

## Press Release

21 April 2010

### **EU should make sure air passengers are properly treated during flight disruptions due to the volcanic ash**

The recent eruption of the volcano in Iceland created an ash cloud that led to the closure of most of Europe's airspace from April 15 2010. Consequently, a very high proportion of flights within, to, and from Europe were cancelled, creating the highest level of air travel disruption since the Second World War.

Association of European Travel and Tourist Agencies certainly understands unprecedented difficulties experienced by airlines. And we are thankful to the airlines who act responsibly by doing their utmost to look after their passengers while rearranging the flights. Nevertheless, it has been brought to our attention that some airlines try to take advantage of the extraordinary circumstances in order to misinterpret the European legislation and skip their responsibility. This particularly concerns the regulation (EC) 261/2004 requiring airlines to offer meals, refreshments and hotel accommodation as appropriate whilst passengers wait for a rearranged flight.

Helmut Messner, Secretary General of AETTA, commented: "We certainly do not want to dramatise the situation. We do know that the majority of airlines show a high level of responsibility and do what should be done in such circumstances. However, we have also noted down a number of testimonies including from the members of our Association that some airlines do not behave properly with respect to the regulation (EC) 261/2004. Therefore, we call upon the European Commission and EU Member States to ensure the compliance with the said regulation."

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Note to the Editor: Association of European Travel and Tourist Agencies (AETTA) brings under one roof some one thousand travel and tourist agencies working in Europe or serving European destinations. Each year these collectively serve 8.4 million clients, generate a total turnover of some €4.5 billion and employ directly 21 000 people.

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