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EU Parliament wants rail passenger rights beefed up

The European Parliament today voted to upgrade rail passenger rights.

The Parliament wants to increase the compensation consumers should receive if their trains are severely delayed or cancelled [1]. MEPs also want to make it compulsory to sell a 'through ticket' for combined journeys, which is when, a consumer books a journey which has more than one leg. This is to prevent railway companies from selling separate tickets for different segments of a journey, which allows them to bypass existing obligations relating to compensation, rerouting and assistance [2].

Another positive development is that MEPs brushed aside the idea to exempt rail operators from paying compensation in cases of 'extraordinary circumstances'. Allowing this exemption could have been a real loss of passenger rights and would lead to replicating the difficulties consumers experience frequently with airlines [3].

Monique Goyens, Director General of The European Consumer Organisation (BEUC), said: "Rail passengers will get their rights upgraded if the Parliament gets its way. It's only fair that consumers get proper compensation when their train has been delayed or cancelled, because disruption has a knock-on effect on people's plans and schedules. The introduction of through tickets will close a loophole which rail operators have used too frequently.

"MEPs were right to ditch the argument that compensation to consumers was not necessary in 'extraordinary circumstances'. It would have opened up an unnecessary gap in the net to protect rail passengers."

ENDS

[1] The compensation levels the Parliament proposes are 50% of the ticket price for a delay of 60 to 90 minutes, 75% of the ticket price for a delay of 91 minutes to 120 minutes; and finally 100% of the ticket price for a delay of 121 minutes or more.

[2] The current rules concerning compensation, re-routing and assistance are available [here](#).

[3] A recent report by the Court of Auditors on EU passenger rights found that 60% of cases brought to the national enforcement bodies where the airline refused to compensate passengers, were actually not an 'extraordinary circumstance'.

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