

Brussels, 20 February 2026

Supporting Cultural Mobility

Towards Clear and Harmonised Rules for the Air Transport of Musical Instruments

Issued on the occasion of the European Parliament event on Air Transport of Musical Instruments: Rules, Risks and Best Practices for a Culture-Driven Economy on 23 February 2026

The Association Européenne des Conservatoires (AEC) represents more than 300 institutions for higher music education across Europe and beyond. Our member institutions educate and train the next generations of composers, performers, educators, researchers, and cultural leaders. Music, as an art form, has always travelled across borders. It has evolved through encounters between cultures, flourished through exchange, and thrived on the free movement of artists and ideas. The history of music is inseparable from international dialogue and collaboration.

In the field of education, international cooperation and the exchange of knowledge and experience are indispensable. For creators, performers, and pedagogues alike, mobility enables artistic growth, fosters innovation, and strengthens mutual understanding. Students and staff benefit profoundly from opportunities to study, teach, perform, and collaborate abroad. Such exchanges not only enhance artistic excellence but also nurture intercultural competence, solidarity, and shared European values. In a globalised cultural landscape, the ability to travel with one's instrument and artistic tools is not merely a practical concern, but a fundamental condition for meaningful professional development.

AEC fully recognises and supports the need to ensure passenger safety in air travel. Safety considerations are paramount and must remain so. We greatly appreciate the efforts undertaken by policymakers and industry representatives to uphold high safety standards while facilitating mobility across Europe.

At the same time, we observe that the absence of harmonised regulations and transparent policies regarding the transport of musical instruments in aircraft cabins creates uncertainty and inconsistency for students and professionals alike. Divergent rules between airlines - and even between individual flights - can unintentionally jeopardise educational activities, performances, and international cooperation projects.

We therefore respectfully encourage further dialogue towards the introduction of common standards and/or clear labelling schemes across airlines. Such measures would provide clarity, transparency, and predictability regarding the conditions for carrying musical instruments, while fully safeguarding safety requirements.

In this context, attention should be given to establishing transparent conditions for the transport of instruments, especially where the purchase of an additional seat is required, as well as to ensuring stronger guarantees when instruments must be checked into the hold, including clear provisions for liability and compensation in case of damage.

For musicians and music students alike, the instrument is not simply personal luggage but the very means through which their art and profession exist. Without it, they cannot study, perform, teach, or work. In a very real sense, a musician without their instrument is prevented from exercising their craft.

AEC stands ready to contribute constructively to future discussions and solution-oriented processes on this matter. Drawing on the experience of our extensive network, we would be pleased to support the development of practical, balanced approaches that ensure both passenger safety and the continued vitality of Europe's musical and cultural exchange.



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The Association Européenne des Conservatoires, Académies de Musique et Musikhochschulen (AEC) is a European cultural and educational network with over 300 member institutions for professional music training in 57 countries.

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