

Emergency measures are needed to overcome the economic and social impact of COVID-19 pandemic on travel agents' and tour operators' community

Statement of the European Travel Agents' and Tour Operators' Social Partners

3 April 2020

The European social partners for the European travel agents and tour operators – ECTAA, the European Travel Agents' and Tour Operators' Association, and UNI Europa, the European Services Workers Union – are fully committed to sustaining and supporting European economic activities to the best of their abilities during this unprecedented pandemic crisis.

The unavoidable decisions to contain the covid-19 pandemic are severely restricting public life and bringing travel and tourism to an almost complete standstill. Considering that this is a crisis of yet unforeseen dimension since the beginning of the European integration, the social partners for European travel agents' and tour operators' community call on the European Commission to continue giving a strong signal to the European travel industry.

A rapid solution needs to be found to the massive cancellations of travel as result of negative travel advisories and closing of borders. The cancellation of trips is currently causing an exorbitant outflow of liquidity, which could lead to the insolvency of thousands of travel companies (tour operators and travel agencies) in the very near future.

All efforts need to be undertaken to help workers, enterprises, economic activities to survive the crisis, to be able to come back to their activities when the crisis ends, to keep workers in their jobs meanwhile, to protect from unemployment and loss of income, to alleviate financial losses and to prevent speculative phenomena leading to a consolidation of the market detrimental to SMEs.

Social Dialogue at all possible levels can provide a good context for finding suitable solutions for this exceptional situation and experience shows that it contributes to reaching the high-level buy-in needed for successful implementation.

Equally, we are calling on the European and national authorities to put forward urgent measures to avoid adverse liquidity effects on European businesses and households during the coming weeks.

While acknowledging the measures that have already been taken by European and national authorities to support the economy, the situation is continuously evolving. Thus ECTAA and UNI Europa call on the public authorities at both national and European level to stand ready to take further actions and use the necessary flexibility at their disposal to overcome the present difficulties.

The Social Partners notably call on:

- The Commission to coordinate the EU budget with the decision adopted by the ECB, the EIB, and national banks to guarantee credit access and financial support for enterprises, especially all types of SMEs, affected by the lockdown and emergency measures;
- The Commission to set-up the adequate legal and financial framework to the Member States providing financial and income support for workers and self-employed affected by unemployment or suspension from work;
- The Commission and Member States to establish an emergency fund for the travel supply chain allowing enough liquidity to be available, to help enterprises to cover the loss of incomes as well as to face their obligations vis-à-vis employees, customers and suppliers;
- The Commission and Member States to ensure that financial support reaches enterprises, especially all types of SMEs, and all workers, including the self-employed;
- Member States to involve national Social Partners in the designing as well as implementing of national measures



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ECTAA is the European umbrella organisation of travel agents and tour operators across Europe. Members are the national associations of 27 Member States of the European Union, as well as Switzerland and Norway. ECTAA represents some **70,000 travel agents and tour operators** in Europe, which sell transport, accommodation, leisure and other tourism services as well as combined products to leisure and business customers. Travel agents and tour operators generate an estimated **turnover of €170 billion** and they account for approximately **500.000 employees**.

UNI Europa is the European trade union federation for **7 million service workers**, representing **272 national trade unions** in **50 countries**, including: Commerce, Banking Insurance and Central Banks, Tourism Gaming, Graphical and Packaging, Hair and Beauty, Information and Communication Technology Services, Media, Entertainment and Arts, Postal Services and Logistics, Private Care and Social Insurance, Industrial Cleaning and Private Security, Professional Sport and Leisure, Professionals/Managers and Temporary Agency Workers