Air transport: protection of passengers

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The committee adopted the report by Gerard COLLINS (UEN, IRL) on the Commission communication. Although the Commission's document was welcomed in general, MEPs took the view that much remained to be done to enhance passengers' rights, including passengers with disabilities. There was a need for European airlines to adopt voluntary codes of practice covering improvements in the quality of service provided and adequate protection for delayed passengers. In addition, simple procedures were needed for logging complaints and settling disputes out of court. The rapporteur proposed that a new EU Air Passenger Ombudsman be appointed to process claims involving EU airlines. The committee also called on the European Commission as a matter of urgency to allocate money from the EU research budget to carry out an independent evaluation of possible health risks to passengers on long-haul flights. MEPs were particularly concerned about the problem of deep vein thrombosis, which was a serious risk on such flights. The Commission was asked to carry out independent research in consultation with EU airlines and EU consumer groups. Finally, the committee regretted that a draft directive on the safety of third country aircraft had lapsed owing to a lack of agreement between Spain and the UK over Gibraltar.