

Briefing: Your Consumer Rights



Summary: This briefing relates to your consumer rights in Europe, including detailed information on your rights when travelling by air in Europe, making telephone calls from abroad within the EU, or consuming food products anywhere in Europe.

1. Labour and Your Rights in Europe

The EU offers consumers an enormous range of products and services. At the same time, the EU works hard to ensure that the rights of consumers are protected and remain at the heart of this array of options.

Labour's **Catherine Stihler MEP** is the EPLP member of the Committee on Internal Market and Consumer Protection ([IMCO](#)). Claude Moraes MEP is the substitute member of the IMCO.

In these functions, Catherine and Claude have presided over various of Labour's progressive achievements for EU consumers. These include an end to sky-high roaming charges and better rights for European passengers travelling by air.

New EU laws have ensured that consumers are at, and will remain at, the heart of Europe.

2. **An End to Unfair Mobile Phone Charges**

Excessive mobile phone roaming charges were finally cut in 2009 after a two-year struggle by Labour MEPs.

As a result, costs for consumers have gone down significantly. No mobile phone companies can now charge consumers up to five times the normal cost of making or receiving a call from another country.

The introduction of the '**Euro Tariff**' forces mobile operators to compete and therefore offer consumers in Europe better roaming deals and prices

- Maximum cost of receiving a call per minute from another EU country: around **20 pence**
- Maximum cost of making a call per minute from another EU country around **40 pence**
- Maximum cost of sending an SMS from another EU country: around **11 pence**
- Receiving an SMS is **free**

Further information on this issue is available [here](#)

3. **Your Rights when Travelling by Air**

Being an EU citizen means being able to **travel freely** within Member States.

Labour MEPs also want to make sure air travel remains as affordable, accessible and fair as possible.

Various laws have been introduced with the support of Labour MEPs to ensure that consumer rights are protected when travelling to other EU countries.

The EU has established common rules ([Regulation 261/2004/EC](#)) on compensation and assistance to passengers who are affected by cancellations or long delays.

Your rights when your flight is delayed

When a flight is delayed for a considerable amount of time (depending on the length of the delay relative to the distance of the flight) passengers are entitled to meals and refreshments. They are also entitled to two free telephone calls, emails or faxes. When an overnight stay becomes necessary, passengers are entitled to hotel accommodation and transport to and from the airport.

Your rights when your flight is cancelled

When a flight is cancelled, passengers are entitled to a full reimbursement of the cost of the ticket; or failing that the provision of another ticket back to their point of departure; or failing that the re-routing to the final destination of the passenger at the earliest opportunity subject to availability of seats.

Furthermore, passengers on cancelled flights are entitled to the same meals, refreshments, telephone calls and hotel accommodation as delayed passengers. Passengers are also entitled to monetary compensation depending on the distance of the cancelled flights and whether or not passengers accept a reasonably timed re-routed flight. **This monetary compensation on cancelled flights has been doubled with the support of Labour MEPs.**

Your rights when you are denied boarding

Where a carrier denies boarding on a flight in the case of an overbooking, passengers have the same rights as those affected by cancellations.

Labour MEPs supported the introduction of fines for airlines that deliberately overbook their flights in order to minimize this extremely frustrating scenario.

4. **Ensuring Food Safety**

The EU has introduced several laws and regulations to ensure the high quality and safety of our food.

Amongst many EU initiatives are farm-to-table measures which allow consumers to trace the origin of products through clear labeling and ensure that strict hygiene standards are implemented and maintained. These measures are designed to combine stringent monitoring with the assurance of animal welfare and plant health.

Labour MEPs have fought for the implementation of numerous new food laws with the aim to maximize quality and safety standards and provide detailed information for consumers purchasing food products. The following reforms were successfully advocated by Labour MEPs:

- The introduction of compulsory labeling for all food containing GMOs.
- Strict laws on food additives such as sweeteners and colours.
- The introduction of labeling of table eggs, allowing the consumer to distinguish between free range, barn or cage eggs.
- Ensured the protection of vulnerable consumers such as blind people who may be ripped off by confusing packaging sizes.

5. **Other Successful Labour Campaigns for your Consumer Rights in Europe**

- The safety of children's toys has been ensured by a ban on

- dangerous chemicals used during production.
- Car prices in the UK have been reduced by allowing dealers to sell more than one brand at the same site and thus increasing competition.
 - Stronger rights for on-line consumers.
 - Cooling off' periods of a minimum of 10 days for timeshare buyers and 7 days for mail order purchases.