

## Information

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### **VOLCANIC ASH – FLIGHT DISRUPTION AFFECTS EUROPEAN ECONOMY; COORDINATED ACTION REQUIRED**

Speaking today following the closure of airspace and airports in more than 8 EU countries, the Secretary General of the Association of European Airlines, Ulrich Schulte-Strathaus, commented upon the consequences for airlines and the economy at large.

“No-one questions that volcanic ash poses a threat to safety. The air travel industry has well established procedures to deal with such extraordinary events knowing that no compromises can be made on safety.”

AEA has carefully monitored with “concern” the difference in reactions of the national authorities to this current natural phenomenon. Although ICAO {the UN Agency for international air transport} procedures are clear, European governments appear to have different interpretations of how to implement them.

“Given the ongoing development of the ash dispersal, in space and time, it is not unusual that individual countries will impose restrictions progressively, but we are concerned that different criteria may be applied by different authorities to determine if and when their airspace will be closed, and equally importantly, re-opened for aircraft. The damage that results to the Western European economy is huge, since the infrastructure that European airlines provide is vital. Alignment and co-ordination at European level is called for to avoid over-reaction. A close coordination with the airlines is essential.”

Mr Schulte-Strathaus added that it is in the interests of airline customers that the European Union applies proper common criteria when dealing with volcanic ash clouds. “These must be based on internationally recognized risk assessments. All of us, the airlines and our customers, we must have assurances that such mechanisms are commonly applied so normal services can be restored as soon as possible”, he said.

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