

Information

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EU Transport Ministers did not fulfill airline expectation AEA: “Opportunity missed”

The Association of European Airlines (AEA) which represents 36 leading European airlines reacted with disappointment to the decisions taken by the Transport Council on 24th June. “It is unfortunate that the Council of ministers did not provide policy guidance on the procedures in dealing with volcanic ash”, said Ulrich Schulte-Strathaus, Secretary General of the AEA. “We will continue to work together with EASA, the European Safety Agency, to support a roadmap for a safe, practicable, robust and internationally accepted approach for future volcanic ash eruptions.”

The airline body was also frustrated that compensation issues had not been resolved. The airlines have repeatedly pointed out that the air space closures had led to a damage of over €1 bn. “In addition to not being able to earn money for reasons totally beyond their influence, airlines had fixed costs and the cost of reimbursing passengers. We know of many passengers who may still seek reimbursement of their expenses. So the least we expected from the Council is a clarification of how such claims can be made, and what should reasonably be reimbursed. But, alas, no clarification, no decision, no leadership.”

The association did note with satisfaction, however, that the Council encouraged the Commission to review the evidently ambiguous wording of the Regulation on denied Boarding Compensation so that, for future cases, the situation would be clearer. AEA furthermore applauds the Council’s acknowledgement that the Single European Skies should be implemented rapidly. “We should never forget the past experience of what happens if aviation no longer functions, said Mr. Schulte-Strathaus. “In fact, there are many lessons to be learned if we are to avoid such a breakdown of the airline sector. A key lesson is that we need a Single European Sky more than ever.”

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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