



Air Passenger

Rights



THE VOLUNTARY COMMITMENTS from airlines and airports of Europe, published in this leaflet, are an outcome of a concerted action on air passenger rights initiated by the European Civil Aviation Conference (ECAC) and the European Commission. Not only the European airline and airport organisations, but also consumer organisations, organisations representing persons with reduced mobility, and the travel trade have been involved in the work which was started in autumn 2000. The goal has been to provide the passengers with a higher quality of service. The carefully formulated airline and airport commitments complement the leg-





isolation issued in the field of passenger protection and the general conditions of carriage applied by the airlines. For the airlines and airports involved, the commitments represent harmonised minimum requirements.

THE TARGET DATE for the implementation of the Airline and Airport Commitments is 14 February 2002. On the back cover of this leaflet you will learn where a list of the committed airlines and airports can be found. Although the commitments are of a voluntary nature, abiding by them is important, already in view of the public image of the airline or airport in question. ECAC and the European Commission are also working on the mechanics for monitoring the implementation of the commitments.

READING THROUGH THIS LEAFLET you will learn more on the services the airlines and airports can offer to you. We are convinced that the commitments will guarantee an even higher, more uniform and more predictable level of service. Have a good journey!

Airport Voluntary Commitment on Air Passenger Service



Preamble

European airports have developed an Airport Voluntary Commitment on Air Passenger Service following extensive consultation with representatives of consumers, European governments, the European Commission and the air transport industry.

Air passengers' expectations have grown considerably in recent years especially in regard to quality of service. Furthermore, as airports are working more and more in a competitive environment, quality criteria have been widely adopted by European airports as a means of competitive definition.

The Airport Voluntary Commitment on Air Passenger Service contains commitments to deliver a defined quality of service to air travellers. Although the commitments are not legally-binding, the signatories to the Airport Voluntary Commitment on Air Passenger Service will continue to strive to meet the needs of customers and achieve the quality set out in this Commitment on a consistent basis.

Signatory airports will each develop their own individual service plans incorporating the Airport Voluntary Commitment on Air Passenger Service.

Clearing the confusion between airport, airline and others

Clarification: When a passenger buys an air ticket their contract is with the airline. In fact no contractual relationship exists between passengers and airports. However, airport operators recognise that they have a duty of care towards the passengers.

Clarification: Many “airport services” are not performed by the airport operator at all and, although airports strive to work closely with all business partners and government agencies, often airports have little or no choice over the selection of these suppliers. This can include critical services such as ground handling, which is organised by airlines and covers matters such as check-in and baggage delivery, as well as security checks, border controls, airport access etc. Unfortunately, the airport operator cannot be held responsible should the level of these services fall below a desired level.

1. PERSONS WITH REDUCED MOBILITY

Each airport will prominently publicise the services it offers for assisting passengers with reduced mobility (PRMs). Most crucially each airport commits itself to the new special protocol on “Meeting the needs of people with reduced mobility” (attached).

2. PASSENGER INFORMATION ON LEGAL RIGHTS

Each airport will prominently display in key strategic locations:

- The European Commission’s “Charter on Air Passenger Rights”
- Future material prepared by the European Commission which aims to inform passengers of their rights under European Union and other international law.

3. ASSISTANCE DURING PERIODS OF SIGNIFICANT DELAYS OR DISRUPTION

Each airport will make available the information given by airlines about expected delays and update passengers as frequently as possible.

Each airport will have contingency plans for assisting involuntarily stranded passengers suffering significant delay. This plan will address the most important needs of passengers, including appropriate seating arrangements, medical support and support for those with particular needs such as families with young children.

Each airport will make every effort to ensure catering concessionaires remain open during such periods.

Each airport will set up appropriate working arrangements with other organisations to provide effective care for passengers in this situation.

4. AIRPORT ACCESS AND GROUND TRANSPORTATION

Each airport will work closely with partners to develop and improve public transport. Wherever possible airports will encourage public transport timetables to be co-ordinated with airline schedules.

5. PROVISION OF INFRASTRUCTURE FOR CHECK-IN, BAGGAGE AND SECURITY

Each airport will provide appropriate infrastructure for business partners (airlines, ground handling companies etc.) for serving passengers at check-in, baggage delivery, security and border control.

6. MAINTENANCE

Each airport will ensure that all equipment used to serve passengers is subject to regular and systematic maintenance in compliance with the manufacturers' recommended guide-

lines. This is particularly important for equipment critical for core airport operations - baggage handling systems, escalators, moving walkways, air conditioning, lifts, car park equipment etc.

7. TROLLEY MANAGEMENT

Each airport will ensure that sufficient trolleys for passengers with hold baggage are available and in good working order at all times at appropriate locations.

8. WAY-FINDING AND INFORMATION DESKS

Each airport will ensure user-friendly and comprehensive signage, taking account of local culture and language without compromising the benefits of consistency. All signs, brochures and other materials and any modern technology (such as Internet pages) will be used in the simplest and clearest way possible.

Each airport will have staffed information desks, wherever feasible, which will be open in line with the airport or terminal's operating hours.

9. CLEANLINESS

Each airport will ensure that all public areas are kept clean at all times. Particular care will be taken over the cleanliness of toilets and washrooms.

10. CUSTOMER COMMENT MANAGEMENT

Each airport will ensure that there are clearly promoted and understandable comment and complaint procedures. Customer comments will be stored for easy access and management.

Each airport will establish a reliable method of monitoring, investigating and evaluating customer compliments, comments and complaints. Under normal circumstances, each airport will provide a response to a complaint within 28 days of receipt. When this does not permit sufficient time for a complaint to be investigated, an interim response will be provided giving the reason for the delay.

11. REGULAR REPORTING

Each airport will produce regular consumer reports (at least once a year) based on passenger satisfaction results. These reports will be made available to the relevant national or international bodies.

The performance indicators will usually take the form of passenger satisfaction levels measured through regular monitoring in all those areas which are totally under the airports' control. Examples of exceptions to this are:

- During times where contingency plans are in operation to deal with severe disruption.
- When check-in, baggage handling and security is provided by a third party.
- On issues of airport access when services are provided by transport partners.

There will also be a performance indicator measuring the number of days taken to respond to passenger comment as defined in paragraph 10 "Customer comment management" above.

Attachment

SPECIAL PROTOCOL TO MEET THE NEEDS OF PEOPLE WITH REDUCED MOBILITY

Introduction

The purpose of this document is to improve the accessibility of air travel to people with reduced mobility by ensuring that their needs are understood and provided for, and that their safety and dignity are respected. It forms the basis on which a voluntary Code (or Codes) of Practice may be prepared by airports. When preparing Codes, the appropriate provisions of the European Civil Aviation Conference (ECAC) Document 30 (Section 5), and the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO Annex 9) will be incorporated.

Definition of a person with reduced mobility (PRM)

A person with reduced mobility (PRM) is understood to mean any person whose mobility is reduced due to any physical disability (sensory or locomotory), an intellectual impairment, age, or any other cause of disability when using transport, and whose situation needs special attention or adaptation of services ordinarily made available to all passengers.

Basic assumptions

- PRMs have the same rights as other citizens to freedom of movement and freedom of choice. This applies to air travel as to all other areas in life.
- Airports and related service providers have a responsibility to meet the needs of PRMs.

PRMs also have a responsibility to identify their needs to the proper channels at the proper time.

- Information, using accessible formats, must be made available to enable PRMs to plan and make their journey.
- Disability should not be equated with illness and therefore PRMs must not be required to make medical declarations about their disability as a condition of travel.
- Organisations representing PRMs will be consulted on all issues relevant to PRMs.
- Staff will be given appropriate training in understanding and meeting the needs of PRMs.
- Control and security checks will be undertaken in a manner which respects the dignity of PRMs.
- PRMs must be enabled to remain independent to the greatest possible extent.
- The cost of providing for the needs of PRMs must not be passed directly to PRMs.

Provision of infrastructure

Each airport will ensure that its infrastructure is compatible with the needs of people with reduced mobility and that this part of the service is provided in an efficient manner.

This will include:

- Access to landside and airside ground transport;
- Parking, pick-up, drop-off and transfer arrangements;
- Information provided both audibly and visually.

Airline Passenger Service Commitment



AIRLINES IN EUROPE have developed the Airline Passenger Service Commitment following consultation with representatives of Air Travellers, European Governments and the European Commission.

STRONG COMPETITION between airlines has provided Europe's air travellers with an increased choice of airline, airport, price and service. The Airline Passenger Service Commitment contains non-legally binding commitments to deliver defined standards of service to air travellers. The code covers 14 areas, before travel, during travel and after travel. It describes the level of service air travellers may expect consistently from signatory airlines. It will enable air travellers to make a more informed choice of airline when planning their travel arrangements.

THE AIRLINES that are signatories to this Airline Passenger Service Commitment will continue to compete vigorously to meet the needs of customers by offering different products and different levels of customer service. They will endeavour to achieve the standards set out in this Airline Passenger Service Commitment on a consistent basis.

SIGNATORY AIRLINES will each develop their own individual service plans incorporating the Airline Passenger Service Commitment. Signatory airlines will establish staff training programmes and introduce changes to their computer systems to implement the Airline Passenger Service Commitment. During this implementation period, some elements of the Airline Passenger Service Commitment may not be delivered by every airline.

SIGNATORY AIRLINES AGREE TO:**1. Offer the Lowest Fare Available through each of its Direct Outlets**

- a) Each airline will offer the lowest appropriate fare available for which the passenger is eligible through its own telephone reservation system, through its own website and through its own ticket offices for the date, flight and class of service requested.
- b) Each airline will inform passengers that different fares may be available through these different outlets.
- c) Each airline will inform the passenger about the terms and conditions which apply to the fare chosen and any applicable taxes, fees and charges.

2. Honour the Agreed Fare After Payment

After payment for the ticket has been made, no fare increase will apply for the date, flight and class of service booked. However, any change in taxes, fees and charges will be subject to additional payment or refund.

3. Notify Passengers of Known Delays, Cancellations and Diversions

Each airline will notify passengers at the airport and on board an affected aircraft, as soon as possible, of the best available information regarding known delays, cancellations and diversions.

4. Assist Passengers Facing Delays

- a) Each airline will provide appropriate assistance, for example refreshments, meals, accommodation, to its passengers facing de-

lays beyond two hours¹ provided that local conditions allow for such assistance to be delivered. This assistance may not apply in situations involving political unrest or long strikes in essential services or other exceptional circumstances beyond the airline's control. Also, assistance may not be provided if to do so would further delay departure.

- b) The assistance described in paragraph 4a may not be offered on routes operated under public service obligations in accordance with the policy of the authority defining the obligation or when weather causes disruption on routes on which the regularity of operations is significantly affected by weather conditions or on routes of less than 300 km serving remote airports operated by aircraft with fewer than 80 seats.
- c) Each airline will produce a clear and concise statement of its policy, which will be made available to its passengers. This will include a list of routes on which any exceptions apply.

5. Deliver Baggage as Quickly as Possible

Each airline will make every reasonable effort to deliver all checked baggage to the Arrivals Hall area as quickly as possible. In the case of mishandled checked bags, each airline will make every reasonable effort to deliver the mishandled bag to the passenger within 24 hours of its arrival at final destination, free of charge. Immediate assistance sufficient to meet the reasonable short-term needs of the passenger will also be offered by the airline.

6. Allow Telephone Reservations to be Held or Cancelled without Commitment or Penalty within 24 Hours

Subject to applicable ticketing deadlines, each airline will allow the passenger either:

- I)** to hold a telephone reservation made directly with the airline without payment for a minimum of 24 hours or,
- II)** where the airline requires immediate payment at the time of booking, to cancel a reservation without penalty for up to 24 hours.

Passengers will be advised which reservations method applies at the time of booking.²

7. Provide Prompt Refunds

- a)** Where a passenger claims and is entitled to a refund on a ticket purchased direct from the airline, each airline will issue refunds within 7 business days for credit card purchases and within 20 business days for cash or cheque purchases.
- b)** Any taxes, fees and charges collected with the fare and shown on the ticket will be refundable where the ticket is not used. This will include non-refundable tickets and the refund will be issued within the same time limits as above.

¹ The assistance given to delayed passengers on an inclusive tour package flight will be in accordance with the published policy of the tour organiser.

² Some leisure airlines may decide to provide this facility only until 3 days before flight departure. This offer may not apply on routes operated by aircraft with fewer than 80 seats. Any such exclusions should be notified by the airline.

8. Provide Assistance to Passengers with Reduced Mobility and Passengers with Special Needs

Each airline will publicise the services it offers for handling passengers with special needs and for assisting passengers with reduced mobility in an appropriate manner compatible with applicable safety regulations. For passengers with reduced mobility the airlines commit themselves to support the attached paper on “Meeting the Needs of People with Reduced Mobility”.

9. Meet Passengers’ Essential Needs during Long On-Aircraft delays

The airline will make every reasonable effort to provide food, water, lavatories and access to medical treatment for passengers on board an aircraft that is on the ground for an extended period of time without access to the terminal, as consistent with passenger and employee safety and security concerns.

Airlines will make every reasonable effort not to keep passengers on board in long delays.

10. Take Measures to Speed Up Check-in

Airlines will set reasonable check-in deadlines and in co-ordination with the airports will take appropriate steps to avoid congestion in departure areas and will take measures to speed up check-in to assist passengers to meet their check-in deadlines. These measures could include e-ticketing and automated check-in systems, self-service check-in, mobile check-in stations, off airport check-in, fast track check-in and queue combing.

11. Reduce the Number of Passengers Who are Involuntarily Denied Boarding

In the event of a flight at departure time having more passengers than seats available, each airline will first seek volunteers who are prepared to stand down from the flight, subject to any security and/or operational constraints at the airport concerned.

12. Provide Information to Passengers Regarding its Commercial and Operational Conditions

Airlines will provide their passengers with the following information relevant to their journey:

A) At the time of booking (if available):

- I)** Planned scheduled time of departure and arrival of the flights
- II)** Airport/terminal of departure and arrival
- III)** The number of en-route stops
- IV)** Any change of aircraft, terminal or airport
- V)** Any conditions attached to the fare to be paid
- VI)** Name of operating carrier and flight number
- VII)** If it is a smoking flight

In the event of substitution of operating carrier which has not previously been disclosed and which is not acceptable to the ticket holder, the passenger will be given the right to a refund or carried on the airline's next flight on which space is available in the same class.

B) With the confirmation invoice or with the ticket:

- I) Confirmation of flight times
- II) Free baggage allowance and liability limits
- III) Cabin baggage allowance

If, after purchase of the ticket, the airline makes a significant change to the scheduled flight time which is not acceptable to the passenger, and the airline is unable to book the passenger on an alternate flight which is acceptable to the passenger, he/she will be entitled to a refund.

C) On request: (for the airline's own services and where available for services operated by other carriers)

- I) The aircraft type scheduled to be operated on the route and seat pitch
- II) Services normally offered on board
- III) Facilities for passengers with special needs and any charge made for using them (except for passengers with reduced mobility as provided for under Article 8)
- IV) Whether specific seats can be allocated or pre-booked
- V) Charges for excess baggage
- VI) Its Conditions of Carriage
- VII) Details of frequent flyer programme, if any
- VIII) Assistance programs for baggage lost, damaged or delayed
- IX) Details of the Airline Passenger Service Commitment and airline's own service plan.

13. Provide Information on Operating Carrier

In case of flights operated under a code share, franchise or long term planned lease agreements, airlines will:

- I) Inform passengers of the name of the airline actually operating the flight. Passengers will be informed:
 - upon reservation, whenever such reservation is made through a distribution channel under the direct control of the airlines, i.e. airlines' own offices, airlines' telephone reservation centre and airlines' own websites; and
 - at the airport upon check-in.
- II) As regards a reservation made through a channel which is not under the direct control of the airlines, i.e. travel agencies and websites other than airlines' own websites, airlines will remind travel agents and websites' operators to systematically inform passengers at the time of reservation.
- III) Make it clear through appropriate wording that the passenger's contract is with the marketing airline, i.e., the airline whose designator code appears on the flight coupon or routing slip next to the flight number.
- IV) Inform passengers travelling on code shared services that the level of service may be different and the Airline Passenger Service Commitment may not apply.

14. Be Responsive to Passengers' Complaints

Under normal circumstances each airline will provide a substantive response to written complaints within 28 days from the date of receipt. When this does not permit sufficient time for the complaint to be properly investigated an interim response will be provided giving the reason for the delay. Each airline will designate a convenient point of passenger contact for all complaints and the address and/or phone number and departmental name of this customer service function will be provided in timetables, on websites and any other public information source and will also be available at all travel agents accredited by airlines.

Attachment

MEETING THE NEEDS OF PEOPLE WITH REDUCED MOBILITY (PRMS)

Introduction

The purpose of this document is to improve the accessibility of air travel to people with reduced mobility by ensuring their needs are understood and provided for, and their safety and dignity are respected. It is aimed at airlines providing services and facilities at airports and on aircraft, and forms the basis on which a voluntary Code (or Codes) of Practice may be prepared. When preparing Codes, the appropriate provisions of the European Civil Aviation Conference (ECAC) Document 30 (Section 5), and the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO Annex 9) will be considered. These documents provide technical information and are produced, following consultation with the airline industry, by governmental agencies concerned with establishing standards and recommended practices.

Definition

A person with reduced mobility (PRM) is understood to mean any person whose mobility is reduced due to any physical disability (sensory or locomotory), an intellectual impairment, age, or any other cause of disability when using transport and whose situation needs special attention and the adaptation to the person's needs of the services made available to all passengers.

Basic assumptions

- PRMs have the same rights as other citizens to freedom of movement and freedom of choice. This applies to air travel as to all other areas in life.
- Airlines, airports and related service providers have a responsibility to meet the needs of PRMs. PRMs also have a responsibility to identify their needs to the proper channels at the proper time.
- Information must be made available to enable PRMs to plan and make their journey.
- The cost of providing for the needs of PRMs must not be passed directly to the PRMs.
- Disability should not be equated with illness and therefore PRMs must not be required to make medical declarations about their disability as a condition of travel.
- Organisations representing PRMs will be consulted on issues relevant to PRMs.
- Staff will be given appropriate training in understanding and meeting the needs of PRMs.
- Control and security checks should be undertaken in a manner which respects the dignity of PRMs.
- PRMs must be enabled to remain independent to the greatest possible extent.

Airline Practices

- No carrier will refuse a PRM except where he/she cannot safely be carried or cannot physically be accommodated. When the carriage of a PRM is refused, carriers will explain clearly and explicitly the reasons for refusal.
- When a PRM declares that he/she is self-reliant (self-sufficient and capable of taking care of all of his/her physical needs independently in flight), the airline should accept that declaration. The airline should then be under no obligation to provide on-board assistance which contravenes health, safety or hygiene requirements where such declaration has been made.
- Airlines will pursue technical and operational options for improving access and facilities on aircraft of all sizes, particularly when major refurbishment is undertaken.
- Where a direct route is not possible for a PRM, (e.g. because of small aircraft), airlines will endeavour to suggest an acceptable alternative.
- Regardless of the size of airport and aircraft, arrangements for embarkation and disembarkation should respect the dignity of PRMs.
- Airlines will, where space permits, provide on-board equipment/ facilities to aid the self-reliance of PRMs within limits of health, safety and hygiene.

- PRMs will have equal choice of seat allocation, subject to safety requirements. Airlines will explain clearly and explicitly the reasons for not allocating a specific seat when the request is not met for safety reasons.
- Certified Service Dogs will be carried in the cabin, subject to national importation and airline regulations. Where they are carried, there will be no charge.
- PRMs will not be charged for the carriage of basic mobility equipment or other essential disability assistive devices.
- Airlines must take all reasonable steps to avoid loss or damage to mobility equipment or other disability assistive devices. Where loss or damage occurs, airlines will make appropriate arrangements to meet the individual's immediate mobility needs.



A list of airports and airlines implementing the commitments can be found at the homepage of the European Civil Aviation Conference (ECAC) www.ecac-ceac.org.

Additional information: Civil Aviation Administration, division for international affairs, tel. +358 9 82771.