

As the year draws to a close, ECC-Net Malta is pleased to present the final edition of its 2025 newsletter. This festive season offers an opportunity to reflect on the year's achievements, celebrate successes, and look ahead to 2026. In this edition, readers will find essential guidance on air passenger rights to ensure smooth and stress-free holiday travel, updates on revised package travel rules, highlights of ECC-Net Malta's activities throughout the year, and a consumer-friendly guide to car rentals. By staying informed, consumers can travel with confidence and benefit from the free advice and support offered by the Network.



# Know Your Air Passenger Rights this Holiday Season

The festive season is one of the busiest periods for air travel. Many passengers look forward to reuniting with loved ones, enjoying winter breaks, or escaping to warmer destinations. However, increased travel demand, staffing challenges, adverse weather, and operational pressures can sometimes lead to unexpected disruptions. Flight delays, cancellations, overbooking, and luggage issues are among the most common challenges travellers may face. Being aware of air passenger rights before travelling can help passengers handle these situations calmly and confidently.

## When EU Air Passenger Rights Apply

Air passenger rights in the European Union are governed by Regulation (EC) 261/2004. This Regulation sets out the assistance, care, and compensation passengers may be entitled to when flights are delayed, cancelled, or when boarding is denied.

These rules generally apply to:

- Flights within the EU, regardless of whether the airline is based in the EU or outside it.
- Flights arriving in the EU from a non-EU country, provided the flight is operated by an EU airline.
- Flights departing from the EU to a non-EU country, operated by either an EU or non-EU airline.

EU rules do not apply to flights arriving in the EU from a non-EU country if operated by a non-EU airline.

Passengers who have already received compensation, rerouting, or assistance for a flight disruption may also be excluded from further claims under the Regulation.

## Rights in Case of Flight Delays

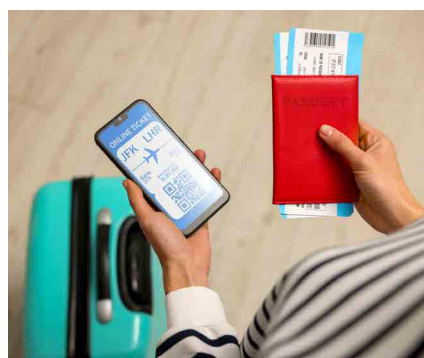
Passengers may be entitled to care and assistance if their flight is delayed, depending on both the length of the delay and the flight distance:



- Two hours or more for flights up to 1,500 km.
- Three hours or more for flights between 1,500 km and 3,500 km.
- Four hours or more for flights over 3,500 km.

Care and assistance can include meals and refreshments, communication via phone or email, hotel accommodation if an overnight stay is necessary, and transport between the airport and accommodation.

Passengers experiencing long delays of three hours or more may also be entitled to compensation unless the delay was caused by extraordinary circumstances beyond the airline's control, such as severe weather, air traffic control restrictions, airport strikes, or security risks.



## Compensation for Cancellations and Denied Boarding

Passengers whose flights are cancelled or who are denied boarding may also be entitled to compensation:

- €250 for flights up to 1,500 km
- €400 for intra-EU flights over 1,500 km and other flights between 1,500 km and 3,500 km
- €600 for flights over 3,500 km

If passengers are rerouted and arrive at their final destination within a limited time compared to the original schedule, compensation may be reduced by half.

Overbooking is a common occurrence in aviation. Airlines must first request volunteers to give up their seats in exchange for compensation or other benefits. If there are insufficient volunteers, the airline may deny boarding to passengers against their will. Affected passengers are entitled to compensation, rerouting to their final destination at the earliest opportunity, or a refund for the unused portion of their ticket. If a new ticket is purchased, passengers are entitled to reimbursement of any price difference. Additionally, passengers



retain the right to care, including meals and accommodation, if an overnight stay is necessary while waiting for rerouting or the next available flight.

#### **Rights in Case of Lost, Damaged, or Delayed Luggage**

Travel disruptions do not always involve the flight itself. Problems with checked luggage, such as delays, damage, or loss, can significantly affect a holiday. Passengers should notify the airline in writing of any damage within seven days of receiving their luggage. For delayed baggage, complaints must be submitted within twenty-one days of delivery. If checked baggage has not arrived within twenty-one days from the scheduled date of arrival, it is considered lost.

Under the Montreal Convention, passengers may claim compensation of up to 1,519 Special Drawing Rights (SDR), approximately €1,900, for lost, damaged, or delayed luggage. Airlines usually require evidence of the damage or losses, such as receipts or photographs. Keeping all receipts and, where possible, confirming with

the airline what qualifies as necessary goods can help avoid difficulties when claiming reimbursement.

#### **Travel for Passengers with Different Abilities**

Passengers with different abilities are entitled to the same rights as other travellers and should be able to journey without difficulties or extra cost. Airlines must prioritise assistance for persons with disabilities and accompanying certified service animals. Boarding may only be refused for physical or safety reasons. Free assistance, including lifts or wheelchairs, is available at all

EU airports and should be requested at least 48 hours before travel. Complaints can be addressed to the airline, airport authority, or the competent national body.

#### **Travel with Confidence This Festive Season**

Understanding air passenger rights can make a significant difference when travel plans are disrupted. Knowing entitlements to care, compensation, or reimbursement empowers passengers to act promptly and assert their rights calmly and effectively.



# News

## Commission Welcomes Political agreement on Revised Package Travel Rules

The European Commission has welcomed a provisional political agreement reached between the European Parliament and the Council on the revised Package Travel Directive. The updated rules aim to strengthen protection for travellers while providing greater legal certainty for the travel industry, largely made up of SMEs and micro-enterprises.

The Directive applies to pre-arranged package holidays and combinations of travel services such as flights,

accommodation, and car rental, offering consumers a high level of protection. The COVID-19 pandemic exposed several weaknesses in the current framework, particularly regarding mass cancellations and delayed reimbursements. This prompted the revision to better protect both travellers and businesses during crisis situations.

Under the new rules, consumers benefit from clearer and faster reimbursement procedures when a package is cancelled. Travellers will also receive transparent information on whether their travel combination qualifies as a package and which

company is responsible if something goes wrong. In cases of insolvency, passengers will receive their money back within six months, or nine months in exceptional situations. The revised Directive also confirms the right to terminate a package contract without penalty when unavoidable and extraordinary circumstances occur. Companies must respond to traveller complaints within 60 days.

The updated Directive must now be formally adopted by the European Parliament and the Council. Once in force, Member States will have 28 months to transpose the new rules into national law.

## Temporary E-Commerce Duty Introduced to Protect European Businesses

The European Commission has welcomed the EU Member States' decision to introduce a temporary €3 customs duty per item on e-commerce parcels valued below €150, starting July 2026. This measure aims to protect European businesses by creating a level playing field between online and traditional retail, addressing the rapid growth of e-commerce imports into the EU.

The temporary duty will apply to parcels sent directly to consumers from third countries and will remain in effect until the EU Customs Data Hub is established in 2028. The Data Hub, part of the broader EU customs reform, will integrate new e-commerce customs data, providing authorities with comprehensive visibility of goods entering or leaving the EU.

This measure is distinct from the proposed EU handling fee on e-commerce parcels, which compensates customs authorities for rising costs in supervising the large volume of imports. While the duty



removes competitive advantages for e-commerce operators, the handling fee covers administrative expenses. The handling fee is expected to enter into force in November 2026, with details still under negotiation between the Council and European Parliament.

Currently, parcels under €150 from third countries are exempt from

customs duties. The Commission initially proposed removing this exemption in May 2023, with the Council approving an earlier implementation in 2026. These new rules aim to strengthen the EU customs union, support retail trade, protect workers, and ensure fair competition for EU businesses amid increasing global e-commerce.



# Looking Back at 2025 and Ahead to 2026

**As 2025 comes to an end, ECC-Net Malta reflects on another year dedicated to supporting consumers facing cross-border challenges. Despite being a small team handling a significant increase in cases, the Network remained committed to going the extra mile to assist consumers.**

Consumer feedback gathered through the 2025 Consumer Satisfaction Surveys showed a high level of satisfaction with the services provided. This reassures the team that their efforts are making a tangible difference in the online purchasing experience. In 2025, ECC-Net Malta handled a wide range of complaints, from air passenger rights to subscription traps. While the team strives for amicable outcomes, the success of each case often depends on the cooperation of the trader. Consumers are encouraged to read reviews and gather information before making purchases, especially from unfamiliar sellers.

Beyond complaint resolution, ECC-Net Malta continued its mission to educate and empower consumers. Throughout 2025, the Network shared valuable information through newsletters, articles, radio programs, and public events, raising awareness of consumer rights and the free, professional services offered by ECC-Net. The team also participated in all ECC-Net meetings, both online and abroad, strengthening collaboration across the Network. This year was particularly special, as ECC-Net celebrated its 20th anniversary. ECC-Net Malta has proudly been part of this journey since 2007.

Looking ahead to 2026, ECC-Net Malta remains committed to advocating for consumer rights and resolving cross-border issues through practical and effective mediation. The team thanks consumers for their trust and support throughout 2025 and looks forward to continuing to assist in the year ahead.



## Drive with Confidence: Your Guide to Car Rentals from ECC Malta

**Just in time for the holiday season, ECC Malta has launched a new car rental brochure designed to guide consumers through the key steps and precautions when renting a vehicle.**

The brochure covers important considerations before booking, including carefully reading the terms and conditions, checking fuel and insurance policies, and thoroughly inspecting the car before departure and upon return. It also reminds consumers to take photos if returning the vehicle outside office hours and to ensure it is parked in the designated area. By understanding their rights and obligations, consumers can avoid unexpected issues and enjoy a smoother rental experience.



**European Consumer Centre Malta**

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