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Letter | 30.06.2021

Alternatives to short-haul flights in the European Union

Open letter to the European Commission

Dear Executive Vice-President Timmermans,

Dear Commissioner Vălean,

In recent months, and in particular in the context of the European Green Deal and the ongoing climate emergency, all over Europe, the problem of short-haul flights was highlighted, particularly, where viable environmentally friendly alternatives exist.

Member States are already taking action in this area. France recently legislated to prohibit certain flights, while the Austrian government has worked with Austrian Airlines as part of a bailout package to ensure journeys of less than three hours that have a rail alternative are phased out.

Considering that within the EU, a significant amount of short-haul flights are cross-border, that their environmental impact is significant, and that in many instances there are sustainable alternatives, we believe the Commission should take action to inform consumers, and help and motivate them in making more sustainable choices. Specifically, we believe the Commission should take action in the following areas:

1) Passengers need accurate information on the environmental impact of journeys to make informed choices. When will the Commission make it mandatory for customers to be provided with information on the comparative environmental footprint of different transport modes (before booking and) on the tickets they purchase, as already required under Regulation (EC) No 80/2009 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 14 January 2009 on a Code of Conduct for computerised reservation systems and repealing Council Regulation (EEC) No 2299/89?

2) The Commission in its Smart and Sustainable Mobility Strategy (SSMS) published in December 2020 outlined the objective of making scheduled collective travel for journeys under 500 km carbon neutral and stated that it wishes to make information on the environmental footprint of travel available to consumers and businesses. Often, more environmentally-friendly transport alternatives already exist for popular short haul flights. Will the Commission develop a publicly available database that lists sustainable alternatives to the most frequented and most environmentally damaging short haul flights in the EU? It 2 would be

important to keep the criteria flexible enough to include train (including night trains), bus or ferry options where the scheduled travel time does not exceed 5 hours.

3) Finally, what measures will the Commission put forward to implement its SSMS and incentivise the use of already available sustainable alternatives to short-haul flights?

Yours sincerely,

Philippe Lamberts Co-chair Greens/EFA group
Bas Eickhout Co-chair Greens/EFA Ecological Transition Cluster
Tilly Metz Co-chair Greens/EFA Ecological Transition Cluster
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Anna Deparnay-Grunenberg, MEP
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Contact person



Catherine Olier

Attached documents

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