

# GILES CHICHESTER MEP

for South West England and Gibraltar

## PRESS LETTER

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Dear Editor,

Don't let your dream holiday become a nightmare this summer. A few simple precautions and a little planning before setting off on a European holiday can save a lot of heartache - and money.

When travelling in the European Union, it's important to ensure that you and your family don't risk your health unnecessarily. European health insurance cards (EHIC) are free. While no substitute for travel insurance, these cards, which replaced the E111 form in 2004, give British visitors to EU countries free or significantly cheaper access to state-level healthcare. If you already have a card, be sure to check that it's still valid before you travel. If you do not already have a card, ensure you apply for one at least 10 working days before you go on holiday. You can apply for a card for all members of your family at <https://www.ehic.org.uk/> or by telephone on 0845 606 2030.

Make sure that you get your European health insurance card for free. Look out for scam sites that try to charge a fee for the card. The Office of Fair Trading has ruled that such sites are trading unfairly, and I hope that they will soon be banned altogether.

Staying in touch with friends and relatives is also important when on holiday. But the last thing anyone wants after a fortnight in the sun is a huge bill for mobile phone or data costs. Conservative MEPs have led the discussions to introduce more transparency in the pricing of data downloads when abroad. I welcome recent proposals to reduce the cost of voice and data services in the European Union by 2014. Until then calls should cost no more than to €0.39 (34p) per minute excluding VAT, and consumers must be charged no more than €0.15 (13p) per minute excluding VAT to receive calls. The price of sending a text should cost no more than €0.11 (9p) per text, and consumers cannot be charged to receive texts. For data, all mobile operators have to apply a cut-off limit once your mobile internet bill reaches €50 (£44) per month.

If you are flying to your destination, don't forget that travellers within the EU or those flying on EU airlines have a clear set of rights laid out for them, together with common rules on compensation if a flight is delayed or cancelled. Details of your rights as an air passenger can be found at: <http://ec.europa.eu/passenger-rights>. If things go wrong use the EU-wide emergency number. If you dial 112 in any EU country, including from your mobile phone, you can reach the police, ambulance or fire services, often with access to English speaking operators - it could save your life.



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*Conservatives in the European Parliament*