



Commissioner Elżbieta Bieńkowska
European Commission
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The safety of tourist accommodation in Europe

Dear Commissioner

First of all, may we wish you a healthy, happy and safe 2016.

We write to draw your attention to a topic that ANEC, as the European consumer voice in standardisation, has been following as a key priority in the services area for several years now: the safety of tourist accommodation services in the EU.

In July 2014, consumer organisations welcomed publication of the Commission's Green Paper on the Safety of Tourism Accommodation Services¹ and sent a full response², calling on the Commission to establish minimum safety standards.

We regret the conclusion of the Commission that the answers to the Green Paper consultation showed insufficient evidence for the need for further consideration of consumer protection initiatives in the area of tourist accommodation.

We still believe action at the European level to be essential.

Of course, millions of people use tourist accommodation in Europe each year. For most, their stays will indeed be uneventful. As a result, their perception might be that all was fine with their accommodation and that they were safe.

The unlucky ones will have experienced a problem, perhaps a fire. Some will have found few or no fire extinguishers, and fire exits blocked. Or that staff were not trained in safety procedures. The unluckiest will have paid for their bad luck with their lives.

¹ <http://goo.gl/LWnVes>

² <http://goo.gl/Lzloay>



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Raising standards for consumers

Others may have found badly installed or poorly maintained appliances in their tourist accommodation. Incorrect installation, maintenance or operation of a gas appliance can lead - and does lead - to carbon monoxide poisoning and death. Still more people are believed to fall ill from carbon monoxide poisoning while using tourist accommodation, but the numbers are not known as such incidents are often not recorded.

It is mainly for these reasons that ANEC has been contributing to the debate on the safety of tourist accommodation for over 10 years. Of course, we appreciate that, in that time, in the area of fire safety, some trade associations have come forward with codes of practice for their members. Unfortunately, these codes are invariably voluntary. And, as with any self-regulation, compliance with them will be limited.

It is for this reason that ANEC believes only a single, European regulation on the safety of tourist accommodation can be appropriate, supported by enforcement and criminal sanctions at the national level. Indeed, when it comes to product or service legislation, it is enforcement that is the key and yet is the area that is so often so very sadly lacking.

All consumers should be entitled to benefit from a minimum standard of safety throughout Europe, with risk assessment ensuring measures are proportionate and appropriate. Hence again our regret at the conclusion the Commission drew from the Green Paper that there is insufficient evidence for further consideration of consumer protection measures.

We have found the European Parliament's Resolution on the De Monte Report³ to be far more encouraging, noting its clear support for minimum standards, mostly in aiding consumer protection from fire or carbon monoxide poisoning in tourist accommodation.

If Europe is to remain the world's number one tourist destination, it is important actions are taken further to the Green Paper. A key subject on which there has been unequivocal support is in relation to a coordinated data collection of safety incidents in tourist accommodation across Europe. This should be the next step for Europe to take as a minimum.

Thank you for your consideration of our concerns and, of course, we would be pleased to discuss our points more fully.

We are writing similarly to Commissioner Jourová.

Yours sincerely

Stephen RUSSELL
Secretary-General

³ <http://goo.gl/eDGaqO>