Air passenger rights: MEPs want to close all loopholes

Committees Committee on Transport and Tourism [20-03-2013 - 18:50]

Transport MEPs welcomed the proposal to update air passengers' rights tabled by the Commission on 13 March but insisted that it include rules on hand luggage and solutions for passengers stranded if an airline goes bankrupt, in their first discussion of the proposal on Tuesday. Commission Vice-President Siim Kallas paid tribute to Parliament's preparatory work in 2012.

Mathieu Grosch (EPP, BE) said the revised rules should provide long-awaited legal clarity and enable passengers' complaints to be dealt with more swiftly, for issues such as compensation for delays, the obligation to provide assistance and the definition of 'extraordinary circumstances'. "Finally, we won't need lawyers anymore to get our rights," he added.

Mr Grosch and Gesine Meissner (ALDE, DE) underlined the need for competent airline personnel at each airport to whom passengers could turn for information and complaint forms when delays occurred. "Not only do we need rights, but also an interlocutor," said Mr Meissner.

For the Social-Democrats, Said El Khadraoui (BE) welcomed the "positive approach" but wondered why the airlines' obligations to assist stranded passengers should be limited to three days. "And what about passengers with an airline that goes bankrupt?" he asked. Extra costs added to the ticket price and hand luggage rules needed to be dealt with as well, El Khadraoui suggested.

Financial compensation after delays of three or five hours?

Jacqueline Foster (ECR, UK) was not in favour of the Commission's idea of putting an end to the "no-show" policy of some airlines, which stop passengers from boarding a return flight if they have not used the outward one. She welcomed the Commission's plan to set the delay after which passenger could claim compensation at five hours. However, Georges Bach (EPP, LU), who drafted the passenger rights resolution in 2012, and Michael Cramer (Greens, DE) wanted it brought down to three hours.

The transport committee will appoint rapporteurs for the two regulations in the coming weeks.

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