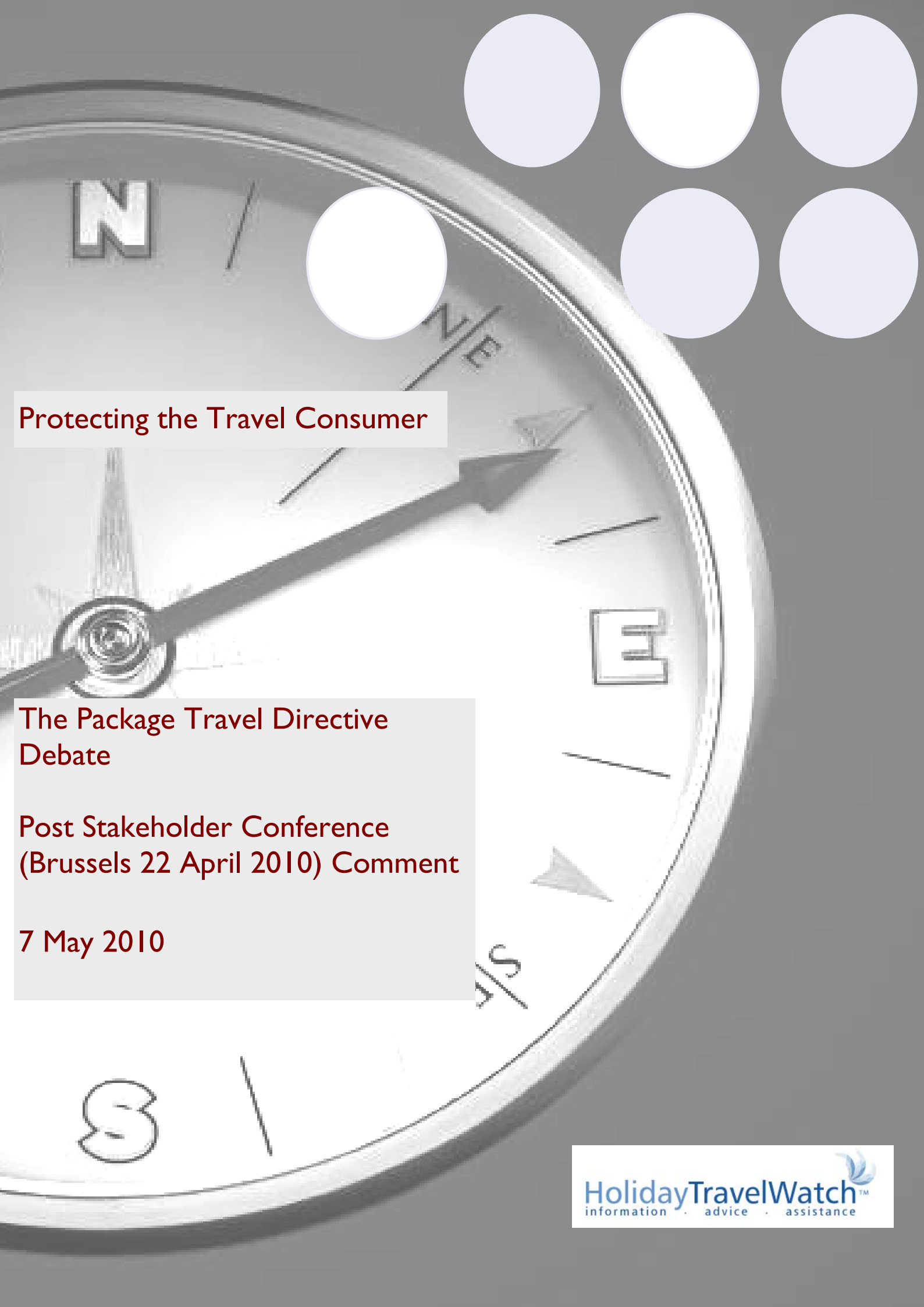


Protecting the Travel Consumer

# The Package Travel Directive Debate

## Post Stakeholder Conference (Brussels 22 April 2010) Comment

7 May 2010

HolidayTravelWatch™
information · advice · assistance

**Contents:**


| ITEM: | PAGE NUMBER |
|---|---|
| | |
| ACKNOWLEDGEMENT | 3 |
| | |
| INTRODUCTION TO HOLIDAYTRAVELWATCH | 4 |
| | |
| THE TWITTER DIARY | 5 to 11 |
| | |
| CONSUMER DETRIMENT – THE HOLIDAYMAKER EXPERIENCE CONTINUES! | 12 to 46 |
| | |
| THE EU COMMISSION POLICY DOCUMENT | 47 to 58 |
| | |
| Points of Agreement | 47 |
| | |
| Points of Disagreement | 47 to 50 |
| | |
| Post Conference Comment | 51 to 58 |
| | |
| CONCLUSION | 59 |
| | |

© HolidayTravelWatch 2010 – Publication of part or the whole of this report only with the express permission of HolidayTravelWatch. Permission is however extended to the EU Commission, EU Parliament, UK Parliament and UK Government Departments.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

It is 5 years since the death of our Founder, Brenda Wall. Her outstanding determination and courage, led to a new dialogue between the Consumer and The Travel Industry. Such dialogue has created a greater awareness of corporate behaviour and the need for Safety & Consumer Protections that benefit both the Consumer and The Travel Industry.

## INTRODUCTION TO HOLIDAYTRAVELWATCH

On 22 April 2010, The European Commission, along with Stakeholders, met to discuss the future format and direction of The Package Travel Directive. The meeting brought together Stakeholders from 27 Member States, from the Travel Industry, Consumer Groups and Government. The debate revealed passionate views both on the current and future Directive; it was ordered that Stakeholders should submit further evidence or views following that meeting. This report seeks to satisfy that request.

HolidayTravelWatch is British based consumers organisation founded in 1995. Through 15 years of operation, it has provided information, advice and assistance to over 190,000 holidaymakers, through its dedicated helpline and website. This should however be put into context with the 65,000,000 individual trips taken by British Citizens in 2005[1]. It suggests that HTW only receives a small proportion of all complaints, however, these holiday complaints tend to reflect the more serious element of contractual, illness and injury difficulties faced by the consumer.

The Organisation currently provides information and advice, assisting some 75% of all travel consumers who contact HTW, to find a resolution to their travel complaint. The remaining complainants are then given the opportunity to progress toward litigation, through travel law specialists. It is estimated that more than 80,000 holidaymakers have received such legal assistance, and have achieved in excess of £20,000,000 in compensation for their holiday complaints, holiday illness and injuries. This report will cite the relevant experience of this Organisation and the Travel Consumer, in support of its conclusions.

HolidayTravelWatch is entered onto the European Commission's Register of Interest Representatives. The Organisation's Registration Number is – 63992152960-12.

[1] Lord Treisman – FCO Reception March 2006

## THE TWITTER DIARY

It is ironic twist of fate that the meeting in Brussels was held at the height of the Volcano Travel Crisis. There were many invited delegates who could not make the journey because of travel difficulties; we managed to make the journey by sea and rail and in doing so, we met many holidaymakers en-route affected by the crisis.

As the author of this report made his journey to and from the conference, he maintained a diary through the Twitter facility, detailing the experiences of other holidaymakers. He found that whilst many were simply 'airline passengers' trying to get home, there were many who were 'traditional' package holidaymakers or 'so-called' DIY/Dynamic Package Holidaymakers suffering from the lack of assistance from either their tour company or airline. The diary illustrates the 'heroic' efforts of ordinary people to resolve their difficulties, but it also highlights the predicament of many who were unable to financially 'aid' themselves out of their situation.

The HolidayTravelWatch Twitter area can be found at this link – @HTWFrank

We have 'reversed' the normal method of reading posts in Twitter, for ease of reading within this report:

"I am glad to see that there is at last an EU wide impetus to try and deal with the Volcano Travel Crisis - my concern is for those....

holidaymakers who are 'trapped' abroad and may not have access to accommodation, funds etc. This is what, no matter how unpopular... 8:06 AM Apr 19th via web

this may be, why 261/2004 and the Package Travel Regulations are there - to protect Consumers and to ensure a high standard of care! 8:07 AM Apr 19th via web

Sitting in the ferry terminal at Portsmouth en route to Brussels - many hundreds of people here - so far the airline I was due to be with... 10:08 PM Apr 20th

Has cancelled my flight and reinstated it by text - I think for the moment it's just as well I am taking the slow route, after all I am.... 10:09 PM Apr 20th

To Brussels to talk about Travel Consumers rights - there will be an aftermath for Consumers and Industry alike - we shall comment soon! 10:11 PM Apr 20th

I think we must be cautious and not get too excited about some flights landing - mother nature will take her time before she finishes! 10:29 PM Apr 20th

I have been Reading some horror stories today about holidaymakers who thought that they had a Package Holiday - and apparently didn't! 10:31 PM Apr 20th

I am glad we are reviewing the Package Travel Directive - we need to work on 261/2004 and introduce some clear balances! 10:32 PM Apr 20th

It's now nearly 50 minutes and the foot passengers are still streaming out into the arrivals hall here at Portsmouth! 10:53 PM Apr 20th

It is interesting to hear all the holidaymakers stories and opinions. Some are completely wrong on their rights, some have turned up.... 11:30 PM Apr 20th

At airports only to find their flight is cancelled after being told it was on, some have endured bus rides of 25 hours, some are.... 11:31 PM Apr 20th

Frustrated because a certain train operators website/phone lines are not working - just ordinary people, working it out, not angry at all! 11:33 PM Apr 20th

The sea looks calm - I am watching the lights of old blighty slip away into the darkness - who will I meet on my journey tomorrow I wonder? 11:57 PM Apr 20th

Just heard of the loneliest stag do in history! One young man is in Majorca - on his own - because his fellow 'stags' didn't arrive!! 6:18 AM Apr 21st

Hearing first complaints of how some airline sites are not created in a way to make obtaining refunds easy - no information on rights! 6:26 AM Apr 21st

In amongst the beautiful Norman buildings epic tales of travel including one Croatian 20 hrs in - 20 to go - Eng, Itl, Fr, Ger dialects! 6:34 AM Apr 21st

Waiting for the train to Paris, the bells of Caen Cathedral are ringing, groups of young people are playing their guitars and.... 7:29 AM Apr 21st

Holidaymakers are trying to fathom out the ticket machines - the popular destination appears to be Paris, many were on last nights ferry 7:31 AM Apr 21st

The train to Paris is packed, many nationalities talking of trying to get home explain what English they know -many business people onboard 8:05 AM Apr 21st

Fatigue has set in with many of the travellers - there is gentle chat between different nationalities, some pouring over maps - next stage! 9:16 AM Apr 21st

As we near Paris I can see 6 vapour trails of high altitude planes! 9:21 AM Apr 21st

Paris Gare du Nord very busy, long queues for tickets, many many airline passengers - one Norwegian couple trying to get back to their... 11:22 AM Apr 21st

Car in Holland - left at airport, then a long journey by road to Norway, journey has taken several days - many trying to get tickets 11:23 AM Apr 21st

How's that for Consumer Service - the train broke down - we had to swop trains and it was announced in 5 languages, compensation available!! 12:37 PM Apr 21st

Met Dutch and English trying to get back from Spain for last 5 days. The English can't afford 1st class tickets, are making their way... 12:57 PM Apr 21st

Sorry phone lost signal - that group are on their way to Zeebrugge - they have no reservation for the ferry and appear to have been.... 2:43 PM Apr 21st

Told by the airline that they have 90 Euro a day which they can claim when they get back to the UK! I would like http://tl.gd/v7uk2 2:46 PM Apr 21st

It's been a long day and I have met some very interesting people along the way - I fear that there are many many more people... 6:50 PM Apr 21st

trying to find their way home. I see the Aviation Industry are riding a 'told you so' high - as one American said to me today, this is.... 6:51 PM Apr 21st

about safety and in their view everyone they met agrees! I shall continue this diary tomorrow and Friday - EU Commission tomorrow! 6:52 PM Apr 21st

Today is an important day for Travel Rights. I am attending a 'stakeholder' meeting in Brussels representing Consumer opinion... 7:29 AM Apr 22nd

It is ironic that we are here discussing this issue in the midst of one of the greatest travel crisis, and now the recriminations have... 7:30 AM Apr 22nd

started, with Ryanair apparently stating that they will not pay anything beyond the flight cost - whatever the arguments - and those... 7:31 AM Apr 22nd

should be made between Industry and Government, 261/2004 is the law - it is not a smorgasbord - I have every sympathy but Consumer have... 7:32 AM Apr 22nd

still suffering - Industry, Government, the EU should look to the Solidarity fund to resolve this issue - we will put forward new proposals! 7:33 AM Apr 22nd

The second session is about to start here in Brussels, there is much passion here about travel rights - a lot of anger about 261/2004 1:33 PM Apr 22nd

Overall a very interesting day! Many delegates do not understand why there is such a problem with travel consumer rights in the UK.... 7:49 PM Apr 22nd

This puzzlement is not matched by the British delegation, who naturally are industry centred - I described the fact that it was high time... 7:51 PM Apr 22nd

Airlines were brought into the financial protection schemes - I said that the topic & industry 'was the elephant in the room - would..... 7:53 PM Apr 22nd

We see their inclusion in the new consumer protections? I took the view that we would not, because they were a powerful lobby as events... 7:55 PM Apr 22nd

Have proved in the last few days! The representative from the European Low Fares group took exception to the fact that they were.... 7:56 PM Apr 22nd

Referred to as elephants and that the suggestion that they would seek to influence the Commission as a 'lobby group' - well that told me! 7:58 PM Apr 22nd

Let's be clear, the aviation industry is powerful, it is politically active, therefore they must lobby! I was not suggesting they were.... 7:59 PM Apr 22nd

Anything wrong, why shouldn't they be heard? But, they do carry a weight, a gravitas, beyond most Consumer Organisations - perhaps it's... 8:01 PM Apr 22nd

Time for the aviation industry not to be so sensitive - if Consumers have the perception that they are powerful, shouldn't their voices... 8:03 PM Apr 22nd

Be heard also? Today was about finding common ground to create fairness in holiday contracts - the time for adversarial exchange has passed! 8:05 PM Apr 22nd

Whilst I have been working at the Commission today, we have 40 calls alone from holidaymakers affected by the Volcano Travel Crisis.... 9:37 PM Apr 22nd

There are some very desperate stories but nothing quite like the 108 people we have heard of from the Dominican Republic - stranded.... 9:38 PM Apr 22nd

seemingly no assistance from the tour operator or airline - many apparently ill - many desperate - how about some action Travel Industry? 9:40 PM Apr 22nd

Travelling home tomorrow, I will keep the diary running and detail any 'stranded' souls I meet on the way - the aftermath has started! 9:41 PM Apr 22nd

Working on the train to Paris drafting a wash-up document after yesterday's conference. Despite all the politicking and outrage, there.... 7:31 AM Apr 23rd

Is a real opportunity to make progress on travel consumer rights! This morning we heard of one low cost airline attempting to get.... 7:33 AM Apr 23rd

Air passengers to sign a disclaimer for further claims if they were repatriated by the airline - if they didn't sign they couldn't be..... 7:35 AM Apr 23rd

Repatriated!! Apparently many signed the document - we hope to get hold of the document! So much for Consumer rights under 261/2004.... 7:37 AM Apr 23rd

We shall put forward our proposals on 261/2004 shortly! In the meantime the main station in Brussels was quieter than the other day... 7:39 AM Apr 23rd

We are 15 minutes from Paris I expect to encounter the return of the 'trapped' from that point onwards...I will tweat on who I meet... 7:40 AM Apr 23rd

The Gare du Nord is much quieter than the other day - I am now on the train to the port - many passengers with 'airline' labels non-Paris.. 9:02 AM Apr 23rd

Airports - clearly trying to get home, no doubt will pick up the stories as we go -we are receiving more calls on the Volcano Travel Crisis! 9:05 AM Apr 23rd

As we approached Paris you could see the planes stacked for landing - there did not appear to be queues for Eurostar tickets - hope helps! 9:09 AM Apr 23rd

Yesterday we were treated to a description of airlines as 'heroic'. I have just met some heroic holidaymakers and they have a story to tell! 12:16 PM Apr 23rd

This port is much quieter and you may be able to get back quicker - I have met other 'trapped' holidaymakers on the way here! 12:20 PM Apr 23rd

People here are very excited - the ferry has just arrived to take us back to England! I have as I said earlier I have met some real.... 1:58 PM Apr 23rd

'heroes' today - those being the British holidaymakers. Yesterday my journey to Brussels was described by the Commission as epic - it.... 2:00 PM Apr 23rd

Was nothing compared to the stories I have heard today. One family were 'trapped' in Ibiza. They purchased a package according to BIS... 2:01 PM Apr 23rd

Guidelines but were clearly denied assistance by both the tour operator and airline. They went to the airport to try and get an.... 2:03 PM Apr 23rd

Early flight out because the crisis was growing but were told by the airline rep not to queue if they did not have a flight that day... 2:04 PM Apr 23rd

He was accompanied by a security guard - others said the same thing was happening at railway stns. The family like others left the queue... 2:06 PM Apr 23rd

And later discovered that others who remained had in fact got on one of the last flights - could it be they wanted fresh paying passengers? 2:07 PM Apr 23rd

They tried to get assistance - none came! Other holidaymakers with families are 'trapped', some have no money or cards, some have flights... 2:09 PM Apr 23rd

Around 26/4 or later - this family decided to get a ferry to Barcelona - there is much rumour mongering but they decided to ignore the.... 2:10 PM Apr 23rd

Whenever they tried to get info none was forthcoming - people are trying to contact FCO Consular with no success - this family's holiday... 2:12 PM Apr 23rd

Did not start well - they booked their hotel only when they got there they were told they were going somewhere else - significant change??? 2:13 PM Apr 23rd

On a tour of the island they discovered that their original hotel and others was boarded up along with others - how many holidaymakers... 2:14 PM Apr 23rd

Are being sold holidays to Ibiza that do not exist? This family arrived in Barcelona only to encounter more problems and more rumours.... 2:16 PM Apr 23rd

They managed to get a train to Paris and a train to Caen and the ferry - they consider that they have been abandoned - I agree - it is.... 2:17 PM Apr 23rd

That those in resorts with return flights are not exactly cared for - they feel abandoned - this is what they are telling me - what about... 2:19 PM Apr 23rd

A few RAF transports to get them back or is this one of the 'cuts' - these are tax payers - help them? Another holidaymaker has had an... 2:21 PM Apr 23rd

'heroic' journey from Lisbon - she describes lengthy queues for one ticket office - she used hostels and train websites to get back..... 2:23 PM Apr 23rd

No assistance offered to her - these savvy holidaymakers - better than any travel agent - used the Internet to good use but said those.... 2:24 PM Apr 23rd

With young children did not stand a chance - some holidaymakers became 'trapped' intending only a 3 day holiday and only brought enough.... 2:25 PM Apr 23rd

Money for 3 days - those spoken to said they did not appreciate the lack of protection from so-called DIY holidays -just hearing of a..... 2:27 PM Apr 23rd

Nightmare journey from Naples - same story - flight cancelled nothing offered - no assistance! What was that word used at yesterday's.... 2:29 PM Apr 23rd

Conference before the 'Commission' - 'heroic' - it is humbling to hear the stories - where's the media when you need them? 2:31 PM Apr 23rd

Hearing more stories of holidaymakers some on packages some on so-called DIY holidays receiving no assistance - getting stuck in Milan... 3:06 PM Apr 23rd

No trains and having to find alternate routes - some have been travelling for 4 days - because of the Volcano Travel Crisis the people... 3:07 PM Apr 23rd

I am speaking to are spending an extra £300 each to get from their resorts home - some say more - apparently one family spent 1,900 Euro... 3:09 PM Apr 23rd

For a hire car from Barcelona to Calais! Many complain about the superinflated prices for trains, cars, hotels etc - business people... 3:11 PM Apr 23rd

Will say it's the demand of the Market that puts the price up - rot - many holidaymakers are angry about price hikes and state.... 3:12 PM Apr 23rd

Profiteering!! I have been told that there were few people on the ferry from Ibiza to Barcelona - why aren't airlines and tour companies... 3:13 PM Apr 23rd

Filling these ferries and budding them up to ALL the ports apart from Calais to get holidaymakers home? Holidaymakers here look exhausted... 3:15 PM Apr 23rd

That should have been bussing them up to the ports - autotext eh? I'll report more as I hear it! 3:16 PM Apr 23rd

People look tired, you can hear them telling their stories to each other, those I have spoken to believe there will be an aftermath... 9:14 PM Apr 23rd

This is the end of my journey, so many others have yet to return - we shall try to guide on the aftermath of 261/2004 & Package Holidays 9:16 PM Apr 23rd

## CONSUMER DETRIMENT – THE HOLIDAYMAKERS EXPERIENCE CONTINUES!

The Stakeholder meeting demonstrated a shortcoming with EU Consumer presentation; that being the experience of the ordinary holidaymaker. We have consistently presented such evidence to the EU Commission and UK Parliament and UK Government Departments. We considered that it would be appropriate to again present further evidence, in support of the position and arguments we made during our presentation at the Stakeholder Conference.

**The following detriment examples are written in the words of the holidaymakers who have contacted HTW.**

**We have not sought to change formatting, grammar or spelling except to make an issue clearly understood.**

**Names, organisations and sensitive or inappropriate opinions have been edited**.

**The complaints have been selected from the period 1 February 2010 to 5 May 2010.**

**We have only chosen a selection of the e mails received from this period. We have not included post or direct helpline commentaries.**

**We have chosen to edit the names of the companies, replacing them with a simple explanation as to the various companies' statuses.**

**We consider that the holidaymakers' comments on detriment are sufficiently powerful without the distraction of naming companies.**

**The examples were chosen at random. HTW experienced difficulty in isolating the complaints into one particular type of complaint or another**

**as many are multi-faceted and cover a range of contractual and personal injury complaints.**

**The complaints illustrated reflect typically the volume that we receive on a given subject matter, received through our various sources.**

**We have provided 124 case examples of Consumer Detriment.**

Stayed on short break at [NAME OF HOTEL], Harrogate. Had a slight chill but was given a room which we found out there were workmen working in the loft above us. Drilling went on from 3.00 pm to 4.00pm when we complained. The drilling stopped after staff had words with workmen, then the sawing started, with what appeared to be wood dropping on the loft floor. The noise stopped at 5.40 pm. During the night I awoke with a high temperature and coughing, I could not get my breath, my partner and I decided to leave. It was our first night! (EM – 2.2.10)

****

CONTRACTED NOVOVIRUS ON BOARD [NAME OF CRUISE SHIP] CRUISE 23 JAN TO 30 JAN GRAN CANARIAS TREATED WITH INJECTIONS FOR SICKNESS AND STOMACH CRAMPS CONFINED TO CABIN (EM – 2.2.10)

****

On August 20th 2009 myself and partner left the kids with family and went for a well deserved break-we wanted adventure see sights and to visit a place that part of my family descend from. we booked our flights independently and first choice was very very good. we booked our hotel through [NAME OF ONLINE ACCOMMODATION PROVIDER] (booking reference above). When we we arrived at [NAME OF HOTEL] beach resort we were happy, we arrived at night and it is a beautiful location but is run so very poorly, the staff were arrogant and rude and even accused my partner of not paying!. After looking around we realised that actually a few things were missing we took a look around expecting our resort to contain all the things as stated when we purchased it, the disco???? wasn't there the zoo??? wasn't there??.....where were the facilities we purchased? It was only when we returned home that we found an email from [NAME OF ONLINE ACCOMMODATION PROVIDER] it was sent whilst we were on the flight there to inform us that certain facilities were no longer available- but this was not the holiday we purchased and we had not been prewarned-although the building work looked as if it had been going on for some time. My partner and myself had been warned not to drink tap water and to only stick to soft drinks-so we stuck to the lemonade and coke from the bar dispensers, after 2 days i was very ill, literally not being able to leave the room as i was so poorly, i spoke to a few of the workers there who were intrigued with me as i am part egyptian (although i do not speak arabic). they told me i should under no circumstances be drinking the dispenser soft drinks as they had been watered down with tap water!!!!!! i was told to go to a shop (across the road)

and buy a can of soft drink and compare it with what they were serving on resort-we did this and the difference was immense, it tasted and looked completely different-unfortunately though this information came too late and by day 4 my partner was also extremely ill. we were told to visit the doctor across the road-we did this and although his bill was high we thought he may help, we were still ill and if anything the tablets we took made it worse! When we returned off holiday my partners doctor was amazed that we had been prescribed refluxes (which means if we were already suffering from this problem it could only make things worse) also the doctor at [NAME OF HOTEL] beach resort not only ripped us off but he didn't once ask me if i was pregnant-which unbeknown to me-i was!!!. i had been on these drugs which could have had very harmful effects-after a few weeks of returning home both mypartner and myself decided that me being so ill couldnt have been healthy and so we deliberated and opted for an abortion-just plainly on the fact that the drugs prescribed could have had major effects. We could not enjoy Sharm el sheikh or egypt and we didn't get to visit any of the sites-no pyramids, no camel rides, nothing!!!! all because [NAME OF HOTEL] beach resort made us so ill. The staff at this place are constantly hassling you,and so i decided i'd get a henna tattoo done just so they would stop hassling us (this didn't work) so my partner and myself designed the henna tattoo and although he claimed to be an artist the man administering the henna made such a bad job of it that we paid him and left disheartened further- My partner was at his wits end i just said "its okay it will fade-its henna-it will disappear soon enough" 4 months later.....i began to feel the bottom of my back itch-under closer inspection you could see the EXACT outline of that henna tattoo, it is RED and RAISED, i had another appointment with my doctor who has given me some cream but he also is worried that it may leave a permanent scar...all i have now is hope...also.i now have to have my liver checked as the henna that they obviously used on me is toxic and may have been absorbed into my liver, which can cause many problems the worst Cancer!!!! [NAME OF ONLINE ACCOMMODATION PROVIDER] ruined our holiday, it ruined our health and it may have scarred me for life. It has been months since our holiday and i am not one to usually complain but i did to [NAME OF ONLINE ACCOMMODATION PROVIDER] (the company who falsely adveryised our hotel to us) they then sent my partner an email saying that my claims had been false and that they had been in contact with the hotel- they basically told my partner that i was lying and that the hotel did in fact have a disco whilst we were there- BUT THERE WAS NOT...seriously i have never been more mortified than to find that we spent good money on that disgusting holiday- whilst we were there we saw a lady from trading standards who was disgusted with the place- not only did she find the food/drinks/lack of facilities disgusting but one of the members of staff tried to con her out of money but offering her a false currency echange. how dare these people get away with this!.! Either something is done about this or i am going to the press as i did not pay money out to these people for a very bad falsely advertised holiday and scars. (EM – 3.2.10)

****

The following morning at around 0915, we made our way to breakfast in the Main Restaurant and were seated at the far end of the large hall. My daughter stood up and walked across to the plate warmer to get a plate and return to the table, a distance of approximately 25 feet. On her return journey she slipped on the wet

floor directly in front of the drinks station, the drinks station is the one area for the whole restaurant to obtain drinks. It was clear that children and adults alike had filled glasses up to the brim, resulting in them spilling liquid from the glass on the way back to their tables, no trays are provided to carry drinks. At the time of the accident their were no warning signs up to make people aware of this hazard. Every meal time from that accident their were yellow warnings markers on the floor, apart from our last two days when again no signs on floor (pictures taken). My daughter fell backwards onto the concrete floor and the plate she had in her hand flew into the sky, resulting in a cut to her hand and severe jolt to her spine. No first aider was available and the local staff sat her up onto a chair, this was against my advice as I said she should not be moved with out the use of a spinal board. Due to the one and only lift being out of order due to the electrics blowing my daughter had to be pushed in a wheel chair around to the back of the complex before being transferred to a golf buggy in absolute discomfort to get to the upper level of the hotel reception, then back into a wheel chair to be taken to the hotel doctor. The hotel doctor gave her an injection for the pain and then we had to travel to the local hospital in the hotel mini van, a 40 minute drive. (EM – 3.3.10)

****

On Monday 1 February 2010 my wife and I traveled to Manchester airport to fly to Goa on[FLIGHT NUMBER]. At check in we were refused boarding because we had only returned from Goa on the 7 December 2009? and we were told that as there were not 2 clear months since our last visit we would not fly? How were we to know about the recent change of rules, no one informed us at any time, we already had a multiple entry visa valid until 25 April. We were directed to [AIRLINE SERVICE COMPANY] where [NAME] (supervisor) confirmed that we could not fly because she would lose her job, she then handed a copy of a memo (attached) from a [NAME] which was dated 27 Jan 2010, just 4 days before we were due to fly, we then went to the [NAME OF TOUR OPERATOR] Counter who again were not at all helpful claiming that the rule change was not their fault, as a consequence we have now lost over £3000!! Which I now need to recover, especially as I consider that I have done nothing wrong. I have to say that the treatment we received at the airport, from the Check in staff, AIRLINE SERVICE COMPANY], and [NAME OF TOUR OPERATOR] was of complete indifference and lack of interest bordering on rude. Another couple in the same position as ourselves also received the same treatment. We are both pensioners I am 68 and my wife is 65 at our stage of life we cannot afford to lose such an amount of money. Incidentally our last holiday which apparently caused the problem was also booked through [NAME OF TOUR OPERATOR] which means that almost £6000 has been spent with you over the last 3 months. (EM – 3.2.10)

****

I am contacting you on behalf of my mother. She is a UK citizen and has a multiple entry visa for India. She has taken a career break from work and has been travelling with my Dad to india whilst he is on buisness out there. The indian commision have in December changes entry requirements for people traveling with a tourist visa so that in order to re-enter India, there must be at leat a 2 month gap from your previous visit. There has been no info on this from the high commision (other than a

statement on their website, which my mother did not check as she has a valid visa) or from the travel agent when booking the ticket. My mother got to the airport this morning and was unable to travel. She has taken unpaid leave to go on this trip and is not getting a refund from the travel agency. Could you please advise what we should do? (EM – 3.2.10)

****

regarding my concerns about my forthcoming cruise on the [NAME OF CRUISE SHIP]....We have since collected our tickets and yet again had our concerns expressed and noted at [NAME OF TOUR OPERATOR AGENCY], Cannock. We plan to go back to the shop on Saturday 6/2/10 to check on the status again, request an alternate holiday and hand them a written copy of our concerns. We do appreciate any advise you can give prior to this meeting...(EM – 3.2.10)

****

I'm a Canadian, just went to Punta Cana and our whole party of 5, plus our friends party (5 out of 6) were very sick. (EM – 4.2.10)

****

my husband lost 3 days of his cruise places we are never likely to go to again through norovirus. we were on the [NAME OF CRUISE SHIP]. they have offered us a £100 each of another cruise, we don't think this is right for the pain and suffering we endured. please can you advise us. (EM – 4.2.10)

****

Dear Sir my wife and my self went on holiday to a three star hotel in spain last september we booked with [NAME OF ONLINE TRAVEL PROVIDER] allthough we paid for transferes no one turned up to pick us up after waiting two hours we had to take a taxi to the hotel and when we got to the hotel we had paid for half board for the whole ten days we were there but the food was that bad we had to eat out there was loads of complaints at hte hotel from many clients but no one got anywhere with them i maid a complaint to [NAME OF ONLINE TRAVEL PROVIDER] as soon as i got home who informed me that it was [NAME OF ONLINE ACCOMMODATION PROVIDER] who chooses the hotels we are put in i have just recived a letter from [NAME OF ONLINE TRAVEL PROVIDER] saying that the transferes were waiting for us so the refused to refund the money allthough we ended paying them and taxis back and to two the airport and no mention about the complaint of the hotel we stayed in i will not book with these people again and i would like to warn other people with kind regards (EM – 5.2.10)

****

we travelled to sharm el shiek on the 4th of November 2009 and stayed at the 5star [NAME OF HOTEL] resort at sharks bay my wife contracted e-coli and we left egypt after 6days as the hotel food was a nightmare and our medical bill was £850. we have writen several letters to the travel company but they refuse to accept any

liability.can you help us with our predicament as we were booked in for 14 days and had to pay for early flights home at a cost of £400 which was not covered by our insurance. we have copys of medical reports fom egypt and from uk also copys of letters sent to the travel company and their replies (EM – 6.2.10)

****

Due to a 16 hr delay on our flight home we were put up in the [NAME] Hotel for one night on 31/01/10. I had one meal at this hotel and during the night took ill with vomiting and severe diorrhea and severe stomach cramps. I had to travel home whilst really poorly and some of the symptoms persisted for a week which resulted in me being off work for a week. I rang NHS direct as felt too ill to go to my GP and they said it sounded like a case of food poisoning and advised me what to do. Please can you advise on this as I am going to write to the holiday company to complain (EM – 6.2.10)

****

We have booked an expensive holiday through a company with both ABTA and ATOL membership. We have paid a deposit and the balance is due this coming week. If the company were to become insolvent before the holiday starts does the membership of those organisations mean that we would receive a full refund? As a separate matter, if we pay the balance by [NAME] CREDIT card (with the 2% charge) would this mean that we would be OK financially in the above event? (EM – 7.2.10)

****

In Sept 2009 I booked a holiday with [NAME OF TOUR OPERATOR] Travel for myself,husband and 2 children,date of travel was Aug 2010,It was for a short cruise with the [NAME OF CRUISE COMPANY].Due to unforeseen circumstances I needed to cancel this holiday although have booked another holiday for later this year with the same travel firm. I have paid £400 deposit for the [NAME OF CRUISE COMPANY] break and hoped to use some of this money for a deferred break with [NAME OF CRUISE COMPANY] in 2011, if not all money would be lost. [NAME OF TOUR OPERATOR] staff have informed me I need to pay a further £200 up front before I can transfer the 2011 holiday as they did not ask us the correct amount of deposit although this was what we were told to pay by the staff,£200 on the day of booking followed by a further £200 in October 2009 which was paid promptly.Please could you advise further? (EM – 7.2.10)

****

my travel agent has phoned me and told me that my hotel has closed and they offered me one in another resort whitch will cost £65 transfers extra i found a hotel the same star and the same resort but they said i would have to pay an extra £150 for it other than that i could cancel the holiday i am supposed to go away on march 17 (EM – 8.2.10)

****

Please can you advise me where to make a complaint to following a direct compalint to the company and to ABTA and no satisfactory response from either? Is there a travel ombudsman? (EM – 10.2.10)

****

[NAME OF CRUISE SHIP] I sailed on the [NAME OF CRUISE] and disembarked on 01/01/10. I was also treated for norovirus on board. I have complained and am awaiting a response (EM – 10.2.10)

****

[NAME OF CRUISE COMPANY] has just emailed that they have cancelled all their 2010 cruises. My wife and I booked on 30 Dec 09 for 1 week Greek Islands and Turkey total 4 nights from 19 April 2010The cruise would have started and finished at Pireus. [NAME OF CRUISE COMPANY] said they would refund our booking £556. We booked our flights Heathrow to Athens via [NAME OF AIRLINE] independently at £329 total and if we take the option of cancelling the flights [NAME OF AIRLINE] would only refund a total of £100. We booked a hotel in Athens for 2 nights prior to the cruise which we have cancelled but we don't know if there is a charge. We have an annual cover by [NAME] Travel Insurance but they state we are not covered for this specific situation. So we are losing most of our flight money, possibly some hotel charges lots of aggravation and of course holiday plans long in gestation in ruins. (EM – 11.2.10)

****

I was told that the booking was exactly the same as the original booking apart from the airline and flight times and of course the hotel was different. However when the time came to arrive home the flight was cancelled and nearly all the people flying on the plane were put up in 4-5 star accommodation, whether they had booked with [NAME OF TOUR OPERATOR] [NAME OF TOUR OPERATOR] or [NAME OF TOUR OPERATOR]. I/we however were left stranded at the airport for 4 hours trying to sort out accommodation. I went straight to the [NAME OF TOUR OPERATOR] reps at the airport who informed me "you are nothing to do with us" although booked through [NAME OF TOUR OPERATOR] they informed me that I was not their responsibility. Eventually after 2 hours I was given an emergency telephone number for [NAME OF ONLINE TOUR OPERATOR] (the company that [NAME OF TOUR OPERATOR] had booked me with). The number did not work and could not be called from abroad. During this time [NAME OF AIRLINE] had given us a time to come back to the airport the next day. I had to telephone a hotel to be put up for the night. We then after 4 hours of running around trying to get help had to drag my 3 children, my Dad ourselves and all of our luggage back to the taxi rank where we had to be taken to our hotel. When at the hotel I had to go in search of a hot meal, as we had not eaten since lunch time. I also had to buy nappies for my son as I was running out. I eventually got a couple of hours sleep. We have all suffered a great deal of stress due to what happened,especially my dad who has an incurable lung disease and my daughter who has severe learning difficulties. In the morning I tried calling [NAME OF ONLINE TOUR OPERATOR] again, to no avail. I

also called [NAME OF TOUR OPERATOR] duty office several times, they also explained that I was nothing to do with them and they proceeded to give me again and again the [NAME OF ONLINE TOUR OPERATOR] number that did not work. When we got back to the airport just after 12 noon I tried calling my local [NAME OF TOUR OPERATOR] and had to leave a message pleading for them to help me, (as usual they did not return my call). I also called [NAME OF TOUR OPERATOR] travel insurance (policy number [NUMBER], booking ref [NUMBER])whom we were covered by only to be told that I could not claim on the policy as the flight was cancelled and not delayed. (even though the flight we went back on was the same). We checked in at 3pm due to fly out at 17.05pm. The flight was delyed til 7, then 9 then 11.55pm. We were told that if the flight did not leave by 11.59pm then we would not be going home and would be asked to leave the airport (luckily it took of at ten to twelve). My children were frantic and my youngest daughter has severe learning difficulties and was getting extremely frustrated, my Dad has COPD (chronic obstructive pulmanry disease) he was panicking as he had enough medication for one more day. I am very upset at the level of care and consideration that [NAME OF TOUR OPERATOR] have shown us. We were passed from pillar to post and made lots of telephone calls trying to get help. I spoke to a lady at the airport that had also booked through [NAME OF TOUR OPERATOR] with [NAME OF ONLINE TOUR OPERATOR] and she was put in 5 star accommodation. I cannot understand why someone in the same predicament as ourselves could get treated so differently. If I had continued with the original booking we would have been on a [NAME OF TOUR OPERATOR] flight, they look after their customers even if they are flight only. We believed that we were booking a package holiday with [NAME OF TOUR OPERATOR] as this is what we were told. Only to find that it was [NAME OF ONLINE TOUR OPERATOR] (which is part of the [NAME OF TOUR OPERATOR] group) when we were coming home (trying to come home). I was not informed that the new booking was a flight only deal and had that have been explained I would have opted for another holiday or a refund. I feel that [NAME OF TOUR OPERATOR] have a level of care to their customers, we were totally miss-sold the holiday in the first place. We booked with [NAME OF TOUR OPERATOR] as they are supposed to be a reputable firm and after the problems with carriers going into liquidation last year we decided to be safe and book with [NAME OF TOUR OPERATOR]. If we had wanted an extremely cheap holiday I would have gone through a cheap online site where they do not offer any protection. This is exactly what we got booking through [NAME OF TOUR OPERATOR]. (EM – 11.2.10)

****

i stayed at the [NAME OF HOTEL] jamaica the food made me ill and the beach was terrible seaweed dirty e.g rubbish i made a complaint no one took it seriously. I checked out and booked another hotel [NAME] for the last week of a two week holiday this was my honeymoon. Can I claim the money back for the last week of my holiday. I booked this with my credit card, can i claim this money back, can i claim my money back through my credit card company. Ihave spoken to [NAME OF TOUR OPERATOR] who said that they gave me too much discount in the first place and that they made a loss on it so will not be give me a refund or help. (EM – 12.2.10)

****

My wife and I have just returned from a holiday in a vessel sailing down the Nile. We upgraded from our original berth and was told that there would be some engine noise but the noise that we experienced was so loud and the vibrations so great that we hardly slept each night. Add to this that each morning at around 0530 hours the vessel would dock, jockeying for position with many other such vessels with much bumping into other vessels, shouting and bumping onto sandbanks. Before we went we were informed that we had to pay £15 each to cover the cost of a visa to Egypt and a further £15 each to cover tips while on board. We subsiquently discovered once on board that the visa actually cost £9 with the balance a rip off for the travel company...it was called a "small handling charge". We were frequently reminded by the tour leader that niether he nor the tour guides were included in the gratuities already collected and he placed greater emphasis on this as we got to the end of the week. I have written to the tour company two weeks ago and they say that they are 'looking into it' but it is felt that they are just stalling for time and hope that I will give up. We are both age 77 and unlikely to give up: Is there anything that can be done to get some small compensation for the discomfort and abuse. (EM – 14.2.10)

****

We had the most dreadful experience on the [NAME OF CRUISE] I would like to tell you about it, please contact me. I have attached some of the photos I have which show the blocked toilet and the bathroom floor in our cabin. Our toilet leaked dirty brown smelly water onto the floor continuously during our stay. (EM – 15.2.10)

****

[NAME OF CRUISE] CRUISE COMPLAINT & ILLNESS. I WOULD LIKE TO TELL YOU ABOUT OUR TERRIBLE EXPERIENCE ON THIS CRUISE & THE FACT THAT WE WERE BOTH ILL ON BOARD (EM – 15.2.10)

****

I and a member of my party was injured/ill on the [NAME] cruise and we had the most dreadful experience also. I would like to tell you about it. Please contact me. (EM – 15.2.10)

****

I had the most dreadful experience on the [NAME OF CRUISE] additionally two members of our party were taken ill whilst on this holiday. I have enclosed a copy of my complaint letter to [NAME OF TOUR OPERATOR]. I would like to tell you about it, please contact me. (EM – 15.2.10)

****

Myself, Partner and 2 friends were on this Cruise and found it a frightening experience. A Christmas to remember but for all the wrong reasons. (EM – 15.2.10)

****

[NAME OF CRUISE] I had Norvo Virus on the Ship and my wife is just getting over not being ill since we left the ship I think this may have something to do with toilets problem. (EM – 15.2.10)

****

I paid a deposit for a holiday to Lanzarote, Playa Blanca with [NAME OF TOUR OPERATOR]. It is an "Exclusive to [NAME OF TOUR OPERATOR]" [NAME OF HOTEL]. For myself, my husband and two young boys this holiday is costing us £3300 !! Which is not cheap atall. we are due to fly on the 18th of July this year for two weeks all inclusive. To my horror I stumbled across a website called [NAME].com. There are 4 privately owned rooms at this" exclusve to [NAME OF TOUR OPERATOR]" centre. They can be rented out by anyone! I have pointed this out to the [NAME OF TOUR OPERATOR AGENCY] where i made the booking. I have informed them that I will not be happy to take my two young children to this complex now! The [NAME OF HOTEL] does not seem quite as appealing or safe!! I am waiting for a response from the [NAME OF TOUR OPERATOR AGENCY] as I do not think it is fair that for me to transfer the holiday to another resort that I should have to pay the costs..They should! Am I within my rights to suggest this or not? (EM – 15.2.10)

****

Yesterday I booked a holiday through [NAME OF TOUR OPERATOR]. I booked the hotel and accommodation together (I was just given an overall price for this) and I paid for the holiday in full as we were due to travel on 25 April. The holiday and price was advertised on teletext holidays and on their own website. Today they have telephoned me and stated that they had an 'error' and the holiday should have been much more expensive. They have not offered me an alternative but simply stated that they will refund my card. Obviously I'm not happy about this and am wondering where they / I stand legally? (EM – 15.2.10)

****

Reference: [NAME OF CRUISE] Complaint My family and I had the most dreadful experience on the [NAME OF CRUISE] 09 [NAME OF TOUR OPERATOR]continue to to play this matter down with insulting offers of compensation and a apparent refusal to address ongoing issues on this vessel
I would like to tell you about it (EM – 16.2.10)

****

[NAME OF CRUISE] illness I was violently sick on the return flight from tenerrife (EM – 16.2.10)

****

[NAME OF CRUISE] cruise complaint i had the most dreadful and depessing experience on the [NAME OF CRUISE]. please contact me. (EM – 16.2.10)

****

I was one of the unfortunate passengers on the [NAME OF CRUISE SHIP] cruise in Dec '09.
The 'ship' was unfit for service. It was in an extremely poor, indeed dangerous state of repair. The sanitation was abysmal. The toilets out of service for most of the 2 week cruise (they were not working when we boarded and were out of service on the previous cruise, unbeknown to us at the time of boarding). Our itinery ws not kept as The Captain said he could not dock in the inclemant weather conditions although other cruise ships did, then we were kept at sea in extremely rough seas for 3 days because he would not go back to calmer island waters. We asked to leave the cruise and were told we would have to cover the cost and would not be reimbursed. I have been offerd £535 cash of £675 vouchers toward another [NAME OF TOUR OPERATOR] holiday, yet the cost of my holiday was over £2,640.00. Obviously I have declined this offer. This was a 65th Birthday treat for my husband, and we were so looking forward to spending this time on a wonderful Christmas and New Year holiday. (EM – 16.2.10)

****

Blocked toilet in cabin . for 2 weeks. Toilets overflowing in public areas. Cabin very shabby. Shower cubicle split . tiles coming off floor. All in all not fit to be in for any length of time. Cost 3,500 pounds for two of us (EM – 16.2.10)

****

We recently returned from a holiday in [NAME OF COMPLEX] Los Christianos Tenerife. When we arrived we had trouble finding a key and no one could help as it was an owners apartment,which had not been let for months. Apparently it was due to be repossessed. We finally found a key in another keybox also owned by the same person. The place was disgusting but the phone number supplied was unobtainable. Reluctantly we stayed and cleaned it up. There were dozens of dead cockroaches everything and layers of dust. We thought it fraud on the part of the owner and did not think we would be able to get anything back from him. Eventually I managed to contact the agents via the website and on the eight day the lady in charge of the cleaners told us the agents had made a terrible mistake and we should have been somewhere else. W e moved all our stuff, another day wasted . It was a far superior apartment although it still did not have the English TV channels advertised. We did not want to go out every night as we live in a tourist area ourselves and this is not a priority for us. We wanted to have long days out in the sunshine and just 'chill' afterwards, and not feel we had to go out every night. I have asked for £150 compensation which I think is more than reasonable. No one else would have stayed in that apartment . I have been offered £50 and £50 off another holiday. I will not be taking another holiday with these agents [NAME OF ONLINE ACCOMMODATION PROVIDER]. The agents are not replying at present to my second request. I assume trying to make me 'sweat' a bit. (EM – 16.2.10)

****

I went to India in january. I booked my ticket with [NAME OF TRAVEL AGENCY]. While booking, I made it clear to the operator that all I was concerned about was my luggage allowance. I was then told to take [NAME OF AIRLINE] as they offered 2 pieces of luggage of 23 kg each. At the airport, I discovered that my ticket had an allowance of 23kg only and I had to pay £40 for my second suitcas. I tried to contact the agency and the operator but never got any answer from them.
Could you just let me know what are my options? Could I ever get my money back for the extra luggage? (EM – 17.2.10)

****

We are due to go on holiday to [NAME OF HOTEL] in Tenerife on 4 March. I wonder if you are able to give some guidelines on the issue below which we have with [NAME OF TOUR OPERATOR]. From reports in the Saturday [NAME OF NEWSPAPER] dated 13 February, with people having returned from [NAME OF HOTEL] (a wholly owned [NAME OF HOTEL] hotel) in Tenerife starting legal proceedings against [NAME OF TOUR OPERATOR] in respect of the virus that appears to be rife in the hotel, I sent the email below to [NAME OF TOUR OPERATOR] Pre Travel Service department and have to date not received an acknowledgement. It seems from comments both in the newspaper and on the trip adviser link on the hotel details on the [NAME OF TOUR OPERATOR] website – and my conversation with [NAME OF TOUR OPERATOR] Travel Shop in Worthing - that [NAME OF TOUR OPERATOR] do not seem to be acknowledging there is a problem and are not prepared to do anything about it. Under their duty of care and health and safety standards I find this quite unacceptable and wonder what recourse I have in this instant. I am told by [NAME OF TOUR OPERATOR] that if I want to change the hotel then I would incur charges. I would have thought that, having been made aware of the problem, they have an obligation to recognize that there is a virus within the hotel and take action to satisfy customers. (EM – 18.2.10)

****

Last October i booked, through [NAME OF ONLINE TOUR OPERATOR], return flights for 4 people to munich from stanstead as partof a skiing holiday- the other elements of the holiday were booked separately. 4 weeks after booking the flights i recieived an e mail telling me that the point of departure had changed from stansted to Gatwick (further away from my home). I arrived with my party at Gatwick last sunday to discover that my flight had infact taken off from stansted- the email detailing the change had been completely wrong. In order to get to my destination i booked flights the next morning with another airline, accommodation at the hotel at the airport plus 1 meal for 4. I have spoken to [NAME OF ONLINE TOUR OPERATOR] on the phone and they have (verbally only) admitted full responsibility, they are however cagey on repaying me any of the necessary extra costs in order to make my holiday- needeless to say i did lose 1 day of holiday that includes accommodation and ski hire costs for 4, plus i am now flying b ack into stanstead and have to get to gatwick to retrieve my car. I will therefore get home at 4am instead of about 11 pm. (EM – 18.2.10)

****

[NAME OF CRUISE] Complaint I had the most dreadful experience onboard the [NAME OF CRUISE SHIP] in January, I would like to tell you about it , please contact me.My husband was ill and we left after 3days. (EM – 18.2.10)

****

Due to the heavy snow last week, my airline cancelled the flight. The travel agent I used to book the hotel ([NAME].com) is being totally unreasonable and will not reschedule my hotel booking to next month. I paid almost £1,000. I have been in contact with them and the hotel and the 3rd party agent [NAME] in USA. [NAME] and the hotel are happy to reschedule if the travel agent will complete the forms. He is unwilling and has said I am breaking the Terms & Conditions of the booking. Surley the heavy snow falls is out of everyones control! I do not want to cancel, I just want to reschedule. He has taken my money and is totally unwilling to help. Can you help any? Should I contact anyone? Abta? Solicitor? (EM – 18.2.10)

****

I have booked holiday with [NAME OF TOUR OPERATOR]. I have found out that they do not have a contract with the accommodation I have booked. I have stayed at this accommodation for the last ten years and have email from them confirming they have no contract with [NAME OF TOUR OPERATOR]. [NAME OF TOUR OPERATOR] are denying this and say I must wait until April when resort is open before they can confirm whether or not contract, as they say "has not been cancelled". As I know there is no Contract this is a farce. If I complied with their requirement I would need to pay in full for holiday in March. By the way, this particular resort has now disappeared from [NAME OF TOUR OPERATOR] website and brochure. What can I do? (EM – 18.2.10)

****

we booked a cruise with [NAME OF ONLINE TRAVEL PROVIDER] group and agreed a price, however, when the invoice arrived we found we had been overcharged by £238.00. we then tried to contact the company by every means possible phone (at least 30 times) e mail (3 times) and by registered letter (once). The 2 times we did make contact they promised to look into it and phone back still waiting, after a week and a half. We are becoming some what desperate as we have over £5,000.00 to shell out to a company we have absolutely no faith in. We are even doubtful the tickets will turn up. We turn to you in the hope that a/ you can find a way to get them to return our overpayment and b/ if you could reasure us that they are a reputable company. (EM – 19.2.10)

****

My family went to [NAME] Hotel in Tunisia in August 2009. Whilst staying there we had many complaints and on return we went through the standard complaint procedure - this was largely ignored and they failed to respond except for standard 'we will get back to you within 28 days' messages. This week we have received an

apology letter but no offer of compensation or assurances that things will be put right at the hotel. During our stay at the hotel the staff used insectaside in our room as we complained about an ant infestation in the ceiling vents - they just told us 'we will deal with that' - they did not say they were going to treat the room with pestasides- they did not comply with any health and safety measures and did not even inform us - the roomwas not ventilated. In the early hours of the morning I woke up in severe discomfort and could not open my eyes and had difficulty breathing. I staggered to the bathroom to put water on my face and could not beleive how swollen my face was. My eyes/noe/cheeks were swollen beyond recognition. I then awoke the rest of our party - including the four children (two who are severe asthmatics) to check their health. They all had symptoms too - swollen/sore throats itchy eyes and general dicomfort. I then went to the management and the hotel rep. They did call out the doctor who came and checked me - he confirmed an allergic reaction to the chemicals used and prescribed steriods and anti histamine which were delivered to the hotel. I requested several times the name of the products used but no one provided the information - the rep stated it was all in arabic and of no use! Other complaints were about the standard of hygiene/food/drink etc. None of this has been dealt with except for - thanks for letting us know. (EM – 21.2.10)

****

I booked a holiday with [NAME OF TOUR OPERATOR] in June 2009 - flight to Hong Kong and a [NAME] cruise. 12 - 27 March 2010. Day flights were confirmed. Full payment made in December 2009. Only by chance did I find out last week that the flights had been cancelled and we had been placed on night flights - not returning home until 05.50 on the Sunday morning. I would not have booked the holiday based on these timings. I accept the terms and conditions say that flights may be changed at very short notice but the decision to cancel the earlier flight was taken by Virgin in July 2009 - we were not advised of the change and therefore denied the opportunity to make an informed choice about continuing with the holiday, cancelling and forfeiting our deposit or paying a fee to change to a different hoilday. I feel I am being forced to accept arrangements I don't feel are suitable - have Virgin broken any terms of contract by not notifying us asap of the change and therefore denying us our right to cancel without paying all charges. I would still prefer a change of location at this stage. (EM – 22.2.10)

****

Hi, I'm looking for help and advice regarding our cruise aboard the [NAME OF CRUISE SHIP] where my family and I endured shocking conditions and my daughter suffered personal injury. (EM – 22.2.10)

****

Booked a package holiday to Madeira with F[NAME OF TOUR OPERATOR] on the Internet and have paid the initial deposit. With the disaster that happened in Madeira last weekend, I have tried to contact [NAME OF TOUR OPERATOR] to discuss my options of either cancelling or being offered another similar holiday, but they are not replying to my emails. I tried to telephone, waited 15 minutes and was told that at

present, there is no change to my holiday, but that someone would contact me shortly about it. How can there not be changes to my holiday!! It will obviously take a long time for Madeira to recover and my husband and I are due to fly out on 3rd May! Today, [NAME OF TOUR OPEWRATOR] have emailed me a reminder to pay my final balance before 8th March. Should I not pay this until they contact me? Their Terms and Conditions do not state what happens i n cases like this. In ordinary circumstances, if I cancel, I will lose my deposit, but this isn't normal circumstances. If they cancel, then they would be liable to refund me, but I feel that they are avoiding replying to my emails. What rights do I have in a case like this please and what should I do? I don't want to run the risk of paying the balance, only to lose all my money (£1106). Please help! (EM – 22.2.10)

****

I write on behalf of my parents ([NAME]) who had a dreadful holiday on [NAME OF CRUISE SHIP] ([NAME OF CRUISE]) and then suffered from a severe gastrointestinal virus (diagnosed Norovirus) immediately on return. (EM – 23.2.10)

****

In august last year i booked a hotel through [ONLINE TOUR OPERATOR] holidays for my parents as they both turned 65. The hotel was the [NAME OF HOTEL] bemidorm. In October i went to benidorm with friends & the hotel [NAME] was close for renovation. When we came home we looked on the [ONLINE TOUR OPERATOR] website & the hotel was not even on there.In January i called [ONLINE TOUR OPERATOR] and asked them why they had booked my parents into a hotel that was not open? They said that the hotel is open and that when my parents got there in February that it would be fine , even though the website told us at this point that it would not be open until march.I asked them to put this in writing (which i am still waiting for) they said OK ,but not to worry as there was no problem !!!! they also said that if this was to happen that they would notify them in ample time & book them into another hotel, but then said but everything is OK the hotel have taken the booking and there is no problem. Still not happy my mum called them last week (bearing in mind that this is ONE WEEK before they travel out.) and yet again they were quite adamant that there was nothing to worry about that everything was fine. YESTERDAY 22/02/2010 my parents flu to benidorm, They arrived at the [NAME] hotel a little after 10pm and low and behold the hotel WAS CLOSED !!!!!! stranded in the street with not even any sign of what to do they were amazed & bewildered as to what was happening. Only for a woman who was staying in a local hotel who said that people had been going to the [NAME] hotel they would have not known what to do. The [NAME] had a booking under there name which proves that the company must have known that the hotel was closed . There is a lot more to this story but what i am not happy about is that they have now lost a day out of there holiday because they are now in a third hotel which they have had to sit around all morning to wait for & [ONLINE TOUR OPERATOR] said oops they have no idea what happened , they have offered them £40 refund WOW. I want to take this matter further as the way they have been treated is absolutely appalling (EM – 23.2.10)

****

Hi just wondering if you can help. We have booked a holiday with [NAME OF TOUR OPERATOR] to the [NAME OF HOTEL] Lara Beach 30/07/2010. Today we have recieved a letter from [NAME OF TOUR OPERATOR] informing us that the picture shown in the brochure for the room type that we have booked is wrong, and that they dont actually sell the type of room shown in the brochure picture - could you therfore please tell me if I have been mis sold and if so what course of action should I take to either enforce my right to that room or to gain some form of compensation. (EM – 23.2.10)

****

I was a passenger on [NAME OF TOUR OPERATOR] [NAME OF CRUISE SHIP] in January 2010 and became ill with the norovirus. Please could you offer advice on what I should do. [NAME OF TOUR OPERATOR] have made an off er of 20% refund of the cost of the holiday but stress that this is only for poor facilities on board ship and not for the illness. (EM – 26.2.10)

****

Our problem is a we booked our holiday with [NAME OF TOUR OPERATOR], last Feb 2009. At the last minute [NAME OF TOUR OPERATOR] has changed the Hotel, as under new managment its been withdrawn. No fault of [NAME OF TOUR OPERATOR]. No fault on our side. Problem being this hotel is cheaper they have sent us a refund of the difference, when we spoke on the phone the supervisor said this was compensation, how?? thats what we have overpaid. Also we booked last feb our argument is surley just good will would mean we pay last feb prices. We are so disapointed we booked to go to a brand new complex 5*, [NAME OF TOUR OPERATOR] now say it's 4* same as we are getting. (EM – 1.3.10)

****

Went on holiday last august to tunisia we booked an all inclusive hotel and checked with company that everything was included.On arival we went to use the main resterant all the food was mainly italian so the next day we went to the pool snack bar and odererd burger and chips only to be told we had to pay. we found out the only place to eat was the main resterant we coudnt use the cocktail bar or swim up bar unless we paid we complained on holiday but never got antything sorted and have wrote a complaint since we got back in which eventully we have been offered 380 pounds in voucher to compensate and they have admitted there have been a few faults in the hotel but we dont think this is good enough could you please advise as the holiday cost 2,225 plus aroud 600 spent on food (EM – 3.3.10)

****

Found the holiday we were seeking through [ONLINE TOUR OPERATOR] noticed it offered live availability and booked the week away. On arriving at the hotel 3 weeks later, we found it to be closed and learnt they had informed all operators of the closure 7 weeks prior to us booking. We were left stranded in a foreign country, and after attempting to call the “In case of emergency number” only to get an answering machine. 36Hrs later we managed to speak to someone who offered us a

refund of the cost of the hotel only, but still leaving us stranded. Our holiday was ruined as we ended up in a B&B in the centre of the capital city waiting for a return flight home! We had been advised to keep all receipts in order we could claim back any additional costs incurred, but on returning to the UK and forwarding a letter along with copies of these, they now claim to be AGENTS and not responsible. We have tried for 18 months to ascertain as to whom they are agents for, and they have continually refused to provide this information. (EM – 4.3.10)

****

Cabin floor – We believe this is actually the first place we have stayed where we felt it necessary to wear our shoes from the bed to the bathroom or indeed at all times in the cabin. I am unsure when the last time the carpet had actually been vacuumed was but it certainly hadn't when we got there and wasn't for the duration of our stay. It was sticky and covered with dirt, bits of insect and probably a whole host of other indecipherable objects.

Cabin furniture – Again unsure when the last time this had actually been cleaned was and again it wasn't whilst we were there. There was a very dubious spattering all over the headboard. The phone was black, there was also a thick coating of grime over the drawer and cupboard fronts and sides. The only bits of the room that seemed to have a clean were the two bits of small glass over the bedside table and the dressing table, however even this became questionable once a couple of cockroaches had been squashed on them as they were not cleaned up.

Sewage – We also had an incessant smell of sewage in our room, upon complaining we were told by our rep Jo that it was usual and it should dissipate once we were travelling. It didn't, in fact if anything it got worse to the extent that at times it made you physically retch. When we asked other guests on the boat no-one else had this problem?

Cockroaches, yes that's right I counted 18 in total in 4 days/nights, 8 of which I or my husband managed to swat. Baby ones were present in the bathroom and larger ones in the cabin. This caused severe distress to me being phobic of cockroaches to the extent of loss of sleep throughout the entire time spent on the boat. We couldn't even un-pack our suitcase through fear of them crawling onto our clothing. Let alone the thought that we may have inadvertently brought a pregnant female home with us. Bearing in mind we were also on the same level as the restaurant and kitchen I hate to think of what state this was in. Upon complaining we were told the boat had been sprayed the week before, obviously not in our area. We were not offered another cabin?

Cabin in steerage – hardly my idea of luxury or 4*. When I booked this trip back in August last year it was to celebrate our wedding anniversary. It was supposed to be a Luxury Highlights Cruise. The only part of this holiday that was luxury was the hotel room in Cairo. Our view was a tiny 1 foot square window on the water – so our view was obviously of the water. We were constantly disturbed by the boat workers going to and from their rooms next to ours which also resulted in my husband obtaining little sleep throughout the entire cruise. (EM – 4.3.10)

****

Please help me I am at a loose end with a company called [ONLINE TOUR OPERATOR]. When I booked my holiday a week or two ago on their website and it crashed as I booked. I rang twice that to confirm it was booked and was told it was, only to be told both times it was and then I was rang back again half hour later by a different person telling me I hadn't booked, so we booked it properly. It was the next day I realised it had been processed wrong, seeing as though there website crashed at the time I booked I know it was there fault. All I wanted to do was change the dates and the board as they were booked wrong, I have done their 'change request' online a numerous of times only to get rejected and have rang them over 10 times now only to be told different things each time. I am at my wits end, I don't want to cancel because I will lose my desposit and I can't afford to do that, but if I extend my dates they are telling me that I will have to pay a amending fee as well despite it not being my fault. I just don't know what to do I really am at my wits end, Please help me (EM – 4.3.10)

****

I have submitted numerous complaint letters to [NAME OF TOUR OPERATOR] in respect of our holiday to Mexico in Sept 2009. I find the compensation being offered to be completely unacceptable and they are unwilling to accept any liability in respect of a number of issues i have raised. I being that they seem to be under the impression that they can inform customers of any incorrect information and providing the terms and conditions override this, then their position is safeguarded. I find this completely unacceptalbe and feel we were incorrectly induced into the contract and for this reason are entitled to damages. Plse find attached a number of letters I have sent to [NAME OF TOUR OPERATOR]. (EM – 8.3.10)

****

have tried to contact [NAME OF TOUR OPERATOR] directly but they are refusing to speak to me or give any informatio as i booked through the co-op shop and not with them .I only want to know where ythey plan to send us in may when we go on holiday and feel they asre fobbing us off at the moment.I ahve been on the telephone for 25 minutes and got nowhere! (EM – 8.3.10)

****

First ever cruise experience. The cruise was not good as only a few days into it, when started to socialies, people were being confined to there cabins as a fast rate with Norovirus. consequently the pools were closed, and everyone including us were just on tender hooks and anxious as to weather we would contract this norovirus. I was away on this trip with a friend as my husband was also on small sail boat trip. This was a great worry to him. Well unfortunately i did contract the norovirus on the 15.12.09 and still on disembarkment on 18.12.09. having had a injection on 15.12.09 and again evening of 16.12.09. It spoilt my christmas as i was still not well, but over january and february to now i have been under the doctor with reflux problems and other soreness as a aftermath from this norovirus, and last week i had a blood test to make sure that the virus has now gone. I was given a

letter from the ships doctor to send of to [NAME OF TOUR OPERATOR], and have now received a voucher for £96 which i feel is not enough, as my holiday was ruined and my christmas and now two months on only just recovering. (EM – 9.3.10)

****

Please can you help us as I dont know what to do. My wife and myself spent our savings on the [NAME] cruise with [NAME OF CRUISE SHIP], we were assured no Norovirus but my wife caught it and my neice and her children and we were all confined to cabins for 3+ days missing our all inclusive cruise. People were dropping like flies. (EM – 9.3.10)

****

We had a terrible experience on the [NAME OF CRUISE SHIP] [NAME OF CRUISE]. We have been in contact with [NAME OF TOUR OPERATOR] but all we seem to receive are automated responses stating 'in order to give my complaint the full attention it deserved they would respond to me within 28 days.' (EM – 11.3.10)

****

We had a holiday booked with [NAME OF TOUR OPERATOR] to India and Nepal. We arrived at the airport yesterday 10.03.2010 and were refused travel to Delhi as we were informed that the regulations on re enter had changed in january. We did not know this we had been in Goa from 2 Jan until 24th January 2010. We think our travel company should have informed us of this change when they did our Nepal visa, they say they are not responsible for our India visa. We tried today to get the required stamp from the Indian Embassy but told it would take 3 Workings day before we would get it so we lose over 1 week of our trip or not go at all as [NAME OF TOUR OPERATOR] want to charge another £270 to fly us out to Nepal, if we do not go we get no refund credit we just lose eveything over £2,000.00 is this right SHOULD they have informed us of this change have we any recourse (EM – 11.3.10)

****

[NAME OF TOUR OPERATOR] has changed the itinerary on its Pharaohs and the Promised Land itinerary departing on April 7. Instead of seeing what it describes in its brochure as the greatest Crusader castle in Syria, we call at a small seaside town in Turkey. Instead of spending two nights in Ashdod, allowing us to see both the Dead Sea and Jerusalem, the ship sails to Haifa, where there is a very small choice of excursions.They have also removed Cairo excursions from the Alexandria stopover. (EM – 12.3.10)

****

went to alanya turkey in july 09,booked this through [NAME OF TOUR OPERATOR] who booked our flights through [NAME OF ONLINE TRAVEL PROVIDER] and our accomodation through [NAME OF ONLINE ACCOMMODATION PROVIDER],the information on [NAME OF ONLINE ACCOMMODATION PROVIDER] website was totally opposite! our holiday was a

disater. we phoned [NAME OF TOUR OPERATOR] on the 1st day of our holiday. when we returned home we complained to [NAME OF TOUR OPERATOR]who then complained to [NAME OF ONLINE ACCOMMODATION PROVIDER]. [NAME OF TOUR OPERATOR] are saying our contract is with [NAME OF ONLINE ACCOMMODATION PROVIDER]. this complaint has been going on for 8months. we really need your help,[NAME OF ONLINE ACCOMMODATION PROVIDER] has offered £302 for 10 people,we paid £2250 for the accomadation. (EM – 12.3.10)

****

We lost money when XL went under, the travel agent lets go canaries said they were atol protected, initally they were brilliant and sent us forms and asked us to fill them in and sent back with the original receipts and tickets. We did this unfortunately though not until november 2009.
this was sent recorded delivery, Since this date i have contacted the agent via email several times and phoned leaving messages to get someone to please contact me in regards to my claim, I have never received a response. i am nearly £500 out of pocket and at a loss at what I can now do to get my money back. (EM – 13.3.10)

****

We where on the 'Cruise from Hell' [NAME OF CRUISE]. The whole trip was a disgrace, sanitary condition where appauling, food and staff dreadful the lack of information why we didn't go into certain ports when other ships went. The whole two weeks was the trip from hell. (EM – 13.3.10)

****

My husband and I were on that cruise and beset by the same problems -- no toilets, grey bed linen, leaking ceilings, cracked tiles in the bathroom, etc. and had written to [NAME OF TOUR OPERATOR] to no avail. (EM – 14.3.10)

****

I booked a package holiday with [NAME OF ONLINE TOUR OPERATOR] to Cuba which included a direct flight to Havana with [NAME OF AIRLINE]. I received written confirmation of the booking and full payment in Feb 2010 yet on 4th March was informed that flight was withdrawn and substituted by flight via Madrid with [NAME OF AIRLINE]. In addition to much longer journey the airline is a 'no frills airline' with seat pitch of 28" compared to the Virgin 32". The holiday departs on 14th April. I notified [NAME OF ONLINE TOUR OPERATOR] that this is not acceptable to me and wanted them to re-book [NAME OF AIRLINE] flight or give me full refund. They refused and offered me £75 compensation. (EM – 16.3.10)

****

[NAME OF TOUR OPERATOR] are trying to downgrade the accommodation I booked for a family of five holidy all inclusive to Turkey. I'd taken advantage of a early booking deal, booked 4 star accommodation for a two week break 19 July,

onwards and my final invoice shows that they are putting us in the Annexe, which is 3 star. Same hotel but lower quality accommodation. After spending ages on the phone, they are offering our money back, but there's nothing left at that resort for these dates. [NAME] in their e-commerce dept said that she would try and get things sorted, but one week later, no news. We have to pay the balance in a couple of weeks, please can you advise? How can I get the holdiay I booked? (EM – 18.3.10)

****

The [NAME] hotel where they stayed for the first three days had no hot water at all after constant complaints to the rep and hotel staff they were finally moved on day four to [NAME OF HOTEL]. On the morning of there last day [NAME] became ill [NAME] husband tried to get some assistance from the rep as he wasn't sure whaty to do but she was too busy organising her airport run to help, and when it became clear that [NAME] was to be taken to hospital the reps only advise was that her husband would have to be ready for the pick up from the hotel as he would not be covered to stay in Turkey. [NAME] was kept in hospital for a couple of days and another night in a local hotel arranged by them selves prior to their flight home arranged by the insurance company. [NAME OF TOUR OPERATOR] were informed of their predicament but did not return their calls. They filled in a complaints form on 18-10-09 regarding the first four days of the holiday with no hot water and having the pack up and change hotels. They also followed this up with a letter when they returned home on 01-11-09 complaining about the hotel and further about the totla lack of customer service recieved during their stay. (EM – 19.3.10)

****

I booked a holiday tripfor myself and my husband to Cairo, Egypt via [NAME OF ONLINE TRAVEL PROVIDER]. The trip was for 4 nights with half board, double room booking at [NAME] Hotel. About 2 days before departure I emailed the hotel in Cairo to arrange transfers from the airport to the hotel. They replied saying that they had no record of my booking and in any case they could not accommodate us for the full length of our stay as they were fully booked for one of the four nights. I attempted to contact [NAME OF ONLINE TRAVEL PROVIDER] however their lines were closed for the weekend and the earliest I could call was Monday - the day we were scheduled to leave for Cairo. I called [NAME OF ONLINE TRAVEL PROVIDER] when their lines opened Monday morning explaining what I was told by the hotel manager in the email and advised them them of my concerns with the hotel booking. They assured me that the hotel booking was made and that the shift manager would investigate the matter immediately and contact me with any updates. Needless to say that call never came and the matter was not resolved. We arrived at the hotel in Cairo and the manager repeated that there was no booking for us. As we stood there arguing our case a fax came through to the hotel labelled URGENT with a copy of our booking. (We saw the fax but could not get a copy). Only then did the manager agree to book us in though he advised that the hotel was fully booked the following night so other arrangements would have to be made.
We were told we had to check out at 12noon the following day and await further instructions. We checked out before 12noon and were made to wait for over 4 hours while a tour representative (sent on behalf of the agency) tried to find a hotel for us to stay in that night. We were finally "transferred" to [NAME] hotel (5 mins

away) and were told that we could return to [NAME]Hotel the next day for the remainder of our stay. At [NAME] hotel we were given a twin bed room and we were told that no half board arrangements had been made so dinner would not be provided.
Furthermore no arrangements were made to transfer us back to [NAME] Hotel and we had to pay for this service ourselves. The entire ordeal left us angry and completely threw our holiday out of order. We had to cancel visits tourist sites and had to cut other visits short in order to make the check out time after the first night. The entire ordeal was a huge inconvenience. When we reported this to [NAME OF ONLINE TRAVEL PROVIDER] we were equally annoyed by their responses. In total they have offered us £38 in compensation which we feel is not justified. (EM – 19.3.10)

****

We started a cruise holiday on the ship [NAME OF SHIP] on10/ 03/ 2010 until 17/ 03 / 2010 joining the ship at Larnaca, Cyprus. On sunday 14 / 03 / 2010 my wife took violently sick and vomited repeatedly all that afternoon.About 6.10 pm I helped her along to the medical centre where the nurse told us to return to our cabin, some minutes later a doctor and nurse visited us and after some dificulty my wife explained her symtoms, the Dr. and nurse were Russian with a poor command of English, My wife was told she had the Norovirus and she was given an injection and some tablets. Both of us were told we must stay in our cabin for a period of 48 hours. I effect we were to be confined to our cabin for the remainder of the cruise and the excursions we booked were cancelled we were issued with a diet sheet for my wife,the menu consisted of allegedly chicken soup and boiled chicken which had the consistency of a rubber tyre and was inedible and since this was all that was available in spite of my request for an alternative my wife had nothing whatever to eat all the time we were confined to the cabin.Because of this illness contacted aboard the [NAME OF SHIP] our ho;iday was ruined – (EM – 21.3.10)

****

I booked a holiday with [NAME OF TRAVEL AGENCY] Travel in October 2009 to Croatia for May 2010. Paid for holiday in March 2010. Folowing week [NAME OF TOUR OPERATOR] holidays changed flight times which leads to me losing one day of my holiday, miss my return flight from Gatwick to Glasgow which was booked in October 2009. Be forced to endure a further two hour extension onto flights due to a change in the schedule by travelling via Zagreb instead of direct to Dubrovnik. I also lose another day at work as the only flight available to me from Gatwick to Glasgow is at 9pm, ariving Glasgow at 10.25 pm originally 2.20pm, forcing me to miss my work which I intended to be at for 10pm on May 27. Both [NAME OF TRAVEL AGENCY] Travel and [NAME OF TOUR OPERATOR] holidays refuse to return my deposit of £180 (EM – 22.3.10)

****

I am looking for advice and support following a terrible experience whilst travelling with [NAME OF TOUR OPERATOR] to the Maldives. My parents booked a treat 14k holiday for my 40th birthday to Maldives. An island they had sepcifically chosen

having been before. less than 48 hrs before departing we were told the island of our choice was fully booked. We were told to spend the first 3 nights elsewhere and then transfer. This did not happen, we then had to spend more nights on another island and on it wnet for the duration of our holiday and we never actually arrived on the island that we booked. We had 10 days of not knowing where we were satying when we were leaving and we never un packed! A total lack of communication from [NAME OF TOUR OPERATOR] mean't I sepnt most of my holiday in an internet cafe trying to find out information. [NAME OF TOUR OPERATOR] have offered a £500 voucher off the next holiday! But what about the 14K we spent on this one! (EM – 22.3.10)

****

I WAS GIVEN A PRESS CUTTNG OF COMPLAINTS OF THE CRUISE SHIP. I WAS POORLY TWO DAYS BEFORE LEAVING. ON FLIGHT HOME HAD TO BE GIVEN OXYGEN. WEEK OFF WORK.LOST INCREMENTS. SICK NOTE,ANTIBOTICS. OUR CABINS WAS SHABBY, SHOWER AREA APPAULING WALKED ON FLOOR WHERE TILES STUCK TO YOUR FEET I BINNED THEM.TOWELS ONLY FIT FOR FLOOR CLOTHS.CABIN WINDOW BADLY STAINED.AND TO TOP IT ALL FOUND BOTTOM SET OF TEETH PLUS USED CORN PLASTERS UNDER THE BED.ON ARRIVING A NOTICE WAS UP SAYING NO UP GRADES.LAST DAY NO TOILETS ON FOUR FLOORS SPOKE TO A CAPTAIN WHO HAD TO GO AND FIND A TOILET (EM – 23.3.10)

****

I am writing on behalf of my mother who was booking a holiday to Ghana on their behalf and after having decided the price and making a reservation under that price the full ticket was paid for. After paying for the ticket however they have increases the price and refuse to refund the money. Surely this is not legal. Even the trading standards are unable to act as they do not disclose their address and operate under a false Atol Number. The only correspondence we have with them are the email we received. (EM – 24.3.10)

****

I booked a package holiday last week with [NAME OF ONLINE TOUR OPERATOR]. The airline used is [NAME OF AIRLINE]. There are two of us travelling and we were told that it was the airline's polixy that if ONE traveller paid for luggage ( in this case £20 for up to 20kg) the other must do so as well and that we were not allowed just to pay for one bag between us.  I have never come across this bizarre rule before and cannot seee any referrence to it on the Airline's website. (EM – 25.3.10)

****

We were there from 23rd Feb until 2nd March...We went back to our Travel Agent immediately on our return and we are still waiting for a response from [NAME OF TOUR OPERATOR] We have been told that they have 28 days to respond. Is this correct?  We arrived on Tuesday 23rd Feb and at the 'welcome' meeting on the

24th there was no mention of an illness at the hotel!!! By Thursday 25th my wife became ill (with sickness and diarrhoea) it lasted for two days but on the Sunday 28th the illness started again. So we called for a Doctor, who came promptly and administered three injections and three courses of tablets. meanwhile on Friday night 26th I went down with the same sickness and diarrhoea. No prior warning was given. No alternative accommodation offered.
There were many other guests reporting sick during this week. We understand that this illness had been at this hotel since January. (EM – 27.3.10)

****

returned from Madeira 15th feb, hotel [NAME] funchal .0n the evening of return gastro enteritis. Gp visited as I vomited and passed blood but it was not fresh blood. sent to A+E [LOCATION].all investigations carried out and am awaiting an endoscopy.87 year old husband contacted the bug 2 days later. (EM – 27.3.10)

****

I booked a city break holiday to Rome through [NAME OF TOUR OPERATOR] online it was a very special holiday to celebrate my 50th birthday. My holiday (and my birthday) has been ruined as the outward flight was cancelled because of the [NAME OF AIRLINE] industrial action and then [NAME OF TOUR OPERATOR] also cancelled my return flights in error and my husband and I were left stranded in Rome. I have had to pay a further £1100+ on top of a £1200+ holiday just to get there and back! I'm now being told that my holiday is not the responsibility of [NAME OF TOUR OPERATOR] but someone called [NAME OF ONLINE TOUR OPERATOR] or [NAME OF ONLINE TOUR OPERATOR] and I've been told to send my complaint to them and that it is nothing to do with [NAME OF TOUR OPERATOR]. I booked with [NAME OF TOUR OPERATOR] because they are supposedly a reputable company – I know nothing of these other companies and cannot understand why [NAME OF TOUR OPERATOR] are telling me to take my complaint elsewhere. The website makes no mention of [NAME OF ONLINE TOUR OPERATOR] although the confirmation email comes from someone called [WEB/E MAIL ADDRESS] but also says 'thank you for booking your trip with [NAME OF TOUR OPERATOR]'. (EM – 30.3.10)

****

We went on a Nile Cruise in Ocober 2009 with [NAME OF TOUR OPERATOR]. We booked in person with a travel agent to ensure that what we booked was the holiday we wanted - so we could ask questions etc. We explained that we are full time foster carers and the most important part of our holiday was to be that it was an adults only one. This was our only holiday away together alone so we wanted it to be special. A Nile Cruise was a perfect choice and the travel agent explained that no children under 12 would be allowed to go on the cruise. The first four days of our holiday was fantastic and we must praise [NAME OF TOUR OPERATOR] and everyone that put together the package as it was fantastic. However, on the return up the Nile when we were looking forward to three days of quiet relaxation things changed. German and Japanese families joined our boat and there were three children - one of which must have only been about 4 years old. All definately under

12 years old.  We have been in to see our travel agent and he advised that we contact [NAME OF TOUR OPERATOR] direct. He suggested that the Cruise must have been sold to the British market as 12 and above but sold differently to foreign markets. (EM – 31.3.10)

****

From 8th to 15th March 2010 I was on holiday in Egypt on a Nile Cruise organised by the [NAME OF TOUR OPERATOR]. On the 10th March I became ill suffering acute diarrhoea and severe stomach cramps....I was so ill that I was unable to go on most of the organised trips and was also unable to eat. When I returned to the UK I went straight to see my GP as I was still having severe cramps and Diarrhoea and he organised a stool sample which has confirmed that I have Salmonella. I am still experiencing diarrhoea and stomach cramps. (EM – 31.3.10)

****

We arrived at the [NAME] Hotel Phuket on 10/1/2010 to be told that our room had been cancelled. When i asked why i was told that the tour operator [NAME] had not confirmed the booking. I was asked to put up my credit card for possible payment for a room for that night to see if the matter could be resolved the following day. When i contacted reception the following day there had been no progress and we were also informed that if we could stay it could not be for the full duration of our holiday because the hotel was fully booked and we would have to move elsewhere. After many visits to reception and a meeting with a junior manager i finally had a meeting with the general manager he reiterated all that his staff had said and confirmed that we might have to pay again, also that if we had to move we would have to go through this whole payment process again. Finally on the 14/01/2010 the general manager [NAME] contacted us to let us know that we could stop the full duration of our stay and that issue of payment had been resolved. This meant that during this period we were left anxious and stressed about where we were going to stay and for how long,would we have to move and would we have to pay again. I wrote initially to [NAME OF TOUR OPERATOR] outlining our complaint and informing them that we would be looking to be compensated accordingly, i also included a copy of an email from [NAME OF TOUR OPERATOR] to the hotel that states that i have already paid in full for the hotel. They wrote back saying that they were investigating the matter. I have now received a letter and cheque for £50 as full and final settlement as agreed. At no point have i been aware of the amount they were offering so could not have agreed to it. I do not believe that this amount reflects the anxiety and stress that we went through. (EM – 31.3.10)

****

I have a complaint against the [NAME] tour operator. We had booked a 9 day Europe tour with them well in advance and they have cancelled this when the travel is just 15 days away. My parents have travelled all the way from India for this tour. I have no other tour to book them on since they are unavailable and are highly priced. (EM – 1.4.10)

****

we took a cruise holiday on the [NAME OF CRUISE SHIP] 8th jan 2010 we were struck down with neoro virus the virus was already on the ship when we boarded we were asked all the health questions when we boarded the ship but the cruise ship never informed us that the virus was on board we feel that [NAME OF TOUR OPERATOR] had a duty of care to us and we should of been informed so that we were able to make our own minds up about boarding the ship to take our holiday and they still picked up at different ports when our deck was 80% sick (EM – 1.4.10)

****

Travelled 19th March - 2nd April on [NAME OF SHIP] ([NAME OF CRUISE COMPANY]) Caribbean - Southampton. Suffered Norovirus. Treated on board. Both me (sick) and partner (no symptoms) confined to cabin for 48 hours. Believe around 120 people affected. (EM – 3.4.10)

****

We sat on our Fly/Cruise package flight from Birmingham for over 6 hrs until it was cancelled. We were asked to fly well over 12 hours later from London. I could not do so because I'm a paraplegic (Wheelchair confined paralysed) and could not sit for such a long period. [NAME OF CRUISE COMPANY] have refused to refund our money ias per PTR 1992 reg 12 & 13 for significant change. Can they do so? (EM – 6.4.10)

****

I went on holiday to Turkey in October with my partner through [NAME OF ONLINE TOUR OPERATOR]. 12 hours before we were due to fly out they contacted us to say our hotel was closed and would provide an alternative. They stated on the phone that as the hotel was cheaper they would refund the difference of £126, however after returning they are only offering £30.
I have not accepted the offer and wrote several letters to them. The hotel we stayed in was of poor standard and the original hotel we had booked was open. I am unsure what to do next, I have sent 4 letters and photos to the company and given the name of the person who dealt with us originally. (EM – 7.4.10)

****

Husband & I sailed on [NAME OF SHIP], 4th Jan 2010 from Southampton - New York. Norovirus was aboard which meant buffet food outlets closed on 3rd day, only leaving [NAME] Restaurant & pub open which impacted on dining efficiency. Caught norovirus, had 5 days in New York which were a waste. Several other issues with regard to [NAME OF SHIP] voyage. Have written to [NAME OF CRUISE COMPANY] but they do not appear to be very interested, just sent letter of apology re norovirus and other issues complained of. (EM – 8.4.10)

****

Whilst on holiday in Turkey last year, my wife and self took the option of a hot air balloon trip with the company recommended by our tour operator. Following a mid air collision we were amongst 11 casualties suffering massive injuries. (EM – 9.4.10)

****

we have just returned from a [NAME] cruise on [NAME OF TOUR OPERATOR] [NAME OF CRUISE SHIP] during which our daughter was taken ill with norovirus and confined to our outside cabin - as she came straight to see us when she felt ill - for 48 hours - we had to move into her inside cabin as she has not been ill in it. she lost almost three days of a seven day holiday and we we worried that we might also catch the virus and were extremely anxious, to the point that our holiday was ruined (EM – 10.4.10)

****

i stayed at the [NAME OF HOTEL]l in puerto de santiago dec09 and every one was dropping like flies due to a sickness virus at that time the virus was not at hotel [NAME] or hotel [NAME] (EM – 12.4.10)

****

hello i booked and paid in full for holiday for 2 to new york with [NAME OF TOUR OPERATOR] .. 6 days later i was informed by phone that my accomadation was cancelled. no specific reason was given . i think it was underpriced . however i chose a lesser star hotel with less ammenaties on the conditin that the room had 2 beds . 4 weeks later [NAME OF TOUR OPERATOR] cannot guarentee my request for seperate beds, stating rooms are allocated on arrival. i feel this is very unfair as my riginal choice was a 4 star luxury suite . i have downgraded to a 3 starr standard room (EM – 13.4.10)

****

The complaint I have is the same as the people in tenerife, only we were in benidorm at the [NAME] hotel over xmas this year ,the cost for four people was £3,028. We all ended in our sick beds with NOROVIRUS.The rep knew all about it and rang each day to see how we were.I informed [NAME OF TOUR OPERATOR] and asked wy they let us go when they knew all about the problem, This hotel had this problem through 2009 the rep said .all we got was sorry and that was the end of story.No more than that.What if one or more had died , we are all over 60, my wife is still ill,Its not right travel firms get away with this kind of thing, Thanks (EM – 15.4.10)

****

I have noticed, since March reviews on Trip Advisor regarding sickness, diarrhoea & cramps. One even saying they have had Dysentry. I contacted [NAME OF TOUR OPERATOR] & they say they are not aware of complaints, but I e-mailed a few of these people who say they have on-going issues with [NAME OF TOUR OPERATOR]. All I wanted from [NAME OF TOUR OPERATOR] is assurance that

they are dealing with it, as we do not want to go on holiday to spend it being ill, they did offer us to change hotels, but at our expense. I think they have a certain amount of responsibility to their customers health, in this case knowingly sending holidaymakers there. (EM – 15.4.10)

****

I have a package holiday booked through [NAME OF TOUR OPERATOR] (atol but not abta protected) [NAME OF TOUR OPERATOR] have a force majeure clause in their ts and cs My holiday is likely to be cancelled tomorrow due to the effects of the volcano will I be able to claim under the Packed travel regulations? (EM – 17.4.10)

****

i have been affected by recent vocanic disruption to air trave. I bookedc a 4 day break with an agent that included air travel/accomodation/insurance in resort transfers and supplier failure protection. I booked holiday on credit card Will i be able to make a claim from agent/airline - credit card agent ? (EM – 19.4.10)

****

[NAME OF CRUISE SHIP] Cruise Pharaohs and The Promised Land 7th to 14th April 2010. Took coach tour to Pyramids & Museum, seated at back of bus where flies and mosquitoes were present. Museum guide poor and hearing device given was of poor quality. Coach broke down and replacement took 35 mins to arrive. Buffet meal at hotel where we were left standing had to contact manager to get seated. Tour of pyramids, guide handed out tickets which she said were just a souvenir and so they were left on coach and then we found we could not gain admittance to part of sphinx area. My wife had a stomach upset on return bus journey. (EM – 19.4.10)

****

One week holiday Nile cruise boat [NAME OF CRUISE BOAT] ([NAME OF TOUR OPERATOR]) 10 British passengers in our group hit by serious stomach infection,one having to have medical treatment before return journey home(injection) My husband who was travelling with me has not as yet quite recovered from what as been diagnosed as dysentry(SHIGELLA)and have been informed by the community nurse who has visited today that it is also concontagious. (EM – 19.4.10)

****

I have booked through [ONLINE TOUR OPERATOR] we have had our outboud flights canceled due to Volcano, and they stated we have to book and pay full fees again before we can find out if we will get a refund for our accomodation. The flights are through [NAME OF TOUR OPERATOR] and accomodation booked through [NAME OF ONLINE ACCOMMODATION PROVIDER] although both were booked at same time with one price on the phone. Is it likely we should get a full refund to rebook another holiday, as our friend is due to travel this Saturday on his

own as we should have already been there, and we can not afford the cost again. Is this covered under the Package Holiday EU regulations. (EM – 19.4.10)

****

We booked a 7 night package holiday to St Lucia departing tomorrow 20 April 2010 with [NAME OF ONLINE TOUR OPERATOR] which is ATOL and ABTA bonded . We have just been called to say that the flight has been cancelled due to the volcanic ash. We were told we can re-book the holiday at a later date but we have a problem with this as my husband cannot take any more time off work. We were told we are not entitled to a refund for the accommodation as this event is a "force majeure" and is excluded in their booking conditions. Is this correct? (EM – 19.4.10)

****

We were subject to flight cancellation today from [NAME OF AIRLINE] as part of group bookings for a package deal with [NAME OF ONLINE TOUR OPERATOR]. We have been advised to rebook and upon doing so we have been informed we have got to pay an extra £1321.42 on top of the original price we had paid 18 months ago. This is between 12 people in our party. We have had to rebook as my sister is getting married (cabcelled re-arranged wedding date now as a result)in the US but shocked at price increase. Asked if EU REgulations or Package Travel Regulations mean we pay the same price for the package and no extra charge but [NAME OF AIRLINE say this does not apply and have experienced quite a distressing phonecall with them today when I queried this. Please help if you are able to. Understand people a lot worse of than us but really disheartert ened and sisters wedding receoption in UK has had to be cancelled too as a result, she is heartbroken. (EM – 19.4.10)

****

Due to the Volcanic ash our flight which was scheduled to leave today Saturday 17th April with [NAME OF AIRLINE] to Faro was cancelled. We conatcted the travel operator [NAME OF ONLINE TOUR OPERATOR] the day before to establish what we would need to do. They advised we would have to change our flights ourselves, then get back to them to change the hotel & transfers. This we did, but when we contacted to advise the revised flights, we were then told they would cancel our hotel & transfers, but we would lose the money for them and must re-book new hotel & transfers. As we were advised incorrectly on the Friday and had transferred our flights to a later date we had no alternative than do a new booking. However we have since established, and have an email to provide proof that the hotel has not been paid as yet for our intended stay.
What are our rights. Surely the travel operator has a duty to change our hotels & transfers without us occurring further cost. And can we demand them to refund the cost of the new booking ( which I have now found out is more expensive than they are offering online). (EM – 20.4.10)

****

Hi,My wife and I wre at the [NAME OF HOTEL] from the 23rd Feb to the 16th March 2010. We have holidayed in Sharm on 6 previous occasions and never known so much sickness in an hotel,guests were dropping like flies,initially this came as a surprise,but after a couple of days the reasons became clear,the hygiene in the canteen was non existant.The doctor was the busiest person on the complex.All the reports on the hotel are true (EM – 21.4.10)

****

Our package holiday was cancelled the afternoon (18/04/10) before we were due to travel, as a result of the Icelandic Volcano. The company we booked with, [NAME OF TOUR OPERATOR] did ring to inform us. They asked if we wanted to rebook, we said yes providing all the details were exactly the same and that we would like to travel one week later. The representative said that this was available. We agreed to rebook and at that point we were told that they required an additional £234 for this booking. Not happy we asked for a refund. The representative said they would only refund as a credit on account to be used against a future booking. We asked how long this credit would be held and the representative was unable to answer. At this point we felt pressurised into making the booking, fearing that if we didn't we would lose al l our money, due to uncertainty when we would be availble to use this credit. After making the additional payment the representative advised us of the flight times which were not the same as the original booking. On querying this we were told that flight was not available. Please can you advise under the Package Travel Regulations, if [NAME OF TOUR OPERATOR] are within their rights to insist on an extra fee in order to rebook our holiday? We have complained by email to [NAME OF TOUR OPERATOR] but they have replied justifying the extra charges due to airline increases from the Volcano disaster. (EM – 21.4.10)

****

I am looking for advice on how best to get a full refund for my holiday. It is a package holiday booked through [NAME OF TOUR OPERATOR]. They are being difficult and saying that they are 'trying' to get a refund on the flight (but that will take at least 21 days) and they refuse to gave any indication as to whether I will get any refund for the hotel portion of the holiday. This seems completely wrong and totally unfair. I assume there must be some right I have to a full refund in the circumstances (i.e. cancellation of holiday prior to departure because all flights were grounded due to volcanic ash). However, I'm unsure about how to press the holiday company into giving me the refund and what information/laws I should be armed with when I next speak to them. (EM – 22.4.10)

****

I would appreciate some advice regarding a package holiday that has been cancelled as a result of the Iceland volcano. We would like to know whether you believe we are entitled to a full refund, and also whether you believe that the organiser's terms and conditions are within the law (Package Travel Regulations). My wife and I were booked on a trip to Marrakech, April 16-19, flying from London Luton. The holiday was booked with [NAME OF TOUR OPERATOR]. We paid £824 in total, for the holiday - consisting of flights and accommodation. The holiday was booked with a

debit card, and we did not have travel insurance for the holiday. [NAME OF TOUR OPERATOR] did not inform us of the fact that our holiday would be cancelled due to the volcano. They sent no emails, nor did they call us regarding the situation. Since then, they have made a verbal offer to refund the cost of the flights, and another verbal offer of £130 refund to do with the hotel. However, they have provided no written offer regarding any refund. I have been assured that I will receive a written offer soon, but it has not yet arrived. (EM – 22.4.10)

****

I booked a holiday just a few days before i was due to go away for 2 daults 2 children online at [NAME OF ONLINE TOUR OPERATOR], i orginally booked for 23.04.10 and was called back within minutes to say the cost had gone up for flights so much so i couldn`t afford it and so the lady (sarah) said she had flights on a earlier date 19.04.10 and from a different airport but would make a small difference of £10 pp and that the accomadation of £284 would stay the same and so the total was £820.51 which i paid in one transaction. I recieved 1 ATOL invoice reciept. There reasons for booking on there web are: "We offer our customers the flexibility of choosing ANY flight and accommodation combination with the ATOL protection of a package holiday!" "ATOL protects you from losing your money or being stranded abroad. It does this by carrying out checks on the tour operators and travel organisers it licenses, and requiring a financial guarantee called a bond, which is lodged with ATOL." Obviously due to the volcano [NAME OF ONLINE TOUR OPERATOR] contacted me the night before my holiday to say my flights where cancelled and that they will not be offering alternative flights so my holiday was completely cancelled and i would recieve £435, I have expressed endlessly that i want a replacement holiday or a full refund they say" im not entitled as its not a package holiday ( even though i believe it is) and classing it as a force majeure and there for im not entitled to anything ". please help!!!!! (EM – 23.4.10)

****

I have booked a holiday with [NAME OF ONLINE TOUR OPERATOR], paid deposit and then decided to change booking, to different hotel, I understood there would be a surcharge for admin etc, upon looking on their website chose another hotel same cost, booked it with them, however, when I received confirmation document, balance remaining was considerably more than I had anticipated. I called them and was informed the holiday cost was due to fluctuate at any time. What I can't understand was why it was indicated at the cost I had seen for a further 24 hours on their website? It is and is still on their site at this time, set at a a cost lower than [NAME OF ONLINE TOUR OPERATOR] indicated to me?? How can they do that without breaking code of conduct and trade description? You don't expect to buy a television for £1000, then receive an invoice 24 hours later and be charged £1200 do you? All I wanted to do was change my booking to a holiday which was the same cost as the previous one I had booked. Not so difficult, I feel "conned" to say the least. (EM – 26.4.10)

****

I have checked the flight and hotel receipts and discovered that although I booked TWIN rooms at the [NAME] Hotel, Cyprus for three married couples the documentation is showing TWO twin rooms. On printing the booking form the information regarding the rooms read HB Twin rooms.
I spoke to one of your representatives shortly after placing the order and she said it was your policy to fill rooms to capacity hence there would only be two rooms. If this is the case there has been a misrepresentation by your company. However, I trust that there has simply been a computer error on your part. She said that I would only be able to take this further via your amendments department on Monday hence this email to prompt immediate action and record my concerns. In plain English a twin room means sleeping arrangements for two persons. Your site clearly states that the price is for a party of 6 adults, in twin rooms, half board for £35.71pppn. This can only be sensibly interpreted as your willingness to provide three bedrooms. I would be grateful if you could confirm that three twin rooms will be made available at the agreed and contracted price as quoted and that the documentation will be amended to clearly reflect this.
I look forward to your early response and thank you in anticipation (EM – 27.4.10)

****

went on holiday last year, all inc arrived at hotel , told fully booked taking us to other hotel same spec all inc/ got up in morning asked for cup of coffee, told had to pay, hitel was only b&b. had to walk to another hotel for food & drink. hotel was dirty food was terrible drinks out of plastic beakers not what we paid for. asked to go back to orriginal hotel 3 days we tried . no luck. spent over £200 extra for food & drink, put complaint in offered £35 compensation not accepted told them it was an insult. had no word back from them. (EM – 27.4.10)

****

We were in Goa when volcanic disruption occured, the Thursday before we were due to fly back on Sunday 18th April. [NAME OF TOUR OPERATOR] told us we had to move out of the hotel a 5* in the south on Sunday to a 2 * hotel in the North couldn't even tell us if it had A/C (34-38 Deg) We refused and suggested that what it was costing them to move all the other people there allow us the same and we would pay the difference. This was refused and we were told that if we did this we were on our own and not their responsability any more (EM – 28.4.10)

****

I have holidayed with [NAME OF TOUR OPERATOR] on countless occasions, from my first in 1972 to my most recent in Jan 2010. We are VIP members of [TOUR OPERATOR LOYALTY CLUB] as regular [NAME OF TOUR OPERATOR] cruisers, never having had a problem in the past with any of our holidays. It is not normally in my nature to complain. We holiday 4 or 5 times annually, always having placed [NAME OF TOUR OPERATOR] as a priority when booking, although this has been made more difficult lately as our local travel agent could no longer sell [NAME OF TOUR OPERATOR]...The total disregard to our complaint means now, that any [NAME OF TOUR OPERATOR] holiday will now not be considered, as I no longer wish to travel with a company who does not care for their customers. A discount

voucher for a future holiday as a goodwill gesture would probably have enticed us to holiday again with you, although definitely not on the [NAME OF CRUISE SHIP]....Our cruise should never had set sail, and to the many who fell extremely ill, I feel [NAME OF TOUR OPERATOR] have a moral obligation to give some compensation for their failure to safeguard their health and to provide a holiday which they should have enjoyed. There was one death on the cruise, on arrival in Lanzarote, and although an elderly gent, I would be interested to know if he had contracted the virus, and could it have been contributory. (EM – 28.4.10)

****

I booked a package holiday with [NAME OF ONLINE TOUR OPERATOR] which was due to start last monday (19th) No one from the company got in touch with me with regards to my flight being cancelled and i have been phoning and e-mailing since last monday to get my money back or another holiday booked but no one seems to want to help.  I have managed to get through to someone twice they have told me i can have an 80% refund(in credit note) for my hotel and transferes flights subject to air line ([NAME OF TOUR OPERATOR] who are going to give me a full refund and of which i am truely greatful!) When i questioned why i would loose 20% they said it was due to a cancellation Fee i explained that i didnt cancel my holiday so i dont feel it is fair that i loose money because of their cancellation. The man told me that i am lucky to get many money back at all. i asked to speak to a manager as i had booked a package deal i was under the impression i should recieve a full refund. He told me i would be on hold for half an hour i said that was fine i was on hold for about 40 mins and then they hung up on me. this happen twice then the following day i called twice and i was "breaking up" so they 'couldnt hear me' and hung up.
I have e-mailed EVERY e-mail address i could find on their website but can't seem to get a responce from anyone.....(EM – 28.4.10)

****

ive just received a letter from my travel agent say that building work will be going on at the hotel im going to in tunisia i leave on the 16th may for 2 weeks can i cancel or must i take a replacment hotel. (EM – 30.4.10)

****

My husband and myself had booked aflight and car hire to and from Vancouver via [NAME OF ONLINE TOUR OPERATOR].We were due to travel from heathrow on a [NAME OF AIRLINE] flight on 19th April obviously this flight was cancelled by [NAME OF AIRLINE] due to the volcanic ash disruption.Over a period of 8 days I have had great difficulty contacting [NAME OF ONLINE TOUR OPERATOR] sometimes i had been left holding on for 1 hour at the cost of 10p per minute.On 26th April i finally was able to speak to an agent in Bangalore who assured me that the flight and car hire was cancelled i asked for an email confirmation of this.The next day no email was forthcoming and i contacted [NAME OF AIRLINE] who told me that the return flight was still live and i would need to contact [NAME OF ONLINE TOUR OPERATOR]to make the cancellation.Another 50 minute hold and i spoke to an agent who told me no cancellation had been made the night b efore.I am now not trusting [NAME OF ONLINE TOUR OPERATOR] as to whether I am

going to get the refund for the cancelled flights and car hire.Interestingly if you want to book a holiday there is no holding on but the sales agents are not able to help. with any other problems (EM – 1.5.10)

****

I bought complete package holiday from [NAME OF TOUR OPERATOR] Travel Agent [LOCATION] in June 2009, for 4 days in Disneyland Paris, ( 14/04 - 17/04 2010 )travelling with [NAME OF AIRLINE]. On checking in at [NAME OF AIRLINE] desk Charles De Gualle for our departure they didn't want to know us !! all they would offer was a flight a week away on 24/04 there were 6 adults and 4 young children in our party . We were left with no accommodation for the night . and were told to arrange something ourselves .This I feel was a complete breach of EU rules. [NAME OF TOUR OPERATOR] have also refused to have anything to do with it. We eventually had to stay another 3 nights in Paris before we all managed to get ourselves home by other means . This was very costly and I have had to put at least £2500 on my credid card All money for the holiday ( £5600.00 ) was paid to [NAME OF TOUR OPERATOR].

****

I WOULD BE SO PLEASED IF YOU COULD HELP ME. I BOOKED A HOLIDAY FOR MY SISTER & MYSELF IN FEBRUARY BY PHONE WITH [NAME OF ONLINE TOUR OPERATOR] [NUMBER] & I PAID BY CREDIT CARD. MY CUSTOMER REF [NUMBER] MY FLIGHTS WERE [NAME OF AIRLINE] BOOKING REF [NUMBER] FLIGHT NO [NUMBER] LEAVING GLASGOW 16/04/2010 6.30 AM ARRIVING AT ALICANTE 10.35 AM DEPARTING ALICANTE FLIGHT NO [NUMBER] 23/04/2010 11.10 AM ARRIVING IN GLASGOW 13.10 PM ACCOMMODATION & BUS TRANSFER [NAME OF ONLINE ACCOMMODATION PROVIDER] BOOKING REF [NUMBER] [NAME] APARTMENTS BENIDORM. WE WENT TO GLASGOW AIRPORT 4.30AM ON FRI THE 16TH TO BE TOLD BY [NAME OF AIRLINE] NO PLANES WOULD BE FLYING TILL AT LEAST SUNDAY THERE WAS ONLY 1 SEAT. WE BOOKED ON TO MONDAYS . WE WERE TOLD TO WATCH THE NEWS & IF THERE WERE NO FLIGHTS WE WERE NOT TO COME TO THE AIRPORT. I PHONED & WROTE A LETTER TO [NAME OF TOUR OPERATOR] I NEED A LETTER FROM THEM FOR MY INSURANCE TO PAY FOR MY ACCOMMODETION & BUS TRANSFER (EM – 1.5.10)

****

My husband and I booked a package holiday via your [LOCATION] shop to Thailand travelling out on the 2nd April and supposed to be returning on the 17th. Due to the volcano we was expectantly delayed somewhat,eventually arriving home on the 24th April. When we flew in from Krabbi we was left at Bangkok airport not knowing what to do until eventually some 7.5 hours later in a state of distress we was pointed in the direction of ATTA. who rang [NAME OF TOUR OPERATOR] who in turn directed us to the hotel being used for the majority of travellers. On each of following few days I rang [NAME OF TOUR OPERATOR] from the hotel (on the hotel invoice )again who was no help whatsoever, they didn't even take our names so no one apart from family knew we was there. It just happened by chance

on the 5th day that we saw a rep in the hotel lobby looking after the [NAME OF AIRLINE] guests and went to her , after having to get quite cross with her she decided to look after us and took our names . We had to settle the bill for the first 4 nights and [NAME OF TOUR OPERATOR] instructed the hotel to take over the bill for the rest of the time we was there , and to send our hotel invoice to [NAME OF TOUR OPERATOR] when we got home and we will be reimbursed , but surprise surprise when I called I was told that even though I booked a package holiday through a [NAME OF TOUR OPERATOR] shop its not covered because the flight wasn't on a [NAME OF TOUR OPERATOR] plane but [NAME] Airways ,this is absolute rubbish ,the contract was with you not them !! (EM – 4.5.10)

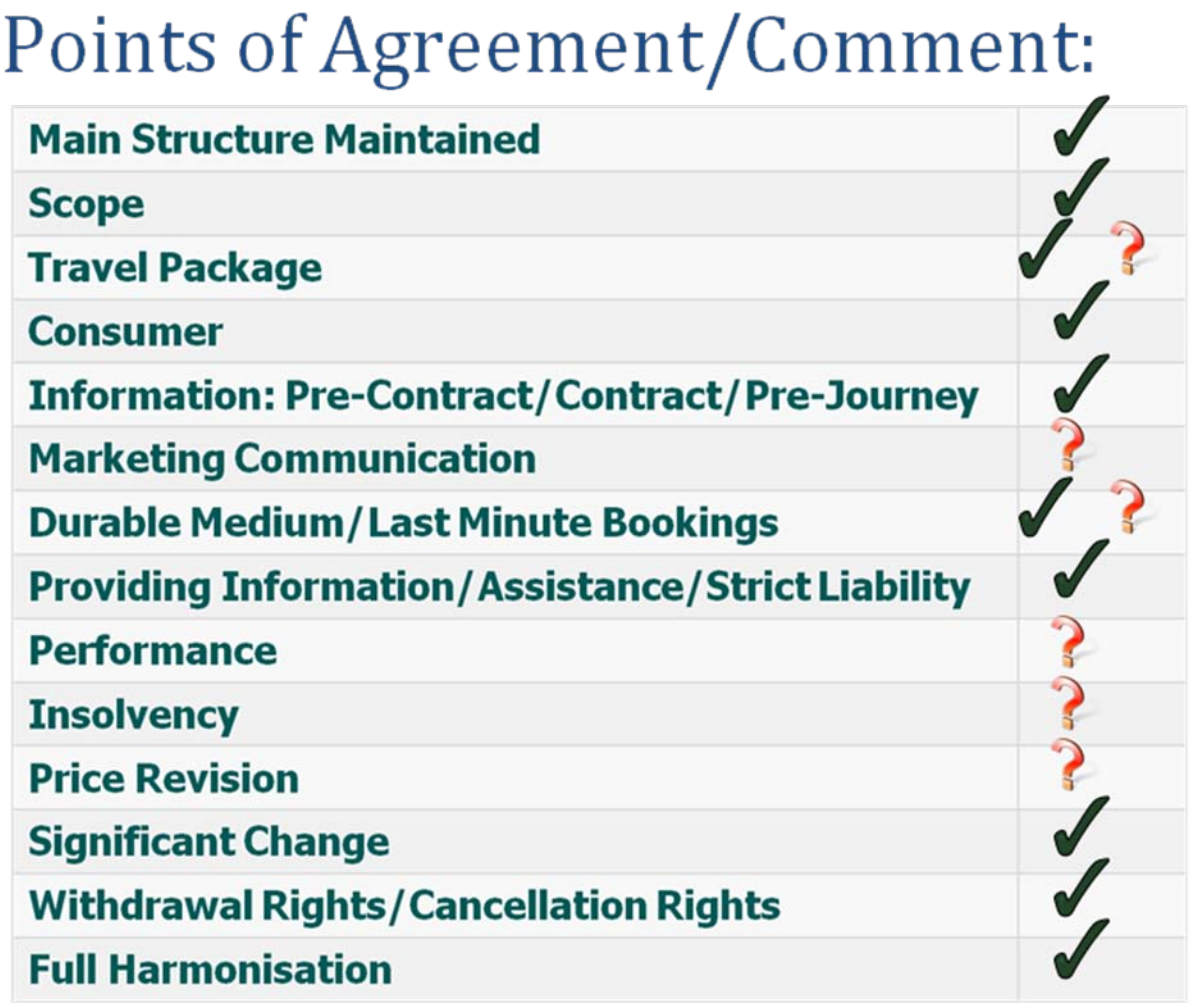
****

Hi, we booked our holiday at [NAME OF ONLINE TOUR OPERATOR] and stayed in a hotel and flew with [NAME OF LOW COST AIRLINE]. When stranded, we were not offered a refund only a return on 7th May which we took as we were advised that if we didn't acccept there and then, we may miss that flight slot. Subsequently we made/paid for our own way home on 27th April. I am unsure as to whether this is classed as a'package' and can I cancel my return flight scheduled for this Friday and get a refund or can I claim any accomodation costs and if so who throm? Many Thanks. ( EM – 5.5.10)

## THE EU COMMISSION POLICY DOCUMENT

***Points of Agreement:***

For ease of reference, we re-produce the table from our Powerpoint Presentation, which indicates the key areas of agreement within Option 5 of the Policy Document. We see Option 5 as containing the basic elements for reform of the Directive.




***Points of Disagreement:***

We shall state our position, as presented at the Conference, by reference to the aforementioned table.

**Package Travel:**

We do not accept the proposals at Option 5 to be workable.

We must be conscious in any assessment, to avoid the potential for loopholes which would make the Directive ineffective!

As it is currently suggested, we consider that the impact of a solely implemented Option 5, would leave many holidaymakers outside the Directive's provisions and we suggest, create a 'rush' by an Industry to reinvent itself outside those provisions.

To date, we have supplied over 1300 case studies to the various studies; within the recent EU Consultation we decided to ask; is the phenomena of internet holiday sales to Consumers something new?

We purchased 3 pre-1990 UK holiday brochures and compared their content, and terms and conditions with the 'new' kids on the block!

We discovered that there was no difference between the terms and conditions of sale or the products being offered.

It is clear that the only difference between then and now, is that the Consumer now deals with a non-paper based medium to make their contract.

There is rarely anything new; just new methods of presentation! Is this an attempt to return Consumers to the so-called 'golden age of travel', that time being prior to the arrival of the current Directive?

This distinction is important, as it cuts to the very heart of Consumer holiday problems today.

We know from the Policy document, that the relationship between the Organiser/Retailer/Agent – will be examined, and consideration will be given to

determine the scope, and level of liability for each party, which in turn runs to the Standards Argument.

The issues of these relationships have been well rehearsed and indeed remain unresolved in the UK.

It must be recognised that confusion results – both for Consumer and Industry! We must be on guard from those who seek to argue that 'retailers/agents/hoteliers/suppliers' should share some of the responsibility with Organisers. It may be a fair point, but Consumer perception is that they make contracts with one entity, not several!

The relationships between the Organisers and suppliers are governed by their own contracts; will it add to the confusion of Consumers if they have to consider multi-contractors or defendants?

We must recognise that there is a world of difference between selling Organisers products or creating the conditions for them to be purchased.

Any impact assessment must have regard to the danger that 'retailers et al' may become the new 'agents' and return us to back to square one!

We must take care to draft a Directive that prevents for a re-interpretation within terms and conditions, and that any 'division' of responsibilities do not present confusion or a clear route to redress – a redress that should remain within the Consumers home state.

We were however encouraged to see that 64% of the trade support including 'click-through' sales as part of the new dynamic package regime; we think that this is correct and is the safest route to prevent confusion in any new Directive - we support the proposals of Option 6.

## MARKETING COMMUNICATION

We do not agree with the proposals in Option 5 on marketing communication – as we demonstrated, there is no difference between electronic and hard copy brochures. To abandon the current rules, which we say could be adapted for the new medium, could create uncertainty as to the holiday product offered or sold to Consumers.

## LAST MINUTE BOOKINGS

With regard to last minute bookings, whilst it may be true that most Consumers receive their documentation at the time of booking, there are some who do not, and experience problems, even upon arrival at an airport, in receiving that documentation – we would urge care and consideration on this point at the assessment stage.

## PERFORMANCE

This has been commented upon in the section, 'Travel Package' above.

## INSOLVENCY

This is commented upon in the Post Conference Comment section below.

## PRICE REVISION

On price revision, we consider that it should be limited to between 2 – 5%. Why? Concern is expressed about increased costs to Consumers and presumably the downward pressure on trade.

Most Consumers are just ordinary working people on tight budgets – if the cost increase is topped out at 10% a £500 increase on a £5k holiday could just be the tipping point that stops that holidaymaker from engaging in the contract!

***Post Conference Comment:***

*Standalone Air Ticket and Consumer Financial Protection*

We understand the cut and thrust of political debate. We reject the implication made following our presentation, that the Commission is anything less than scrupulous when considering the arguments presented to them.

We take the view that the aviation lobby is organised and powerful in the presentation of its arguments; Trade bodies and other Consumer groupings need to confront this 'aged' discussion and address any view they have and confront any perceived imbalance.

We take the robust position that Option 7 should be adopted, however, we are not confident that this will be the case, simply because the current range of views and opinion from Consumers, will leave authorities of the view that at this stage nothing should change. We base this view not simply upon the input into the current enquiry, but also our experience of such debates on a National level.

The argument from the Aviation Industry is three-fold. Firstly that to introduce the provision would be disproportionate given that few airlines collapse. Secondly there are sufficient checks and balances in place to ensure the financial strength of an airline, and thirdly, the Travel Industry has its own internal 'awareness' whereby that it would either be unlikely or rare that a Consumer would be sold a ticket with an airline that was close to collapse or not able to satisfy its creditors. In the presentation made by ELFAA, reference was made to the XL collapse, in support of that proposition.

One the question of proportionality, we suggest that this has to be balanced against the effects of such a collapse by comparison to say for example the collapse of a furniture supplier. An airline's collapse not only affects the staff within its operation but also the passengers who have contracted with them. Its influence also extends into the contracts with tour operators, hoteliers, transport providers and other

ancillary services. The key question is this; should we allow for the aviation industry to go unregulated on this issue? Additionally, what effect does this have upon the goal of a seamless and fair internal market, not only for the wider travel industry but also the Consumer.

We question the sufficiency of current checks and balances. If those checks and balances were operating correctly, would we have had the XL collapse and subsequent failures? The fact that the 'systems' in place failed to detect or act upon the difficult trading position of any airline, is proof in itself, that the reliance on this method to protect Consumers has reached its sell by date.

We reject the notion that an added 'awareness' protects Consumers. We are not sure that this is a serious argument! If it were the case that an airline was trading in difficulty and it was known within the Travel Industry Community, surely they have a duty to utilise and report such 'defects' to the relevant sanctioning authorities? If XL is being used as a model of how the 'awareness' argument works, then it clearly failed and is in fact an argument for greater checks and balances!

In conclusion we take the position that they should be included, but would suggest that this should be subject to a separate debate within the impact assessment to encourage a wider and more informed debate. Only then would the Commission and Parliament, in our view, be able to make a judgement on the proportionality of the measure for inclusion within any new Package Travel Directive.

*Insolvency*

This issue is connected with the standalone air ticket debate.

Our position remains that we support a pan-European protection fund.

The policy options document suggested that the majority favoured their own national schemes.

However, during the course of the debate it became apparent that there were many differences between the national schemes and concern how a harmonised market would work or be policed.

Notwithstanding, it was clear that amongst the delegates, there was a 'meeting' of national schemes already in operation. However, their fears reflected the growing trend for Consumers to buy travel products from providers based outside their own Member States. We have experienced a number of British Consumers engaged in such transactions, notably with companies based in Spain. The fear is that 'rogue' companies will position themselves in one Member State, only to move onto other Member States when their trading position becomes difficult. This latter point was ably brought out by a French representative who suggested an 'Interpol' solution to monitor the movement and operation of companies offering travel products and protection to Consumers. The concern of being able to track companies was also expressed by the representative from the FIA. In our view, these arguments formed the basis of support for a pan-European scheme.

It will be recalled that the explanation given by HTW, as to the problems of the UK National scheme, is in fact rooted in the longstanding argument over what is and what is not a package! It was clear to us that whilst many Member States have not yet encountered the difficulty of DIY Holidays vs The Package Travel Directive, Member States should learn from the British experience!

The result in the UK has been total chaos for Consumers, (we understand that some XL Consumers are still waiting for payment), with ABTA, the CAA and Credit Cards companies all passing the problem from one to the other!

Subsequent to the meeting it has been expressed to us by one Trade Body that such a pan-European scheme would be unworkable, as many EU Member States would institute their own version of any pan-European scheme. We disagree. We consider that such an approach fails to recognise, as with any Directive, enforcement (whether National or pan-European) will have to become a central feature as further development of the internal market takes place.

As stated during the meeting, these are genuine concerns, but mixed in with a myriad of National Schemes which must offer usability, understanding and maximum protection to the Consumer. As an Organisation we accept that there appears to be little appetite for a pan-European or unified protection scheme, however, judging by the concerns expressed about National schemes we consider that it is only a matter of time before such matters will have to be considered. For the present, it would seem that the majority would favour tighter pan-European rules to support National schemes.

*Package Travel Label*

It was surprising to find that even amongst Consumer representatives, there is disagreement on this point.

The argument advanced was that are too many logos; concern was expressed as to what would it mean and what kind of value is added to the travel product by the presentation of such a label. We consider that whilst it is valid to express such concerns, it would have been better for delegates to provide a constructive review of this topic in support of their position.

Our view was clear; we support the introduction of the label - anything that provides confidence in the travel product must surely be useful? 86.5% of those we have surveyed, would support 'warning notices' within holiday contracts - those Consumer responses would appear to suggest that this proposal has purpose.

Assuming that the new Directive still leaves a number of holiday transactions as non-package holidays, we consider that there is a need to advance the label discussion further.

We suggested that the label issue should develop into a 'label +' scheme, that being, the label should declare whether you are or are not covered by the Directive for different levels of complaint or services (including Financial Protection) within the

travel product.

The extension beyond a simple label could and should lead to its inclusion we suggest, into all travel products - that way Consumers can clearly see what kind of product they are purchasing.

Even if warning notices are not preferred, we would suggest that in any event, within any holiday contract, a key facts document supplied at the time of purchase, detailing what and whether you are protected on a range of issues (not just financial protection), would enhance the travel product and increase confidence and competition.

There will be those who will object to this proposal as being too cost impactive. We disagree; it is a .PDF standardised document and we would suggest that initial set up costs to be in the region of €0.50 to €1.0 - or less per passenger; that cost diminishing over a period of time until it becomes negligible.

*Strict Liability*

There were strong views expressed and passions were raised as to why the UK was not enforcing the strict liability of article 5.

We heard a range of views from UK and non-UK representatives.

We noted the Luxembourg Government's representative's submission that the problems that existed within the UK could be related the fact that it is a Common Law Jurisdiction as opposed to the Codified systems on mainland Europe. We consider that this is a correct interpretation of UK problems.

At the root of UK Consumer Travel Problems, is the long-running argument as to what constitutes a package.

This argument has been used to try and effect a change in how the product is sold

and perhaps we suggest, to avoid regulatory obligations.

Within that argument is the thorny question of whether a tour company is to be judged by UK or foreign standards.

The result has seen a breakdown of the principle of Article 5, with many Consumers left adrift trying to prove that an Organiser has failed to protect them and as a result, they have suffered damage.

As we presented, we are concerned by the argument within these proposals that an attempt should be made to define 'responsibility'. We note the campaign by the Travel Industry to create new Safety Directive, such as Fire, Carbon Monoxide etc. Any new Directive must have regard to this issue and ensure that any new proposals are 'crossed' with the Package Travel Directive to ensure a continuous line of responsibility upon Organisers/Retailers.

Whilst we would support any efforts to improve safety for the Consumer, we would be concerned if this was also an attempt to 'water' down the obligations of the Package Travel Directive. Within our report we included our letter expressing these concerns and how any move to 'spread' responsibility, should also be cross-referenced to The Package Travel Directive.

The weakening of the strict liability principle or 'spreading' of responsibility has potentially great difficulties, with Consumers struggling to determine who within a complex holiday contract is responsible!

It is a simple fact; Consumers believe that they are contracting with one entity, not several, it should surely remain the case that Organisers or those who put packages together should bear the responsibility to the Consumer?

Organisers/Retailers can create their own solution, as they currently do, through indemnity clauses within supplier contracts.

Therefore in relation to strict liability, we support the proposals at 5.1.3.4 but would suggest that the definition will have to be drafted with greater certainty so as to ensure that whatever legal system is asked to consider its provisions, there is clear intention expressed that strict liability is its purpose!

*Exclusion reasons for significant change:*

We note that one delegate suggested that a change of airline should be removed from the list. We disagree. Most 'Packages' are put together with reasonable certainty as to which airline a customer will fly with. The representative from BEUC made a valid point within her presentation. She raised the point that not all airlines are acceptable to Consumers. They may have safety or service concerns which would ordinarily prevent them from making arrangements with that airline. Why then should a tour operator be allowed to foist an airline onto a Consumer, without the choice being given to that Consumer if they wish to continue with the contract? Our concern would be if during the impact assessment, items were to 'disappear' off the list of 'significant changes', this could lead to further uncertainty into an already difficult legal environment.

*Force Majeure:*

We have written extensively of the need to protect Consumers from the issues of natural or man-made disasters, highlighting many of the problems endured by holidaymakers. The greatest detriment suffered is from those holidaymakers who are expected to travel to a trouble-spot, on the basis that matters are under control; rarely is that the case! Consideration needs to be given to this issue when considering the issue of 'significant changes'.

*Impact Assessment:*

We support the representative from BEUC, who expressed concern as to how the impact assessment will be carried out. We urge the Commission to facilitate cross table discussions on key areas. We note that we have been invited to take part in a

telephone interview, with the comment that they have noted our submitted questionnaire, but they seemed oblivious to the extensive evidence that accompanied that questionnaire!

## CONCLUSION

The Stakeholder Conference provided the opportunity for all those invited to share their views on the future direction of any new Directive.

As we stated in our presentation:

"The events of the Icelandic Volcano eruption brings into sharp focus, the real problems faced by Consumers and Industry, when things go awry!

It demonstrates why in any analysis, the importance of creating fairness and partnership, rather than the harsh words of recent days, which seem centred on costs and commercial pressures, must not dominate the impact of experience; the experience of the Consumers of the Travel Product. Whatever about current events, our job is to build for the future; we must not be thwarted by understandable pressures.

Many Consumers so desperately want to demonstrate their loyalty to the travel product; we should all work to that end, and create the conditions that engender trust, respect, safety and real sustainability in the travel product.

Overall, we consider the proposals are good for the promotion of the internal market, good for EU tourism – but it should be remembered, it's the Consumers that make that market work!"

We look forward to being part of developing debate on this important issue!

Frank Brehany
MD – HolidayTravelWatch
7 May 2010