

COACH INDUSTRY: THE RULES MUST BE CHANGED!



The main point of debate in the coach industry at the moment is the 561/2006/EC which is hugely significant in recent developments in the European coach transport sector. It is a modification of the EU regulation to cancel coach drivers' entitlement to work, i.e. drive, for 12 days solid before taking a well-deserved rest. Now, drivers are only allowed to drive for half of that time before being forced by EU law to take a rest. It seems logical, especially as the same or similar law applies to most professions around Europe. However, absolutely nobody apart from EU officials is satisfied with the legislation and there are now demands for it to be changed back to the original state.

Firstly, the change is not beneficial for drivers as they now tend to earn less and the extra break time is deemed most of the time worthless anyway as, considering the fact that the breaks start in mid-journey, they are forced to take breaks away from their families. When the breaks used to be taken at the end of long journeys, they would have been used to better effect.

Secondly, to suggest that the new legislation has made this mode of transport safer can quite rightly be described as ludicrous. Basically, if something isn't broken, why to fix it? The coach industry prides itself anyway on its safety records and rare accidents are almost never put down to the tiredness of the driver.

Thirdly and perhaps most importantly, small and middle-sized coach companies have been hit hard by the change and they now claim that costs have gone up by 30%. This has, naturally, hit the ticket prices and the cost of some 6-day tours is now almost twice that of before as 2 drivers now need to be paid.

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