

A large number of those who did not use alternative travel demanded a refund from the agencies, because they were not informed that the deadline had been extended for another year.

Citizens who did not use their vouchers for unrealized trips paid for at the beginning of the pandemic, are increasingly contacting travel agencies these days and asking for a refund. Although the decree on replacement vouchers was extended for another year in November by the decision of the Government of Serbia, many passengers were obviously not informed about it.

As Aleksandar Senicic, the director of "Utah", says for our paper, there have been more calls since the beginning of this year, and these are those who did not know that the obligation of the agencies to return their money was postponed until January next year. - The decree was extended in November due to the overall situation in the tourism sector and the fact that agencies are not able to return money to passengers. The pandemic, as well as the crisis it brought to our sector, resulted in mass cancellations of tourist trips that were partially or fully paid for by March 15, 2020. As the circumstances have not changed significantly in the interest of both passengers and the tourist industry, as well as the survival of the agencies, this decree was postponed - explains Seničić. The latest amendment to the regulation on replacement travel stipulates that the traveler can use the replacement voucher no later than December 31 this year. If they decide to return the money after that deadline, the agencies will be obliged to refund the amount by February 1 next year at the latest. According to the latest data, travel agencies in Serbia owe citizens more than 20 million euros for unrealized trips, and about 65,000 passengers expect that money. It is considered that this amount is even higher because school trips and excursions are not included. It is assumed that the debt, along with school excursions, could reach 26 million euros.

However, it should be reminded that there were many problems and upheavals in the tourist market. In addition to the fact that a significant number of agencies stopped working, there was also the bankruptcy of one large tour operator, the "Muzeidis" agency, which covered a large number of arrangements in Greece. On the other hand, there were problems with agencies that had debts to passengers who paid for arrangements in Italy, which could not be traveled at all. The average prices of the arrangement were around 200 euros, in a large number of cases they were not paid in full, while more expensive trips were reserved in Spain and Italy, Politika reports.