



## 14 Dec. 18 / Rome's Chaotic Coach Plan to Go Ahead

ETOA notes the decisions of the Consiglio di Stato published 14<sup>th</sup> December 2018.<sup>1</sup> The court declined to suspend Rome's new coach plan. This will be implemented on 1<sup>st</sup> January 2019. The court found there were insufficient grounds to overturn the lower court's original finding in favour of the Comune. In particular, it made reference to the primary importance of safeguarding the 'patrimonio urbano' as well as controlling both traffic and pollution. In this it appears to have accepted that the plan will be beneficial in at least some of these respects.

So much for legal argument. The practical consequences to the visitor economy are already dramatic. Instead of focusing on improved service, operators have been trying to find alternative accommodation located outside the central zone; coach transport providers have, at a stroke, had their businesses seriously compromised. The risk of further costly litigation and reputational damage is high.

Incredibly, with the platform through which operators must apply for permits due to go live on 17<sup>th</sup> December, as of 14<sup>th</sup> December we still do not know exactly what information must be provided. Administrations have a duty to provide information sufficient to comply with regulation, and a duty to provide an environment such that businesses may, with a reasonable level of confidence, make investment decisions and continue to serve their clients. The current situation, with all its costly and damaging distraction, was completely avoidable.

The city's stated intention is to reduce pollution, reduce congestion, and safeguard urban heritage. Given these objectives, there is a commensurate requirement for monitoring, enforcement and assessment. Traffic congestion in Rome is indeed severe; air quality is a primary health concern. ETOA's position remains that limiting access for low-emission tourist coaches will not improve either. It calls for urgent operational review of the plan, a grace period during which unintended contravention is certain given the last-minute and confusing nature of the plan's implementation, and very careful monitoring of actual impact to traffic, business and air quality that is attributable to the plan's operation.

The need to manage urban mobility within the context of a robust and properly resourced strategic plan has become ever more urgent. No-one disputes the desirability of Europe's cities becoming better places to live and visit through improved infrastructure, low-emission transport, and other innovations promoting smart, sustainable accessibility. These will provide an environment within which our urban heritage may be safeguarded and enjoyed for the foreseeable future, and urban communities may remain socially rich and distinctive.

This vision requires a vast amount of funding to turn it into reality, together with an ability to create and implement a plan which is sufficiently insulated from short-term political calculation. Politicians seeking support based on such a vision have a duty to explain how it may be achieved with the administrative tools and resources at their disposal.

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<sup>1</sup> N. 06054/2018 REG.PROV.CAU., N. 08764/2018 REG.RIC.; and N. 06062 /2018 REG.PROV.CAU., N. 08852/2018 REG.RIC.

Tim Fairhurst, Secretary General of Brussels-based ETOA said: *“Cities will be different in 10-20 years’ time. So will tourism. So will the nature of employment. That is their defining feature. The challenge is to manage change in a way that safeguards employment and a productive economy such that the necessary investment may be funded to bring about the conditions both local communities and their visitors will appreciate.”*

City administrations across Europe exert an increasing influence over the economy as urbanisation increases. With that comes an increasing responsibility to plan properly for the long-term. Decisions such as that made in Rome, which create severe disruption within a key economic sector due to short notice, insufficient consultation and extreme operational difficulty illustrate the gulf between current administrative capacity and society’s needs. A more creative and collaborative approach is necessary to evolve a practical way forward. ETOA is willing and able to play a constructive part in supporting destinations’ work to these ends.

**End.**

**14<sup>th</sup> December 2018**