

TO:

- 1 Lufthansa Airlines
- 2 Scandinavian Airlines (SAS)
- 3 American Express Business Travel, Stockholm
- 4 Arlanda Airport
- 5 Star Alliance

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My experience with SAS/Lufthansa at the Stockholm main airport (Arlanda)

Yesterday, 25 July 2014, I arrived at the Stockholm airport about 2 hours before my scheduled flight (LH805, scheduled departing time 18:45, 25 July 2014). I was supposed to fly to Buenos Aires, via Frankfurt (LH510, scheduled departing time 22:05, 25 July 2014), as I was an invited speaker at the Stochastic Processes and their Applications conference at the University of Buenos Aires. I had bought a ticket through my university, using their travel office, American Express Business Travel in Stockholm. The ticket was paid by my VR (Vetenskapsrådet) research grant.

Upon arrival at the airport, I noticed that the flight was delayed by 1 hour. I proceeded to the check-in desk and asked them if the delay would cause my missing the connecting flight to Buenos Aires. They replied that *they didn't know* because, in their words, "*you are flying with Lufthansa and we are Scandinavian Airlines (SAS)*". I then asked to talk to Lufthansa. They replied that I can't because *there is no Lufthansa at the Stockholm airport*. I asked them to find out what would happen if I missed the connecting flight. They responded that I should just board the plane, *go to Frankfurt and ask Lufthansa there*. In the meantime, another SAS representative (she was a supervisor) told me to go to the *SAS ticket office that is representing Lufthansa*.

At the SAS ticket office I posed the same questions. They made a phone call and told me exactly the same thing: "*We don't know, we are not Lufthansa, you have to go to Frankfurt to find out.*" I replied that it was unreasonable to go to Frankfurt if, say, they would not put me in the next flight or reschedule me with another airline. They refused to talk to me further. Nevertheless, I continued: I told them that, since they are representing Lufthansa at the Stockholm airport they should take on the responsibility to find out about my connecting flight and inform them. *They replied that it was not their responsibility*. I told them that it was the first time, ever, that, at an international airport, in fact the main airport of the capital of Sweden, they refused to take on the responsibility of what would happen to a passenger who might miss his flight. The lady asked to see my boarding pass and replied: "*Who talks about responsibility, a Greek?*" So there was no point in communicating with

them further as, not only they were unwilling to take on any responsibility and help, but were also insulting me.

Meanwhile, I realized that the flight was delayed even longer and now it was clear that I would miss the connecting flight. I decided to find the phone number of Lufthansa and call them myself from my mobile phone. And so I did. I called +46 770 111010 and was told to wait. After 20 minutes of waiting, and without hanging up, I went back to the check-in office. The lady at the check-in desk said to me that she had seen me earlier and she could do nothing except check my luggage in and send me to Frankfurt. The supervisor appeared again and asked me what they told me at the ticket office. I replied that they didn't help at all and that, meanwhile, I decided to call Lufthansa and was, at that very moment, waiting for Lufthansa to reply. *"Could you not, please, call Lufthansa yourselves, as you are supposed to represent them in Sweden?"*, I asked. To which they replied: *"We are not allowed to call phone numbers abroad, just local ones, and there is no Lufthansa at the airport. It is not our responsibility and we can do nothing about it."*

After about 50 minutes of waiting, Lufthansa picked up the phone. I told them what was going on and they said that I would certainly miss my flight, that Lufthansa would put me in a hotel in Frankfurt and that I would have to wait for the next flight to Buenos Aires. She looked for the next available flight and told me that for the next 5 days all flights to Buenos Aires were booked. I had to wait in Frankfurt for 5 days. While this lady from Lufthansa was on the phone (Natalie was her name, Lufthansa representative from Cape Town), I communicated what she was telling me to the check-in desk in order that they realize that my inquiry was, indeed, very rational: there was no point in going to Frankfurt and wait there for 5 days, at least. I asked Natalie if there was any way to be rebooked via another airline, Iberia, say but *she answered that this was impossible.* After the Lufthansa representative (Natalie) ensured me that Lufthansa would reimburse me for the flight, I decided to cancel the flight because, after all, I would miss the major part of the conference. Actually, Lufthansa said that I would get the reimbursement through the travel agent (American Express Business Travel) who made the reservation.

While still on the phone with the Lufthansa representative, and while standing in front of the check-in desk, I asked Lufthansa to clarify who is responsible for this kind of help which I was refused at the Stockholm airport. She clearly responded that SAS, just as Lufthansa, is part of Star Alliance and that SAS is supposed to help me. There was no point in me taking on the responsibility to call Lufthansa on my mobile phone (and pay for 1 hour of phone call), when SAS was representing Lufthansa. While still on the phone, I told SAS that *"Lufthansa tells me that you are responsible for finding out this information and taking on the responsibility to help, and not tell me 'go to Frankfurt to solve your problem'. As you can clearly see, it is pointless to follow your suggestion and go to Frankfurt as I would have to wait at least 5 days there."* SAS replied: *"it is not our responsibility"*.

I thanked the Lufthansa representative, while, at the same time, expressing my extreme disappointment that a delay in Stockholm would cause me a minimum 5 day delay to reach my destination. But, since I was assured that I would, at least, get reimbursed, I decided not to board the plane. Of course, there was no point in speaking to SAS further. They insisted, just as they had been doing since my first contact with them, that SAS has absolutely no responsibility whatsoever.

In my experience of traveling for 30 years at various countries and various airports in the world, I had never, ever, seen something like that. No major airport in the world (and I was at the main airport of

Sweden) would give answers like “we have no responsibility”. This was unique and utterly disappointing. It felt as if I was in some kind of backwards remote country.

Therefore, besides me getting reimbursed from Lufthansa, I would like to find out, from the officials at Lufthansa, SAS, Star Alliance and, perhaps, Stockholm Airport, why SAS, at the Stockholm airport, was so reluctant in taking on any responsibility. Lufthansa clearly told me it was their responsibility. SAS declined it. Who was telling me the truth, and how can I get some satisfaction plus compensation plus explanation for this.

Sincerely,

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