

# Half of Euro online travel purchases legally unsafe: EU

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A woman works on a computer in 2007 at the cyber cafe "Le Milk" in Paris. More than half of all people who buy flights, hotel rooms and hire cars online risk being left without compensation if companies fail under outdated law, the EU said Thursday.

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Fifty-six percent of travellers use the Internet, rather than high street travel agents, to organise their own trips, and protection fit for the digital age has fallen by a corresponding amount, said European Union [Consumer Affairs](#) Commissioner Meglena Kuneva.

Brussels is in particular targeting so-called "dynamic packages," which see punters pick up separate services as a bundle from single websites.

According to commission research, "for dynamic packages where the consumer has experienced problems, the average loss they face is 600 euros (900 dollars) -- which is 80 percent of the average cost of the package.

"For the 17 countries covered by the study, this translates into one billion euros annually," a statement added.

The existing legislation dates back to 1990, the boom years for package holidays in the likes of Spain sold on a diet of sea, sun and sex -- only for the reality of sometimes half-finished building sites to stir anger.

While the EU Package Travel Directive introduced rules covering what tour operators could promise in glossy brochures, Brussels now wants to find ways to stop online consumers from being left high and dry when firms go bust.

According to commission statistics, in Britain it is estimated that less than 50 percent of passengers on leisure flights are protected under the directive, compared to 98 percent in 1997.

The impetus for the new drive stems from the collapse in recent years of the XL Airways, Air Madrid, EU Jet and Sabena airlines -- with thousands of people left stranded or out of pocket in foreign countries.

Kuneva wants the [tourism industry](#) to agree a new set of consumer rights standards.

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