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Federation of European Tourist Guides Associations (FEG)

Media Release

'Is the ID Card for Tour(ist) Guides proposed by ETOA (European Tour Operators' Association) worth the paper it would be printed on?' Well, probably not according to ETOA! If you're looking to guarantee that the holder is what the card says, then this ID card won't help. The, 'Terms and Conditions', warn tour operators and users that ETOA cannot, 'guarantee the accurate and completeness' of any information. It's therefore hard to think why any tourism professional would want to carry this ID. So who is it intended for? The market is apparently described as a, 'pan-European tour guide'. By its very nature tourist guiding, as the interpretation of cultural and natural heritage of an area, takes place in a specific place, is not pan-European as such and tourist guides already have IDs where they guide. Although what in EU terms are called Tour Managers work for Tour Operators across Europe it's not at all common in our profession. And there are already mechanisms within the EU that deal with cross-border services for all professions. ETOA, being the trade organisation for a number of tour operators clearly recognises that in reality it has no standing to issue an ID for a Profession and has trailed a scheme that is flawed.

It's a shame that ETOA did not speak with FEG – the one and only official European representative body of 40.000 professional Tourist Guides across 21 countries. With nearly 25 years of experience of the profession in Europe, our Associations' Members have independently recognised ID (*in/for the country, region or city they work*) and have dealt directly with tens of millions of visitors. FEG could have ensured that all the recognised IDs within the EU in our field could be made available to anyone who wanted to guarantee the occupation of the ID holder, *after fulfillment of the proper studies, exam/test or after control of the acquired knowledge*.

With the EU's commitment to raising standards and quality, followed by the issuing of a CEN European Standard on Tourist Guiding training (EN 15565: 2008) across Europe, this sort of idea from ETOA just muddies the waters, misinforms the market and consumers and could harm the image of tourism in general. In a number of Member States Tourist Guiding is a regulated profession. Obviously this is not the sort of ID that Member States of the EU would wish to see used under either the Directive on the Recognition of Professional Qualifications or the Directive on Internal Services. And where the Profession is not regulated, the interpretation of Culture is treated with equal seriousness. 'The growth in interest in Tourist Guiding as a Career is welcome', says FEG President Carlos Ortega: 'People are interested in being trained to the European Standard EN 15565 and look to achieve Professional Qualifications where they want to Guide. FEG recognises how vital qualifications are within any occupation and urges ETOA to embrace this rather than develop this rogue scheme'.

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