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ECAC POLICY STATEMENT IN THE FIELD OF CIVIL AVIATION FACILITATION

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13TH EDITION



ANNEX 5-A GUIDANCE LEAFLET FOR PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES AND PERSONS WITH REDUCED MOBILITY WHO MAY BE INFREQUENT OR FIRST TIME FLYERS

1. INTRODUCTION

As a person with disabilities or a person with reduced mobility (PRM) you should be able to enjoy the same opportunities to travel by air as everyone else.

In EU Member States your rights are protected under Regulation (EC) No 1107/2006. This Regulation sets out the assistance that both the airport and the air carrier must provide and specifies that this assistance must be free of charge.

Most services you will need will be provided free of charge, e.g. assistance with boarding the aircraft. But it is worth making sure, when booking, that there will be no charges made.

Non-EU ECAC Member States should apply similar provisions as recommended by the European Civil Aviation Conference (ECAC). To ensure all goes smoothly and your journey is as stress free and comfortable as possible there are some simple "points to follow:

- a) Make sure you have all the information you need before finalising your travel plans
- b) Be realistic about your own needs, particularly if you cannot walk long distances without help. The distances between the check in desks and the departure gates can be very long.
- c) Check that the air carrier or tour operator is able to meet those needs.
- d) Contact them to make sure they know, understand and can meet your particular needs. Don't assume that help will be available "on demand". Prebooking assistance with your air carrier at least 48 hours in advance is the best approach.
- e) Don't assume that staff know the best way to lift or transfer you - if they don't ask, tell them!
- f) Even though, in all European states they should all have been trained in safe lifting, etc., it is always best to tell them what your particular needs and preferences are.

The airport managing body is responsible for assisting you through the airport and on and off the aircraft including, if needed, into your aircraft seat. The air carrier also has responsibilities to you as a passenger. Everyone must play their part to make the journey as comfortable and stress free as possible.

Under international agreements and EU law, compensation for lost or damaged personal baggage (which includes mobility equipment) is subject to limits that may not cover the true costs of replacement or repair. It is recommended that before you travel you should check the limit of your travel insurance and make sure your travel insurance provides cover for your mobility equipment. You may need to extend your insurance policy in this area.

2. GETTING THE INFORMATION YOU NEED

2.1 ASSISTANCE

There may be specialist organisations in your country who can advise you on the services offered by various airports and air carriers. They will generally be well experienced in dealing with persons with disabilities and PRMs and can offer informed advice on the services available. Some may also be able to make your travel arrangements direct.

Alternatively, you may want to use a particular travel agency, booking agent or air carrier special assistance staff. It is vital when you make your booking that you tell the agent or the air carrier about your particular travel needs so that they can be recorded as part of your booking. It is recommended that you should request written confirmation to ensure that they have recorded your requirements accurately.

However you choose to book your flight, you should inform your air carrier or tour operator of your needs 48 hours or more before you fly. This allows for notifications to be sent from the tour operator to the air carrier, and/or the air carrier to the airport managing body in advance of your arrival at the airport.

2.2 Your Needs

Air carriers use an internationally recognised coding system to identify the level of assistance they will need to provide to particular persons with disabilities and PRMs. A copy of that list is attached.

The questions the agent (or through them, the air carrier) asks may seem intrusive, but they are necessary to ensure that you receive the type of service you need. The following are some examples of the questions you might be asked:

- What are your needs?
- Are you able to walk through the airport terminal to the aircraft, or will you require a wheelchair/buggy?
- If you require a wheelchair will you be using your own chair?
- Is the chair:
 - collapsible?
 - power operated?²⁹
- How heavy is your chair and how big is it (width and length)?
- Do you need someone to push you in your wheelchair?
- Are you able to walk up and down aircraft steps, or will you require assistance boarding and disembarking? § Can you transfer from a wheelchair unaided?
- Are you able to walk about inside the aircraft, or will you need to use an on-board wheelchair, if there is one?
- Do you need to know if there will be a toilet on the plane that is accessible

²⁹ Not all aircraft can accommodate wheelchairs with batteries in the aircraft hold for safety reasons. It is very important to check before you travel.

- to the on-board wheelchair?
- What assistance will you need, if any, during the flight? Please specify. The air carrier cannot assist with feeding, communicating, medicating and providing assistance inside the toilets. If you need help with those you will need to be accompanied.
- Some air carriers have cabin crew trained to lift you on an onboard wheelchair to go to the toilet. Other air carriers will not assist in lifting. Get the needed information before you book the flight.
- What type of seat suits you best?
- Are you taking any medical equipment with you?
- Are you asthmatic or do you have other breathing difficulties?

If you also have a serious medical condition, you must contact the air carrier and it may be necessary to provide a "Fitness to fly" certificate. You may be asked at the airport to confirm your fitness to fly.

2.3 Booking

You will be able to have access to all types of ticket, e.g. economy, business, etc., but not all of those types of ticket may be able to offer the facilities you require. For example, if you need extra legroom an economy class seat may be unsuitable. You are strongly advised to make your reservation in advance where possible 7 days in advance, but at least 48 hours before you intend to travel. This should ensure that the assistance you need is made available. It may also save disappointment. Some air carriers limit the number of disabled passengers who can travel on any flight; limits are related to the size of the aircraft and the level of service required by the passenger. By booking early you can increase your chances of travelling when you want. Of course, if you need to cancel a reservation you should let the air carrier know as soon as practicable so that your seat is available for other PRMs.

Especially if you travel with an electric-powered wheelchair or with a service animal³⁰, or you require medical oxygen equipment during travel, you should pre-notify at least 48 hours prior to departure, as opposed to informing on your arrival at the airport or at the check-in desk.

2.4 At the airport

If your pre-planning has worked then all your needs should be met in accordance to your booking.

If you use a wheelchair, you need to be aware of what will happen to it during the flight.

It may be possible to store a manual, folding wheelchair in the passenger compartment if suitable accommodation is available.

It is more likely, however, that your wheelchair will be stowed in the luggage hold; this would certainly be the case for all powered wheelchairs

In either case, airports and air carriers should allow you to remain in your own wheelchair until the door of the aircraft. They should also deliver your wheelchair at the aircraft door upon arrival at your destination, when practicable and possible. Air carriers and their ground handling companies should do their utmost to provide

³⁰ In the ECAC/EU context and throughout ECAC Doc 30 Part I, "service animals" refers exclusively to "recognised assistance dogs".

proper equipment to load and offload your heavy electric-powered wheelchair. Please ensure that you have pre-notified your electric-powered wheelchair.

You also need to be aware of security arrangements which apply to all passengers but may be particularly significant if you need to use mobility equipment or carry medication with you on the flight. All mobility equipment, including wheelchairs is subject to rigorous security checks. However, these checks should be done in a way that minimises inconvenience or stress.

You may also be subjected to a body search. If you would prefer to have this done in private because of the nature of your disability, you can ask to be taken to a separate screening area.

In some airports, you will be required to transfer to an airport wheelchair to pass through the scanning equipment so that your chair can be thoroughly checked. Searches may also be made of the content of your hand luggage. This should always be done with discretion and items should always be replaced in the same order.

There is currently a restriction on the carriage of liquids on-board aircraft to a maximum of 100 ml per container. However, you are allowed to carry essential medicines of more than 100ml in your hand baggage, but you will need prior approval from the air carrier and departure airport and supporting documentation (e.g. a letter from your doctor or a prescription).

Make sure you have any necessary medication in your hand baggage and check that you have packed enough to cover any delays to your flight or in case of a lost or delayed baggage.

2.5 On-board

If you require the use of an on-board wheelchair then this should have been confirmed when you made your booking. You will not be able to use your own wheelchair on-board any flight because the aisles are too narrow to be able to move up and down. If you have a sensory impairment (e.g. Blind or Deaf), the air carrier staff should make themselves known to you and should offer the appropriate level of assistance during the flight. For example, they should explain the emergency procedures and they can assist with unpacking food³¹.

If you have breathing difficulties and require supplementary oxygen for the duration of the flight, the air carrier may provide supplementary oxygen. Some air carriers will make a charge for this service. Some air carriers will allow you to carry your own oxygen – you should always check with your air carrier beforehand. Air carriers are not required to carry oxygen for first aid purposes although many do. They are only required to carry oxygen for passenger use after a cabin depressurisation and in medical emergencies.

2.6 At the end of your Journey
If the airport managing body and air carrier meets all your needs - in accordance with your booking - then your journey should be as comfortable as anyone else's. But if things do go wrong, it is worth notifying the problems promptly to the relevant bodies.

³¹ Cabin crew are not obliged to provide assistance with eating, drinking or taking medication. Nor are they obliged to give assistance in the toilet or any other form of personal care, although cabin crew can help you get to the toilet if you need help with any of these activities, you should travel accompanied.

For flights within the European Union or provided by an EU airline, you should complain in the first instance to the managing body of the airport concerned or to the air carrier concerned, or to the tour operator if you do not know the air carrier. Remember the airport managing body is responsible for your journey through the airport including to and from your aircraft seat. Your air carrier is responsible to pass your assistance request to the airport managing bodies, transport your mobility equipment safely and carefully and your experience in-flight.

If you are not satisfied with the way your complaint is handled through these channels, you can complain to the National Enforcement Body for the country concerned. A list of contacts for such bodies in the European Union is published on the European Commission website³².

For airports and air carriers outside the EU you should follow the same procedure but you may not have the same level of legal redress. If you are not satisfied with the response you receive then you may want to consider taking it up with the aviation authority or the ministry of transport in your country.

2.6 Air carrier codes

Air carriers have defined codes to specify the condition and special needs of the passengers they carry. These codes, which are standardised, are essential for each operator (air carriers, airports) in the travel chain to organise the service needed. They are explained hereunder, for information purposes only and as presented in Section 5 of the ECAC Doc 30 Part I document. Selecting the appropriate code remains the sole responsibility of the air carrier.

Codes to identify assistive services provided to the passenger

- **WCHR** (wheelchair – R for Ramp) - passenger can ascend/descend steps and make own way to/from cabin seat but requires wheelchair for distance to/from aircraft, i.e. across ramp, finger dock or to mobile lounge as applicable. When a service animal is accompanying the passenger, the type of animal should be specified in free text of SSR Item. Where applicable - and prior to a bilateral agreement between airport management body and the passenger - the passenger can be left at the gate to board independently.
- **WCHS** (wheelchair—S for Steps)—passenger cannot ascend/descend steps but is able to make own way to/from cabin seat; requires wheelchair for distance to/from aircraft or mobile lounge or must be assisted up/down steps. When a service animal is accompanying the passenger, the type of animal should be specified in free text of SSR Item.
- **WCHC** (Wheelchair—C for Cabin Seat)— passenger requires wheelchair to/from aircraft/mobile lounge and must be assisted up/down steps and to/from cabin seat. When a service animal is accompanying the passenger, the type of animal should be specified in free text of SSR Item. **Note:** In this last assistance category, the reservation should specify if the passenger is travelling with their own wheelchair and use the applicable codes i.e. **WCBD**, **WCMP**, **WCLB** or **WCBW**, or if a passenger is requesting a wheelchair on board use code **WCOB**.
- **BLND** - Blind or visually impaired passenger. When a service animal is

accompanying the passenger this should be specified.

- **DEAF** - Passenger who is deaf or hard of hearing or a passenger who is deaf without speech. When a service animal is accompanying the passenger this should be specified.
- **DPNA** - Disabled passengers with cognitive or non-visible disabilities needing assistance. Details should be specified.

Codes to identify type of wheelchair or mobility aid the passenger will be travelling with for reservation purposes

- **WCBD** (non-spillable battery)—to be transported by a passenger which will require advance notification and may require preparation/(dis)assembly. Weight and dimensions may be specified. Wheelchair and battery must be claimed and rechecked at each interline transfer point (by bilateral agreement).
- **WCBW** (Wet cell battery)—to be transported by a passenger which will require advance notification and may require preparation/(dis)assembly. Weight and dimensions may be specified. Wheelchair and battery must be claimed and rechecked at each interline transfer point (by bilateral agreement).
- **WCMP** (Manual power)—to be transported by a passenger. Weight and dimensions may be specified (by bilateral agreement).
- **WCLB** (Lithium-ion battery)—to be transported by a passenger which will require advance notification/preparation. Weight and dimensions may be specified. Wheelchair and battery must be claimed and rechecked at each interline transfer point (by bilateral agreement).
- **WCOB** (Wheelchair on board) a passenger who is requesting a wheelchair to use on board – if not already available.

Codes to Identify Animals Accompanying a Passenger with Disabilities

When a service animal is accompanying the passenger, the type of animal and details should be specified in free text of SSR Item.

- **ESAN**—for passengers travelling with an emotional support/psychiatric service animal in cabin - (by bilateral agreement). Use of this is subject to government regulations.³³
- **SVAN**—for passengers travelling with a service animal in cabin (by bilateral agreement).

Codes to Identify Equipment Accompanying the Passenger

- **OXYG** (Oxygen)—for passengers travelling either seated or on a stretcher,

³³ In the EU legal framework of Regulation (EC) 1107/2006, emotional support/psychiatric service animals are not recognised as service animals. This scope is limited to assistance dogs.

needing oxygen during the flight (only to be used in conjunction with SSR Code MEDA).

- **AOXY** (Airline Supplied Oxygen)—for passengers travelling either seated or on a stretcher, needing oxygen during the flight (only to be used in conjunction with SSR code MEDA)-(by bilateral agreement).
- **POXY** (Passenger Own Oxygen)—for passengers travelling either seated or on a stretcher, needing oxygen during the flight (only to be used in conjunction with SSR code MEDA). Subject to airline and/or government regulations (by bilateral agreement).
- **PPOC** Personal Portable Oxygen Concentrator (by bilateral agreement).

Additional Codes that may be used to document assistance

- **LEGL** (Leg in cast)—for passengers with a left leg in a full cast or fused knee, (only to be used in conjunction with SSR code MEDA).
- **LEGR** (Leg in cast)—for passengers with a right leg in a full cast or fused knee, (only to be used in conjunction with SSR code MEDA).
- **LEGB** (Leg in cast)—for passengers with both legs in a full cast, (only to be used in conjunction with SSR code MEDA).
- **MEDA** (Medical case)—company medical clearance may be required. Not to be used for passengers with disabilities or reduced mobility who only require assistance or handling, and who do not require a medical clearance.

Bookings may have multiple codes specifying the type of assistance necessary for the passenger.

In the case of a deaf and blind person (e.g. Usher syndrome), the code **DEAF/BLND** may be used. In this scenario, the person should always be travelling with a companion.

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