

..in five minutes..

April-May 2014

A lot of changes are looming ahead as a new European Parliament has been elected and the European Commission term is coming to an end. The elections of the European Parliament on 23-25 May resulted in the victory of the EPP, the Center right party, but their advance vis-à-vis the European socialists has been slightly reduced. Another highlight of those elections were the important score of Eurosceptic parties, but their potential split into 3 different political groups may limit their influence. The results of the European Parliament elections will impact on the political course for the next five years, as they will not only determine the EU work as co-legislators but will also determine the orientation and composition of the new Commission President and the College of Commissioners. This is because each European political party has designated a candidate to the position of Commission's President. Now we will see if the European Council will appoint Jean Claude Juncker, designated by the EPP, or will choose an alternate candidate.

This means a lot of reshuffling of portfolios and new people in the European Parliament and Commission. This also means that ECTAA and its Members will have a lot of work on their hands to meet with the new European decision-makers in order to present them our industry and the main issues that need addressing.

Benoit Chantoin

Air transport: DOT publishes its ruling on New Distribution Capability (NDC)

On 21 May 2014, the US Department of Transportation tentatively approved the NDC. The Department's tentative approval includes several safeguards specifically designed to protect privacy, ensure competition and consumer choice, and make clear the voluntary nature of the standard and its availability to all airline industry participants.

Further information to be sent shortly

Air transport: The IATA Travel Agent's Handbook 2014 now available for download

The new editions of the IATA Travel Agent's Handbook, effective 1 June 2014, has been made available on the IATA website and can now be downloaded.

For further information, please see e-mail sent on 28 April 2014 or download the [Handbook](#)

Air transport: Report on the IATA PAPGJC 20, Geneva, 27 March 2014

At the PAPGJC meeting a number of issues were discussed, among other progress on the IATA New generation ISS (whose objective is to increase airlines' cash flow and increase agents' remittance frequencies), report on NDC and presentation by the Travel Agency Commissioners. ECTAA raised a number of issues including on BSP functionality, the increasing number of notification of irregularities and suspension of agents relating to purely administrative issues, refund of customers' money in case of airline bankruptcies.

For further information, please see e-mail sent on 9 April 2014

Air transport: Progress of air passenger rights Regulation proposal

The Council is making fast progress on the air passenger rights Regulation proposal. It is taking a balanced approach to ensure the protection of passenger rights while taking into consideration the cost and burdens for airlines.

For further information, please see e-mail sent on 10 April 2014

Air transport: Court to rule on price indication in GDSs

A new case is pending before the European Court of Justice, which will have to determine whether Article 23(1) of the Air Services Regulation 1008/2008 must be interpreted to mean (i) that the prices shown for the first time in the GDSs must be the final prices and (ii) that the final price to be paid must, in the context of a GDS, be indicated only for the air service specifically selected by the customer or for each air service shown.

For further information, please see e-mail sent on 2 April 2014 or consult or consult the case [C-573/13](#)

Air transport: Updated blacklist of unsafe carriers

The Commission has adopted an updated Community blacklist of unsafe airlines, which has come into effect on 12 April 2014. The updated EU blacklist includes all airlines certified in 20 states, for a total of 294 airlines fully banned from EU skies, as well as 10 airlines subject to operational restrictions.

For further information, please see e-mail sent on 10 April 2014 or consult the [updated blacklist](#)

Road transport: Free website on Urban Access Regulation Schemes

The Commission is co-funding a free website on Low Emission Zones in Europe, which aims to give all types of vehicles information on urban access regulation schemes, e.g. urban road and congestion charging, traffic limitations, any odd and even number plate schemes and the many different ZTL (limited traffic zones) among others. Members have been invited to respond to the questionnaire.

For further information, please see e-mail sent on 22 April 2014 or consult the [questionnaire](#)

Rail transport – Travel agents' input required in the rail distribution initiative, FSM

ECTAA urgently seeks additional rail distribution experts who can contribute to the Full Service Model initiative in order to take account of travel agents' needs in the distribution of rail tickets, notably in terms of after-sales processes, fulfilment and contractual obligations. This is a joint initiative of railways, travel agents and GDS aiming at making rail distribution more efficient.

For further information, please see e-mail sent on 2 April 2014 or read [press release](#) with further details on FSM

Consumer protection: EU Sweep of online travel websites are showing results

Last summer, national authorities researched 552 websites selling air travel and hotel accommodation, including websites of intermediaries, of which 69% were in breach of the European consumer protecting legislation. National enforcement authorities contacted these companies to correct the shortcomings. Now 61% of the websites examined are compliant with EU consumer legislation and work is ongoing.

For further information, please see e-mail sent on 30 April 2014 or consult Commission [press release](#)

Insurance Mediation: Council starting to discuss a common position

Under the proposed common position, intermediaries selling travel insurances on an ancillary basis are included within the scope of the directive. Intermediaries satisfying the criteria of article 4 (light regime) will be subject to a number of stringent requirements. Members have been encouraged to contact their governments to highlight the risk of travel agents stopping to sell travel insurance.

For further information, please see e-mails sent on 3 April and 16 May 2014

Visa: Proposal to make Schengen visa applications simpler and less burdensome

The Commission has adopted a package of proposals modifying the Schengen visa rules, with the aim of simplifying and shortening the visa application procedure and thus facilitating travel for legitimate travellers to Europe. ECTAA has been calling for the simplification of the visa rules for many years.

For further information, please see e-mails sent on 1 April and 5 May 2014 or consult the Commission's [press release](#)

Competition: Damage claims by victims of antitrust violations made easier

On 17 April 2014 the EU Parliament approved a Directive proposal which will help citizens and companies claim damages if they are victims of infringements of the EU antitrust rules, such as cartels and abuses of dominant market positions. The proposal is now sent to the EU Council of Ministers for final approval.

For further information, please see e-mail sent on 17 April 2014 or consult [Directive proposal](#)

Standards: Potential new ISO standards projects in the field of tourism

8 proposals for possible new standards have been proposed in the ISO Technical Committee on tourism and related services, ISO/TC 228. Following Members' consultation, ECTAA will reiterate its position that standards should ONLY be developed where they procure clear benefits for both businesses and customers.

For further information, please see e-mail sent on 23 April 2014

Tourism: Difficulties of non-EU tourists when visiting EU destinations

A study is being undertaken to identify the difficulties that non-EU tourists from a number of target countries (US, Canada, Russia, Brazil, Serbia, China and Switzerland) encounter when travelling to/within the EU and their needs for possible assistance. The study should assess whether the scope of the current European Consumer Centres could/should be extended to offer assistance to non-EU tourists coming to Europe and whether reciprocity can be ensured for EU tourists travelling there.

For further information, please see e-mail sent on 24 April 2014

Data protection: EU-US "Umbrella Agreement"

An "Umbrella Agreement" was reached following the US spying revelations and is the first official step to follow the negotiations on the EU – US Free Trade Agreement. The Agreement deals with a number of complex issues related to the data protection reform and the transfer of PNR.

For further information, please see e-mail sent on 14 May 2014

Data protection: ECoJ ruling on Internet search engine operator

The European Court has ruled that an internet search engine operator (e.g. Google) is responsible for the processing that it carries out of personal data which appear on web pages published by third parties. The Court stated that a data subject may successfully lobby the authorities to remove the relevant link from the list of search results, in cases where the operator refuses to do so.

For further information, please see e-mail sent on 14 May 2014 or consult the case [C-131/12](#)

Other News in Brief

- [UNWTO Tourism Barometer](#), April 2014
- [Optimising Tourist Spend in the Local Economy: Research Findings and Recommendations from Cyprus and Tenerife](#), April 2014, The Travel Foundation
- Delay compensation regimes: the impact upon leisure airlines and their customers, November 2013, available from ECTAA Secretariat
- [Holiday season: useful tips for a worry-free summer](#) (Commission press release outlining all legislation that assist you on your travels), May 2014

Calendar of ECTAA meetings

15 April 2014

Joint Legal and Tour Operators Committee, Brussels

14 May 2014

Destination and Sustainability Committee, Brussels

4-6 June 2014
24 June 2014
24 September 2014

ECTAA bi-annual meeting, the Azores
TOURISMLink Conference, Brussels
Fiscal Committee, Munich

EU consultations / ECTAA surveys

Results of questionnaire: Tour operator's liability and obligations for not providing a part of a service due to a Force Majeure event, sent on 10 April 2014

[EU Survey: Horizontal Standards for Services](#), open until 28 May 2014