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AIRLINE CARRIERS IN FINANCIAL TROUBLE: WHAT SAFEGUARDS FOR THE PASSENGERS?

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The issue will be debated on October 22 at TTG Incontri in Rimini in an exclusive interview with Frédéric Selnet, international expert in tourism legislation, member of the International Forum of Travel and Tourism Advocates, which in France has obtained the guarantee of reimbursement for travel agencies' customers.

Turin, October 2010 - What happens to the passengers who have already purchased their airline ticket when the company they fly with, in financial trouble, cancels the flights? Do they have any chance to recover their money, or none at all?

The situation in Italy is still confused, and customers have very few guarantees. The legislation in force in our Country does not foresee that IATA (International Air Transport Association) reimburse passengers, even though they have purchased their tickets through a travel agency. In fact, the repayment of the ticket price is only possible when passengers have personally purchased the ticket on the Internet, through credit or debit card and, in such case, the insurance is connected to the card they own which allows them to obtain reimbursement.

This issue, a long-standing one in Italy, was solved in France thanks to the intercession of Frédéric Selnet - lawyer at the Selnet, Pantaloni and Fisher law firm and international expert in tourism legislation as well as a member of IFTTA (International Forum of Travel and Tourism Advocates) -, internationally renowned for obtaining from IATA the reimbursement for passengers purchasing tickets through travel agencies.

Selnet will be a guest of TTG Incontri, the main b2b tourism fair in Italy, organised by TTG Italia - member company of the Rimini Fiera Group -, in the afternoon of October 22, to explain in a dedicated interview the possible solutions to regulate the relationship between travel agencies and airline companies in financial trouble. He will recount what has been done in France and most of all, what can be done in Italy to overcome this obstacle.

'The French case can certainly be of inspiration to find a possible solution to the problem - Selnet explains, expounding the strategy used in France -. At the end of the nineties- he carries on - travel agencies operating in France obtained that IATA lodge the money collected for the sale of tickets via bsp, and that IATA itself allocate such funds according to the flights actually operated by the indicated carriers. If the flight is cancelled, IATA gives back the money to the agency which in turn gives it back to the customer'. According to Selnet this solution would strengthen the role of the agency, convincing final users that relying on a professional also serves to protect themselves from unpleasant inconveniences. Which at the moment is not the case in Italy. 'In France - he adds- in about ten years we managed to obtain from IATA this kind of service for about 15 carriers'.

A further burning issue Selnet will be called to deal with at TTG Incontri relates to travel agency commission cuts, one of the fronts his team of experts is very active on. *'On behalf of SNAV, the French national association of travel agencies, we are exerting some pressure in order to limit such cuts as much as possible'*, he explains, adding that *'we have worked in favour of agencies to obtain compensation measures for the reduction of commissions and to give new rules as for the reimbursement of taxes due in case the ticket is cancelled'*.

Note for editors

TTG Incontri, main international b2b tourism fair in Italy, will take place in Rimini from October 22 to 24. Together with TTG Incontri takes place TTI, main workshop for the sale of the Italian tourism product.

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