

From three to five hours:

Why an extended delay window actually gets passengers moving faster

Status quo of EU flight delay rules

For European carriers,¹ the EU261 rules set a **maximum delay of 3 hours for flights arriving in or outside the EU**, after which financial compensation of up to €600 per passenger is due.

These rules were arbitrarily set by a court without proper consideration of how airspace and airlines operate in reality. While intended to protect passengers, in practice, passengers often end up getting to their destination later and with more hassle.

? What is a delay window?

It is the time limit that determines when a delay qualifies for compensation under EU rules.

Example:

Consider a non-stop flight from Brussels to Tenerife yet to take off. The aircraft body suffered minor damage during landing. Now the airline faces two choices:



1 Wait for repairs:

Delay of **9+ hours.**

or



2 Prepare a replacement aircraft:

Ready to go in **under 5 hours.**

✓ Gets everyone there faster, but...

✗ airline still penalised under current rules.



Find spare aircraft and position it



Crew repositioning



Technical clearance on new aircraft



Baggage and fuel transfer



Board passengers



Final safety checks

The solution:

Up to 40%

of **delays** longer than 3 hours could be reduced if airlines were given a **5-hour window.**

3-hour window:



5-hour window:



● - delayed ● - on time



The extra time would allow airlines to deploy replacement aircraft and/or crew, **helping more than 6 million** of the 13 million delayed passengers every year to reach their destinations sooner.

1. Flights into the EU operated by non-EU (third-country) carriers are not covered by EU261, meaning passengers on these flights are not entitled to compensation for delays or cancellations.