



May 2020

NEWSLETTER

Vouchers versus refunds: will the EU be able to deliver a more coordinated solution? Commissioners Reynders and Vaele have both spoken against removing rights to refunds if consumers prefer not to take vouchers. After intense pressure from all sectors of the travel and tourism industry, at time of writing (29.4.20) we understand that the Cabinet of EU Commission President, Ursula von der Leyen, has taken direct interest in this question.

Historically resistant to measures which may dilute consumer protection, EU institutions are nevertheless showing awareness that, in unprecedented times, temporary arrangements at EU level to permit a wider sharing of the financial strain may be justified, providing that the vouchers themselves are protected so consumers cannot ultimately lose out. 12 EU Member States have called for laws requiring refunds to be suspended in favour of a protected voucher scheme, as reported [here](#). For travel vouchers, there should be no discrimination between mode: air, road, rail, river or sea. Strong lobbying continues.

An overview of our policy activity can be found [here](#).

A new Marshall Plan for Europe?

ETOA joined another video conference with EU Commissioner Thierry Breton (pictured) last week on behalf of its partners in [NET](#). Fresh from discussion with EU Council President, Charles Michel and Commissioner Paolo Gentiloni, Breton was pushing for a fund of 10% or more of EU GDP; the largest sectoral recipient would be travel and tourism. This is welcome political recognition.



Keen to ensure the momentum would not be lost in technical discussions about financial mechanisms and regulatory tools, Breton's priority was to win approval for the overall proposal. If this level of funding were available, over €1.5 trillion, one question will be conditionality: how will this gigantic stimulus be used to support the twin pillars of EU policy: digitalisation, and the [European Green Deal](#)?

Buses and Borders: In conversation with Commissioner Valean, this week ETOA and partners had the chance to present industry needs for the transport sector. As speculation grows about how the internal Schengen border controls may be lifted as anticipated in the [Joint European Roadmap](#) the likelihood remains that we will see a piecemeal opening as neighbouring countries come to bilateral arrangements. Member State ministers [express caution](#) about both inbound and outbound tourism, and change to lockdown may be implemented at regional or provincial level, for example in [Spain](#). Meanwhile, the impact of social-distancing on collective transport was discussed. If city buses were required to impose 2m social distancing, perhaps nine or ten passengers could use them at any one time. This is not a practical option once cities start to exit lockdown and we see a return to a significant level of mass mobility. It is therefore essential that private coaches, which alleviate public transport and may support consumer confidence in allowing door-to-door travel, should not be subject to stricter regulation than public transport. This would be irrational and, in effect, make most group tourism impossible to deliver. Commissioner Valean fully recognised the issue. The encouragement of use of private transport on social distancing health grounds may, if such behavioural change becomes embedded, militate against chances of meeting carbon reduction and emissions targets.

Coronavirus (COVID-19)

ETOA - Insight, Action and Resources



[More](#)

The [COVID-19 resources page](#) is reviewed and updated regularly with notifications on which sections updated at the top of the page. Recent updates include:

- [ETOA document updated](#) summarising European countries temporary amendments to the application of the Package Travel Directive. Portugal has now legally approved the use of credit note vouchers.
- Details on [Bounce Back loan scheme](#) being launched on Monday 4 May for SMEs in United Kingdom.
- [Business rates relief guidance](#) from Local Government Association updated in United Kingdom which includes a joint letter from ETOA and other industry associations to the UK Chancellor for all leisure businesses to be eligible for relief such as tour operators, coach operators and DMOs.

ETOA Webinar

ETOA's previous webinars can be reviewed [here](#). Future events will include: destination and regional product development - how public and private sectors can collaborate to stimulate and support recovery; origin markets - what are operators and recent research telling us about travel intentions?

Upcoming webinar:

- 'Crisis and recovery - the USA FIT market' May 4, 2020 3:00 PM BST. Register [here](#).

ETOA's current lobbying priorities remain:

- Access to liquidity, especially for SMEs
- Resolution to cancellation and refund policies
- Better practical information to enable future planning
- Coordination in standards for food, accommodation, transport systems under any new public health guidelines



City Fair: 20th July, London

The opportunity for travel buyers and product developers to rethink their strategies, focus on new products ideas and stimulate the recovery

[Find out more](#)

Members Exclusive

We have just published ETOA's 2020 Member Directory on the website and a print copy will be delivered to all members. Meanwhile you can access it in our member resources area by clicking [here](#).



Member Features

ETOA member **RateGain** have produced a report entitled "[COVID-19 & The Hospitality Industry Worldwide](#)". Analysing recent hotel booking data on the RateGain platform, the report covers:

- Reservations & Cancellation Trends
- Actionable Steps to Protect Your Hotel Business
- The New Normal of Revenue Management

RateGain are pleased to share this report with ETOA members and stakeholders, and plan further studies in the near future.



Please check [our hub](#) for further member features, shortly to include news of a virtual cocktail-making party next week, hosted by the Guinness Storehouse in Dublin!