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European travellers set to retain right to choose between either reimbursement or a voucher

The European Commission published a recommendation to EU countries today, calling them to uphold travellers' rights to reimbursement for travel cancelled due to COVID-19 and proposing how to offer voluntary vouchers to consumers.

This came after a coordinated effort from [almost 20 EU countries](#) to try to temporarily amend the travellers rights legislations to suspend the right to a refund established in EU legislations and impose vouchers.

BEUC welcomes the Commission's call for EU countries to comply with EU legislation and quickly establish national schemes to ensure all 'COVID-19 travel vouchers'¹ are insolvency protected. This **protection is a pre-requisite to promoting vouchers and to make them a safe and reliable option for consumers.**

BEUC also supports the proposed criteria to make vouchers attractive to consumers. Of particular interest for consumers are conditions that vouchers are valid for 12 months and that they must be automatically reimbursed at the end of the validity period.

BEUC Director General Monique Goyens said: "This is good and important news. It is precisely in times of crisis such as these that travellers should be able to rely on strong consumer rights. Trying to make consumers bail out transport and travel companies through cheap credit in the form of vouchers is unacceptable: consumers are not banks. We are glad the European Commission agrees and shows the way.

"Amending the existing consumer right to reimbursement would have set a dangerous precedent. It would have had very bad, long-term consequences for consumers' confidence in the travel and tourism industry. It's vital that when Europeans need their consumer rights that these rights are granted.

"We urge the European Commission to ensure that EU countries that have introduced COVID-19 measures that impose vouchers instead of refunds to comply with EU law and the new recommendations as soon as possible.

"Consumer organisations now look forward to working together with governments and the travel industry to find swift solutions to implement the recommendations at national level. Such cooperation will enable both the industry and consumers to get through the crisis together in the best possible way."

ENDS

¹ Vouchers for package holidays, but also for stand-alone journeys (for air, rail, bus-coaches, and maritime transports) shall be insolvency protected.

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