



PRESS RELEASE

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EU-US Aviation Agreement Step in the Right Direction – But Concerns Remain

The European Cockpit Association (ECA) – representing more than 36.000 European Pilots – congratulates the European Commission on the conclusion of the negotiations with the USA on a "Comprehensive Air Services Agreement".

This draft agreement, due to be considered by the Council of Transport Ministers later in the month, has innovative provisions and settles the legal uncertainty raised by the 2002 judgements of the European Court of Justice. In particular, by introducing the concept of "Community designation", allowing any European airline to fly to the US from any point in the EU, is an important step towards completing the external dimension of the EU's single market in civil aviation.

The Agreement contains forward-looking provisions on a Joint Committee to address, among other things, the social effects of the liberalisation foreseen by the Agreement. It also foresees a quick start to second stage negotiations, a mechanism for reviewing the progress of these negotiations, and a possible suspension of rights under the Agreement in case no progress is made during the second stage.

ECA does have reservations, however. ECA is concerned that the agreement grants further access to the EU internal market for US airlines, whilst not achieving meaningful access for EU carriers to the US continental market.

ECA is also concerned that investment opportunities in African countries, foreseen within the draft Agreement, opens the potential for both 'flags of convenience' and with that a possible significant out-sourcing of European jobs.

Captain Martin Chalk, ECA President, today called for the robust use of the clauses on the Joint Committee and second stage negotiations. "The European Community and its Member States must protect the integrity of the EU's airline industry by ensuring that concerns regarding safety, social, competition and market access are addressed through the Joint Committee."

As to the imbalance in the market access opportunities under the draft Agreement, he stressed that: "It is imperative for Europe that the process of rebalancing access across the two largest aviation markets in the world is continued in a second stage Agreement. The current draft Agreement can only be a starting point, and must be improved as soon as possible."

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