Press release | 07.12.2015

Aviation sector

EU Commission's myopic focus on growth ignores major problems with air transport

The European Commission today presented its 'aviation strategy', setting out proposals for the adapting the rules governing the aviation sector in Europe. Commenting on the proposals, Green transport spokesperson **Keith Taylor** said:

"This strategy paper has again revealed the myopic focus of the European Commission on promoting growth in the aviation sector. The Commission's only concern seems to be boosting the profits of airlines and, as a result, it is failing to address the myriad of other problems associated with air transport. Instead of redesigning rules to the demands of the air industry, we should be looking to reduce the climate change impact, pollution, nuisance and health problems linked to the sector. Given air transport is one of the fastest growing sources of greenhouse gas emissions, it is also both ironic and cynical that the Commission is presenting these proposals during the COP21 UN climate talks in Paris.

"Quite apart from the major problems linked to continually expanding air transport, it is not like the air industry needs a further 'leg up'. The aviation already benefits from major direct and indirect subsidisation: the exemption from paying taxes on fuel and VAT on cross-border EU flights is estimated to amount to €30 billion per year. This finally needs to end and we need to ensure proper taxation of the sector to help address some of the external costs, like the climate impact, noise and air pollution. Ultimately, the focus should be on shifting short distance flights to more sustainable modes of transport, such as rail, where there are scheduled alternative connections of less than 5 hours travelling time. Addressing some of the unfair advantages from which air transport benefits compared to other sectors would be a start to this end.

"The Commission should also move to address the social dumping practiced mainly by low cost carriers and introduce stricter flight times to improve the health and safety of airline personnel and their passengers. We also finally need to introduce EU night flight bans near densely populated areas."

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Responsible MEPs

Keith Taylor

Member

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