



# Press Notice

## **AIR TRANSPORT USERS COUNCIL (AUC)**

### **DELAYED BAGGAGE TABLE FOR 2007**

The Air Transport Users Council (AUC) has today published its table on the baggage handling performance of the member airlines of the Association of European Airlines (AEA) for 2007. The table is attached to this press release at Annex 1.

AUC chairman Tina Tietjen said:

“ According to the airlines’ own data, an average of 16.6 bags per thousand passengers were delayed on flights operated by the major European network airlines in 2007. This compares to 15.7 bags per thousand passengers for 2006. It is notable that those AEA airlines that tend to operate connecting flights through “hub” airports come out worst. For example, Air France, KLM and British Airways all take up places in the top five poorest performers for 2007. This is borne out by industry research, which, according to the AEA, shows that 61% of baggage incidences are related to connecting passengers.

We have spoken to BA and BAA, the airport operator of Heathrow, BA’s main base, about the problems they had with baggage handling in 2007. Their comments are at Annex 2 of this press release. We have some sympathy with the unique problems they encountered in 2007, particularly the increased levels of hold luggage as a result of the “one bag” rule at UK airports throughout the year. But, whatever the extenuating circumstances, when passengers hand their bag in a check-in they should expect to see their bag at the other end. Complaints to the AUC show that delayed baggage can cause passengers considerable stress, inconvenience and expense. Examples of case studies of complaints received by the AUC are at Annex 3.

However, there are reasons to believe that things will soon get better for passengers. British Airways is moving into a new home at Terminal 5 at Heathrow with state of the art baggage handling facilities. And BAA has announced that, in conjunction with Emirates Airlines, it has began trials of using Radio Frequency Identification (RFID) baggage tags on some passengers’ baggage with the aim of improving efficiency of baggage handling so that fewer bags go astray.

But passengers should not have to take the industry's word for it. We would like the European Commission to provide "name and shame" league tables on the baggage handling performance of all airlines, and not just those that voluntarily submit their data through the AEA, to encourage all airlines to invest in measures to improve their baggage handling."

#### **Notes to Editors**

1. The Air Transport Users Council (AUC) is the consumer watchdog for the airline industry. It was established by the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) to help protect the interests of air travellers.
2. For more information call James Fremantle, Industry Affairs Manager at the AUC, on 020 7240 6061.

## Annex 1

RANK (by no of bags missing 2007)	CARRIER	NO OF PASSENGERS ENPLANED	NO OF BAGS DELAYED PER 1,000 PASSENGERS (2007)	NO OF BAGS MISSING PER 1,000 PASSENGERS* (2006)
1	TAP Air Portugal	8,250,411	27.8	21.0
2	British Airways	43,064,346	26.5	23.0
3=	KLM	23,466,307	19.7	16.4
3=	Alitalia	25,870,381	19.7	16.5
5	Air France	56,889,596	17.6	16.6
6	Luxair	558,175	17.2	16.4
7	BMI	5,229,520	17.0	-
8=	Finnair	8,082,359	15.8	14.2
8=	Lufthansa	57,175,335	15.8	18.1
10	Spanair	11,012,86	15.4	9.5
11	SAS Scandinavian	28,164,735	14.8	13.3
12	LOT Polish Airlines	4,376,246	13.9	14.8
13	Iberia	33,080,998	13.8	15.5
14	Austrian	11,118,649	12.9	13.8
15	CSA Czech Airlines	5,582,626	12.4	10.8
16	SN Brussels Airlines	3,830,985	11.7	12.7
17	Swiss International Airlines	12,874,922	11.4	10.0
18	Icelandair	1,325,396	11.1	9.8
19	Air One	7,047,942	9.9	8.1
20	Adria Airways	1,126,773	9.8	9.6
21=	Malev Hungarian Airlines	3,384,996	9.5	8.9
21=	Tarom Romanian Airlines	1,026,803	9.5	8.3
23	Croatia Airlines	1,710,571	9.3	11.8
24	Cyprus Airways	1,132,087	8.8	-
25=	Air Malta	2,107,206	4.5	4.4
25=	Turkish Airlines	19,811,287	4.5	4.7
	All AEA airlines	377,301,582	16.6	15.7

Source: Association of European Airlines (AEA) consumer report 2007

*\*The figures for 2007 show the rate of bags reported delayed upon passengers' arrival at their final destination per 1,000 passengers transported by each carrier. The figures for 2006 show bags reported missing upon arrival at their final destination.*

1. *Virgin Atlantic, Aer Lingus, JAT Airways and Olympic Airlines did not submit data for 2007.*
2. *Data refers to the airlines' entire network covering domestic, intra-European, and long-haul scheduled services and non-scheduled services.*

## **Annex 2**

### **Comment from British Airways**

*Gareth Kirkwood, director of operations, said*

“We fully apologise to customers who have been affected by delayed baggage in the past year.

While our performance at the vast majority of global airports remains good, we continue to experience a wide variety of difficulties at our main home at Heathrow.

It is interesting to note that Heathrow’s two biggest carriers, ourselves and BMI, come towards the bottom of the baggage performance table published by the Association of European Airlines.

Although Heathrow airport continues to suffer from a very stretched infrastructure running at almost double capacity, we also accept that on occasions our own levels of service have not been as high as we would like.

Our figures have also not been helped by all UK airports having had throughout the whole of 2007 much more restrictive cabin baggage allowances than the rest of Europe.

This restriction led inevitably to an increase in the levels of hold baggage and in summer 2007 we dealt with a record number of overall bags as well as transfer bags at Heathrow.

The record level of bags in the summer combined with the wettest UK June and July on record and a "critical" level of security following the bomb attack at Glasgow airport led to a range of operational difficulties which also impacted on our baggage performance during the busiest months of the year.

We are pleased that the cabin baggage restriction was finally lifted at Heathrow in early January 2008.

We very much expect that our baggage performance will improve once we settle into our new home at Heathrow Terminal 5 which opens at the end of March 2008.”

**Comment from BAA**

*A BAA spokesperson said*

"Whilst there is no doubt that Heathrow is running at full capacity, the baggage infrastructure we operate is very resilient and is not capacity constrained. Our systems are reliable and we have contingencies in place to mitigate the effect of any problems, should they occur. When Terminal 5 opens in less than two months, one of the significant benefits it will bring will be much needed terminal and infrastructure capacity.

"We are committed to working with the airline community to develop innovative baggage handling solutions for Heathrow and drive performance. We recently announced a 6 month trial of RFID technology in Terminal 3, for Emirates passengers. The scheme tracks bags at every stage of their journey and could significantly improve the efficiency of Heathrow's baggage system, delivering an improved service to both passengers and airlines alike. Upon successful trial, RFID could be rolled out across the airport, significantly improving the way bags are handled at the world's busiest international airport."

### Annex 3

#### Case studies

*A married couple booked a cruise to celebrate their golden wedding anniversary. On arriving at the airport to join the cruise ship later that day, they found that both their bags had not arrived with them. They therefore joined the ship without their luggage, which contained, amongst other things, all their clothes, including formal eveningwear, and their camera. The couple had to spend £150 buying replacement items such as toiletries, t-shirts and shorts. One bag eventually turned up after five days but they did not get the other one back until after the cruise had finished. They told us that their golden wedding celebration cruise had been “ruined” and were bitterly disappointed that all the airline has offered them as recompense was a refund of the £150 they spent.*

*Five friends flew to Germany for a walking holiday, only for three of the bags not to arrive with them. Because the bags contained camping and walking equipment, the five friends could not start their camping trip until all the bags had arrived. The airline said that it would courier the bags to the group as soon as they arrived. But because no one at the airline had contacted them by the next day to tell them what was going on, the friends went to the airport to try to find their bags. The bags eventually arrived on a flight later that day, meaning the group missed the first two days of their trip. And just to confound matters, the bags of all five friends were also delayed on the flight home.*