FACT SHEET

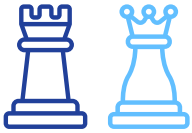
Europeans for Fair Competition

UNFAIR COMPETITION

The competitiveness of EU airlines is increasingly under pressure due to **asymmetrical regulatory conditions** between EU and non-EU carriers, resulting in **higher costs, unfair competition, and risks to jobs and long-term viability** of the EU aviation sector.

Aviation is a global sector, and EU network airlines operate globally.

As it is also recognised in the European Commission's Work Programme 2026, to strengthen the global competitiveness of these airlines, EU policymakers must take into account the international environment in which they function when designing regulations. This is essential not only for the long-term viability of EU aviation industry but also for protecting the jobs and working conditions of the employees who depend on a strong and competitive EU aviation industry.



Strategic importance for the EU

Aviation is a **global industry**, and EU network airlines compete worldwide. As recognised in the European Commission's Work Programme 2026, EU policymakers must:

- Consider the **international competitive environment** when designing regulations
- Protect the **jobs, working conditions, and long-term viability** of EU airlines
- Ensure **regulatory convergence with third countries** wherever possible

Fair competition is a **precondition for a strong, safe and resilient EU aviation sector**.

EU airlines operate under the highest regulatory standards, including:

- Solid internal market rules
- Strong competition oversight
- The **highest social standards** for employees
- The **highest environmental standards** globally
- The **highest safety standards**

There is an urgent need to ensure the competition-neutrality of the EU regulatory framework affecting aviation.

This will put EU airlines on equal footing with their non-EU competitors, ease the one-sided costs imposed on EU airlines and their employees and not immediately put them at a competitive disadvantage vis-à-vis non-EU competitors through legislation by the EU's own policymakers.

Highest regulatory obligations

Europeans for
Fair Competition

Asymmetrical policy burden and higher costs

The result is **a clear asymmetry in policy obligations**:

- EU airlines face **high compliance costs**
- Non-EU airlines enjoy **beneficial market access to the EU** without equivalent obligations

The EU has created an asymmetrical regulatory framework that burdens EU airlines with unilateral cost increases compared to their non-EU competitors. The result is a distorted level playing field to the detriment of EU carriers.

More favourable conditions for non-EU airlines

Many non-EU airlines **benefit from lower cost base**, due to:

- Limited or no **competition authorities**
- Absence of high **social and labour standards**
- Lack of strict **environmental requirements**
- Direct or indirect **state ownership and subsidies**

This creates structural advantages that EU airlines cannot replicate under EU law.

E4FC calls on the EU policy-makers to:

- Enforce existing comprehensive air transport agreements with third countries
- For future mandates, actual compliance with the provisions of the comprehensive agreements should prevail market opening
- Introduce strong and binding wording on environmental, social and safety provisions for potential future agreements
- Address carbon leakage by designing a corresponding EU legislation (e.g., sustainable aviation fuels border adjustments mechanism - SAF BAM)

READ MORE

For more information about our policy objectives, see our Manifesto and our other policy fact sheets.