Directive (EU) 2015/2302 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 25 November 2015 on package travel and linked travel arrangements, amending Regulation (EC) No 2006/2004 and Directive 2011/83/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council and repealing Council Directive 90/314/EEC

DIRECTIVE (EU) 2015/2302 OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND OF THE COUNCIL

of 25 November 2015

on package travel and linked travel arrangements, amending Regulation (EC) No 2006/2004 and Directive 2011/83/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council and repealing Council Directive 90/314/EEC

THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND THE COUNCIL OF THE EUROPEAN UNION,

Having regard to the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union, and in particular Article 114 thereof,

Having regard to the proposal from the European Commission,

After transmission of the draft legislative act to the national parliaments,

Having regard to the opinion of the European Economic and Social Committee[(1)],

After consulting the Committee of the Regions,

Acting in accordance with the ordinary legislative procedure[(2)],

Whereas:

(1) Council Directive 90/314/EEC[(3)] lays down a number of important consumer rights in relation to package travel, in particular with regard to information requirements, the liability of traders in relation to the performance of a package, and protection against the insolvency of an organiser or a retailer. However, it is necessary to adapt the legislative framework to market developments, in order to make it more suitable for the internal market, to remove ambiguities and to close legislative gaps.

(2) Tourism plays an important role in the economy of the Union, and package travel, package holidays and package tours (‘packages’) represent a significant proportion of the travel market. That market has undergone considerable changes since the adoption of Directive 90/314/EEC. In addition to traditional distribution chains, the internet has become an increasingly important medium through which travel services are offered or sold. Travel services are not only combined in the form of traditional pre-arranged packages, but are often combined in a customised way. Many of those combinations of travel services are either in a legal ‘grey zone’ or are clearly not covered by Directive 90/314/EEC. This Directive aims to adapt the scope of protection to take account of those developments, to enhance transparency, and to increase legal certainty for travellers and traders.

(3) Article 169(1) and point (a) of Article 169(2) of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU) provide that the Union is to contribute to the attainment of a high level of consumer protection through measures adopted pursuant to Article 114 TFEU.

(4) Directive 90/314/EEC gives broad discretion to the Member States as regards transposition. Therefore, significant divergences between the laws of the Member States remain. Legal fragmentation leads to higher costs for businesses and obstacles for those wishing to operate cross-border, thus limiting consumers' choice.

(5) In accordance with Article 26(2) and Article 49 TFEU, the internal market is to comprise an area without internal frontiers in which the free movement of goods and services and the freedom of establishment are ensured. The harmonisation of the rights and obligations arising from contracts relating to package travel and to linked travel arrangements is necessary for the creation of a real consumer internal market in that area, striking the right balance between a high level of consumer protection and the competitiveness of businesses.

(6) The cross-border potential of the package travel market in the Union is currently not fully exploited. Disparities in the rules protecting travellers in different Member States act as a disincentive for travellers in one Member State from buying packages and linked travel arrangements in another Member State and, likewise, a disincentive for organisers and retailers in one Member State from selling such services in another Member State. In order to enable travellers and traders to benefit fully from the internal market, while ensuring a high level of consumer protection across the Union, it is necessary to further approximate the laws of the Member States relating to packages and linked travel arrangements.

(7) The majority of travellers buying packages or linked travel arrangements are consumers within the meaning of Union consumer law. At the same time, it is not always easy to distinguish between consumers and representatives of small businesses or professionals who book trips related to their business or profession through the same booking channels as consumers. Such travellers often require a similar level of protection. In contrast, there are companies or organisations that make travel arrangements on the basis of a general agreement, often concluded for numerous travel arrangements for a specified period, for instance with a travel agency. The latter type of travel arrangements does not require the level of protection designed for consumers. Therefore, this Directive should apply to business travellers, including members of liberal professions, or self-employed or other natural persons, where they do not make travel arrangements on the basis of a general agreement. In order to avoid confusion with the definition of the term ‘consumer’ used in other Union legislation, persons protected under this Directive should be referred to as ‘travellers’.

(8) Since travel services may be combined in many different ways, it is appropriate to consider as packages all combinations of travel services that display features which travellers typically associate with packages, in particular where separate travel services are combined into a single travel product for which the organiser assumes responsibility for proper performance. In accordance with the case-law of the Court of Justice of the

European Union[4], it should make no difference whether travel services are combined before any contact with the traveller or at the request of or in accordance with the selection made by the traveller. The same principles should apply irrespective of whether the booking is made through a high street trader or online.

(9) For the sake of transparency, packages should be distinguished from linked travel arrangements, where online or high street traders facilitate the procurement of travel services by travellers leading the traveller to conclude contracts with different travel services providers, including through linked booking processes, which do not contain the features of a package and in relation to which it would not be appropriate to apply all of the obligations applicable to packages.

(10) In the light of market developments, it is appropriate to further define packages on the basis of alternative objective criteria which predominantly relate to the way in which the travel services are presented or purchased and where travellers may reasonably expect to be protected by this Directive. That is the case, for instance, where different types of travel services are purchased for the purpose of the same trip or holiday from a single point of sale and those services have been selected before the traveller agrees to pay, that is to say within the same booking process, or where such services are offered, sold or charged at an inclusive or total price, as well as where such services are advertised or sold under the term ‘package’ or under a similar term indicating a close connection between the travel services concerned. Such similar terms could be, for instance, ‘combined deal’, ‘all-inclusive’ or ‘all-in arrangement’.

(11) It should be clarified that travel services combined after the conclusion of a contract by which a trader entitles a traveller to choose among a selection of different types of travel services, such as in the case of a package travel gift box, constitute a package. Moreover, a combination of travel services should be considered to be a package where the traveller's name, payment details and e-mail address are transmitted between the traders and where another contract is concluded at the latest 24 hours after the booking of the first travel service is confirmed.

(12) At the same time, linked travel arrangements should be distinguished from travel services which travellers book independently, often at different times, even for the purpose of the same trip or holiday. Online linked travel arrangements should also be distinguished from linked websites which do not have the objective of concluding a contract with the traveller and from links through which travellers are simply informed about further travel services in a general way, for instance where a hotel or an organiser of an event includes on its website a list of all operators offering transport services to its location independently of any booking or if ‘cookies’ or meta data are used to place advertisements on websites.

(13) Specific rules should be laid down for both high street and online traders which assist travellers, on the occasion of a single visit or contact with their point of sale, in concluding separate contracts with individual service providers and for online traders which, for instance, through linked online booking processes, facilitate in a targeted manner the procurement of at least one additional travel service from another trader, where a contract is concluded at the latest 24 hours after the confirmation of the

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booking of the first travel service. Such facilitation will often be based on a commercial link involving remuneration between the trader who facilitates the procurement of additional travel services and the other trader, regardless of the calculation method of such remuneration which might, for instance, be based on the number of clicks or on the turnover. Those rules would apply, for example, where, along with the confirmation of the booking of a first travel service such as a flight or a train journey, a traveller receives an invitation to book an additional travel service available at the chosen travel destination, for instance, hotel accommodation, with a link to the booking website of another service provider or intermediary. While those arrangements should not constitute packages within the meaning of this Directive, under which one organiser is liable for the proper performance of all travel services, such linked travel arrangements constitute an alternative business model that often competes closely with packages.

(14) In order to ensure fair competition and to protect travellers, the obligation to provide sufficient evidence of security for the refund of payments and the repatriation of travellers in the event of insolvency should also apply to linked travel arrangements.

(15) The purchase of a travel service on a stand-alone basis as a single travel service should constitute neither a package nor a linked travel arrangement.

(16) In order to increase clarity for travellers and enable them to make informed choices as to the different types of travel arrangements on offer, traders should be required to state clearly and prominently whether they are offering a package or a linked travel arrangement, and provide information on the corresponding level of protection, before the traveller agrees to pay. A trader's declaration as to the legal nature of the travel product being marketed should correspond to the true legal nature of the product concerned. The relevant enforcement authorities should intervene where traders do not provide accurate information to travellers.

(17) Only the combination of different types of travel services, such as accommodation, carriage of passengers by bus, rail, water or air, as well as rental of motor vehicles or certain motorcycles, should be considered for the purposes of identifying a package or a linked travel arrangement. Accommodation for residential purposes, including for long-term language courses, should not be considered as accommodation within the meaning of this Directive. Financial services such as travel insurances should not be considered as travel services. In addition, services which are intrinsically part of another travel service should not be considered as travel services in their own right. This includes, for instance, transport of luggage provided as part of carriage of passengers, minor transport services such as carriage of passengers as part of a guided tour or transfers between a hotel and an airport or a railway station, meals, drinks and cleaning provided as part of accommodation, or access to on-site facilities such as a swimming pool, sauna, spa or gym included for hotel guests. This also means that in cases where, unlike in the case of a cruise, overnight accommodation is provided as part of passenger transport by road, rail, water or air, accommodation should not be considered as a travel service in its own right if the main component is clearly transport.

(18) Other tourist services which are not intrinsically part of carriage of passengers, accommodation or the rental of motor vehicles or certain motorcycles, may be, for

instance, admission to concerts, sport events, excursions or event parks, guided tours, ski passes and rental of sports equipment such as skiing equipment, or spa treatments. However, if such services are combined with only one other type of travel service, for instance accommodation, this should lead to the creation of a package or linked travel arrangement only if they account for a significant proportion of the value of the package or linked travel arrangement, or are advertised as or otherwise represent an essential feature of the trip or holiday. If other tourist services account for 25 % or more of the value of the combination, those services should be considered as representing a significant proportion of the value of the package or linked travel arrangement. It should be clarified that where other tourist services are added, for instance, to hotel accommodation, booked as a stand-alone service, after the traveller's arrival at the hotel, this should not constitute a package. This should not lead to circumvention of this Directive, with organisers or retailers offering the traveller the selection of additional tourist services in advance and then offering conclusion of the contract for those services only after the performance of the first travel service has started.

(19) Since there is less need to protect travellers in cases of short-term trips, and in order to avoid an unnecessary burden for traders, trips lasting less than 24 hours which do not include accommodation, as well as packages or linked travel arrangements offered or facilitated occasionally and on a not-for-profit basis and only to a limited group of travellers, should be excluded from the scope of this Directive. The latter may for example include trips organised not more than a few times a year by charities, sports clubs or schools for their members, without being offered to the general public. Adequate information on that exclusion should be made publicly available in order to ensure that traders and travellers are properly informed that those packages or linked travel arrangements are not covered by this Directive.

(20) This Directive should be without prejudice to national contract law for those aspects that are not regulated by it.

(21) Member States should remain competent, in accordance with Union law, to apply the provisions of this Directive to areas not falling within its scope. Member States may therefore maintain or introduce national legislation corresponding to the provisions of this Directive, or certain of its provisions, in relation to contracts that fall outside the scope of this Directive. For instance, Member States may maintain or introduce corresponding provisions for certain stand-alone contracts regarding single travel services (such as the rental of holiday homes) or for packages and linked travel arrangements that are offered or facilitated, on a not-for-profit basis to a limited group of travellers and only occasionally, or to packages and linked travel arrangements covering a period of less than 24 hours and which do not include accommodation.

(22) The main characteristic of a package is that there is one trader responsible as an organiser for the proper performance of the package as a whole. Only in cases where another trader is acting as the organiser of a package should a trader, typically a high street or online travel agent, be able to act as a mere retailer or intermediary and not be liable as an organiser. Whether a trader is acting as an organiser for a given package should depend on that trader's involvement in the creation of the package, and not on