

24th September 2012

PRESS RELEASE (2 pages)

European Alliance for Coach Tourism (EACT) holds key discussions with high-ranking EU politicians and officials in Brussels

A delegation from the European Alliance for Coach Tourism (EACT) discussed key issues concerning the European coach tourism sector with high-ranking EU representatives on 18th September 2012 in the European Parliament and European Commission in Brussels.

The delegation consisted of Willy Della Valle (President CONFARTIGIANATO Autobus Operators), Richard Eberhardt (President, IBV – International Coach Tourism Association and RDA – International Coach Tourism Federation), Kjell Peterson (Swedish National Coach Operators' Organisation), Stephen Smith (Operations Director, CPT Confederation of Passenger Transport UK), Dieter Gauf (CEO, RDA) and Sandra van de Walle (RDA Representative in Brussels).

During a meeting with Antonio Cancian, Italian MEP and Member of the EU Parliamentary Committee for Transport and Traffic, the EACT clearly demonstrated that coach tourism fulfils vital economic and social functions. Medium-sized coach tour operators contribute significantly to the accessibility and development of tourism in rural areas and hinterland regions, thereby supporting European tourism policy objectives. Moreover, coach tourism operators and their contract partners secure millions of jobs in Europe. Despite these positive aspects coach travel is still highly discriminated against compared to other modes of transport. Themes also discussed at the Brussels meeting included a demand for special driving and resting hours for coach drivers; technology and ecology in modern tour coaches.

A coach is not a truck

Coach driver working requirements and job profiles differ considerably from those of truck drivers. Therefore, the EACT calls for a special body of rules specifically for coach drivers. This line of argument was voiced by MEPs Dr. Dieter-Leberecht Koch (EVP Parliamentary Party and Vice-Chairman of the Committee for Transport and Tourism) and Mathieu Grosch when the EU Parliament voted on the introduction of the digital tachograph and on amendment motions concerning the same at the beginning of July. Special regulations for coach drivers were discussed in Brussels with Mathieu Grosch (Belgian MEP and EVP Parliamentary Party Co-ordinator for Transport and Tourism). Mathieu Grosch pointed out that the most decisive criterium was safety.

European Alliance for Coach Tourism

RDA CEO, Dieter Gauf, was able to illustrate on the basis of RBI findings (RDA – Coach Intervention Accident & Safety Monitoring) that there were no proven negative effects on safety arising from the “12-day rule” for coach drivers’ hours.

Discussions were held with Michael Shotters, Member of the Cabinet of Viviane Reding, Vice-President of the EU Commission for Justice, Civil Rights and Citizenship. Mr. Shotter began by explaining the current status of the ‘Amendment of the EU Package Tours Directive’. In this context, he reassured the EACT delegation that alliance demands concerning the retention of a possibility to cancel trips when minimum participant numbers were not reached would be given due and careful consideration. This issue is fundamental to medium-sized coach holiday operators’ business model which ensures that consumers can choose from a wide selection of offers and destinations.

Richard Eberhardt, President of IBV and RDA, stated in conclusion:

“It is clear that we are on the right path with our joint European Alliance for Coach Tourism. We can articulate our case far more effectively with this broader foundation. We view ourselves as bridge builders - with the first pillars already set for the removal of one-sided political preferences for rail and air passenger transport.”

Members of the European Alliance for Coach Tourism:

- B.A.A.V. Busworld
- CONFARTIGIANATO
- CTC Coach Tourism Council (UK)
- CPT Confederation of Passenger Transport UK
- F.B.A.A., Belgian Bus Operators’ Association
- FNTV ALSACE Fédération Nationale des Transports de Voyageurs d’Alsace
- RDA and IBV
- Swedish National Coach Operators’ Organisation

Further information:

Dieter Gauf, RDA CEO
Tel.: +49-221 – 91 27 72-0
Fax: +49-221 – 12 47 88
European Alliance for Coach Tourism, Hohenstaufenring 47-51, DE 50674 Cologne
E-mail: info@rda.de,

This text may also be accessed online at: www.rda.de