

Information

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- Adria Airways
- Aegean Airlines
- Aer Lingus
- AeroSvit
- airBaltic
- Air France
- Air Malta
- Alitalia
- Austrian
- bmi
- British Airways
- brussels airlines
- Cargolux
- Croatia Airlines
- Cyprus Airways
- Czech Airlines
- DHL
- Finnair
- Iberia
- Icelandair
- Jat Airways
- KLM
- LOT
- Lufthansa
- Luxair
- Malev
- Montenegro Airlines
- Olympic Air
- SAS Scandinavian Airlines
- SWISS
- TAP Portugal
- TAROM
- TNT Airways
- Turkish Airlines
- Ukraine International Airlines
- Virgin Atlantic Airways

AEA blasts EU assessment of ash impact

The Association of European Airlines, AEA, has reacted angrily to a statement by a European Commission spokesperson that the recent travel disruption would have only a 'tiny' effect on the impact for the European airlines of the EU Emissions Trading Scheme.

2005 was the base year to determine the total amount of certificates for trading emission permits; 2010 is the base year to determine which airlines would be allocated which share of those certificates. Because of the particularly harsh winter and the protracted closure of airspace in April there were large-scale cancellations for protracted periods by all airlines, particularly those based in northern Europe. This means that using actual 2010 emissions as the baseline for allocation of permits to airlines for the whole period of the Scheme 2012 – 2020, will create significant distortions.

"Some airlines will have to pay €40 million more for certificates because their share of the cake in the base year will have changed", said Ulrich Schulte-Strathaus, Secretary General of the AEA. "To the European Commission such sums may be 'tiny', to the airlines they certainly are not".

He noted that the Commission's statement qualified the view that the impact would be insignificant with the observation that 'most operators have been impacted by the flight restrictions'. *"That is precisely the point", said the Secretary General. "Misguided political decisions to close airspace, based on deeply flawed assumptions, impacted almost all operators in Europe, but those impacts differed widely. The three largest northern EU operators lost more than 16% of their business in April; for the three largest southern EU airlines the figure was 4%. It is evident that the use of 2010 as a baseline will create significant distortions, disadvantaging all airlines, but particularly those who were hardest hit by the unjustified airspace closures this spring. To pretend that the impact is minimal is wrong and disingenuous on the part of the Commission."*

AEA maintains that particularly in times of austerity programmes, the solution should not be to penalise airlines, but to incentivise them to invest into creating a more sustainable industry for the future. *"We all understand that safe, environmentally*

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friendly and affordable flying is the key to economic recovery and a sustainable future”, said Mr Schulte-Strathaus. *“Limited public budgets should be focused on securing a competitive future, through investments into biofuels and into future technology”.*

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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 347 million passengers and 6 million tonnes of cargo each year, operating 2,160 aircraft serving 662 destinations in 162 countries with 11,400 flights a day. They provide around 385,000 jobs directly, and generate a total turnover of €70 billion