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## **Air travel rights to take off or be grounded by EU parliament vote**

The rights of every air traveller in Europe when it comes to flight cancellations, lengthy delays, luggage restrictions, boarding denial, compensation claims and more will be decided in a crunch vote by the European Parliament, Wednesday, February 5<sup>th</sup>.

Passenger rights and airline obligations as originally set out in the EU's 'Regulation 261' of 2004 have been under review for many years. MEPs must improve a flawed Commission proposal and deliver clear, robust passenger rights in Europe. We hope they will live up to consumer expectations despite intense airline industry pressure since the Icelandic volcanic ash disruption.

For passengers, 3 key protections at stake are:

- **Right to financial compensation for delays** – The European Court of Justice has repeatedly clarified that this right kicks in after 3 hours of delay to *arrival at destination*. MEPs are now split on whether to endorse this consumer-friendly approach or introduce 3, 5 and 7 hour thresholds dependent on flight distance, which would significantly reduce rights as they stand.
- **Right to accommodation** – Passengers have long been appropriately entitled to accommodation while stranded and waiting for rerouting. Wednesday's vote will decide whether to set this right at a 5 night limit.
- **'No-show' clause ban** – Many airlines unfairly cancel the return or connecting flight of passengers who either miss or do not take an outbound flight. This business practice deprives a consumer of an already purchased ticket. Such 'no-show' clauses should face an outright EU ban.

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

"Airlines turning a blind eye to their obligations are among the top consumer problems in Europe. This legal review should be very careful not to reward those who have not been respecting current laws.

"The industry claims it cannot afford these laws. But that is disingenuous. Market analyses prove that a decimal percentage point of short and medium haul flights were affected by compensation claims<sup>1</sup>. Furthermore, to respond to a once in a lifetime volcano crisis by reducing passenger rights would be doubly misguided.

"MEPs need to give this industry a wake-up call by improving our travel rights. They should take their lead from the ECJ's judgments."

ENDS

BEUC Factsheet on EU air passenger rights [here](#)

<sup>1</sup> [\(SEC\(2011\) 428\)](#)