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EU safely lands Package Travel reform, falls short on Product Safety

Two long-running and crucial EU consumer laws were on the agenda of a meeting of national government ministers in Brussels today.

All 28 EU countries have now signed off on the update of laws on package travel dating from 1990. When consumers buy holidays and travel arrangements online they will now be protected if they combine at least two services – such as the flight and a hotel booking or car rental – from the same operator or website.

On the downside, a 2-year impasse on product safety rules has not been overcome. The review remains blocked by disagreement between Member States on mandatory “made in” labelling for consumer products such as appliances, footwear and toys.

Monique Goyens, The European Consumer Organisation’s Director General, commented:

Package travel laws brought into digital age

“This overhaul increases the legal protections of passengers and holiday makers when they buy travel packages online. So when for example buying flights and clicking through to confirm a car hire or hotel stay, consumers will now have practical and monetary safeguards against any of these services not being up to scratch or not being delivered. It remains to be seen whether this new law will protect consumers effectively within a quickly developing market and among new business models.

“As Member States implement these EU laws, we call on them to use the leeway provided to grant the best protection for consumers. For example, we need a right of withdrawal when consumers have a bad surprise when booking a holiday during a sales expo and to avoid sanctioning those who don’t immediately inform companies when there is a problem with the quality of the service.”

Member States fail to agree on product safety reform

“It is highly unfortunate that Member States have failed to solve a two year stalemate on better product safety and market surveillance rules.

The bone of contention, mandatory “made in” labelling, does not improve product safety and is not needed to improve supply chain traceability. Thousands of dangerous products are flagged every year by the EU’s rapid warning system RAPEX. So to further delay adopting and implementing stronger product safety and market surveillance rules over this side issue is unjustifiable.”

ENDS

- More BEUC info on the Package Travel revision:
www.beuc.eu/consumer-rights-and-enforcement/package-travel
- European commission page on Package Travel revision:
http://ec.europa.eu/consumers/consumer_rights/travel/package/index_en.htm

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