

## Information

26 February 2010

### **AEA AIRLINES DEFEND THEIR RECORD ON CUSTOMER SERVICE Punitive regulation of airline service standards hitting the wrong target, says AEA**

The Association of European Airlines, which represents the most important European network carriers, has called for a halt to the confusion and misperception surrounding the area of consumer interests which has sprung up in the wake of a legal and regulatory activity on passenger rights.

*“As far as the members of AEA are concerned, we believe that our customers are already well protected and very well cared-for”,* said the association’s Secretary General Ulrich Schulte-Strathaus. *“On the rare occasions where journeys are disrupted – for whatever reason – a responsible airline will do whatever is necessary to minimise the impact on its passengers, knowing full well that they can always take their business elsewhere, in a competitive marketplace”.*

The traditional, network carriers have achieved the feat of upholding service quality while keeping pace with today’s fast-moving aviation business. *“We have become massively more efficient over the last fifteen years”,* said Mr Schulte-Strathaus; *“without ever losing sight of our customer focus. Reputations built over 30, 40, 50 years or more are not going to be sacrificed in a race down-market”.*

Policy-makers, he said, needed to recognise what airlines do for their passengers, both in normal business conditions and in times of service disruption, before attempting to regulate further the airline/passenger relationship. *“There is already a body of very comprehensive consumer-protection legislation globally, nationally and at the EU level that applies to all aspects of service provision by airlines. Not only is the consumer protected by the general legislation on contract terms, but also by specific common rules on compensation and assistance to passengers in the event of denied boarding, cancellation and long delay; protection for passengers with reduced mobility, and compensation for baggage issues – a package of measures which goes far beyond those applicable to other forms of transport”.*

Policy-makers also needed, he said, to recognise that much of the disruption that affects passengers is caused by issues over which the airlines have very little control – for example delays caused by air traffic control deficiencies or inadequate airport infrastructure. The focus of the EU institutions should be to fix the root causes of the disruption rather than focus on punitive measures which will result not in better service,

- Adria Airways
- Aegean Airlines
- Aer Lingus
- AeroSvit
- airBaltic
- Air France
- Air Malta
- Alitalia
- Austrian
- bmi
- British Airways
- brussels airlines
- Cargolux
- Croatia Airlines
- Cyprus Airways
- Czech Airlines
- DHL
- Finnair
- Iberia
- Icelandair
- Jat Airways
- KLM
- LOT
- Lufthansa
- Luxair
- Malev
- Montenegro Airlines
- Olympic Air
- SAS Scandinavian Airlines
- SWISS
- TAP Portugal
- TAROM
- TNT Airways
- Turkish Airlines
- Ukraine International Airlines
- Virgin Atlantic Airways

but in increasing airlines' costs and ultimately ticket prices, thus hitting the very people the legislation aims to protect

AEA would be presenting its service-quality credentials to European Parliamentarians and other policy-makers at a seminar on 3<sup>rd</sup> March, hosted by Brian Simpson MEP, Chairman of the Parliament's Transport Committee, which will discuss a wide range of issues related to the manner in which passengers' interests are currently catered for by airlines.

*"We are confident that our record of care and attention for our passengers' well-being will be self-evident", said the AEA Secretary General. "Airlines do all they can to minimise hassle for their passengers – for sound commercial motives: the consumer is king; reputations and perceptions matter very much indeed".*

For further information, please contact:

David Henderson

Manager Information

Phone : +32(0) 2 639 89 72

Email: [david.henderson@aea.be](mailto:david.henderson@aea.be)