



Proposal on safeguarding competition in air transport: European Commission makes first good step but more effectiveness is needed

Europeans for Fair Competition (E4FC) welcomes the Proposal for a Regulation on safeguarding competition in air transport published yesterday by the European Commission. E4FC is convinced that this proposal lays down a good foundation to address unfair practices from third country airlines, an objective that was not effectively achieved by the Regulation 868/2004. However, E4FC emphasizes that specific provisions, such as those related to investigations on and banning of unfair practices should be improved and timelines shortened significantly.

EU connectivity is increasingly being challenged by flights which connect at hubs beyond EU borders, operated by state-subsidized airlines. The aim of the Commission's Aviation Strategy of December 2015 was allowing EU aviation to tap into new growth markets through external aviation agreements with key countries, namely the UAE and Qatar. For this strategy to materialize, it is vital that the inclusion of provisions effectively securing undistorted competition in bilateral air services agreements is guaranteed.

Furthermore, there is a need for an efficient measure to address unfair practices from third countries and third country operators. In the absence of an international legal framework and due to inadequate EU legislation, E4FC has long been advocating for an EU tool to address distortion of competition. The Commission's proposal allows not only the Commission but also EU member states, individual airlines and an association of EU air carriers to file a complaint. The Commission would have up to 6 months to decide on the initiation of an investigation and up to 2 – 2,5 years to conclude proceedings and put sanctions in place.

However, specific to the United Arab Emirates and the State of Qatar, immediate action is necessary to ensure a competitive and level playing field for European commercial aviation before it will be too late, given the incredible rate of growth of their state owned, state subsidized airlines. E4FC is therefore calling on the EU member states and the European Parliament to considerably shorten the investigation time. European carriers are, based on their experience, able to provide evidence of unfair and anticompetitive behavior.

It is crucial to have an EU-based airline industry which best serves Europe's strategic interest, such as consumers, European employment, investment, competitiveness and connectivity. Flights to and from the EU, performed by an EU-based airline will result in at least four times more local employment than the same flight performed by a non-EU airline. "It is vital that the EU pursues a policy which strengthens the accessibility of Europe's secondary and tertiary destinations through European hubs to safeguard connectivity and consumer choice on a longer term."

END OF STATEMENT

About E4FC

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.

Contact

Website: www.e4fc.eu

E-mail: press@e4fc.eu

Twitter: [@CompetitionEU](https://twitter.com/CompetitionEU)