

Air transport: rights of persons with reduced mobility

2005/0007(COD) - 11/10/2005

The committee adopted the report by Robert EVANS (PES , UK) amending the proposal under the 1st reading of the codecision procedure:

- the term 'persons with reduced mobility' should be replaced by 'disabled persons and persons with reduced mobility', thereby extending the scope of the regulation to cover certain other categories of passengers, such as the blind, partially sighted, deaf, hard of hearing and those with an intellectual disability, who do not necessarily have limited mobility but may nevertheless encounter difficulties when travelling via airports;
- in order to prevent abuse of the provisions contained in Article 4 (whereby carriers may refuse on safety grounds to accept a reservation from or to embark a disabled person or a person with reduced mobility), MEPs stipulated that the applicable safety standards should be established by international, Community or national law or by the authority that issued the carrier's operating certificate. Moreover, in the event of refusal on the grounds of the size of the aircraft or of the justified absence of the cabin crew, alternatives must be proposed to the passenger in question. If the air carrier, its agent or a travel firm request the presence of an accompanying person, that person should travel at the expense of the requesting party. The rules concerned should be made publicly available in accessible formats;
- when a disabled person or person with reduced mobility arrives at an airport for onward travel by air, the managing body of the airport should be able to contract out the provision of assistance. The period of notification of the person's particular needs for such assistance should be 48 hours (rather than 24 hours as proposed by the Commission). This notification should also cover the return flight, if the outward flight and the return flight have been contracted with the same air carrier;
- it should be clearly specified in the regulation that "the assistance provided shall be adapted to the specific needs of the individual passenger";
- MEPs amended the wording of Article 6 (Responsibility for assistance at airports) with the aim of ensuring that the managing body and the airport users can find solutions appropriate to a particular airport, while nevertheless ensuring that the responsible managing body is able to fulfil its legal obligations in the event that no agreement can be reached. They also specified that the charge levied on air carriers for the purpose of funding assistance must be non-discriminatory and reasonable;
- the designated points of arrival at which disabled persons and persons with reduced mobility can request assistance should include underground (metro) and light rail stations and properly labelled car parks intended for people with reduced mobility. Basic information about the airport should be available at these arrival points in accessible formats.

Other amendments sought to lay down rules on the liability of air carriers and tour operators as regards assistance and on the training of air carriers' and airport managing bodies' staff in how to provide direct assistance. Lastly, the committee wanted provision to be made for compensation in cases where wheelchairs and other "assistive devices" are damaged in transit.

