



Groupement des Unions Nationales des
Agences et Organismes de Voyages de
l'UE
Group of National Travel Agents' and
Tour Operators' Associations within the
EU



ASSOCIATIONS INTERNATIONALES SANS BUT LUCRATIF

Press release

The Commission has given IATA 4 months to complete negotiations with the European travel agents community to solve the competition concerns raised by the ECTAA/GEBTA complaint against IATA

ECTAA/GEBTA, IATA and DG Competition of the European Commission met on 18th October 2004 to take stock of the progress made on the concerns identified by the European Commission concerning the compliance of the IATA Passenger Agency Programme with Community competition law.

To recall, ECTAA and GEBTA filed a complaint with the European Commission against IATA and IATA member airlines in October 2002 for infringing European competition legislation. In response to the complaint the Commission identified 4 major concerns of competition relating to the criteria to become and remain an IATA accredited travel agent, the national system of BSPs, the ticketing restrictions and the restrictions in travel agents' access to fares. The Commission invited IATA to negotiate with the travel agents community on the revision of the accreditation criteria, while the other three concerns are dealt with by the Commission itself.

Significant progress has been made through negotiations between IATA and ECTAA/GEBTA on the accreditation criteria concerning staff and premises. However, the European Commission has invited the parties to go further, on aspects as important as giving agents the possibility of benefiting from a single accreditation for Europe, and to pursue the work undertaken to make accreditation requirements, notably for security and finances, more simple and proportional.

The Commission has also invited the parties to start negotiations on the possibility for agents to remit and settle through one single BSP, i.e. one local BSP elected by the agent or a European BSP.

Finally, the Commission is continuing to work on the issue of equal and non-discriminatory access to fares for travel agents and consumers throughout Europe.

The Commission has given the parties 4 months to complete negotiations on the outstanding issues by mid- February 2005, after which it will assess the final results in the framework of the complaint. "There are still numerous issues, which need to be addressed in the negotiations with IATA in the last four months, before all issues identified in our complaint are resolved in a satisfactory way" said Jean Brooke, Chairman of the Air Matters Committee of ECTAA/GEBTA. We are thus now in the final rounds of negotiations.

For more information, please contact the ECTAA/GEBTA Secretariat: Tel: +32 2 644 34 50, Fax: +32 2 644 24 21 or e-mail: secretariat@ectaa.org / gebta@gebta.org or consult our websites www.ectaa.org / www.gebta.org for more information on the ECTAA/GEBTA complaint filed in October 2002.