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## **Airlines must not use volcanic ash as an excuse to water down passenger rights**

As the European Commission today presents the results of its public consultation on air passengers' rights, in the context of the review process of EU legislation on air passengers' rights, consumer organisations call upon European legislators not to use the ash cloud crisis as a pretext to water down passengers' rights.

The volcanic ash cloud crisis underlined the importance of having European legislation in place to protect air travellers. Furthermore, the crisis has shown that the mere existence of protective rules alone is not enough. They are only helpful for consumers if information is available and if strong supervision is in place.

Monique Goyens, Director General of BEUC, the European Consumers' Organisation said:

"The Icelandic volcano eruption, that affected millions of air passengers across Europe, was a once in a lifetime occurrence. It should not be the yardstick against which the economic implications of airlines' obligations should be evaluated. The review of the legislation currently in place must not lead to a reduction of crucial passenger rights. It is of critical importance that these basic obligations to passengers affected by flight disruptions are kept.

"Surveys by consumer organisations and other independent bodies clearly show that all across Europe even the most basic obligations such as the right to information, assistance, refund, rerouting, provision of food, drink and a phone call were often ignored by certain airlines. The real challenge for the EU is to ensure that these important safeguards for all are more clearly communicated and more reliably enforced in the future. The volcano crisis should not be used as an excuse to reduce these safeguards."

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