

Information

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HELP US MANAGE OUR WAY OUT OF CRISIS, AIRLINE CHIEFS TELL EU COMMISSIONER

A delegation of Chief Executives representing Europe's most important airlines met with Transport Commissioner and Commission Vice-President Antonio Tajani on 27th July to emphasise the depth of the crisis facing European air transport at the present time.

The AEA Chairman for 2009, Ivan Misetic of Croatia Airlines, was accompanied by Jean-Cyril Spinetta of Air France/KLM. Willie Walsh of British Airways, Wolfgang Mayrhuber of Lufthansa and Steve Ridgway of Virgin Atlantic, as well as AEA Secretary General Ulrich Schulte-Strathaus.

Commissioner Tajani heard how economic conditions, since late last year, have been the worst on record for the airlines. A sector which is used to, and plans for, a growth of around 5% in both traffic and revenues has seen **reductions** in passenger traffic by 7%, passenger revenue by 12% and freight traffic by 22% during the first half of 2009. Said Ivan Misetic: "the airlines are used to managing economic disturbances; this is an economic maelstrom".

The AEA CEOs emphasised that, in contrast to other parts of the world, European airlines were not looking for taxpayer-backed bailouts. "The airlines want to manage their own way out of the crisis", said the AEA Chairman, "and that means removing barriers and creating pathways back to prosperity". He cited the belated impact of the suspension, well into the Summer season, of the use-it-or-lose-it slot rule. "At last we have some degree of confidence that we can match capacity to the temporary drop in traffic, without permanently losing slots", he said, "but we must have the opportunity to maintain this process through the Winter".

The recession had not relieved the airlines of their need to access funds to regenerate their business and maintain their commitment to the environment, the Commissioner was told. The financial crisis had cut off many commercial sources of funding, and a decision by the European Investment Bank to cease supporting the airline sector urgently needed to be reviewed.

- Adria Airways
- Aer Lingus
- AeroSvit
- Air France
- Air Malta
- Air One
- 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
- Olympic Airlines
- SAS Scandinavian Airlines
- SWISS
- TAP Portugal
- TAROM
- TNT Airways
- Turkish Airlines
- Ukraine International Airlines
- Virgin Atlantic Airways

The CEOs also pointed out that, throughout the period of crisis, the European Aviation Safety Agency (EASA) had been relentlessly promoting and augmenting its role as Europe's safety regulator, with a succession of legislative proposals of questionable effectiveness but unquestionable costliness. Mr Tajani was asked to closely monitor the EASA activities to ensure that they remained firmly focused on safety activities and did not stray into areas of political activity.

The AEA Chief Executives urged the Commissioner to recognise the scope of the challenges faced by the industry, with a formal Communication.

Said Ivan Misetić: "We are told that the Commission recognises the importance of air transport, to European jobs and prosperity, to mobility and cohesion. If that is so, then they must recognise that all these benefits are at risk in the current crisis, and extend the appropriate institutional support for a key European industry".

The text of a letter, sent by the AEA Chairman to Commissioner Tajani subsequent to the meeting, can be viewed here

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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