



The Wise Traveler—Beware!

The European Commission and EU consumer protection authorities launched a coordinated screening of 352 price comparison and travel booking websites across the EU in October 2016. They found that prices were not reliable on 235 websites, two thirds of the sites checked. For example, additional price elements were added at a late stage of the booking process without clearly informing the consumer or promotional prices did not correspond to any available service.

Authorities have asked the websites concerned to bring their practices in line with EU consumer legislation, which requires them to be fully transparent about prices, and present their offers in a clear way, at an early stage of the booking process.

KEY FINDINGS

- **What you believe you'll pay, is it what you will actually pay?** In one third of the cases, the price first shown is not the same as the final price.
- **Is it an offer or is it just bait?** In one fifth of the cases, promotional offers were not really available.
- **Puzzled mind or puzzled price?** In almost one third of the cases the total price or the way it was calculated was not clear.
- **Last cheap room in the hotel or simply last promoted room on that website?** In one in four cases, websites did not specify that statements about scarcity (e.g. "only 2 left", "only available today") applied strictly to their own website.

Grand Opening – YouLab Xanthi



On April 3 the newly expanded and renovated YouLab Xanthi officially opened its doors. This new American Corner will help Thracian youth and young professionals in the wider region learn job skills for today's knowledge-based, global economy so that they can productively contribute to Greece's skilled workforce and economic development. Using state-of-the-art, interactive technology, the talented YouLab personnel will lead exciting and innovative programs for visitors. The

U.S. Embassy Athens-led redesign and renovation is part of its broader commitment to promoting STEM education for young people in Greece.

AT A MINIMUM

As of 1st January 2017, 22 out of the 28 Member States of the European Union (EU) have national minimum wages: only Denmark, Italy, Cyprus, Austria, Finland and Sweden do not have one. The 22 EU Member States that have national minimum wages can be divided into three main groups based on the level in euro. In January 2017, ten Member States, located in the east of the EU, had minimum wages below €500 per month: Bulgaria (€235), Romania (€275), Latvia and Lithuania (both €380), the Czech Republic (€407), Hungary (€412), Croatia (€433), Slovakia (€435), Poland (€453) and Estonia (€470). In five other Member States, located in the south, minimum wages were between €500 and €1 000 per month: Portugal (€650), Greece (€684), Malta (€736), Slovenia (€805) and Spain (€826). In the remaining seven Member States, all located in the west and north of the EU, minimum wages were well above €1 000 per month: the United Kingdom (€1 397), France (€1 480), Germany (€1 498), Belgium (€1 532), the Netherlands (€1 552), Ireland (€1 563) and Luxembourg (€1 999). For comparison, the federal minimum wage in the United States was €1 192 per month in January 2017.



Greece Second in the World—Blue Flag Beaches

Greece ranked second in the world, among 47 countries, on the 2017 Blue Flag quality list, with 486 beaches and 12 marinas included. Spain was first.

Blue Flag is a voluntary eco-label awarded to beaches across the world and is run by the independent, non-profit Foundation for Environmental Education based in Copenhagen. The Blue Flag is awarded to beaches that follow requirements that include Environmental Education and Information, Water Quality, Environmental Management and Safety and Services.



EU—Top Trading Partners

In 2016, the United States (€610 bn, or 17.7% of total EU trade in goods) and China (€515 bn, or 14.9%) continued to be the two main goods trading partners of the European Union (EU), well ahead of Switzerland (€264 bn, or 7.6%), Russia (€191 bn, or 5.5%), Turkey (€145 bn, or 4.2%) and Japan (€125 bn, or 3.6%). Trends observed over the past years are however very different for these top trading partners of the EU. After recording a significant and almost continuous fall until 2011, the share of the United States in EU total trade in goods has begun to increase again to reach 17.7% in 2016. The share of China has almost tripled since 2000, rising from 5.5% to 14.9% in 2016. Since 2013 the share of Russia in total EU trade in goods has nearly halved to 5.5% in 2016, as did the share of Japan since 2000 to 3.6% in 2016. As for Switzerland and Turkey, their respective share remained relatively unchanged over the entire time period. In 2016, machinery and transport equipment, other manufactured goods and chemicals represented the main categories of product traded by the EU.

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BETTER MAKE THAT SITE RESPONSIVE!

More than 80% of persons aged 16 to 74 in the European Union (EU) used the internet in 2016, in many cases via several different devices. Mobile phones or smart phones were the device most used to surf the internet, by over three-quarters (79%) of internet users. They were followed by laptops or netbooks (64%), desktop computers (54%) and tablet computers (44%).

