

**WORLDWIDE AIR TRANSPORT CONFERENCE: CHALLENGES AND
OPPORTUNITIES OF LIBERALIZATION**

Montreal, 24 to 29 March 2003

**Agenda Item 2: Examination of key regulatory issues in liberalization
2.4: Consumer interests**

**EUROPEAN AIRPORTS AND AIRLINES PASSENGER RIGHTS
COMMITMENTS**

(Presented by Albania Armenia, **Austria**, Azerbaijan, **Belgium**, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, **Denmark**, Estonia, **Finland**, **France**, **Germany**, **Greece**, Hungary, Iceland, **Ireland**, **Italy**, Latvia, Lithuania, **Luxembourg**, Malta, Moldova, Monaco, **Netherlands**, Norway, Poland, **Portugal**, Romania, Serbia and Montenegro, Slovakia, Slovenia, **Spain**, **Sweden**, Switzerland. The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Turkey, Ukraine, **United Kingdom**)²

INFORMATION PAPER

SUMMARY

This paper describes for the information of the Conference the Passenger Rights Commitments developed by airline and airport organizations under the auspices of European Civil Aviation Conference (ECAC) and the European Union (EU). More detailed information can be found on ECAC's Web site: www.ecac-ceac.org.

¹ French version provided by European Civil Aviation Conference (ECAC)

² The 15 Member States of the European Union (EU) appear in bold.

1. DISCUSSION

1.1 Concomitant with the greatly increased freedom given to Europe's air carriers under a liberalized regime, is a need to ensure against abusive competitive practices which could have negative impacts on the increased opportunities that liberalization is intended to offer to the air passenger.

1.2 The areas in which regulation has been seen as necessary include Computer Reservation Systems, denied boarding compensation and conditions of carriage. Below that minimum level of regulation, ECAC and the European Union see value in air carriers and airports undertaking voluntary commitments to their passengers expressed in a code of conduct. Ensuring passenger satisfaction is, in the first place, a matter for airlines and airports and it is at the very core, as it should be, of their activities.

1.3 The approach taken, therefore, by ECAC and the European Commission was to act as facilitator to encourage, persuade and even gently pressurize airline and airport organizations into developing Voluntary Commitments for their customers. The intention was to set down the Commitments in each case in a type of charter which would be monitored for some time by European administrations to ensure that the Commitments voluntarily undertaken were honoured. With this aim, ECAC and the European Commission brought together both airline and airport associations and representatives of consumer organizations and organizations representing passengers of reduced mobility.

1.4 The ensuing Commitments were adopted during the course of an ECAC/European Dialogue with the European air transport industry in Lisbon on 10 May 2001. They came into operation on 14 February 2002 and were launched at a special ceremony in the Council of Europe headquarters in Strasbourg. It is now a matter for the airlines and airports to ensure wide-spread dissemination and publicity for these Commitments, and for the time being their effectiveness will be monitored by European civil aviation administrations. In the longer term, and since it is in their essential interest, monitoring will become the responsibility of airlines and airports at local, regional and national levels. Both ECAC and the European Union will continue to take an active interest in the effective implementation of these commitments. It is of course open to these organizations to take stronger measures, and in the case of the European Union, enforce these measures by law should the voluntary Commitments reveal themselves to be inadequate to the task of ensuring consumer satisfaction. A full-scale review of the implementation of these Commitments is planned for the summer of 2003.

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