The Business Travel Sector Celebrates 40 Years of the Schengen Agreement

Brussels, Belgium (12 June 2025) – This week marks the 40th anniversary of the signing of the Schengen Agreement, which led to the creation of the borderless Schengen Area, allowing citizens to travel across 29 European countries without any border controls.

The Schengen Area has been one of greatest achievements of the European Union in its history, facilitating a more united and connected Europe. For business travellers, the Schengen Area has been a major success story, **cutting red tape** for businesses and **creating a free movement area** that covers more than 450 million people. It has brought people together, fostering exchange of ideas and economic growth.

Four decades on from its inception, the business travel sector celebrates its success and **calls for the Schengen Area to be better enforced**, through a **wider digitalisation of travel procedures and better protection of travellers' rights**, making travel even smoother and more secure. In addition, to fully realise the internal dimension of Schengen, it is essential to focus not only on borderless travel in principle but also on enabling seamless, fast, and reliable connections in practice. This includes the need to physically connect Member States through a **comprehensive high-speed rail network**, ensuring that freedom of movement is supported by sustainable and accessible transport infrastructure.

With the recent start of a new legislative mandate, the European Commission has committed to fostering the continent's industrial competitiveness, ensuring that businesses can thrive in Europe by reducing unnecessary red tape. In this context, the business travel sector believes the digitalisation of travel procedures would **enhance legal certainty for travellers travelling to and from the Schengen Area** and save their companies time and money. A **swift implementation of ETIAS** (European Travel Information and Authorisation System) would be highly welcome as it would provide a new way for EU Member States to conduct pre-travel screening to assess security and migration risks of extra-Schengen travellers before issuing a Schengen visa. Business travellers will benefit from **improved travel safety, easier border control processes**, as well as a **reliable and early indication of their admissibility** into the Schengen area. Similarly, the **Entry/Exit System (EES) should be implemented** as soon as possible, as it would **digitalise passport stamps** and allow for the **automatic monitoring of the border-crossing of third-country nationals**, reducing queues and bureaucracy at the border, greatly facilitating business travel.

Finally, the sector applauds the new legislative proposals released by the European Commission to **digitalise passports and ID cards across the EU** with the aim of speeding up border controls and ensuring more efficient and secure travel. This initiative has been long awaited by the business travel community as it will allow for seamless cross-border travel and passenger clearance while preventing potential risks such as identity fraud. Business travellers celebrate the successes of four decades of European integration through an increasingly united Schengen Area that allows seamless travel across 29 European countries. Recognising this, we call for the EU to digitalise and modernise travel procedures, as well as better protect passenger rights to ensure businesses can thrive and remain competitive for decades to come.

About the Global Business Travel Association

The Global Business Travel Association (GBTA) is the world's leading business travel and meetings trade organisation, serving stakeholders across six continents. GBTA and its 8,500+ members represent and advocate for the €1,302 trillion ($1,484 trillion USD) global business travel and meetings industry. GBTA and the GBTA Foundation deliver world-class education, events, research, advocacy, and media to a growing global network of more than 28,000 travel professionals and 125,000 active contacts. For more information, visit gbta.org and gbtafoundation.org.

About eu travel tech

eu travel tech represents the interests of travel technology companies. eu travel tech uses its position at the centre of the travel and tourism sector to promote a consumer-driven, innovative and competitive industry that is transparent and sustainable. Our membership spans Global Distribution Systems (GDSs), Online Travel Agencies (OTA), Travel Management Companies in business travel (TMCs) and metasearch sites.

eu travel tech's members include Airbnb, Booking.com, eDreams ODIGEO, Expedia Group, Etraveli Group, and Skyscanner. Associate members include American Express GBT, LastMinute, Trainline, Amadeus, Travelport, GetYourGuide, Sabre, and TripAdvisor. Strategic Partners include Idealo and Omio Group.

About CER

The Community of European Railway and Infrastructure Companies (CER) brings together railway undertakings, their national associations as well as infrastructure managers and vehicle leasing companies. The membership is made up of long-established bodies, new entrants and both private and public enterprises, representing 78% of the rail network length, 81% of the rail freight business and about 94% of rail passenger operations in EU, EFTA and EU accession countries. CER represents the interests of its members towards EU policy makers and transport stakeholders, advocating rail as the backbone of a competitive and sustainable transport system in Europe. For more information, visit www.cer.be or follow us on X @CER_railways or LinkedIn.

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