

News release

Media Contact:

Sandy McLean, smclean@cambre-associates.com

+44 (0)7 786 601 771

ETTSA CALLS FOR BETTER PASSENGER PROTECTION

Brussels 4 March 2010: ETTSA (the European Technology & Travel Services Association) called on the European Commission to give increased financial protection and compensation rights to air passengers in its consultation submission on air passengers' rights and the liability of air carriers in the case of insolvency.

"We're pleased that the Commission is moving forward the debate on air passenger rights," commented Tom Parker, ETTSA's Secretary General. "Their detailed request for input shows that they are looking at the most urgent issues, including compensation for lost/damaged luggage, airline bankruptcies and transparency in booking terms and conditions."

The public consultation was sparked by increased complaints of the flying public and by a number of high-profile airline bankruptcies that left thousands of travellers stranded. On key issues, ETTSA said:

Airline bankruptcies – The incidence of airlines going bust has increased in recent years, resulting in thousands of stranded passengers and lost funds. While passengers who hold airline tickets that are part of a travel package maybe compensated by their tour operator or travel agent, those who purchase stand-alone tickets are not and have to bear the costs themselves.

ETTSA pointed out that airlines are still going bankrupt at an alarming rate, in spite of the increased requirements for financial fitness, and there is virtually no passenger protection in Europe. ETTSA called for airlines to be required to offer insurance which passengers could opt to buy, as well as EU harmonisation of rules on insolvency protection.

Mishandled luggage – The absence of specific national enforcement authorities means that passengers may not be able to enforce their rights against the airline they have travelled with. ETTSA would welcome the appointment of an independent body to handle such claims and ensure that passenger rights are upheld.

Other issues – ETTSA would also welcome any steps that would help to standardise and reduce the consumer confusion on how the airlines deal with various other issues. These include the processes and charges relating to checking in (whether on line or at the airport) and the size and weight of hand luggage.

"It looks like the Commission is determined to find a way to bring everyone up to a 'gold standard' of air travel business practices and customer relationship management," says Tom Parker. "Everyone in the air travel value chain stands to benefit."

###

ETTSA (the European Technology and Travel Services Association) was launched in 2009 to represent and promote the interests of travel distributors and Global Distribution Systems (GDS). Working with industry, policymakers, opinion formers, consumer groups and other relevant European stakeholders, the Brussels-based association encourages and supports fair competition and consumer choice in the travel distribution chain. Members include Amadeus, ebookers, Expedia, Opodo, Sabre (including its affiliate lastminute.com) and Travelport. Associate members include Booking.com and eDreams. www.etsa.eu