

Ryanair only partially complies with court ruling: Euroconsumers' member Testachats/Testaankoop demands payment of penalties

On 28 January, Testachats/Testaankoop, the Belgian member of the Euroconsumers group, won a landmark court ruling against Irish airline Ryanair, which was ordered to change four unlawful sales practices or face financial penalties. Ryanair seems now to have brought itself into line only on three of the four points — but not the fourth. Testachats/Testaankoop has instructed its lawyer to demand payment of the penalties until the airline is fully compliant. Together with its member organisation, Euroconsumers will ensure that the court's ruling is fully respected.

A landmark ruling

In its judgment of 28 January, the court ruled against the Irish airline on the following points:

- Fake discounts: advertising price reductions based on misleading reference prices.
- False urgency: messages such as “only 5 seats left at this price” when they do not reflect reality.
- Hidden baggage fees: failing to display the price of checked baggage separately for outbound and return flights.
- Opaque bundled pricing: bundled fare packages that pushed passengers into paying for services they did not necessarily need.

Partial compliance

Ryanair had until 30 June to bring its website and app booking process into line with the ruling. The airline has apparently stopped the fake discounts and removed the false urgency messages, and checked baggage fees seem now displayed separately for outbound and return flights. However, the bundled pricing practice remains problematic: Ryanair still presents several packages (Basic, Regular, Flexi, etc.) from the very start of the booking process, without clearly indicating that certain services can be added separately at a lower price. As a result, many consumers are still paying more than necessary.

Penalties now due

As Ryanair continues to apply some problematic practices, Testachats/Testaankoop and Euroconsumers will closely monitor compliance with the ruling and will be requesting payment of the penalties of €5,000 per infringement per day, until the airline is fully compliant.

The Irish airline is also facing several other rulings across Europe. Austria's Supreme Court recently found more than a dozen of the airline's fees to be illegal, opening the door to refund claims from passengers. In the UK, the Competition and Markets Authority (CMA) has opened an investigation into Ryanair's practice of charging fees for passengers to sit next to a minor. Following the opening of that investigation, the airline announced it would review its policy and no longer charge this fee.

This practice was also among the points raised by Testachats/Testaankoop in its legal action, though it was not upheld by the judge. These developments suggest that scrutiny of Ryanair's practices is increasing across the continent, and that the airline is expected to adapt and commit seriously to meeting its legal obligations.

Els Bruggeman, Euroconsumers' Head of Advocacy and Enforcement, said:

"Consumers should not have to navigate misleading sales practices when booking a flight. The court ordered Ryanair to change these practices, and that decision must be fully implemented. We will continue to monitor compliance closely and take the necessary legal steps until the airline fully respects the ruling."

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About Euroconsumers

Gathering six national consumer organisations and giving voice to a total of more than 7 million people in Italy, Belgium, Spain, Portugal, Poland and Brazil, Euroconsumers is the world's leading consumer group in innovative information, personalised services and the defence of consumer rights.