

European Passengers Federation (EPF)

What this paper is about

Gives details of the European Passengers Federation (EPF) and raises the question whether UKACCs should become a member of the organisation.

Points for Discussion

- The value to UKACCs of becoming a member of the EPF.
- If UKACCs agrees that it should obtain membership, how should the membership costs be met? And who should be appointed as UKACCs representative?

Possible Action

- Dependent on the views expressed at the meeting.

Introduction

1. The Annual Meeting has previously discussed the need for the UKACCs to take action to adopt a more visible public profile. The revised DfT Guidelines for Airport Consultative Committees also encouraged ACCs to be as open and transparent as possible. The Stansted Airport Consultative Committee (STACC) has been considering this issue and has made contact with the European Passengers Federation (EPF). STACC consider that there would be value in UKACCs becoming a member of the EPF. Delegates are therefore invited to consider whether UKACCs should obtain membership of the EPF

The EPF's work

2. The EPF was founded in 2002, at least in part, at the suggestion of the European Commission (EC) which was in the process of working on a series of 'Passengers' Rights' Directives. The EC wanted to have input from passengers' organisations as a counter-balance to the powerful voices of the transport industry. EPF's involvement in the consultation process for these directives resulted in a number of the provisions being more passenger friendly than the operators wanted and the establishment of on-going dialogue processes being put in place between EPF and European-wide passenger transport industry organisations.

3. Initially EPF concentrated principally, but not exclusively, on rail, but it quickly expanded to include road and maritime passenger transport. In 2009 the EC asked EPF to take on air passenger issues.

4. There are currently Regulations dealing with air, bus and coach, rail and maritime passengers' rights. The legislation dealing with air passengers' rights is the subject of fresh legislative proposals but, as with a number of other issues concerned with aviation, the final stages of the legislative process have not yet been completed principally because of disputes between the UK and Spain over Gibraltar airspace.

5. EPF has argued for the simplification of existing passenger rights' legislation in order to make it more accessible to passengers and to the operators. An important achievement, which arguably would not have come about without EPF's involvement, is that this position has been reflected in Communications from the EC which have acknowledged that passengers need a common set of principles applicable to all modes of transport, so that they can be more easily aware of their rights if something goes wrong with any part of their trip, regardless of the mode of transport they use or whether a journey takes place wholly within a single Member State or goes through an intra-Community or external frontier.

6. EPF, with its wide-ranging membership, has been able to pay particular attention to the needs of multi-modal passengers and their interface between modes – somewhere that passengers can find they face particular problems when travelling, nowhere more so than at airports which are interposed between air travel and the different modes used for prior or onward travel.

7. EPF's involvement with air passengers' rights has included meetings with the CAA and with IATA. It has provided speakers at a number of high-level international conferences including the European Association of Aviation Lawyers, the European Civil Aviation Conference and the European Regions Airlines Association, the European Aviation Club and the IATA Legal Forum where it has brought a passengers' perspective to their discussions. The Director of External Affairs at IATA has now proposed an annual, or possibly twice-yearly, standing meeting to engage in a frank and open discussion to increase understanding of issues across both sides of the table. This would be augmented by an informal, ad hoc "sounding board" channel, when either side wishes to discuss a specific issue.

8. EPF operates as an association registered in Belgium and as such operates under Belgian law. It currently has a membership of 34 associations (some statutory and some voluntary) from 20 countries. Currently there is only one association that deals exclusively with air passengers and that association is from Poland. A number of the other member associations include air travel in

their activities. Given the current activities of European institutions greater involvement of national organisations dealing specifically with air passengers', such as UKACC, would be beneficial.

9. EPF operates a two-tier structure – the general meeting takes place three times a year plus the AGM and representatives from each member association can, and usually do, attend. The meetings take place at different locations in Europe. The general meeting sets the overall strategy of EPF. A newly created Management Board comprises 7 members elected annually by the general meeting which meets four times a year plus monthly tele-conferences. The Management Board is responsible for the daily operation of EPF. It is supported by a half-time Administrative Officer whose time is bought from one of EPF's member organisations in Belgium.

10. The minimum subscription for statutory organisations which employ staff is 200 euros. Organisations would also need to fund attendance at meetings. The total annual cost is unlikely to exceed £1,250.

Benefits

11. Membership would provide UKACCS with an opportunity to influence emerging European legislation affecting passengers and be aware of issues and best practice in other EU countries. It would also raise the Liaison Group's profile both in the UK and within Europe.

Recommendation

12. Delegates are invited to consider whether UKACCs should become a member of the EPF and if so, who should represent the Group. An initial option might be to seek membership for a year and then review the benefits before reaching a decision on continuing membership.

13. Delegates may wish to note that the Chairman of STACC's User Experience Group, Rufus Barnes, was a founding member of EPF and served on its then Administrative Council until his retirement from full-time work in 2008. He was involved in the discussions with the EC which led to the Directive on Rail Passengers Rights and discussions with the UK DfT relating to its implementation in the UK. He would be willing to be the UKACCS representative on EPF should UKACCS seek membership of that body.

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