



**ECAC RECOMMENDATION ON CONSUMER
INFORMATION/PROTECTION NEEDS IN CONNECTION
WITH CODE-SHARED AIR SERVICES
RECOMMENDATION ECAC/19-1**

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(Recommendation ECAC/19-1)

Whereas code-sharing typically involves one carrier using its designator code on a service operated by another partner carrier;

Noting that code-sharing is becoming a more common practice between carriers;

Recognizing that the practice has the potential to bring benefits to consumers through increasing the range of travel options and enhancing product quality in areas such as connecting service arrangements, passenger check-in and baggage handling;

Being satisfied that consumer protection measures are needed to guard against deceptive and misleading practices;

Acknowledging that many code-sharing carriers wish to ensure transparency as regards their operations;

Believing that in order to ensure transparency, code-shared services demand the provision of adequate information to the consumer at all key points in a transaction from the initial enquiry to completion of the final segment of the journey;

Considering that regulatory measures are already applicable with regard to the display of code shared flights in Computer Reservation Systems;

Considering that the contracting carrier must maintain the ultimate responsibility for ensuring that passenger needs are satisfied;

Concluding that in many cases there are deficiencies in the information currently provided to consumers as regards code-shared services;

Recognizing that carriers alone cannot overcome all of the shortcomings and that co-operative efforts are called for on the part of all involved, including, in addition to the carriers, travel agents, CRS vendors, other data providers, airport authorities and handling agents;

Considering that in the interests of safety and passenger protection, greater transparency may be required with regard to the delimitation of operational and technical responsibilities for code-shared services

Conscious of the world-wide nature of code-sharing and of the merits of developing a consistent global approach concerning these arrangements;

Wishing to encourage in the first instance an industry-based solution,

the CONFERENCE:

A. RECOMMENDS that

- 1) carriers holding out code-shared services to the public should ensure that before making a booking or reservation, potential passengers are made aware of the existence of the code share and given additional information on the main features of the arrangement, including in all cases the name of the actual operator of each segment of a flight;
- 2) ways and means should be found to ensure that, before travelling, and at the latest at the time of ticket issue, the passenger is given in written form confirmation of the actual operator for each segment of a flight and other information (e.g. airport terminal(s), check-in area(s), transfer point(s)) that will facilitate the passenger's travel;
- 3) airport authorities, in co-operation with code-sharing carriers and handling agents, should take all possible measures through information displays on arrivals and departure boards, signposting, check-in displays etc. to assist the passenger's travel;
- 4) where necessary during a journey (e.g. in the case of denied boarding, missed connections, delayed departures, mislaid baggage) appropriate measures should be taken to ensure that passengers are fully informed and given clear guidance and support by the contracting carrier, or, in his name, by the operator or their agents;
- 5) where matters remain to be resolved after a journey has been completed, the passenger should be given clear information as regards the carrier with whom communications should be pursued; in any event the passenger should be given the opportunity to appeal to any of the carriers participating in the flight (either contracting carrier or operator) according to choice;
- 6) in view of the complementary roles played by airlines, travel agents and CRS vendors and other data providers in the marketing and selling of code share products, all concerned should co-operate in finding effective and cost efficient arrangements to ensure that passengers are not misled about the nature of the services being offered. The industry should take advantage of the opportunities becoming available to provide more accurate and user-friendly information and, in particular, give urgent and serious consideration to implementing the following:
 - a) presentation of data in a more user-friendly way - for example by including the codes of both code share partners in the same entry on the CRS screen;
 - b) greater provision of information on code share products, both by carriers and by CRS operators to enable sales personnel to describe services accurately;
 - c) provide information on code shares on the face of the ticket where economically and practically feasible;

- d) where electronic means are used to store or transfer travel information, data on code shares should be included so that the operator of a code-shared flight can be clearly shown on any subsequent display of the information.

B. EXPRESSES ITS CONCERN that:

The display of code-shared flights in CRSs does not in all cases comply with the criteria set down in the ECAC and EU codes of conduct; and

URGES that:

Means of conforming with the requirements of the codes are quickly found and implemented.

C. RESOLVES

- 1) to have a review undertaken of progress made in implementing the various provisions in this Recommendation;
- 2) to decide in the light of that review, which should be completed by 30 June 1997, whether more binding regulatory measures are called for;
- 3) to study, separately and as quickly as possible, if, in the interests of safety and passenger protection, better transparency with regard to the delimitation of operational and technical responsibilities for code-shared services is required.
