

Air Travel and Passengers With Disabilities

The Congress of the Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe (ALDE) Party convening in Stockholm, Sweden on 26-28 May 2023:

Notes:

- That passengers with a disability or reduced mobility should have access to air travel like everyone else and not be faced with variable quality of basic travel services. There are reports from across Europe and the wider world of passengers being uncollected, left on planes, or in waiting areas, unable to access sanitary facilities and aid equipment being damaged. Contractors to provide support services may not be trained adequately, leaving the passenger to be passed from one person to another, and often left without support or consideration.

Believes:

- Passengers with disabilities or reduced mobility have the right to travel safely by air without discrimination and to receive the necessary assistance.
- Regulation (EC) 1107/2006 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 5 July 2006 concerning the rights of disabled persons and persons with reduced mobility when travelling by air establishes rules both to protect them against discrimination and to ensure that proper assistance is provided.
- Their Rights are further enshrined in the UN Convention on People with Disabilities (UNCPD) which says in Article 20 Personal Mobility: "States Parties shall take effective measures to ensure personal mobility with the greatest possible independence for persons with disabilities";
- The UNCPD should hold UN Member States accountable for air travel in their territories;
- The 1999 Montreal Convention which sets out carriers responsibilities to treat mobility aids as if they were luggage;
- The International Airlines Trade Association (IATA) is not the right body to police airlines, airport companies and their subcontractors for performance of support for passengers with disability. The maximum payable by IATA for damage to a wheelchair in transit is a small fraction (\$1,500) of the total value of replacing a wheelchair;
- Although the Montreal Convention limits the liability of air carriers for damage to mobility equipment to an amount far lower than its actual replacement cost, the United States' Federal Aviation Authority requires all airlines to agree to pay the full cost of lost or damaged mobility equipment as a condition of operating in US airspace;

Resolution:

Air Travel and
Passengers With
Disabilities

Year and Congress:

Stockholm, May 2023

Category:

Social Policy

Page:

1

- That the European Civil Aviation Conference (and those of individual states in Europe) do not have the powers to ensure that passengers with disabilities can travel with ease and without fear of their wheelchairs and aids being damaged.

Calls for:

- The European Commission to conduct the necessary consultations with the related stakeholders representing travelers with disabilities or reduced mobility, to complete an impact assessment on the enforcement of Reg. 1107/2006 and to make a proposal for the revision of its rules where necessary.
- The European Commission to promote the highest standards of protection of the rights of persons with disabilities or reduced mobility when travelling by air, at international level.
- UNCPD to take evidence from passengers with disabilities and experts on the current state of accessibility services for passengers with disabilities;
- UNCPD to include assessment of air travel in their inspections of UN Member states disability provision;
- the European Aviation Safety Authority (EASA) to follow the US FAA in requiring all airlines to agree to cover the full replacement cost of lost or damaged mobility equipment as a condition of operating in EU airspace;
- IATA to create (& pay for) an independent body to assess all claims for passengers with disabilities, whether the failure was the airline, the airport or any agent or subcontractor involved in the service;
- IATA to set up a fund to pay for compensation for mobility aids damaged during the journey, and to charge the responsible bodies (airlines/airports/agents/subcontractors) the actual damage and costs, as well a fine of up to ten times the value of the damage to the passenger. Such a fund could also assist with costs arising from travel caused by unexpected equipment processing/handling;
- IATA to also introduce a funded scheme to develop a Programme of training for airline staff in the understanding and management of Physical and Mental Disabilities, along with the care of equipment such as wheelchairs, walking aids, breathing apparatus, dressings and medication.

Resolution:

Air Travel and
Passengers With
Disabilities

Year and Congress:

Stockholm, May 2023

Category:

Social Policy

Page:

2