PRESS RELEASE

Europeans for Fair Competition

E4FC urges the European Commission to suspend the provisional application of the EU-Qatar Comprehensive Air Transport Agreement

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Europeans for Fair Competition (E4FC) has already expressed strong concerns about the State of Qatar's lack of compliance with the EU-Qatar Comprehensive Air Transport Agreement. Following the recent decision to dismiss the former Director-General of DG MOVE of the European Commission, who oversaw the negotiations of the EU-Qatar Comprehensive Air Transport Agreement, E4FC urges the European Commission to suspend the provisional application of this Agreement.

The findings of the internal European Commission investigation strike at the core of the integrity that must underpin all international negotiations carried out in the name of the European Union. An agreement granting unrestricted access to the EU aviation market cannot remain provisionally applied, when the negotiating conditions fail to meet the most basic standards of transparency and accountability.

Background of the agreement

In 2016, the European Commission obtained the authorisation from the Council of the EU to negotiate an EU-level aviation agreement with the State of Qatar. Negotiations were finalised in 2019 when the EU-Qatar Comprehensive Air Transport Agreement was approved by the Member States.

Since October 2021, the Agreement has been provisionally applied, which allowed Qatar Airways to gradually increase flights to/from the EU, and since November 2024, it has enjoyed unlimited access to the EU market. The full liberalisation mainly impacts the previously limited markets – Belgium, France, Germany, Italy, and the Netherlands – where Qatar Airways has increased flights and capacity. The present situation, where Qatar Airways enjoys unlimited market access to the EU based on an agreement that was negotiated under questionable circumstances, cannot continue. The internal investigation of the European Commission proves that the Agreement itself was negotiated with unfair advantages for the State of Qatar.

Furthermore, the current provisional application of the agreement indicates that the State of Qatar has shown no genuine willingness to comply with the comprehensive provisions on fair competition and financial transparency. This raises concerns as to why the European Commission initiated disciplinary measures within its own jurisdiction while failing to address the conduct of the party accused of bribery.

Facts speak louder than words

- Whereas Qatar Airways benefits from unlimited access to the EU market of nearly 450 million people, the Agreement offers EU airlines access to a market of roughly 3 million people only.

While **Qatar Airways operates 339 flights per week from Doha to Europe**, there are only **14 flights from Europe to Doha operated by EU airlines**.

- While the agreement was intended to enable and develop significant improvements in connectivity for secondary airports, it is clear that Qatar Airways' strategy is to draw traffic away from major hubs of key markets, jeopardising regional connectivity in the EU. The number of flights operated by Qatar Airways since the provisional application of the Agreement to Brussels Airport increased by over 30%, and doubled to Frankfurt, Munich, Amsterdam Schiphol, and Paris Charles De Gaulle airports. Qatar Airways is now also able to fly to all German airports, which was previously not possible.

- The Agreement contains binding provisions on fair competition and social, labour aspects, however, to date, the State of Qatar has failed to fully comply with these obligations.

Europeans for Fair Competition is therefore urging the European Commission to **suspend the provisional application of the Agreement** until all outstanding concerns related to the negotiation process and governance issues have been conclusively addressed.

Europeans for Fair Competition (E4FC) is a coalition of European airlines and unions representing airline employees, fighting for fair competition and high social standards with the objective of safeguarding European aviation, European jobs, and sustaining connectivity for Europe's citizens.

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