

## Information

21 December 2009

### **AIRLINE BODY HAILS POLITICAL ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF THE AIRLINE CRISIS**

#### **EESC paper could pave the way for much-needed reforms, says AEA**

The Association of European Airlines, representing Europe's major network carriers, has welcomed the endorsement by the EU European Economic and Social Committee (EESC) of a relief programme for European aviation, which is enduring the most difficult business conditions in the industry's history.

The influential EESC has resoundingly endorsed an Opinion of its Consultative Commission on Industrial Change, presented by Rapporteur Jacek Krawczyk, which sets out the impact of the current crisis in the industry, on the airlines, their customers and their employees; on the European aerospace sector and other industries supporting and supported by air transport, and on European competitiveness in global markets.

Said AEA Secretary General Ulrich Schulte-Strathaus: *"It is encouraging that here at last we have an EU institutional body which has recognised both the depth of the crisis and the breadth of its impacts. While politicians occupy themselves looking for 'green shoots of recovery', we in the airline sector know that we are in for at least another year of hardship"*.

He noted that, while the ongoing reduction in traffic volume was the most evident symptom of the crisis, the most severe consequences lay below the surface, in the area of costs and revenues. *"The average ticket price, per kilometre of travel, is about 15% lower than last year – this is not a weakening, it's a collapse"*, said Mr Schulte-Strathaus, *"Our markets have been fundamentally damaged during the last year, and in some respects they will not recover. EESC has correctly identified the timely need for a root-and-branch review of Europe's air transport – its operational infrastructure in the form of airports and airspace and its regulatory framework"*.

He repeated AEA's call for an Aviation Summit in early 2010 to secure the future of European air transport by delivering a comprehensive political vision for the sector. *"This is about the long-term sustainability and competitiveness of a key European industry"*, he said. *"With this document in their hands, the new Commission have an important tool to help them make some very important decisions, affecting Europe's businesses and Europe's citizens, in the coming months"*.

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Note to the Editor: The Association of European Airlines (AEA) brings together 33 European established scheduled network carriers. These collectively carry 366 million passengers and 7 million tonnes of cargo each year, operating 2,617 aircraft serving 662 destinations in 162 countries with 11,585 flights a day. They provide around 394,200 jobs directly, and generate a total turnover of €79 billion