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ETTSA welcomes Commission push for rail ticketing standards – points to growth opportunities for European rail sector

Brussels, 6 May 2011 – The European Technology & Travel Services Association (ETTSA) applauds the publication of a new EU Regulation to facilitate pan-European rail travel by driving the implementation of standards for fare and timetable data as well as ticketing processes. ETTSA represents the leading global distribution systems as well as major online travel agents in Europe.

“The Commission’s initiative carries great promise,” says Tom Parker, Secretary General of ETTSA. “But this is only the beginning. Now we need to ensure that the Regulation is implemented in such a way that it really makes planning and booking of rail journeys easier for consumers, and allows travellers to easily compare the fares and offers of different rail operators.”

ETTSA, together with the Commission, the European Railway Agency, the railway operators and consumer representatives, will be involved in the implementation of the new rule until 2012.

“The global distribution systems have the power to distribute rail schedules and fares across Europe and provide consumers with unbiased comparison shopping. They also offer travellers the possibility of combining rail with air and other travel products. The Commission recognises this potential,” says Parker. “We played a similar role for the airline industry in the 1990s. Where previously air travel was a privilege for the few, it is now a commodity that is available to every EU citizen.”

“This is an opportunity that the rail sector needs to grasp with both hands. It is expected to grow passenger rail numbers and support environmentally-friendly transport in the EU,” Parker concludes. “Together, we can revolutionise the way consumers plan and book rail travel across Europe and at the same time, deliver benefits for the environment. “

ETTSA (the European Technology & 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 eDreams. ATPCO and OAG are Supporting Partners of ETTSA. www.etsa.eu