

ECAC/EU DIALOGUE

with the European air transport industry

Virtual 2020
4 November



RESTART, RECONNECT, RECOVER
Rebuilding aviation in a changed world

4 November 2020

For immediate release

PRESS RELEASE

AVIATION IS FACING AN UNPRECEDENTED CRISIS DUE TO THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC: ECAC/EU VIRTUAL EVENT DISCUSSES CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR REBUILDING AVIATION IN A CHANGED WORLD

Europe, 4 November 2020 – The joint 11th edition of the ECAC/EU Dialogue with the air transport industry was held today with analyses and ideas for addressing the challenges the European aviation sector is facing in this unprecedented crisis.

Over 350 senior leaders from regulators, airlines, airports, air navigation service providers, manufacturers and industry organisations participated in this Dialogue, which was held under the auspices of the German Presidency of the European Union. Initially, the event was planned in Friedrichshafen but had to be adapted to a virtual conference. This change had no effect on the excellent contributions and lively panel discussions aimed at producing recommendations in the interests of the air transport sector.

ECAC President Ingrid Cherfils opened the conference, followed by a [keynote](#) speech by the **Director General for Mobility and Transport of the European Commission, Henrik Hololei**, joined by the **Parliamentary State Secretary of the German Federal Ministry of Transport and Digital Infrastructure, Steffen Bilger**.

The four sessions, with high-level panellists from the industry and regulators, covered topics such as the economic consequences of the pandemic, the public perception of the aviation sector, sustainability and innovation, and lastly the Single European Sky (SES) package.

With the objective of setting priorities to support the recovery of European aviation in a changed environment, the conference discussed:

- Economic and financial relief measures for the industry have been put in place in Europe and globally. The measures adopted by different States demonstrate the importance governments give to the sector, and are a recognition of its value to the economy at large. The level of this financial support is unprecedented but the prolonged crisis will have a major impact in the sector, which has very limited revenues for a long period of time, in a severely depressed market. Additional support will be needed in the months and years to come to manage through the crisis - which will be much longer than initially anticipated - and it will need to be designed in a way that ensures a sustainable recovery of the sector.

- Consumer confidence needs to be rebuilt. Safety and security remain a priority for all actors of the sector, at a time where the primary focus is legitimately placed on the economic aspects of the crisis. All actors are committed to maintain safe and secure operations combined with more stable and harmonised public health measures, in the interest of the travelling public.
- This crisis acts as a catalyst to accelerate action on innovation, leading to advances in technology and policies, where current challenges can be turned into opportunities. Sustainability is both one of the main challenges *and* opportunities that the air transport sector faces. Innovation in aircraft, engines, fuels and operations will be one part of the solution, while other initiatives, such as market-based measures, will also play a key role.
- The modernisation of air traffic management systems and the implementation of the Single European Sky package will be a further building block for, and play a key role in, mitigating the climate change impact of civil aviation. The fundamentals of making the European airspace and its management more efficient, while addressing the financing issues in the system, was emphasised.

In concluding the event, **Ingrid Cherfils, ECAC President**, said that European aviation is facing an, *“unprecedented crisis – unprecedented in its duration, its scope and its structural impact on the sector, leading to lasting changes. Unprecedented also as it will most likely change travel behaviour resulting in new patterns for travel demand and passenger expectations. This crisis has shown the high dependence of the aviation sector on decisions taken in other domains, such as those by health ministries and immigration authorities. We need to adopt and implement innovative solutions that combine both the financial needs of the sector and public health requirements, and this can only be achieved with a strong, clear and common vision of the air transport sector we want for our economies and by strong cooperation between all those involved in this common vision.”*

Filip Cornelis, Director for Aviation, DG MOVE, European Commission, emphasised the need to maintain support to the aviation sector, and restore passenger confidence, whilst preparing for a greener and more digital recovery: *“This ECAC/EU Dialogue between regulators and industry provided great insights in the challenges for the coming months and years, and will help inform many initiatives which are in the works at EU level – whether it’s the promotion of sustainability, the survival of the industry and the restoration of consumer confidence, or the ongoing negotiations on the Commission’s new proposal for the Single European Sky. More than ever, we need the regulatory agenda to focus on helping the industry meet the expectations of the public for restoring connectivity in a more sustainable and smart way.”*

Johann Friedrich Colman, Director General for Civil Aviation, Federal Ministry of Transport and Digital Structure, Germany, highlighted *“the Single European Sky project and mentioned that a key factor is the modernisation of the air traffic management system. We have today further elaborated on what was discussed at the Aviation Summit under the German EU Council Presidency earlier this year. The Single European Sky is also an important part of achieving our environmental goals and making aviation more efficient and sustainable.”*

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For more information, please contact ECAC Secretariat (communications@ecac-ceac.org)

[See here the full list of speakers](#) and related documentation

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