

Seven low-cost airlines under pressure for excessive cabin bag charges

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Dhaka: A coalition of European consumer organizations has filed a formal complaint to the European Commission and the Consumer Protection Cooperation Network against seven low-cost airlines—EasyJet, Norwegian Air Shuttle, Ryanair, Transavia, Volotea, Vueling, and Wizz Air—alleging that their hand luggage fee policies violate EU consumer protection laws.

The European Consumer Organization (BEUC) and 16 member groups from 12 countries argue that these airlines impose unjustified charges on passengers for carrying hand luggage that meets reasonable size and weight requirements.

This practice, they contend, contravenes a 2014 ruling by the European Court of Justice, which deemed that hand luggage, provided it complies with safety and size standards, should not incur additional fees.

This legal precedent, established more than a decade ago, has become a cornerstone of consumer rights within the European aviation sector.

BEUC says that the airlines' ongoing fees disregard this legal obligation, leading to widespread confusion and inconsistent practices across the EU.

BEUC's Spanish member, OCU, previously brought the issue to national authorities, triggering a significant response. In late 2024, the Spanish Ministry of Social Rights and Consumption fined five budget airlines a total of EUR 179 million for what it described as "abusive hand baggage practices." Ryanair faced the steepest fine, EUR 107 million, followed by Vueling with EUR 39 million, and EasyJet at EUR 29 million.

The coalition's complaint urges the European Commission to clarify which services must be included in the basic fare. BEUC also calls for harmonized EU rules defining what qualifies as "reasonable" hand luggage, ensuring consistency across all member states and air carriers.

Harmonizing these rules could also benefit airports, BEUC notes, by streamlining baggage handling and reducing disputes at boarding gates.

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