

## PRESS RELEASE

### 2020, the year travel stopped

**2020 has been catastrophic for the travel companies. Turnover has slumped to 20% compared to 2019. State aids and vouchers issued in the early months avoided the collapse of the sector. Cooperation with destinations has been key.**

**Brussels, 18 December 2020.** In a review of the year, ECTAA, the European Travel Agent and Tour Operator Association, described 2020 as the most catastrophic year in history of travel. With an average of -80% of turnover, the value of the activities will barely reach 40 billion euros in 2020, compared with the 175 billion euros in 2019. Travel has been made impossible due to closure of borders and subsequent uncoordinated, contradictory and unstable travel restrictions, discouraging potential costumers to travel and travel companies to start up again.

The liquidity crunch of the service suppliers (airlines, hotels, events...) was passed on to tour operators and travel agents, which in turn were unable to refund their customers and issued vouchers. In December 2020, an estimated 7 billion euros are still to be reimbursed by airlines to the indirect distribution. In absence of sales due to the travel restrictions and health measures, many companies were required to reduce their staff, using temporary unemployment schemes or laying off personnel.

Said Pawel Niewiadomski, President of ECTAA: "From all countries we receive the same information: despite all the efforts made by companies and their staff and despite the public support provided to the industry, many companies may not recover. This has never been seen before! Continuous support measures are needed for the travel and tourism industry, which is the industry most adversely hit by the pandemic."

In this context, coordination and joint initiatives aimed at supporting the restart of travel and tourism are essential. As ECTAA Preferred Destination for 2020, the Greek National Tourism Organisation brought an invaluable contribution to restore consumer confidence and open tourism up for business.

Since June, Greek authorities and Greek travel organisations have been communicating in a clear way with the industry and consumers and implementing strict health and safety protocols.. Thanks to well-shaped policies, Greece, despite all the difficulties, has managed to safely welcome visitors.

"The attribution of the World's Leading Tourism Board 2020 title by the World Travel Awards is fair reward for the quality of the work done by Greece during the last months and reflects the successful opening of Greece to tourism during the pandemic" said Eric Drésin, Secretary General of ECTAA. He added "ECTAA values the excellent cooperation with the GNTTO which has made it possible for our members to sell Greece in the summer".

#### About ECTAA

ECTAA represents some 70,000 travel agents and tour operators in Europe, which provide consultancy and sell transport, accommodation, leisure and other tourism services as well as combined products to leisure and business customers.

For more information, please contact:

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