

# European Scrutiny Committee

House of Commons London SW1A 0AA

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From: Sir William Cash MP

17 June 2020

Rachel Maclean MP  
Parliamentary Under Secretary of State  
Department for Transport  
Great Minster House  
33 Horseferry Road  
LONDON SW1P 4DR

**Commission Recommendation (EU) 2020/648 of 13 May 2020 on  
vouchers offered to passengers and travellers as an alternative to  
reimbursement for cancelled package travel and transport services in the  
context of the COVID-19 pandemic**

The Committee have asked me to thank you for your Explanatory Memorandum (EM) on the above listed document dated 1 June 2020.

As you will be aware, the Committee considered this document together with 6913/20 on EU passenger rights. Taken together, these documents speak to the seriousness with which the protection of consumer travel rights is being treated by EU Member States and the Commission during the current pandemic.

We thank you for the detailed information that you provide in your EM on the EU passenger rights framework and, in particular, the applicable rules governing voucher entitlements for each form of transport covered by the Commission's Recommendation. The additional information you provide concerning the domestic measures that the Government has taken to support operators during the current crisis is also welcome.

On the substance of the Commission's Recommendation, the Committee notes your acknowledgement that for cancelled flights, there is currently no insolvency protection in place for vouchers and, furthermore, that the Government does not have plans to introduce a guarantee scheme. We also draw attention to your statement that:

[The] Department has been clear with industry that it is the responsibility of the airlines to manage these risks and to communicate them to consumers.

The Committee agrees that industry has a role to play in risk mitigation, however, the Government has an equally important role to play in ensuring that the current regulatory and administrative framework is operating effectively. The significant disquiet amongst passengers—whose flight refund requests appear as though they are not being processed in line with current rules and who are concerned about the future value of accepted vouchers—is strong evidence of the need for intervention by the Government or, alternatively, the appropriate regulatory authorities.

Aside from mention in your EM of Government support schemes for industry, there is little information provided on consumer-focussed measures that, as per the Commission's Recommendation, are aimed at making vouchers a more attractive alternative to cash refunds and, moreover, seek to promote consumer confidence that rights will be protected. We therefore request further information on the Government's plans in this regard.

We request a response to this letter within 10 working days.

I am copying this letter to Lord Kinnoull and Christopher Johnson in the Lords; Huw Merriman MP, Chairman of the Transport Committee; Les Saunders at the Cabinet Office; and to Margaret Browne, Departmental Scrutiny Co-ordinator.

**CHAIR**