

Ms Marlene Bonnici
Permanent Representative of Malta to the EU
Rue Archimède 25
1000 Bruxelles
Brussel, Belgique



RE: Maltese Presidency January-June 2017

Dear Representative,

The undersigned supporters of Europeans for Fair Competition (E4FC), a coalition of concerned European citizens and organizations, would like to draw the special attention of the Maltese Presidency to the issue of “fair competition” between European airlines and a number of their competitors based in the Gulf.

Indisputable documented evidence shows that the nations of Qatar and the United Arab Emirates have injected over €39 billion in government subsidies and unfair benefits into their state-owned airlines. These nations and their subsidized airlines have used these funds to develop services and massive capacity between Europe and Asia via their hubs and proceed with a certain number of strategic investments in European airlines to feed their own operations and gain market access.

In turn, European airlines are losing market share, with an inevitable negative impact on the European economy. EU connectivity is increasingly being challenged by flights which connect at hubs beyond EU borders, operated by these state-subsidized airlines. It is crucial to have an EU-based airline industry which best serves Europe’s strategic interest, i.e. 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 European hubs to safeguard connectivity and consumer choice at a longer term. The Commission’s Aviation Strategy was published in December 2015 with the intention of allowing EU aviation to tap into new growth markets through external aviation agreements with key countries among which are 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 a swift adoption by the European Institutions of an efficient measure to address unfair practices from third countries and third country operators. 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. The pace of the subsidized growth in the Middle-East is accelerating the market distortions which at some point can no longer be mended.

We therefore call on the Maltese Presidency to play an active role in the establishment of fair and enforceable bilateral air service agreements. In the meantime, we continue our campaign to enforce international aviation and trade rules, ensure fair and equitable competition and a satisfactory level playing field, and end the gulf region airline subsidies. Aviation is viciously

competitive. We, representing employees and management of European airlines, can compete with any airline, but not with governments.

Thank you for your courteous attention to our concerns.

Sincerely,



Steven Verhagen, President, VNV (On behalf of E4FC Supporters)

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cc: Mr. Joe Mizzi, Minister of Transport and Infrastructure

E4FC Supporters:



Erick Derivry, President

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Miguel Silveira,
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