



Our human rights report on

Our rights when travelling by plane

Easy-to-read version

Easy-to-read is information that is written in a simple way so that all people can understand it. You can find more information about easy-to-read at: www.inclusion-europe.eu/easy-to-read.



Some difficult words in the text are marked in **bold**.
You can find their explanation at the end of this booklet.

This text was created thanks to money we received
from the European Union.



**Funded by
the European Union**

Who we are

We are the European Disability Forum.
We are an organisation
of people with disabilities in Europe.
In short, we are called 'EDF'.

At EDF, we work to protect the rights
of all people with disabilities in Europe.
We think that people with disabilities
should have the same chances in life
and take part in the community
like everyone else.

We also think that people with disabilities
should decide about their lives.

Nothing should be decided about us
without us!

What this booklet is about

Every year, EDF makes a booklet
that talks about important rights
of people with disabilities.

We call these booklets 'Human rights reports'.

This year, our report talks
about the rights we have when we travel by plane.

To make this report,
we checked how the situation is
in different countries in Europe.



In the next few pages,
we will talk about:

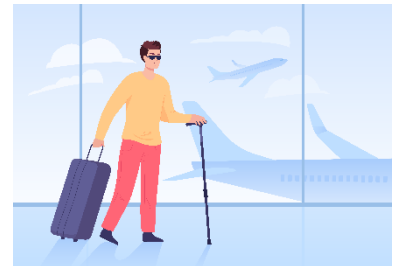
- How the European Union tries to protect the rights of people with disabilities when travelling by plane;
- What problems people with disabilities still face when travelling by plane;
- What should be done better.



The right to move freely in Europe

People in Europe
have the right to move freely
from one country of the **European Union**
to another.

Taking the plane is one
of the most common ways
to get to another country of the European Union.
People with disabilities have the right
to travel by plane like all other people.



The European Union has made a law
to protect the rights of people with disabilities
when they travel by plane.

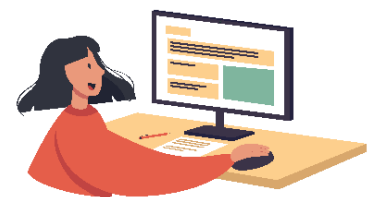
Among others, the law says
that people with disabilities have the right to:

- Travel by plane like other people;



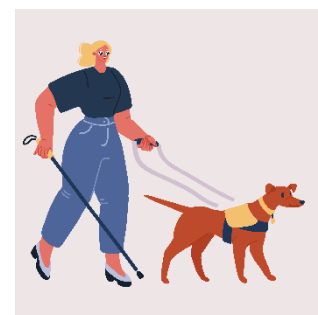
- Get free support to travel by plane;
- Get information in **accessible** ways to be able to read it and understand it;
- Submit a complaint when their rights are not respected causing them trouble with their trip.

The law says airports and airlines must publish all useful information on their websites in clear and accessible ways. This way, people with disabilities would be able to read and understand it without problems.



For example, airports and airlines should publish on their websites information about:

- The rights people with disabilities have when they travel by plane;
- Where people with disabilities can go to get help in the airport;
- If there are accessible toilets;
- If people with disabilities are allowed to bring their **assistance dog** with them;
- How people with disabilities can report a problem if their rights are not respected.



Making this law was an important step but it is not enough to change things. All countries, airlines and airports in Europe must respect this law.



Sadly, this is often not the case.

Many airports and airlines in Europe don't do what the law says.



For example, many airports and airlines still:

- Find excuses to refuse to take people with disabilities on the flight. Airlines often say they do this for safety reasons. For example, airlines may say that they cannot have many people with disabilities on board in case there is a problem on the plane and people have to get out quickly.
- Do not have on their website information about the law and the rights people with disabilities have. Or the websites of the airlines and airports are not **accessible**. This means that people with disabilities may not know what rights they have and how to submit a complaint or report a problem.
- Apply the law differently. That means that people with disabilities have to check the rules of each airline and airport every time they travel by plane.



- Demand from people with disabilities to travel with a **support person** and pay for the extra ticket.
- Are not careful with wheelchairs or other devices people with disabilities use. They may damage or lose these devices during the trip.
- Do not train their staff well enough to help people with disabilities. People with disabilities have to book this help in advance. Even then, they may wait for a long time for help at the airport with the risk of missing their flight. Or they may not get the help they need.



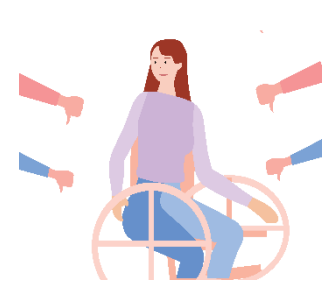
Also, the process to submit a complaint can be long and complex. The offices in charge of checking these complaints may work differently in every country.

In some countries, these offices can give fines to airlines and airports for not respecting the rights of people with disabilities. In some others, these offices can apply little or no fines at all to airlines and airports for not respecting the rights of people with disabilities.



Problems people with disabilities have when travelling by plane

Despite the law that the **European Union** made, in practice, people with disabilities do not have the same rights as other people when travelling by plane.



A common trip by plane can be very difficult for a person with a disability.

Booking a flight

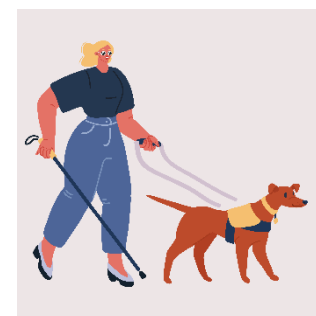
Before booking a flight, a person with a disability needs to find and understand the rules of each airline and airport.



For example:

- Will their wheelchair be allowed on this specific flight?
- Can they get their **assistance dog** on the flight with them?

If they cannot find this information online, they have to call or email the airline to ask.



If the website of the airline is not **accessible**, the person with a disability needs to ask another person to book the ticket for them.

After they book a ticket,
the person with a disability may need to wait
for the airline to confirm accepting them.

The airline may ask the person with a disability
for more information about their condition.
For example, the airline may ask
for a proof from a doctor
that the person is able to fly.

Some airlines also ask people with disabilities
to travel with a **support person**,
if they cannot eat or go to the toilet on their own.
People with disabilities often have to pay extra
for the ticket of their support person.

After the airline checks all this information,
they can accept or refuse people with disabilities
on their flight.

If the airline refuses to accept
the person with a disability on the flight,
the person needs to look for another flight.

As time passes,
flights get more expensive.
So, the person with a disability
may end up paying much more in the end.



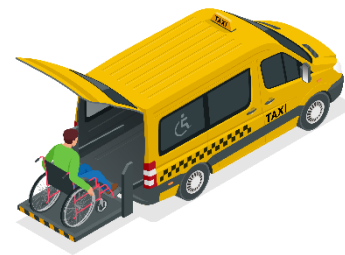
Getting to the airport

The day of the flight, the person with a disability has to look for **accessible** ways to get to the airport.

If metros, trains and buses are not accessible, the person with a disability will not be able to use them to get to the airport like other people.

They may need to book an **accessible** taxi to take them to the airport.

Taking a taxi can cost a lot of money.



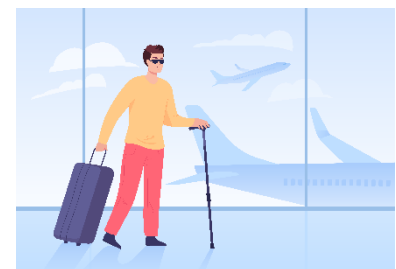
At the airport

At the airport, the person with a disability needs to arrive much earlier than other people to check in any devices they use to get around. For example, their wheelchair.

Even if they have warned the airport in advance about the support they need, they may still wait for a very long time to get this support.

Or they may not be able to find where they have to go to get this support.

Or the airport staff may not be trained to give the person with a disability the support they need.



These delays can cause the person with a disability to lose their flight.

At the gate

While the person with a disability is waiting for boarding, they may miss important information about their flight.

For example, if the information that the gate has changed only appears as a text on a screen, a blind person will not be able to read this information.

This can cause them to lose their flight.

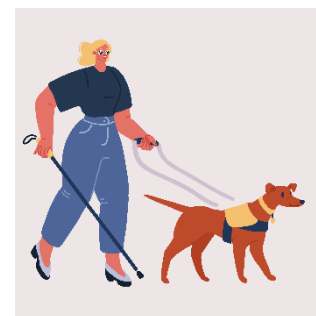
Even worse, the airline may still refuse to let the person with a disability to get on the plane.

Even at the last moment, the airline may ask the person with a disability:

- To travel with a **support person**;
- To travel without their **assistance dog**.

These things are impossible to arrange last minute.

So the person with a disability may be left out of the plane.



But even if they are accepted on the plane, getting on the plane can be hard. Often, there are stairs to get on the plane. This can be hard or impossible for certain people with disabilities who have problems walking.



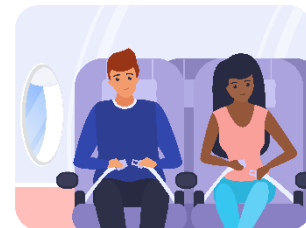
On the plane

During the flight, the person with a disability may not be able to use the toilet because it is not **accessible**.



People who use wheelchairs are often not allowed to keep their wheelchairs in the plane.

They have to sit in a normal seat. Sitting in a normal seat can be uncomfortable or even painful for people with certain disabilities.



After landing

After landing, the person with a disability often has to wait a very long time to get help or to get any devices they use to get around. For example, a wheelchair.



Often, the airport staff is not careful enough, and the wheelchairs or other devices people with disabilities use arrive damaged.

If the person's wheelchair or other devices are damaged, the person will not be able to continue their trip.

They have to start a long process and pay a lot of money to get them fixed.

In theory, airlines must pay for the damage they caused.

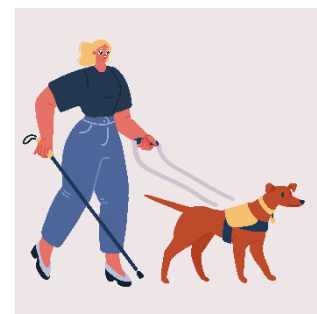
But in practice, getting this money can be hard or it can take too long. Also, airlines never pay the full cost to repair the damage.



What should be done better

We ask the European Union and its countries:

- To make its law on the rights of people with disabilities when travelling by plane better and stronger;
- To stop airlines from refusing to let people travel by plane like everyone else;
- To give airlines and airports fines if they do not respect the rights of people with disabilities;
- To make it possible for people with disabilities to get help at the airport without having to ask for it well in advance;
- To make sure people with disabilities can travel with a **support person** free of charge;
- To make sure people with disabilities know about the rights they have when they travel by plane;
- To make sure all countries recognise **assistance dogs** in the same way. This will make it easier for airlines to accept assistance dogs on their flights;
- To push airlines and airports to become more **accessible**;



- To collect information on how things are for people with disabilities when travelling by plane.

For example,

how many people with disabilities get help when travelling by plane, and how this help can be better.

Or what problems people with disabilities have when travelling by plane;



- To support the offices in charge of checking if airlines and airports respect or not the rights of people with disabilities;



- To support organisations of people with disabilities to be able to do their important work.



We ask the offices in charge of checking if airlines and airports respect the rights of people with disabilities:

- To make stronger checks on airlines and airports;
- To push airlines and airports to respect the rights of people with disabilities and make it easier for them to travel by plane like everyone else;
- To make sure airports and airlines inform people with disabilities about their rights on their websites;



- To work together with organisations of people with disabilities. This way, they could better understand the needs and rights of people with disabilities;



- To make it easier for people with disabilities to submit a complaint and report a problem;
- To publish information about the complaints they receive and the fines they give to airlines and airports.

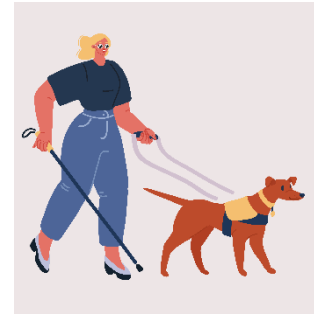


We ask airlines:

- To cover the repair cost for any wheelchair or other devices they damaged by not being careful;
- To not demand people with disabilities to travel with a **support person** if they do not want to;
- To offer the ticket of the **support person** free of charge if they make people with disabilities travel with a support person;

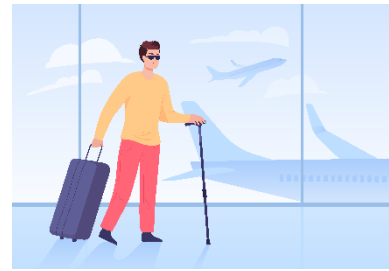


- To allow people with disabilities to travel with their **assistance dogs**;
- To buy **accessible** planes so that people with disabilities can get in and move around without problems;
- To make sure people can use wheelchairs during the flight.
For example, to go to the toilet;
- To make the process of booking a ticket easier and faster for people with disabilities;
- To allow people to use their wheelchairs until they get on the plane and use their wheelchair again after they get off the plane;
- To train their staff to help people with disabilities;
- To work with organisations of people with disabilities to understand what they can do better for them;
- To make their websites and all information **accessible**.
For example, blind people should be able to use the website to find the information they need and to book a ticket.



We ask airports in Europe:

- To make sure they are **accessible** so that people with disabilities can get around without problems;
- To train their staff to understand the needs and rights of people with disabilities and give them the right help;
- To work with organisations of persons with disabilities and listen to their views. This way, they can better understand their needs and rights and make things better for them;
- To make their websites **accessible**;
- To explain clearly on their websites where and how people with disabilities can get help when they arrive at the airport.



More information

For more information about EDF and our work, you can visit our website at www.edf-feph.org.

You can also send us an email at info@edf-feph.org.



Explanation of difficult words

European Union

The European Union is a group of 27 countries in Europe. These countries work together to make things better for their people.



Accessible

Things are accessible when they are easy to use for people with disabilities.

For example, when buildings have ramps that people in wheelchairs can use to get in.



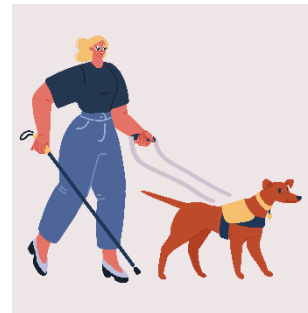
Or when information is easy to read and people with intellectual disabilities can understand it.

Assistance dog

Assistance dogs are trained to help people with disabilities with everyday things.

For example:

- To help a blind person get around;
- To open doors or pick things up;
- To bring medicine;
- To make the person with a disability feel safe.



Support person

A support person helps a person with a disability with everyday tasks.

For example:

- To go shopping, cook or clean;
- To go places or travel;
- To communicate with other people.



This easy-to-read text is written by 'Say it easy'
www.sayiteasy.eu

