

Make Europe the Hub for Net Zero CO₂ Flight

We have an ambitious goal: net zero CO₂ emissions by 2050. Whilst this is one of the industry's biggest challenges, it is also our biggest opportunity to date. If Europe becomes the hub for decarbonised flight, we successfully lay the foundations for our industry's long-term future. This will help people and businesses in Europe. It will also help aviation become a long-lasting and sustainable industry, securing green jobs and protecting the planet.

A clear path to CO₂ reduction

The European aviation industry has a vision and a path for meaningful CO₂ emissions reduction. The Destination 2050 roadmap has set this out in clear terms: building on the Paris Agreement and the European Green Deal, it sees all flights within and departing the EU, UK and EFTA realising net zero CO₂ emissions by 2050. This is our sector's most ambitious objective to date. Europe can lead these efforts worldwide.

Significant progress has been made since the start of this decade. With more efficient aircraft technologies, increased availability of sustainable aviation fuels (SAF), electrification and a plan to deliver a net zero CO₂ emission aircraft by 2035, a path towards net zero aviation has already been mapped out.

Will Europe lead or follow in net zero flight?

This is a unique opportunity for Europe. By pioneering green technology for the aviation sector, Europe can become the global hub for net zero flight. The continent has the potential to become the world's largest producer of SAFs and green hydrogen. More importantly, it will secure thousands of green jobs, thus helping Europe to become a global economic leader in arresting climate change whilst doing good for our society.

A task for industry and political leaders

However, the Destination 2050 roadmap has made it clear that we cannot achieve this alone. While the energy transition in the skies will benefit us all, this is a task not only for the aviation industry but also for policymakers. The time is ripe for substantial political decisions. As representatives of the European aviation industry, we therefore unite in calling on the European Commission to join us in developing an EU Pact for Sustainable Aviation.

The Pact

An EU Pact for Sustainable Aviation would bring industry and policy makers together to form a shared vision, with common aspirational targets and high-level principles for related industry and policy decarbonisation roadmaps. Ensuring closer alignment between industry and policy makers at national and EU level will be key. We must also reinforce Europe's leadership position globally, vis-à-vis the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) and non-European countries.

A combination of measures is needed to reach net zero

In the short and medium term, economic and regulatory measures are needed to reduce emissions and price CO₂. Smart economic instruments, such as the EU Emissions Trading

System (ETS) and offsetting schemes such as the Carbon Offsetting and Reduction Scheme for International Aviation (CORSIA), can play a key role. A smart taxation regime can incentivise and support the decarbonisation of aviation without compromising its ability to deliver social and economic benefits. In addition, the digitalisation of Europe’s air traffic management operations and improvements in aircraft and engine technologies will help pave the way. EU support for collaborative R&D programmes is instrumental in this regard.

A long-term overhaul of the energy system

For the medium and long-term, we need to up the ante on our collective efforts. Simply put, we need to consider an overhaul of the energy system as we know it. This includes much higher levels of SAF uptake, as recommended by the Refuel EU Aviation Initiative. Hydrogen will come to play a key part of the strategy, with Hydrogen Hubs at airports supporting the transition. These measures must be accompanied with economic benefits and access to sustainable finance to support the transition to a net zero CO₂ economy.

We know how to achieve the energy transition in the skies, but we cannot achieve it on our own. We need an EU Pact for Sustainable Aviation under the European Commission’s political leadership. This can make Europe become the global hub for net zero CO₂ flight. We will all benefit from this – so let’s make it happen, together.



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