

Adina Vălean
Commissioner for Transport
European Commission
Rue de la Loi 200 / Wetstraat 200
1040 Brussels
Belgium

By email

BR1058950/SMR

Brussels, 14 février 2023

Re: Call to support EU tourism by facilitating pragmatic and safe driving and rest time rules for coach drivers

Dear Commissioner Vălean,

We – the International Road Transport Union (IRU), the European Travel Agents & Tour Operators in Europe Association (ECTAA), and the European Tourism Association (ETOA) – voice our strong support for an ambitious European Commission proposal on the specific driving and rest time rules for coach tourism drivers.

We are confident that this initiative of the European Commission will introduce specific driving and rest time rules in coach tourism, benefiting drivers, customers and transport operators alike.

The negotiations on Mobility Package 1, where a number of specific derogations for coach tourism drivers have been adopted by the European Parliament, resulted in a last-minute deal among legislators which focused mainly on goods transport leaving the passenger transport sector with only a "revision clause" and an obligation for the European Commission to assess and report to the Parliament and the Council on the need for more adequate rules for drivers involved in the occasional carriage of passengers.

Currently, coach tourism drivers are subject to the same rules regarding the organisation of their working and driving times, breaks and rest periods as truck drivers who transport goods. However, the activity of a coach tourism driver differs significantly from other modes of transport in terms of operational and driving patterns.

Indeed, coach tourism drivers make their journey at a "tourism pace", with more breaks for tourists, more stops along the way, and a combination of longer trips (at the start and end of long-distance tours) and shorter trips (during tours). Targeted and specific driving and rest time provisions for coach tourism would allow drivers to better react to situations during their trips while also significantly reducing stress generated by rules unfit for such transport.

Coach tourism was the sector the most severely and longest impacted by the pandemic. Travel restrictions and low demand for group tourism services due to Covid-19 restrictions have already bankrupted around 5-10% of coach tourism operators. Failure to support the sector via tailor-made derogations for coach and tourism could negatively impact Europe's entire occasional transport industry.

Europe is the world's number one tourist destination – including for group tourism by coach, which is one of the safest and most environmentally friendly way to move tourists in Europe. The sector deserves to be supported and encouraged, including by appropriate driving and rest time rules.

IRU, ECTAA and ETOA count on your invaluable support to facilitate the recovery of group tourism businesses by offering the sector the rules it needs to safely and sustainably move Europeans citizens and visitors across Europe.

For your convenience, **Annex 1** hereto includes the sector's precise driving and rest time rules modifications which are necessary for a good functioning coach tourism sector.



Raluca Marian

General Delegate to the EU, IRU



Tim Fairhurst

Secretary General, ETOA



Eric Dresin

Secretary General, ECTAA

IRU is the world road transport organisation and the voice of one million transport operators in the European Union, connecting societies with safe, efficient and green mobility and logistics.

ETOA is the trade association for tour operators and suppliers in European destinations, from global brands to local independent businesses. The membership includes tour and online operators, intermediaries and wholesalers, European tourist boards, hotels, attractions, technology companies, coach operators and other tourism and business service providers.

ECTAA is the European Travel Agents' and Tour Operators' Association. It represents some 70,000 travel agents and tour operators in Europe, which provide consultancy and sell transport, accommodation, leisure and other tourism services as well as combined products to leisure and business customers.