



Package holiday protection: MEPs strike a deal with Council

[05-05-2015 - 16:26]

Travellers putting together their own package holidays online will get the same protection as those buying from traditional travel agents under a provisional deal struck by MEPs and Council negotiators on Tuesday. The deal also strengthens holidaymakers' rights, by enabling them to cancel a package deal contract if its price rises by more than 8%, get help if they encounter difficulties or get transport home if a tour operator goes bust.

"In long and difficult talks, we managed to strengthen the rights of travellers substantially, especially, and for the first time, with regard to online bookings, which are growing fast. At the same time, we also took account of the interests of small and medium-sized enterprises, said Internal Market rapporteur Birgit Collin-Langen (EPP; DE)".

The draft law on package travel would update the current EU rules on package holidays, which date back to 1990. Since then, the growth in cheap flights and internet sales has substantially changed how travellers plan and buy holidays.

The deal extends the definition of "package holidays" to include most types of travel arrangements made up of various elements, such as flights, hotel accommodation and car hire, so as to protect holidaymakers in the event of problems.

"Click-through" deals protected

MEPs included certain "click-through" online travel arrangements in the "package" definition to give online package deal buyers the same liability and insolvency protection as buyers of traditionally pre-arranged (travel agent) packages or combinations of services bought from a single sales outlet.

Additional services purchased from separate traders through linked online booking processes, where the travellers name, payment details and e-mail address are transferred between traders within 24 hours of the original sale being concluded, should be considered part of the original package.

More rights

MEPs secured the right for travellers to cancel a package deal contract if its price rises by more than 8% (The European Commission had proposed 10%).

Package organisers would have to obtain insolvency protection, so as to ensure that holidaymakers whose travel organiser goes bust while they are on a trip are refunded in full and repatriated.

If "unavoidable" and "unforeseen" events such as natural disasters or terrorist attacks make it impossible for traveller to return home on time, the organiser would have to pay for a stay of three nights, says the deal.

Press release

MEPs pushed hard to increase this number to five nights, but as member states refused, Parliament's negotiators instead managed to insert an additional clause specifying that the three nights rule applies unless another, future EU law entitles the traveller to more nights, so as not to preclude any further agreements on passenger rights.

Essential information

Before holidaymakers enter into any contractual commitments, organisers and retailers would have to make it clear that they are buying the package and tell them their rights, says the deal.

The information to be provided would always include the name of at least one party responsible for the performance of the package and an emergency number.

MEPs added a duty to give travellers approximate departure and return times and an indication of the type of any possible extra costs.

Holidaymakers would also get the right to cancel the package before it starts or to transfer it to another person.

Next steps

The provisionally-agreed text still needs to be formally approved by Parliament's Internal Market Committee and the Council Committee of Permanent Representatives.

Procedure: Co-decision, second reading

Further information

- Profile of the rapporteur Birgit Collin-Langen (EPP, DE):
http://www.europarl.europa.eu/meps/en/112788/BIRGIT_COLLIN-LANGEN_home.html
- Committee on the Internal Market and Consumer Protection:
<http://www.europarl.europa.eu/committees/en/imco/home.html>
- Procedure file:
[http://www.europarl.europa.eu/oeil/popups/ficheprocedure.do?reference=2013/0246\(COD\)&l=en](http://www.europarl.europa.eu/oeil/popups/ficheprocedure.do?reference=2013/0246(COD)&l=en)

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