

Information

8th October, 2008

European Airlines “deeply frustrated” with political debate about emissions trading

The Association of European Airlines, AEA, reacted angrily to yesterday’s vote of the European Parliament’s Environmental Committee on amendments to a proposed revision of an EU Emissions Trading Scheme which would apply to all European industries as of 2013.

An exasperated Ulrich Schulte-Strathaus, Secretary General of the AEA commented: “We have the impression that some MEPs are so dogmatic that they have lost touch with reality. Major governments in Europe are preparing state guarantees for the national banking systems in the range of hundreds of billion Euros, because the world is facing the biggest fiscal crisis ever, and is heading into a deep recession, both of which will alter the face of entire economies. How will this affect aviation? Significantly of course! And yet these politicians maintain a fixation that airlines will all grow and grow, and that therefore the levels of auctioning of permits should be raised even above that for other industries, and the cap for free allowances reduced – and all that without the slightest impact assessment. With its decision, the Environmental Committee has effectively questioned a political consensus achieved between the Council and plenary of the European Parliament three months ago.”

Furthermore, the airline sector has repeatedly quoted the United Nations International Climate Change Panel to substantiate its claim that it accounts for only 2% of all man-made global CO2 emissions, of which 80% stem from travel on long distance flights, in other words, distances for which there is no alternative to air transportation. The airlines have nonetheless developed a “four-pillar strategy” to further reduce aircraft CO2 emissions. This includes the technological development of next generation fuel efficient aircraft and engines, operational improvements, infrastructural enhancements and economic instruments.

“If environmentalists were sincere about the environment, they would insist upon a Single European Sky, which the Environmental Committee did not do”, said Schulte-Strathaus. “Because simply by reorganising the use of the air space in European, and no longer national terms, airlines would be flying optimal routes, more economically and just as safely and thereby emit 12% or 16 million tonnes CO2 less than today. It simply requires political will to act European. In fact, a Single European Sky should precede the Emissions Trading – the problem should be reduced, before it is resolved through an economic instrument.”

- Adria Airways
- Aer Lingus
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- Croatia Airlines
- Cyprus Airways
- Czech Airlines
- DHL
- Finnair
- Iberia
- Icelandair
- Jat Airways
- KLM
- LOT
- Lufthansa
- Luxair
- Malev
- Olympic Airlines
- SAS Scandinavian Airlines
- Spanair
- SWISS
- TAP Portugal
- TAROM
- TNT Airways
- Turkish Airlines
- Ukraine International Airlines
- Virgin Atlantic Airways

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- Czech Airlines
- DHL
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- KLM
- LOT
- Lufthansa
- Luxair
- Malev
- Olympic Airlines
- SAS Scandinavian Airlines
- Spanair
- SWISS
- TAP Portugal
- TAROM
- TNT Airways
- Turkish Airlines
- Ukraine International Airlines
- Virgin Atlantic Airways

The airlines have, however, consistently reiterated that a regional economic instrument cannot solve a global environmental issue. "My hope is", concluded Schulte-Strathaus," that the Council of Ministers will see the international dimensions. Airlines, whether European or non-EU need predictability and stability of operating conditions. Legislation must be based upon impact assessments. Let's keep our priorities clear: the fiscal crisis, the economic downturn, the defragmentation of the air space use, and then a global emissions trading scheme which is workable, has the desired impact on the environment and is non-discriminatory."

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Note to the Editor: The Association of European Airlines (AEA) brings together 35 European established service and scheduled network carriers. These collectively carry 380 million passengers and 7 million tonnes of cargo each year, operating 2,660 aircraft serving 615 destinations in 165 countries with 11,865 flights a day. They provide around 426,000 jobs directly, and generate a total turnover of €79 billion.