



News Story

## Swiss agents step up campaign on airline standards

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Swiss travel agents are to step up a campaign that is demanding airlines to agree to common standards for mutual customers.

The move follows a poor response from the Association des Agences de Voyages Privee's (AVP) first set of questions to airlines sent out in July 2009, as reported by ABTN at the time.

Then a number of airlines ignored a five-point plan called the Agreement of Fair Collaboration, which called on carriers to share the same sense of responsibility to customers.

Olivier Dupont, general director of the Geneva-based Fert Voyages, said most of the 28 airlines approached at first refused to answer the questions.

"The Middle East and Asian airlines answered but the American and European ones did not. They said the questions had to be sent on to their head office so they had to be in English not French.

"Then they said we were not to mix with their internal policies. Then they said their lawyers would not discuss it," he said.

"The airlines were talking about passengers while we are talking about our clients. They did not seem to care about before or after the flight.

"Two thirds of business travel sales go through agents and if the customer thinks were are reactive, responsive and can offer advantages, they will use us. But we can't do that alone."

Eventually two thirds of the airlines replied.

But AVP said only 7% of the answers were very satisfactory, with 50% satisfactory, 11% unsatisfactory, 21% evasive and 7% no reply.

On claims for re-imbusement of tickets, the agents said 11% of the replies were very satisfactory, 50% satisfactory, 11% unsatisfactory, 18% evasive and 7% no reply.

No of the airlines were named.

Dupont said the second round of questions would be drawn up this month and would be more sophisticated, especially on re-imbusement (ADMs).

"The airlines are flaunting their own IATA rules on ADMs. We are going to consult with IATA in Geneva later this month and then draw up new questions.

"We should have visibility, clarity and certainty for the client. We had a case of re-imbusement last year which took a year to solve.

"We were not responsible but it only showed to my client that some airlines do not agree with any standard of service.

"We think a collaborative approach is better. We want to sit down and define a common approach with them."

Dupont said the next questionnaire would go out by the end of May.

"We will give them until September and publish in October. And this time we will name airlines," he said.

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