

Fifty Euro-years already – doesn't time fly?



The Association of European Airlines congratulates the European Union on attaining the ripe old age of 50. Having passed this milestone itself some three years ago, AEA can reassure the EU that vitality is in no way diminished once the half-century is passed.

When the Treaty of Rome was signed in 1957 by the six founding states, AEA's membership already numbered twelve, and we have continued to keep several steps ahead, today counting 31 to the EU's 27.

Five of the six founding members of the European Community had capitals within driving distance of each other. Clearly, that is no longer the case today. Europe's cities and regions are not all connected by road, nor by rail, nor by sea and inland waterway. They are, however, all connected by air. Without air travel, there could be no EU.

Business counts. We are proud to be a pan-European airline association, so we have members, formidable carriers such as Turkish Airlines, whose nations are not yet EU members, as much as the EU seeks to catch up.

The process of completing the Single Market goes on. But for aviation, the Single Market has been a reality for ten years. Within Europe, as far as market access is concerned, there is no such thing as a German airline, or Portuguese, or Polish. We are all Europeans.

We – the airlines – are proud to have been single-market pioneers, in the same way that we are proud to have contributed to the cohesion of the Community. In AEA, we are pleased to be recognised as the authentic voice of the European airline industry, and to work together with the Commission to further the goals of European competitiveness as enshrined in the Lisbon strategy.

There's another great European city that is easier to get to by air than by any other means.

The next fifty years will bring new challenges. For the airlines, we must establish a robust process of sustainable development, balancing the need for increasing mobility and connectivity with our environmental responsibilities. We count on the continuing support of the EU and its institutions as they continue to grow in wisdom and judgement.

Happy birthday!

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