

Should budget airlines compensate for delays?

The growth of budget airlines, such as Easyjet and Ryanair, has transformed flying. But low pricing has meant cutting back on extras, and passengers receive little or no compensation for flight delays. New legislation may change this.

1 Which airline do you prefer to use, and why?

2 Which of the following situations have you experienced? Discuss them with a partner.

being bumped off a flight being offered cash to take another flight losing luggage
 strike action having a flight cancelled receiving compensation from an airline
 being stranded being delayed

3 Read the article. Which of the situations above are mentioned?

Will new laws damage budget airlines?

Passengers who are tired of being bumped off flights because of overbooking or cancellations should soon be able to claim cash compensation from budget airlines. The European Parliament has voted to pass a new EU law guaranteeing compensation for passengers left stranded by airlines. Even those delayed at airports will be able to get their airfares refunded.

The budget airlines are highly critical of these new measures, which are due to come into force next year. They complain that the payouts could be many times the value of a ticket, and have stated that they will be forced to increase airfares. In order to keep costs low, budget airlines fly to tight schedules, so a missed take-off or landing slot means a long wait. They have cut back on extras, such as refunds for flight delays.

Budget airlines have in turn been criticised by passengers for their poor response to customer complaints over delays and cancellations. A refund is usually offered only after a flight has been severely delayed. The new rules mean that those waiting only two hours would be entitled to receive compensation.

Air travel is growing globally at around five per cent per year. Post 9/11, it is the low-cost, no-frills airlines which have expanded, with a clear message: the cheaper the fare, the more people will fly. The result has been a price war, with business travellers and holiday-makers benefiting. However, environmentalists fear that more flights will inevitably lead to bigger and busier airports, more noise and an increase in global warming.

4 Find words in the article meaning:

- a to officially ask for money that you believe you have a right to
- b money you get back
- c to reduce the amount of something, especially money that you spend
- d to be given the right to do something

Definitions from *Macmillan English Dictionary*. Text © Bloomsbury Publishing Plc 2002.

5 Discuss the following questions in small groups and report your ideas to the class.

- a Which do you prefer: flying on a regular airline or on a low-cost airline? Why?
- b Should airlines overbook flights?
- c Should the no-frills airlines compensate passengers for delays?
- d How do you feel about the increase in air traffic? Should it continue unchecked?