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## **Air passengers' rights: key EU vote approaches**

In the context of a major EU update of air passengers' rights, the European Parliament votes Thursday, calling for strengthening of rights and measures to improve enforcement. MEPs also denounce the lack of transparency of ticket pricing and call for a 'black-list' of unfair contract terms.

EU Regulation 261 defines passenger rights and airline obligations during cancellations and long delays. First introduced in 1991, the current review will define European rights for years to come. BEUC hopes and expects MEPs to take a firm line against industry calls for limitations on existing rights. Regrettably, MEPs do not lend sufficient support to the introduction of mandatory guarantees against airline bankruptcies. The recent and sudden folding of Spanair and Malev are but two examples of the need for such safeguards.

Monique Goyens, Director General of the European Consumer Organisation, said:

"EU law in this area is a clear example of rights which are robust on paper, but devalued by a lack of transparency and enforcement. Passengers do not know their rights, they are not told them and many airlines have a poor record of applying them. That is unacceptable. Airlines should not be allowed to view their obligations to consumers as an optional extra.

"There has been a disturbing rise in adverts with misleading prices and unfair contract terms when buying air tickets. Unfortunately practices such as credit card surcharging, bans on ticket transferability and unexpected fees for luggage are becoming unwelcome facts of life for travellers. The EU has a duty to stamp out these dodgy business practices. Thursday's vote should show the way forward for the European Commission.

"Throughout this review many airlines are pushing hard for a dilution of their obligations, often inappropriately using the volcanic ash cloud crisis as justification. We are glad MEPs are prepared to resist such arguments."

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