



THE EUROPEAN TRAVEL AGENTS'  
AND TOUR OPERATORS' ASSOCIATIONS

## PRESS RELEASE

### **ECTAA welcomes Tourism Ministers' strong support for a swift and effective recovery of tourism sector**

Recognising that tourism has been “badly hit” by the COVID-19 crisis, ECTAA is pleased to see that Tourism Ministers are eager to use the EU Recovery Fund for tourism. ECTAA also welcomes their support for a “harmonized solution” for refunding travel packages, including vouchers ([link](#)).

**Brussels, 27 April 2020.** The Croatian Presidency organised today an Informal Meeting of Tourism Ministers in attendance of the European Commission—as well as of the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO).

The European Travel Agents' and Tour Operators' Associations, ECTAA, strongly welcomes that Ministers took into account the importance of the tourism sector and highlighted that its recovery should be a top priority of the Commission's upcoming recovery plan. The sector has been particularly hit by the COVID-19 and the lack of liquidity is paralysing the entire tourism value chain, which is on the verge of collapse. A plan of unprecedented scale is therefore needed and the announcements from both the Ministers and Commissioner Thierry Breton are encouraging.

ECTAA also strongly echoes the Ministers' call for a harmonized solution for refunding travel packages, including vouchers. ECTAA recalls that the current Package Travel Directive is not fit for purpose to deal with the massive waves of cancellations witnessed since the generalised travel restrictions worldwide. Travel agents are running out of cash. The problem will soon be magnified when customers will start cancelling their summer holiday bookings if travel restrictions for popular leisure destinations are not lifted very soon. It is a race against time.

At the moment, the best way to ensure that all travellers will be refunded is through state aid, providing the wider travel ecosystem with much needed liquidity to the benefit of the consumer, or the possibility of using refundable vouchers that are—protected against the insolvency of the travel agent. In that case, a temporary change of the Package Travel Directive is required, as there are still a number of Member States that are hesitant about deviating from the letter of the law.

Said Pawel Niewiadomski, President of ECTAA: “Tourism being such an important sector for many European countries, we need a coordinated approach, mixing flexibility measures and injection of liquidity. It is a strong signal to the European Commission that the status quo prevailing for the past 6 weeks is not sustainable. Concrete actions must follow this call as soon as possible.”

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ECTAA regroups the national associations of travel agents and tour operators of 29 European countries and represents some 80.000 enterprises.

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