

Information

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AIRLINES WELCOME PROPOSAL ON AIRPORT SLOTS

Temporary suspension of 'use it or lose it' rule practical and beneficial for the consumers, the environment and all airlines, says AEA

The Association of European Airlines, which represents the 34 most important network airlines in Europe, has welcomed the decision of the European Commission to suspend airport slot utilisation provisions during the current economic crisis.

Airlines plan their operations, well in advance, on a season-by-season basis, with the entitlement to carry over airport slots from one season to the corresponding season in the following year. However, current slot rules require an airline to operate its slots on 80% of occasions in each season, or lose them for the following year.

Said AEA Secretary General Ulrich Schulte-Strathaus: *"Clearly, in today's depressed market, the schedules planned many months ago are no longer in line with demand. Airlines need to trim this overcapacity but cannot afford to lose the slots. This decision restores planning certainty for future seasons, while resolving the dilemma of whether or not to maintain operations at an uneconomic level in order to protect the slots"*.

It went without saying, added Mr Schulte-Strathaus, that an orderly rationalisation of capacity would bring environmental benefits. Consumers, too, would be reassured that, as demand picked up in the wake of the eventual recovery, their travel needs would continue to be met.

The Commission, said Mr Schulte-Strathaus, had acted with commendable speed to produce a proposal which was non-discriminatory, and clearly brought relief to all airlines, not only European carriers, and certainly not only network airlines. *"All airlines, irrespective of their business models, are seeing a decline in demand and/or revenue levels. The Commission's regulatory proposal sends a clear message that Policy-makers acknowledge the impact of the economic crisis on airlines, and recognise the part that the airline sector will need to play in the eventual recovery. We have identified other areas in which further structural deficiencies within our industry can be similarly addressed, and we look forward to working with the Commission in exploring further measures to improve the efficiency of European aviation without resorting to State Aid and financial bail-out"*.

For further information, please contact:

David Henderson

Manager Information

Phone : +32(0) 2 639 89 72

Email: david.henderson@aea.be www.aea.be