

# GUILD OF EUROPEAN BUSINESS TRAVEL AGENTS

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## PRESS RELEASE

### **Business travel management companies defend their customers' interests**

***At an event organised by the Guild of European Business Travel Agents, GEBTA, business travel management companies confirmed to key EU regulators their support of legislation that protect and enhance the rights of their customers, such as complete and fair access to fares and passenger protection in case of disruptive events and the financial failure of service providers.***

At the event organised on 3 October, GEBTA Members reiterated that the complete deregulation of the market for computerised reservation systems (CRS), as contemplated as an option by the EU legislators, would be detrimental for European travellers. They insisted on the need for regulatory safeguards in the use of CRSs to ensure, among other, the widest access of all fares and fare types on a non-discriminatory basis. The maintenance and adaptation of the legislation on CRSs is also essential to ensure confidentiality of sensitive commercial data contained in agents' MIDTs, which are currently accessible to third parties.

Said President Carl Gerkens: *"In the absence of a number of safeguards on fair and complete access to fares, business travel management companies will lose an essential tool of comparison of existing fares and availabilities. Finding the optimal flight will require more time and money, costs which will ultimately be paid by the customer."*

GEBTA also reiterated support for the various EU legislations which protect air passengers in case of disruptive events, such as long delays and cancellation of flights, and against unsafe carriers. However GEBTA expressed strong regrets on the lack of any protection of passengers against the financial default of airlines. It called on the Commission to act on a study, which showed that in the period 2000-2005 some 50 airlines went bankrupt, leaving more than 63.000 passengers stranded without a return ticket. In an appeal to the Commission, President Carl Gerkens said: *"Since agents are required to remit their customers' moneys to the clearing system despite the knowledge of an airline's financial or operational difficulties, a contingency mechanism is urgently needed to ensure the refund and repatriation of passengers in case of an airline's default"*.

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GEBTA, the Guild of European Business Travel Agents, promotes the interests of travel management companies, their clients and their travelers. It currently counts 7 Member Guilds with more than 300 travel management companies.

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