

During this fourth issue, ECC Malta will provide you with information related to the new Rail Passenger Rights Directive. In this article, we highlighted all the newly added rights which improved the protection of rail passengers. ECC Malta also thought it would be useful to share the information prepared by our colleagues at ECC Italy related to toll fees as we know that many Maltese drive in Italy. Furthermore, we will end this newsletter with some useful information related to EURO 2024 ticket purchasing organised in Germany to avoid any mishaps.



WISHING YOU A GREAT

*festive
season!*

New Regulation on Rail Passenger Rights

Regulation 2021/782 became applicable from June 2023, repealing the previous **Regulation 1371/2007**. With the new Regulation, consumers are better protected if their travel is disrupted, and railway companies must ensure a trouble-free travel experience for passengers with reduced mobility. Commissioner for Mobility and Transport Ms Adina Valean stated that:

“This new set of passenger rights is a key step on our way to better connection people across Europe – and in a sustainable way. We need strong and modern rail passenger rights to attract more people to rail and contribute to our climate goals. The new rules will improve

protection for rail passengers faced with delays, cancellations and missed connections. They also respond better to the needs of persons with disabilities or reduced mobility.”

The right to be informed

When purchasing a train ticket, whether you are buying it directly from the train operator, tour operator or ticket vendor, you have a right to be provided with certain basic information. This information shall include:

- The general conditions – time schedules and conditions for the fastest trip, as well as for all available fares, emphasising the lowest fare;
- Accessibility conditions on board the train for people with impairments and mobility issues;
- The availability of capacity and bicycle access conditions;
- Availability of seats in first and second class, as well as couchette cars and sleeping carriages;
- Disruptions and delays;
- Availability of on-board facilities
- If the consumer is purchasing a through ticket,
- Information related to the procedure if the consumer’s luggage is lost;
- Information related to the submission of complaints.

Furthermore, railway operators must provide real-time traffic data and travel information to other railway companies, ticket vendors and tour operators. This newly imposed obligation aims to eliminate passenger discrimination and eliminate the anomaly whereby, in the past, only those who purchased their tickets directly from the carrier received complete information regarding delays and other connection options for continuing their journey.



I will be travelling by bike and will need to take the train. Will the train operator agree to store my bike?

Now, railway operators must provide designated areas for the carriage of assembled (rather than folded) bicycles. Before booking, you must remember that older trains may still lack such space; railway operators must ensure that new and significantly upgraded trains provide such a service. At least the train shall have four dedicated bicycle spaces.

There are exceptional and acceptable circumstances when fewer than four spaces will be permitted, such as during the winter in Northern Europe, when there is a market need for skis rather than bikes. The Regulation sets out the minimum spaces and leaves it up to the member states that offer train services to establish more spaces. If you make a reservation for a bicycle and the carriage of that bicycle is disallowed for no justified reason, then you are entitled to re-routing or a refund.

A railway operator may refuse to store the bicycle on the train for safety or operational concerns, mainly due to capacity constraints, especially during peak hours. There are other restrictions based on the weight and dimensions of the bicycles in question. Such information should be included in the bicycle transport conditions and available on the rail company's website.

My long trip requires me to stop in one location to board a new train. What are my rights?

Regulation 2021/782 states that if you are required to board two or more trains that the same railway company runs, you must be given a through-ticket for the service.

Furthermore, if you have one or more connections, the ticket/s acquired in a single commercial transaction shall constitute a through-ticket, and the railway company shall be accountable if one or more connection trains are missed. If, on the other hand, you purchase these tickets from a tour

operator in a single commercial transaction and the operator combines the tickets on its own initiative, the tour operator is obligated to reimburse the total amount paid for the ticket, as well as compensation equal to 75% of that amount if you miss one or more connections.



I have mobility issues; what are my rights when travelling by train?



According to the new Regulation, persons with disabilities and reduced mobility have a shorter pre-notification period for requesting travel assistance. This means that you are invited to notify the railway station only 24 hours ahead of the journey as opposed to the 36 hours by bus and coach and 48 hours by plane. Under extreme and explainable circumstances, a member state can apply a more extended pre-notification period for rail travel only until 30 June 2026.

You have several other rights when travelling by train, which include...

Where strictly necessary to be accompanied on board, the accompanying person shall be entitled to travel free of charge and to be seated, where feasible, next to you;

- Assistance dogs shall be permitted on-board
- All measures shall be taken to allow you to travel comfortably.
- Assistance shall be provided free of charge to help you board the train.

- Where the journey is halted and an overstay is required, the railway company shall offer accommodation for the night, and the needs of the assistant dogs shall also be taken into account.

You have a right to information on the accessibility of stations and available services and facilities. The railway company or station manager is liable for any lost or damaged mobility equipment or assistive devices, which include:

- The lost or damaged mobility equipment or assistive device,
- The cost of replacement or the treatment of the injury of an assistance dog
- Reasonable temporary replacement costs for mobility equipment, assistive devices or assistance dogs.
- The staff should receive targeted disability-related training to know how to meet your needs.



Self Re-routing



Where you have yet to be offered a timely solution for the journey to continue, you have a right to self-rerouting. Self-rerouting is entirely new, whereby if a solution is not provided within 100 minutes of the scheduled departure time, you may ask for the carrier's consent and re-route yourself to another transport service (rail, coach, or bus). The carrier shall refund you the costs that you would have incurred.

By means of this Regulation, the EU made a significant effort to harmonise rail passenger rights by providing a minimum level of protection for passengers travelling by train across Europe. Thus, this Regulation continued to add upon previous regulations to make travel more convenient and accessible within the EU.

Like other transport modes, this Regulation also clarifies that in 'force majeure', railway undertakings do not have to pay compensation for delays or cancellations. These are extraordinary circumstances not connected with the operation of the railway, such as extreme weather conditions, pandemics, and terrorist attacks. Force majeure only applies if the carrier took all the necessary measures but could not prevent nor avoid the consequences. The railway undertaking, even though it is exonerated from compensation in case of force majeure, will still need to reimburse the ticket cost or re-route the passenger to another service and provide assistance.

Toll Fees in Italy

ECC Malta is aware that most Maltese are using their car to explore the beautiful island of Sicily and some even beyond Italy and Europe. Our colleagues from ECC Italy recently published a Brochure related to toll fees in Italy.

The use of highways in Italy is not for free, and when you pass through the toll booth and pick up the ticket, you are concluding a private contract with the highway concessionaire. Barriers may be open, but this does not exempt you from paying the fee. Indeed, free-flow tolls are dedicated

to the toll badge holders (Telepass lanes) and freeways, which are regulated by an electronic system that registers your plate. In most cases, you are charged by distance travelled; the toll booths calculate the amount when you enter and exit from the toll roads.

How to pay tolls

You can pay the toll fee at the exit toll booth: by Credit Card, Cash, Telepass or Viacard. The latter is a prepaid card which is linked to the bank account. For each option, there is a dedicated toll booth. Thus, it is important to use the proper lane:

- Telepass lane – for cars which are equipped with a Telepass toll box only
- Card lane – if you are paying by credit card or Viacard
- Cash lane – if you pay by cash or with a debit card.

Errors happen, so it is advisable to collect the receipt, especially if you are paying by cash. If you experience any trouble at the booth, it is advisable to get and keep the unpaid toll report, which can be directly collected at the toll booth. It is possible to pay online without any additional charge within fifteen days if you have the report/ticket.

In case of non-payment, you will receive a letter from a debt collector agency on behalf of the concessionaire, including additional costs such as interest, administration

and debt collection fees, and postage fees to send the registered letters.

The non-payment of a toll fee also represents a traffic offence, and the penalty is between 87 and 244 euros. In this case, the traffic ticket is notified by the police within 360 days of the infringement. If you pay within five days of receiving the fine, the amount is reduced by 30%. You will pay double the amount if you take more than sixty days. There is a right to appeal. The details related to this right will be included with the traffic fine.



Euro 2024 - Germany

Securing your Euro 2024 tickets

- 1. Official Channels Only:** Purchase your UEFA European Football Championship 2024 tickets exclusively through the **official UEFA website** or **national football associations' websites** (see below). Beware of significant risks tied to third-party platforms, like fraud and inflated prices.
- 2. Next Sales Phase:** The second sales phase starts on 4 December. Just before that, the preliminary draw will unveil schedules for all qualified teams, such as England, Spain, France, and host Germany. This phase offers the last major opportunity to buy tickets, with one million tickets available.
- 3. UEFA Ticket Lottery:** Be aware that you will enter a lottery and cannot directly purchase tickets via the UEFA website. If you are fortunate in the draw, you will have the chance to buy tickets. If drawn, you must purchase all the tickets that have been assigned to you, or you will miss out on the opportunity entirely.
- 4. Tickets for Supporters:** National football associations of qualified teams sell tickets to their supporters, such as members

of their fan clubs. Refer to your nation's association website for how it distributes its ticket quota.

- 5. Final Opportunities:** The last chances to buy tickets will be in March and May 2024, along with a last-minute sale during the tournament.
- 6. Digital Tickets:** UEFA exclusively sells digital tickets, requiring users to download the UEFA ticket app.

Be Vigilant for Potential Fraud During Euro 2024

Large-scale events such as the Euro 2024 attract criminals. Please be vigilant. The Network of European Consumer Centres will promptly issue warnings concerning any identified specific fraudulent activities. Meanwhile, we recommend adhering to the following guidelines for a secure Euro 2024 experience:

- **Safe Ticket Procurement:** Buy your tickets from the official Euro 2024 sales website, "euro2024.com/tickets," or the official resale platform, set to be available from spring 2024.
- **Phishing Awareness:** Exercise caution against potential phishing attempts. Always verify the sender's address and the authenticity of links



in emails claiming to be from the UEFA. The official sender address is "@uefa.com."

- **Trusted Accommodations:** Opt for accommodation listed on reputable booking platforms, selecting providers with positive reviews. Stick to the payment system provided by the platform. Communicating and paying outside these systems significantly increases the risk of fraud. Do not do it!
- **Government Travel Advice:** Entry to Germany is permitted for all travel purposes (including tourism and visits). It is no longer necessary to present proof of vaccination, proof of recovery or a negative test result for entry to Germany, however, we recommend that before embarking on your journey, always check the travel advice for Germany. For the latest information regarding entry regulations and public health measures which are currently in effect in Germany, please click [here](#). **Before booking a flight, we recommend contacting your airline for guidance concerning health and safety protocols at your destination or any airline-specific requirements in place. Airline contact details may be found here.**



European Consumer Centre Malta

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