

## Information

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### SERB TRANSPORT MINISTER WANTS CONSUMERS TO BENEFIT FROM “OPEN SKIES”

The Secretary General of the Association of European Airlines, Ulrich Schulte-Strathaus, met with the Serb minister for Infrastructure on 15<sup>th</sup> January to discuss the consequences of the liberal Serb aviation policy.

In the past weeks, the Serb government implemented a number of measures designed to facilitate travel; these include a visa waiver programme for EU citizens, coined a ‘White Schengen’, and a unilateral suspension of traffic right restrictions between Serbia and EU countries. In the first month since implementation of these measures, traffic soared between Serbia and EU countries by 20% despite the general economic downturn.

Mr Schulte-Strathaus also met the Serb Transport minister, Mr. Mrkonjic, thanking him on behalf of AEA for this market-oriented policy, which he credited the minister for having initiated. *“This is good news for the consumer, the industry and the economic perspectives of this region”*, The AEA Secretary General said. *“It requires political courage to liberalise markets in times of economic turmoil, I must say, we are impressed by the action taken by the minister to promote competition in our sector”*. He said the entire region would stand to benefit from this market-oriented approach and welcomed a conference, to be hosted by the Serb government at the end of February on ‘Open Sky over the territory of Serbia after abolition of the visa regime’.

Mr Schulte-Strathaus also met with the CEO of JAT Airways, Mr. Radovanovic. *“JAT Airways is one of the longest-serving members of our association”*, he said. *“With this policy, JAT Airways positions itself in a region with high potential for sustainable growth. We look forward to a close co-operation with JAT Airways on how the interests of the consumers in this region can be best secured”*.

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Note to the Editor: The Association of European Airlines (AEA) brings together 36 European established scheduled network carriers. These collectively carry 374 million passengers and 7 million tonnes of cargo each year, operating 2,689 aircraft serving 662 destinations in 162 countries with 11,934 flights a day. They provide around 394,200 jobs directly, and generate a total turnover of €80 billion