

Air passenger rights: Lufthansa leads the way

Black sheep

Binding regulations that protect passengers are necessary. After an Irish low-cost carrier cancelled a flight from Luebeck to Pisa in June 2008, it was not willing to immediately provide passengers with accommodations. As a result, two groups of school children had to spend a night on cots in the storage facility of the volunteer fire department. Another group of school children from Cologne experienced a similar situation in late 2007. Consequently, the lord mayor of Cologne called on the schools to pay special attention to professionalism and customer-friendliness when selecting airlines.

Air passengers, in contrast to passengers of other modes of transport, can assert comprehensive rights vis-à-vis airlines and airports. Lufthansa is setting standards in this effort when it comes to service and consumer protection.

Service facilitates mobility

As of July 2008, passengers with reduced mobility in Europe have a right to receive assistance at the airport. With the regulation, the EU adopts a tradition-rich practice at Lufthansa. Lufthansa has been providing a personal assistance service since 1968. In Frankfurt, FraCareS – a consortium of Fraport and Lufthansa with over 400 employees – has been providing professional assistance since midyear for what will be close to 540,000 passengers annually. In addition, the airline also provides personal assistance to children travelling alone.

Fair compensation guaranteed in case of delays

Obligations in the event of delays and cancellations have also been regulated in all of Europe since 2005 through comprehensive legislation:



Delays lasting two hours or longer: The airline has to provide appropriate meals and refreshments as well as provide the possibility to make phone calls or send faxes and e-mails free of charge.



Delays lasting five hours or longer: Travellers have a right to be reimbursed the cost of the ticket and transported back to the departure site or to rebook.



Cancellations on short notice: Barring any extraordinary circumstances, airlines must, in addition to providing any hotel accommodations, also pay compensation of between 250 and 600 euros. Passengers may also, at their option,

- ... be reimbursed for the flight;
- ... be flown back to the departure site;
- ... select other transportation to the destination;
- ... agree on a comparable destination site with the airline.

All details on passenger rights can be viewed at: www.lufthansa.com

Limitation with serious consequences

However, according to the judgment of the European Court of Law, the provisions do not apply to the flights of non-European airlines within the EU. One customer of a Dubai airline painfully learned this when he was stranded abroad for two days.

Irrespective of statutory guidelines, customer-friendliness is a priority at Lufthansa. For instance, Lufthansa's compensation payments often go beyond the prescribed amount. It goes without saying that the airline believes in a global complaint management system that avoids red tape.