

Regulation (EU) No. 1177/2010 concerning the rights of passengers when travelling by sea and inland waterways

Guidance Note N° 4

Guidance for the carriage of recognised assistance dogs (e.g. guide or hearing dogs) when travelling by ship

Guidance for Passengers

1. The EU Regulation ensures that a passenger who relies on an assistance dog will be legally entitled to take that dog with them when travelling on a passenger ship, such as a ferry or cruise vessel. This is subject to safety conditions and applicable EU rules on the movement of animals¹.
2. A passenger who requires specific accommodation, seating or services (for themselves or their dog) should notify the ferry or cruise company when booking their ticket. Additionally, a passenger who will need assistance at the port or onboard the ship may be asked to provide the ferry or cruise company with details of that assistance prior to travel.
3. A passenger may seek to buy a ticket at the time when they wish to travel or may ask for assistance on arrival at the port without having done so beforehand. In such circumstances, the ferry or cruise company will make every reasonable effort to accommodate the passenger (and the assistance dog) and to provide the assistance needed. However, if the operator requires 48 hours notice and if the passenger has not provided it, there is no guarantee that such assistance will be available. Similarly, there is no guarantee that specific seating or cabin accommodation needed by the passenger will be available if it has not been pre-booked. It is possible that, in such circumstances, the passenger might be unable to travel.
4. The passenger may also be asked for evidence that the dog (whether it is a guide dog or other assistance dog) has been appropriately trained².
5. If the passenger's journey is international, their dog will be subject to animal health controls. The rules for travel to the EU (which apply to UK residents returning home, as well as to visitors from abroad) are contained in EU Regulation 998/2003 on the animal health requirements applicable to the non-commercial movement of pet animals. Details are provided on the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs' (DEFRA) website:

<http://www.defra.gov.uk/wildlife-pets/pets/travel/>

¹ The EU rules allow – (i) pet dogs, cats and ferrets to enter the EU (including the UK) without quarantine or other restrictions as long as they meet the health requirements; and (ii) people in the UK to take their dogs, cats and ferrets to other countries and territories, and return with them to the UK without the need for quarantine or other restrictions. The purpose of the rules is to limit the spread of rabies and certain other diseases that might be carried by pets in the EU.

² A list of qualifying training organisations for all guide dog organisations can be found at the following website address - www.igdf.org.uk and www.assistedogsinternational.org for all assistance dog training organisations.

6. Briefly, the passenger will need to ensure the assistance dog is micro chipped, vaccinated against rabies, blood tested (if coming from a non-EU country), accompanied by a pet passport or Third Country Veterinary Certificate and treated for tapeworm. Other countries to which the passenger is travelling may impose their own requirements. It is the passenger's responsibility to find out what requirements apply, and to ensure that their dog meets these requirements. Further details about the Pet Travel Scheme and its obligations on assistance dog owners and their dogs can be obtained from the DEFRA website at the address above.

Guidance for Carriers / Operators

7. The EU Regulation requires the carrier / operator to allow a passenger to travel with an assistance dog. The carrier / operator may ask the passenger to provide evidence that a dog has been properly trained as an assistance dog, but the carrier / operator should be aware that there is currently no standard certification scheme³.

8. A carrier may refuse to embark a passenger with an assistance dog (or to accept a booking, or sell a ticket, etc) only for safety reasons – for example: to remain within a vessel's passenger carrying limit or when, in the professional judgment of the master, it would be unsafe to embark, carry or disembark a passenger on a particular sailing. On international sailings, the carrier may refuse to embark an assistance dog if animal health law so requires.

9. A ferry or cruise operator is entitled to require a passenger who will need assistance at the port or on board the ship to give 48 hours notice of their need⁴. However, in the event of the passenger failing to give such notice, the carrier / operator should nonetheless make every reasonable effort to carry the passenger. The carrier / operator should provide clear information on their website and other appropriate places about travelling with assistance dogs on their ships.

10. The carrier / operator should ensure that all onboard and shore-based personnel whose duties include providing assistance to passengers are suitably trained in handling assistance dogs. There is no obligation to make arrangements for evacuating assistance dogs from a vessel in the event of an emergency.

11. Animal health rules apply to the carriage of assistance dogs on international voyages. If a carrier operates a ferry or cruise service between the UK and another state the carrier / operator will need to have a system in place to check that all animals using their service comply with these rules. Carriers that already transport animals will have the necessary checking arrangements in place. Carriers that have not transported pets or assistance dogs before should contact the Animal Health and Veterinary Laboratories Agency (AHVLA) as soon as possible by emailing ahitchelmsford@ahvla.gsi.gov.uk. AHVLA will be able to provide expert advice and support to carriers undertaking these checks for the first time.

³ Organisations recognised to be providing acceptable standards of training for the competency of their dogs and the partnership with the dog's owner can be found on the websites below. All recognised UK, EU and international guide dog organisations can be found at www.igdf.org.uk. All recognised UK, EU and international assistance dog organisations can be found at www.assisteddogsinternational.org

⁴ A 48 hour notice period applies unless a shorter period is agreed between the passenger and the carrier or terminal operator. See Article 11 (1) (a) of the EU Regulation.

12. Carriers and operators will need to consider that when sailing to other countries, these other countries may impose their own specific requirements.

Annex A - Definitions and further information

A guide dog is a dog trained to provide mobility assistance to a blind or partially sighted person. In the UK the guide dog is trained, assessed and accredited by the Guide Dogs for the Blind Association. Outside the UK a guide dog is a dog trained by an individual or organisation that is accepted by and affiliated to the International Guide Dog Federation.

An assistance dog is one which has been specifically trained to assist a disabled person and which has been qualified by one of the charitable organisations registered as members of Assistance Dogs (UK). Assistance dogs trained by members of Assistance Dogs (UK) will have formal identification and have been granted certification by the Department of Health on the basis that the dogs high standard's of training, behaviour, health and welfare are such that it should be permitted to accompany its client, owner or partner at all times and in all places within the United Kingdom.

Assistance dogs from other nations, when entering the United Kingdom, should meet the full membership criteria of the established international assistance dog organisations – Assistance Dogs International and Assistance Dogs Europe – or other such bodies as may from time to time be recognised.

The following assistance dog organisations are registered members of Assistance Dogs (UK):

- Canine Partners
- Dogs for the Disabled
- The Guide Dogs for the Blind Association
- Hearing Dogs for Deaf People
- Support Dogs

Annex B - Conditions under which assistance is provided (Article 11(4))

Where a disabled person or person with reduced mobility is accompanied by a recognised assistance dog, that dog shall be accommodated together with that person, provided that the carrier, travel agent or tour operator is notified in accordance with applicable national rules on the carriage of recognised assistance dogs on board passenger ships, where such rules exist.

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(Comments received by midday on 4 December 2012 have been taken into account).