

NEW EU AIR PASSENGER RIGHTS REGULATION: KEY CHANGES COMING IN 2027



After 13 years, the European Union has concluded a major revision of air passenger rights. The new regulation was published in the Official Journal of the European Union on 2 October and enters into force on 23 October 2027.

The regulation applies to all flights departing from an airport in the EU, irrespective of the nationality of the airline or the destination of the flight. **When the flight departs from a third country and arrives in the EU, the regulation applies only when the airline is European.**

Here is a summary of the changes that will affect passengers.

Baggage and Boarding

Passengers will have the right to one free handbag, which must measure 40 × 30 × 15 cm at most, or its equivalent, and food and drinks appropriate to the length of the flight, subject to security checks.

Cabin trolley bags (placed in overhead lockers) may incur a charge. Airlines must show, in their booking system, the price of the cheapest option that includes a ticket plus a suitcase as a "first option" on the market. A cheaper alternative for those who do not use a trolley bag is acceptable.

If there is no space in the overhead lockers or if the flight is changed, any trolley bag which must be placed in the hold at the time of check-in will be at no cost to the passenger. The airline must make clear, both in the booking system and on its website, how many bags and their combined weight and dimensions are permissible and the charges for any special items.

Boarding Passes and Reservations

Paper tickets remain valid as long as they are legible: airlines cannot refuse to board a passenger or impose an extra charge simply because they have a paper ticket. Passengers will not be obliged to download an airline app or register an account.

The airline must send the electronic boarding pass by e-mail.

If the passenger's phone runs out of battery after they have checked in online, they may request a printed copy of the pass at the airport.

Minor errors in the name on the ticket will not prevent the passenger being boarded. If the discrepancy is reported at least 48 hours before departure, the airline must correct the typographical error free of charge at least once.

Delays, Cancellations and Compensation

The amounts of compensation have been clarified and, in some cases, increased:

- €250 for journeys of up to 1,500 km
- €400 for intra-EU journeys of more than 1,500 km and for journeys from the EU to a third country of between 1,500 and 3,500 km
- €600 for journeys in excess of this (for journeys delayed by less than four hours, the amount will be halved in some circumstances).

Compensation is due if the flight is delayed by more than three hours on arrival, unless the airline proves that the disruption was due to exceptional circumstances directly contributing to the delay. Five hours after the flight has been delayed, the passenger may cancel the trip and receive a full refund of the unused part of the ticket, including any additional fees. If the delay makes the journey pointless, the passenger will receive a refund of the proportion of the ticket that has already been used as well as a refund to return to the point of departure if this is necessary.

If the flight is cancelled, the passenger has the choice between a refund and a re-routed flight. Compensation is also due for cancellations notified with less than 14 days' notice (subject to the exceptions listed above).

The claim for refund must be paid within seven calendar days. Re-routing need not be on the same airline's next available flight, with other carriers, different itineraries or even rail or bus journeys being acceptable if they reach the destination faster. If a suitable re-routing is not offered within three hours, the passenger may make arrangements themselves and be reimbursed for any necessary and reasonable expenses, up to 400 % of the ticket price and any additional fees.

Vouchers may only be issued with the passenger's consent. These are valid for a maximum of 12 months (extendable by a further 12 months) and any unused balance must be refunded within seven days.

Stronger Protections for Passengers with Disabilities and Reduced Mobility

When assistance is triggered by a delay, cancellation or denied boarding, airlines must provide:

- free refreshments every two hours, followed by a meal after three hours and every five hours thereafter (up to three meals a day)
- internet and two telephone calls
- overnight accommodation and transport if necessary; in exceptional circumstances the requirement for overnight accommodation may be limited to three nights, but this does not apply to persons with disabilities or reduced mobility, pregnant women, infants, unaccompanied minors, passengers needing assistance or their accompanying persons.

If the airline does not provide the necessary care, the passenger may pay for it themselves and claim reimbursement.

Passengers flying with a child under the age of 14 or a person requiring special assistance are entitled to an adjacent seat free of charge. Strollers and wheelchairs may be used free of charge up to the gate or aircraft door. Persons with disabilities or reduced mobility have priority for assistance and re-routing. Assistance dogs are also covered.

Time on Board and EU Airport Facilities

Aircraft on the tarmac or apron at an EU airport may not keep passengers on board for more than

two hours, except for safety, immigration or air-traffic reasons. There must be an adequate temperature and functioning toilets.

EU airport facilities must provide free drinking water and charging points for mobile devices at all times, irrespective of the terminal, flight or time of day.

Connections and Overbooking

If several flights make up part of a single contract and a connection is missed for a reason for which the airline is responsible, the airline must provide assistance and re-routing. If no solution can be found within five hours, a refund is also due. A three-hour delay on arrival may still entitle the passengers to compensation.

For tickets purchased under separate contracts, the seller must advise the passenger that if they miss a connecting flight they may lose certain rights. If the outbound and return flights are booked under the same contract, failure to take the outbound flight cannot result in the return flight being cancelled or an extra charge being made.

In cases of overbooking, passengers with a valid reservation who are denied boarding are entitled to the same compensation amounts (€250 / €400 / €600) as in the case of a denied boarding, in addition to a refund or alternative transport and care. These payments must be made within seven days.

Musical Instruments and Complaints

Musical instruments may be taken in the cabin if the size and safety requirements are met. Oversized musical instruments may be accommodated by purchasing an additional seat.

Claims for damages to baggage must be submitted within seven days of the delivery of the baggage; for delayed baggage the deadline is 21 days. Airlines must inform the passenger of their potential entitlement to compensation within 96 hours of the end of the journey. **The period for submitting a formal claim is nine months, during which the carrier must acknowledge receipt of the claim immediately and provide payment or a reason for refusing to pay within 30 days.**

For other complaints the time limit is 12 months. The airline must acknowledge receipt within seven working days and reply in principle within one month (two months in justified cases).

The new rules represent a major step in the direction of greater transparency, speedier remedies and enhanced everyday protection. While airlines will have more than a year to make the necessary adjustments to their systems and pricing, passengers can look forward to more straightforward baggage rules, faster settlement of refunds and support when things go wrong.

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