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- **Central & Eastern European Travel Retail Association 2nd Biannual Forum identifies critical market change in CEE; ETRC spreads arrivals duty free optimism**
- **CEETRA Members meeting TFWA Cannes – Hotel Majestic Tuesday 26 October 2021**

The CEETRA Forum on 7 October 2021, produced some clear findings central to its mission to “Protect, Promote and Facilitate the Region’s duty-free and travel retail channel”.

A guest presentation by Rachel Bulford, Chair of the UK Travel Retail Forum and Retail Director, Gatwick Airport, provided “a UK perspective and particular focus on the impact on Eastern and Central European airports.” Travel between the UK and CEE had been a very strong pre-pandemic segment, and Bulford was able to report important indicators of recovery: “Some UKTRF members have reported 80% load factors to Eastern Europe in recent weeks and there had been a significant jump in August; more than doubling in some cases.”

With the advent of Brexit, Bulford explained that the reintroduction of duty free could have had a significant benefit to airports in CEE with strong flows to the UK. For British airports this effect had been severely diluted with the UK’s simultaneous removal of VAT-free shopping from airside locations, with Bulford assessing it has “had a big impact on the industry, including the decision of Dixon’s Travel to exit the category completely.”

#### **m1nd-set Research – key market forces identified at “larger CEE airports”**

A set of survey results specifically conducted at “larger CEE airports” were included in a set of market insights presented by Anna Marchesini, Head of Business Development, m1nd-set Research.

Key take-outs of the m1nd-set findings were:

- Based on international travellers at larger airports in CEE, m1nd-set found shoppers “are less likely to visit the DF shops, but when they do it is more likely that they convert into buyers”. Supporting this assertion Marchesini suggested that store visitation (“footfall”) was down by as much as 37%, “but conversion is up 59%.”
- Post-pandemic CEE customers are particularly willing to embrace a more digital life and shopping experience with nearly 90% “expecting more digitalisation and technology offers.”
- CEE travellers appear to be focusing more on buying pre-planned products for themselves (up 40%), while gifting has taken the strongest hit – down 31%.”
- “Value-related aspects and sustainability have gained significant importance among CEE travellers post-pandemic.”

## **EU attitude to arrivals duty free: “a distinct change from the absolute refusal”**

As most of the CEETRA members operate in EU countries, the group continues to use its membership of the European Travel Retail Confederation (ETRC) as the main conduit for the CEE travel retail voice in Brussels. One of the great hopes of CEETRA was the introduction of arrivals duty free, and progress on this was explained by Julie Lassaigue, Secretary General of ETRC, who explained that arrivals duty could generate a total increase in GVA to the channel of the magnitude of €3.2 billion.

In one of the brightest moments of the Forum, Lassaigue was able to report that steady progress has been achieved with the European Commission, in particular via a supportive letter being received from DG MOVE, the department responsible for transport – this is a distinct change from the absolute refusal to even consider arrivals duty free 10 years ago. Lassaigue called on the participants to continue their efforts at national level to ask Member States to request the European Commission to consider arrivals duty free as part of the sustainable recovery measures to support the aviation sector.

## **CEETRA Members to meet at TFWA Cannes – contact us for your press meeting requests**

A members-only meeting of CEETRA will take place at the Majestic Hotel during the Tax Free World Exhibition in Cannes at 08.30 on Tuesday 26 October 2021. Members of the press wishing to meet Dr Patrick Bohl, Chair of CEETRA, and Head of Retail and Property Management Budapest Airport, should contact us on the details below.

Notes for editors:

### **CEETRA – Central and Eastern European Travel Retail Association**

- A regional industry association organising companies involved in the duty-free and travel retail industry in the Central and Eastern European region.
- Representing companies in Albania, Austria, Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Croatia, Hungary, Kosovo, Macedonia, Montenegro, Poland, Romania, Serbia, Slovakia, and Slovenia involved in supplying and retailing goods to travelling consumers in all duty free and travel retail outlets throughout the Central and Eastern European region.
- The association’s aim is to protect, promote, and facilitate the Region’s travel retail channel by providing the means to obtain the most favourable trading environment for the travel related commerce.
- CEETRA contact: [secretariat@ceetra.org](mailto:secretariat@ceetra.org) | [www.ceetra.org](http://www.ceetra.org)

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