

Europe reaches passenger rights deal, yet little comes good for passengers

EU reaches agreement on air passenger rights reform; compensation rules remain largely unchanged

UNITED KINGDOM, June 12, 2026 /EINPresswire.com/ -- After 13 years of negotiations, EU member states and the European Parliament have reached an agreement on the reform of European air passenger rights.

The compromise maintains the existing compensation framework, introduces new rules on hand luggage, and stops short of several previously proposed changes to enforcement.

The rules today

Under the current regulation, known as EU261, passengers are entitled to compensation when their flight is cancelled at short notice or arrives more than three hours late, unless the airline can show the disruption was beyond its control, such as extreme weather. The amount depends on flight distance: €250 for short flights, €400 for medium ones and €600 for long-haul.

"Those amounts were set in 2004 and haven't moved since. Inflation has cut their real value in half, while ticket prices — and airline profits — have only climbed. Last year, Europe's airlines posted record results," says Tom van Bokhoven of [Flight-Delayed.com](https://www.flight-delayed.com), a company that helps passengers claim compensation from airlines.

What the deal changes — and what it doesn't

Under the agreement, compensation amounts remain between €250 and €600, and the three-hour delay threshold is retained. This means the core of the system continues to be based on the rules introduced in 2004, without an inflation correction or adjustment to current ticket prices.

"The European Parliament pushed hard for improvements and deserves credit for that," says Van Bokhoven. "But the end result is that passengers are left with a framework written more than two decades ago."

Enforcement provisions scaled back

Earlier proposals included a claim form automatically pre-filled by the airline and automatic compensation payouts. In the final agreement, this has been reduced to an obligation for airlines to provide passengers with information and instructions on how to submit a claim themselves.

In practice, this means passengers must still initiate claims on their own. Industry data shows that many airlines do not pay compensation automatically, and passengers in some cases turn to legal proceedings to obtain payment.

"Realistically, very few travellers will take on an international airline and its legal team alone," says Van Bokhoven. "Without support and without effective enforcement, compensation risks remaining a right on paper. If airlines simply played by the rules, companies like ours wouldn't exist. The reality is that lawyers and claims organisations file tens of thousands of cases every year — precisely because airlines ignore the rules."

New rules on hand luggage

The agreement does bring a change welcomed by consumer advocates: in addition to a bag that fits under the seat, a second piece of hand luggage will be included in the base ticket price. This ends the separate fees airlines currently charge for cabin baggage. Passengers who opt out and travel with less luggage will receive a discount once the new rules take effect.

Outcome

The agreement preserves existing passenger rights while leaving the compensation amounts, the delay threshold and the claims process largely as they are today.

"After 13 years, Brussels has delivered stability, but not the fundamental reform that was on the table," concludes Van Bokhoven. "No inflation correction, no real fix for enforcement, no simpler claims process. The relationship between airlines and passengers stays more or less where it was — and a right that isn't enforced automatically tends to favour the stronger party. That's rarely the passenger."

About Flight-Delayed.com

Since 2010, Flight-Delayed.com has been helping passengers fight for their rights in the event of delayed, cancelled, and overbooked flights. We have legal teams in over 10 countries, have won 98% of court cases, and work exclusively on a "no win, no fee" basis.

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