

Press Release

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ERA encourages the promotion of sustainable regional air connectivity as a matter of political urgency

- ERA encourages the European Commission to review the Air Services Regulation (EC) 1008/2008 – the common rules for air services in the EU, including public service obligations (PSOs).
- Reviewing the current PSO framework towards more flexibility and efficiency, considering the pandemic experience, is key for ERA carriers.
- Regional airlines are committed to reducing their carbon footprint, therefore the introduction of an environmental criterion is welcome to aid in the fight against climate change.

ERA supports the European Commission (EC) in its review of the Air Services Regulation 1008/2008 (ASR) to ensure it is in line with moves to make aviation more sustainable, smarter, more resilient and socially responsible. The ASR is the basic legal act organising the EU Aviation Single Market by setting common rules for air services, including PSOs.

PSO routes play a significant positive role in terms of connectivity, especially for communities in remote areas which often do not have direct access to essential services – such as healthcare, education, social services – and hence rely on services connected in larger centres of population. Maintaining these essential routes after the COVID-19 pandemic is vital for the future viability of regional airlines and the connectivity and services they provide.

Equally, ERA member airlines strongly support the introduction of environmental criteria in the PSO framework, as well as the possibility to extend the duration of PSO contracts to attract investments in the renewal of airline fleets. These new criteria would favour regional carriers' investments in more CO₂-efficient aircraft and sustainable aviation fuel (SAF) blending.

However, the EC recently published an updated agenda for its upcoming initiatives until June 2023 – the ASR revision is currently not on it, something ERA believes is a missed opportunity.

Montserrat Barriga, Director General, ERA, said: “Regulatory support for regional aviation at EU level is needed to preserve essential connectivity and support for Europe’s regions, promoting social and territorial equality, and cohesion as well as contributing to increased tourism, investment and job creation. ERA, on behalf of its members, including 58 European airlines, calls on EU policymakers to urgently proceed with the revision of Air Services Regulation 1008/2008, to promote and encourage regional connectivity whilst fostering the sector’s sustainability.”

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* Founded in 1980, European Regions Airline Association (ERA) is a non-profit trade association representing over 55 airlines plus around other 150 companies involved in European air transport, and is the only association that bring together the entire spectrum of companies involved in European aviation. The association supports and defends the airline industry in providing safe, efficient and sustainable air connectivity to all regions of Europe. By lobbying European regulatory bodies on policy matters, ERA promotes and protects social responsibility, environmental sustainability and the development of regional economies and local communities.

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