Law – what next for services?

A draft Regulation on a Common European Sales Law has been adopted and will apply to contracts for the sales of goods or for the supply of digital content. It will apply only if the parties agree to it

and only for cross-border contracts between a trader and a consumer or an SME. While this legislative proposal focuses on contracts for the sales of goods -not services-, it is an important development of EU contract law, which should be monitored.

For more details, see e-mail sent on 25 October 2011

Environment: Impact of EU sulphur Directive on cruises and cruise destinations

The EU has adopted a Directive proposal transposing the international rules on air emissions from ships into EU legislation. Amendments are included in the EP ENVI draft report, which go beyond the international rules and have a considerable impact on cruise ships. The Directive proposal will have a serious impact on cruise members as well as for the incoming cruise destinations in Europe. ECTAA will support the European Cruise Council in its lobbying activities.

For more details, see e-mail sent on 12 December 2011

VAT: 'VAT' is in the pipeline?

The Commission has published a Communication on the future EU VAT system, which sets out the principles of a modern VAT system and the priority actions. Among other, the Commission intends to review the VAT rules for passenger transport services (currently benefitting from exemptions for certain passenger transport services) and reduced VAT rates (currently eligible for hotel accommodation and passenger transport services). Other actions are envisaged as well.

For more details, see e-mail sent on 7 December 2011 or consult the [Communication](#)

Other News in Brief

- **Launching Conference of the Code of Practice on Environment Oriented Sustainability, "EOS CODE"** – Athens, 23 January 2012