

2018: Worst year for ATC delays and flight cancellations in nearly a decade

- Urgent need for Member States to remove political bottlenecks and enable a “seamless European sky”.
- Opportunity for EU Transport Ministers to take decisive action at 3 December Transport Council meeting.

2018 is shaping up to be one of the worst years on record for air traffic control delays and flight cancellations in nearly a decade. Eurocontrol has revealed that ATC capacity and staff shortages led to a 50 per cent increase in delayed flights in October compared to last year. For the full year, Eurocontrol estimates that total delay minutes will be up by 53 per cent versus last year due to strikes and capacity shortages (14.3 million minutes in 2018 versus 9.3 million minutes in 2017).

Airlines for Europe (A4E) is urging the EU and national governments to take swift and decisive action to reform Europe’s Air Traffic Management (ATM) system.

These figures follow this summer’s record delays due to ATC staff shortages and capacity issues, which have wreaked havoc on airlines, their passengers and Europe’s economy. So far in 2018, A4E member airlines have been forced to cancel over 5,000 flights due to ATC strikes, affecting around 800,000 passengers. Millions more travellers have suffered flight delays caused by other ATC issues such as staff shortages, airspace diversions and residual backups.

According to a PriceWaterhouseCoopers (PwC) study, the economic cost of ATC strikes in the EU between 2010-2017 was estimated at €13.4* billion and continues to grow. In 2017, the European Commission released figures further revealing the magnitude of the problem: Since 2005, the EU has been home to some 357 air traffic control strikes, 254 of which have occurred in France – which has seen a 300 per cent in ATC strikes compared to 2017.

“Europe’s Transport Ministers are meeting on December 3rd. They have a unique opportunity to take decisive action on behalf of their citizens and resolve the political bottlenecks that are contributing to these delays”, said Thomas Reynaert, Managing Director, A4E.

“The current crisis has to be addressed. The EU must act now to tackle the long-term damage that is being done to Europe’s economies and to the reputation of our airline industry”, Reynaert added.

The way to remove air space inefficiencies is to introduce a “seamless European sky”. This would integrate national airspaces into a single continuum across the continent. EU Member States would maintain sovereignty of their airspace while cooperating across borders in order to facilitate seamless and more efficient flight operations on behalf of passengers.

ENDS

Notes for Editors:

- According to Eurocontrol, the average en-route delay per flight in October was 1.22 min/flight, well in excess of the monthly guideline value of 0.35 min/flight. Year to date, the average en-route delay is 1.93 min/flight, more than three times the 0.5 min/flight European target. See [link to full Eurocontrol monthly network operations report](#)
- According to Eurocontrol, year to date, an average of 1,427 flights per day had an en-route delay of at least 15 minutes. The corresponding figure in 2017 was 681 flights per day.
- *Link to PriceWaterhouseCoopers Study on the Economic Impact of ATC Strikes in the EU: https://a4e.eu/wp-content/uploads/2016/10/A4E-Economic-Impact-ATC-Strikes-Final-Report_160929-vf.pdf
- Link to A4E Backgrounder on its [Seamless European Sky Vision](#).
- Link to A4E Backgrounder on the [Single European Sky Regulation](#).

- Launched in 2016, Airlines for Europe (A4E) is Europe's largest airline association, based in Brussels. The organisation advocates on behalf of its members to help shape EU aviation policy to the benefit of consumers, ensuring a continued safe and competitive air transport market. With more than 635 million passengers carried each year, A4E members account for more than 70 per cent of the continent's journeys, operating more than 2,900 aircraft and generating more than EUR 110 billion in annual turnover. Current members include: Aegean, airBaltic, Air France-KLM, Cargolux, easyJet, Finnair, Icelandair, International Airlines Group (IAG), Jet2.com, Lufthansa Group, Norwegian, Ryanair, TAP Portugal, Travel Service and Volotea, with plans to grow further. Follow us on Twitter @A4Europe.