



**EUROPEAN TRAVEL COMMISSION**

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**ETC URGES THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND THE COUNCIL TO CONSIDER THE IMPACT OF CHANGE OF VISA REGIME ON US AND CANADA CITIZENS ENTERING EUROPE**

**Brussels, 13th April 2016**

The European Travel Commission has been following with increasing concern the developments in the visa waiver reciprocity mechanism applied by the European Commission towards the citizens of the United States and Canada. In order to preserve the smooth bilateral relations and the huge positive impact of US and Canadian travellers on the European economy, ETC appeals to the EU authorities to follow the requirements of Regulation No1289/2013 and take into account the political, economic and administrative consequences of the suspension of the visa waiver with US and Canada.

Currently, the travellers from US and Canada account for the largest percentage of all extra-European arrivals. In 2015, travel from the US to Europe boomed, aided by a strong economy and a strong US dollar. Both emerging and mature European destinations have seen visits from the US and Canada grow, with arrivals from the two markets reaching 30.3 million tourists<sup>1</sup>. The US visitors alone spent more than \$54 billion<sup>2</sup> during their stay in 2014. Introducing visa restrictions for US and Canadian citizens would inevitably lead to a steep decrease in these numbers, leaving thousands of jobs in Europe at stake.

ETC urges the European Parliament and the Council to do their utmost to resolve the situation as soon as possible, in any case not allowing for the visa waiver for Canadian and US citizens to be put on hold. The ultimate solution pursued should be full visa reciprocity, therefore we call for the US and Canadian authorities to cooperate and ensure a balanced and fair outcome. "At times when European tourism is already suffering the consequences

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1 Source: Tourism Economics.

2 Source: U.S. Department of Commerce, National Travel and Tourism Office from the Bureau of Economic Analysis, October 2015

of the tragic events in France and Belgium, we saw travellers from North America resilient in their plans to come to Europe<sup>3</sup>. It would be extremely inconsiderate to close our doors to them and renounce billions of export revenue” said Eduardo Santander, Executive Director of the European Travel Commission.

ENDS

**Note to editors:**

*The European Travel Commission is an association of National Tourism Organisations (NTOs). It was created in 1948 to promote Europe as a tourist destination to the long-haul markets outside of Europe, originally in the USA and later in Canada, Latin America and Asia. It currently has 32 member NTOs, including 8 from outside the European Union.*

*Europe is the world's no. 1 tourist destination with 609 million international arrivals in 2015 and more than 51.4% of the market share of worldwide tourism.*

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**For further information:** ETC's corporate website [www.etc-corporate.org](http://www.etc-corporate.org) is aimed at industry, government and educational personnel interested in tourism to Europe. Tourists seeking travel-specific information and ideas are directed to ETC's consumer portal [www.visiteurope.com](http://www.visiteurope.com).

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<sup>3</sup> Source: ETC, Long Haul Travel Sentiment Index 2015.