

COACH TOURISM: REINTRODUCTION OF 12-DAY RULE POSTPONED



The 12-Day Rule, which would allow bus drivers to work 12 days in a row, is not likely to be reintroduced before Easter 2010 because of bureaucratic complications within the EU.

European Tour Operators Association (ETOA), the European Travel Agents and Tour Operators Association (ECTAA) and the International Road Transport Union (IRU) are concerned about the development of the 12-Day Rule reintroduction. **The rule is not likely to be reintroduced before Easter 2010.**

The 12-Day Rule allowed coach drivers to drive 12 days in a row and then rest. Nevertheless, the EU was concerned about the safety of the passengers and abolished the practice in 2007. As a result, drivers have to rest after half of the time, which means they have to spend their week off on the road while a second driver is driving his half of a 12 days tour.

This is naturally uncomfortable for the drivers who can not spend their time off at home and also for the tour operators that have to pay for another coach driver. The associations mentioned above complain about the negative effects of the current rules especially when the new practice has not proved to be safer.

The organizations urged the EU institutions to change the rule and they have succeeded as the European Parliament voted in favor of the reestablishing of the 12-Day Rule in 2008. The Council of Transport Ministers was supposed to deal with the proposal in 2009 but now it seems it will not come into effect before Easter 2010 because of delays caused by bureaucratic procedures within the EU linguistic services.

This delay will naturally even further increase the costs of travel businesses that have expected that the 12-Day Rule would be back in effect by the start of 2010. According to the associations the latest developments make planning quite difficult and it is particularly damaging for small and medium-sized companies involved in the coach tour business.

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