

LOW-COST AIRLINES FACE DISCIPLINARY ACTION OVER EXTRA CHARGES FOR HAND LUGGAGE



Several low-cost airlines, including Ryanair, Vueling, EasyJet, and Volotea, have been hit with disciplinary proceedings by the Spanish Ministry of Consumer Affairs for imposing additional charges on hand luggage carried in the cabin. The ministry's General Directorate of Consumption has expanded the investigation to cover other services previously included in ticket prices, such as seat reservations for minors or dependents.

Previously, in 2018, it had already denounced Ryanair and Wizzair before the State Aviation Safety Agency and the National Commission of Markets and Competition (CNMC) without either of the two agencies communicating any action in this regard.

The Ministry of Consumer Affairs has cautioned that companies offering competitive prices for air travel by charging passengers extra for traditionally included services are engaging in questionable practices. By separating these services and setting a supplement, these companies can achieve higher SEO positioning in search engines and comparators, giving them an unfair advantage over competitors that include these services in the advertised ticket price.

Regarding sanctions, fines for serious infringements can range from 10,001 to 100,000 euros, while penalties for severe violations can range from 100,001 to 1,000,000 euros. Suppose the illicit benefit obtained from the breach exceeds these amounts. In that case, penalties can be four to six times the benefit for serious violations and six to eight times the benefit for severe infringements.

The airlines insist that such practices are "perfectly legal"

The Association of Airlines (ALA) has pointed out that commercial practices such as the collection of suitcases in the cabin or the assignment of seats are "perfectly legal and are covered by European Regulation 1008/2008 that establishes the freedom of tariff setting.

ALA has emphasized that travelers know the cost of their selected flight from the start, allowing them to choose the required services and only pay for them. This practice is based on providing consumers with choices, ensuring they can determine what they need anytime.

Meanwhile, via the General Directorate of Consumption, the ministry has expanded its investigation to include extra charges imposed on other services previously included in the ticket price. These services may consist of reserving a seat next to a minor or dependent passenger.

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