



E4FC calls on EU negotiators to enact and enforce Fair Competition practices in EU-Qatar Talks

28 February 2017 – As the second round of negotiations for the air services agreement between the EU and Qatar approaches, Europeans for Fair Competition (E4FC) is calling on EU negotiators to advocate for the European aviation sector, its employees and fair competition practices.

If the European Commission is going to offer a new EU-wide air services agreement to the State of Qatar, it needs to be with the explicit understanding that unfair competitive practices will not be allowed and that violation of the agreement will not be tolerated. It is vital that language supporting fair competition within the EU aviation sector should be included in the agreement along with explicit and plausible enforcement provisions. E4FC calls on the European Commission to ensure that EU aviation jobs are not continued to be subjected to unfair anti-competitive practices by Qatar.

Without such language, the EU would be accepting the continued harm done by state-subsidized, state-owned airlines to the EU aviation sector and infrastructure. This is neither acceptable nor is it in line with the subsidization practices of intra-EU industries and practices. The European Aviation Strategy was adopted by the European Commission in December 2015 with the specific aim of increasing the competitiveness of the European aviation sector. It is then the expectation that EU negotiators will follow through on the outlined strategy by actively fighting for the principle of fair competition in the upcoming talks with Qatar.

The second round of negotiations for the air services agreement between the EU and Qatar will take place between 28 February and 1 March.

Steven Verhagen, president of the Dutch pilot union VNV, another E4FC coalition partner, agreed: 'The European aviation sector is committed to fair and open competition, but we can't compete with airlines who are subsidized by their government owners with the specific aim of undermining competition through unfair trade practices. It is essential that European leaders recognize the need to end the unfair practices coming from Middle Eastern airlines, stand up for EU aviation workers, and restore a level playing field in global aviation.'

Christoph Drescher, General Secretary of the European Cabin Crew Association EurECCA adds: 'EU connectivity is increasingly being challenged by flights, which connect at hubs beyond EU borders, that are operated by non-EU and heavily state subsidized airlines. These airlines move into the market with the aim of driving out competition through artificially low ticket prices and adding seats to routes for which there is no demand for a massive increase in capacity.'

The restoration of fair competition will safeguard competitiveness and direct connectivity, social standards and consumer choice for Europeans in the longer term. Therefore, for the sake of the future of European aviation, EU negotiators need to place fair competition and its enforcement at the heart of any aviation agreement with Qatar.

Europeans for Fair Competition is a coalition of concerned European airline employees, passengers, airlines, and others who have identified the illegal aviation subsidies from two Middle Eastern nations as a major threat to EU jobs, the larger EU economy, and EU connectivity.

END OF STATEMENT

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