

WRITTEN QUESTION E-0461/08
by Joseph Muscat (PSE)
to the Commission

Subject: IATA distribution programme

The International Air Transport Association (IATA) regulates the distribution of airline tickets through a network of accredited travel agents around the world. In practice, IATA enjoys a monopoly on centralised remittance and settlement of air ticket sales by travel agents to the 240 IATA airlines. This implies that travel agents need to participate in the IATA programme in order to have access to a major segment of the market for air transport distribution.

1. Is the European Commission aware that in the framework of the IATA programme, airlines collectively impose requirements on travel agents, who are excluded from the decision-making body?
2. With regard to EU competition law, does the Commission support that the rules of the IATA programme for the distribution of air tickets are binding only on travel agents, while airlines and IATA itself increasingly depart from those rules in practice?
3. With regard to the objective to promote a fair and free European business environment, can the Commission accept that the IATA distribution programme disproportionately increases the cost of distribution through travel agents, hence the final price paid by consumers?