



## **Press release from the European Consumer Centre Luxembourg**

### **Disabilities: know your rights when traveling by plane**

December 3 is the International Day of Persons with Disabilities. For this purpose, the European Consumer Centres Network (ECC-Net) wants to draw attention to air passengers with disabilities or reduced mobility. Even though European law ensures substantial consumer rights, they still face serious problems when traveling by air.

In 2016, the ECC-Net received several information requests and complaints:

- An elderly Dutch woman was supposed to fly from Amsterdam to Sofia. She got assistance when arriving at the airport, because she was not able to walk long distances. However, an employee brought her to the wrong gate. As a result she missed the flight.
- A British air passenger suffering from Crohn's Disease wasn't allowed to board a flight as the airline claimed she appeared drunk.
- An Austrian consumer booked a flight from Vienna to Paris. He needs a dialysis machine which is vitally essential for him, but too big to carry as hand luggage. The airline denied offering this transportation of medical equipment free of extra charges.

According to **EU Regulation No. 1107/2006** on the rights of disabled persons and persons with reduced mobility, consumers are entitled to check in medical equipment free of extra charges. Moreover, airlines have to offer the transport of assistance dogs or mobility aids such as wheelchair, most of the time free of charge.

Assistance given at airports should enable persons with disabilities to proceed from a designated point of arrival to an aircraft and from the aircraft to a designated point of departure, including embarking and disembarking. For example, after the flight passengers with reduced mobility shall be provided assistance to reach their connecting flight, a bus or a taxi. If necessary, they shall also be assisted with their luggage.

Air passengers with reduced mobility have to inform the airline or the tour operator about their need of assistance at least 48 hours in advance before takeoff. If the airport does not provide the assistance required, consumers should contact the airport direction. The airline is responsible for problems associated with the flight, the luggage or the check-in of mobility aids.

The regulation applies to all airports and air carriers with a registered office in the European Union, Iceland and Norway. The ECC-Net offers free assistance and advice to air passengers with disabilities in cross-border disputes who have already contacted the air carrier unsuccessfully.