

## **400+ flights cancelled due to national Air Traffic Control (ATC) strike in Belgium tomorrow**

- At least 50,000 travellers to be impacted, damaging European tourism and the Belgium economy
- 24-hour strike will disrupt ATC and other public sector services beginning 12 Feb. at 21:00 UTC (22:00 local time)
- 2018 saw a record 30 ATC strike days in Europe, disrupting travel plans for millions
- More certainty over the impact of ATC strikes in Europe urgently needed

**Brussels, 12 February 2019** – A4E airlines and their passengers are bracing for the second air traffic control (ATC) strike in Europe so far this year, with Belgium ATC services disrupted as of 21:00 UTC (22:00 local time) today through 21:00 UTC on 13 February. Already more than 400 flights to and from Belgium have been cancelled by A4E airlines in advance of the strike, in order to minimize the level of passenger disruption.

“ATC strikes have unfortunately become a common occurrence in Europe – and 2019 is shaping up to be no different than in the previous years. These strikes are increasingly damaging not only local economies and tourism, but the reputation of European aviation amongst its passengers. A4E continues its calls for the immediate implementation of the recommended mitigation practices put forward by the European Commission in 2017. In particular, improvements need to be made concerning both the predictability, impact and scale of a strike”, said Thomas Reynaert, Managing Director, Airlines for Europe (A4E).

In the countries most frequently affected by controllers’ strikes, A4E is calling for an improved continuity of service for passengers and has proposed a number of solutions to address the situation, including a mandatory 72-hour individual notification period for employees wishing to strike and the protection of overflights (while not at the expense of the country where the strike originates). In addition, investments are required in technology, processes and human resources to make Europe’s overall air traffic management system capable of coping with ever-increasing traffic.

ATC strikes continue to have a costly impact on tourism, European economies and the environment:

1. Customers’ journeys and supply chains are severely disrupted.
2. Diversions to avoid closed air space result in much longer flights and burn more fuel, resulting in higher CO2 emissions.
3. Tourism is most affected due to cancelled flights to prime holiday destinations, putting small and medium size businesses at risk.
4. Airlines have to pay passengers compensation for the delays and rebook them on other flights, significantly disrupting customers’ travel plans and the airlines’ operations. Airlines don’t have the right to recover these costs from the air navigation service providers who have caused them.
5. Tour operators have to offer alternative travel arrangements and possible refunds for services not performed according to contract, which can be significant when re-routing in high season is more difficult.

6. A recent study\* estimates air traffic strikes have cost the EU economy €13.4 billion since 2010.

\*“Economic Impact of Air Traffic Control Strikes in Europe”, PriceWaterhouseCooper for A4E, Brussels, 2016

### **About A4E**

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 2,800 aircraft and generating more than EUR 100 billion in annual turnover. Members with air cargo and mail activities transport more than 5 million tons of goods each year to more than 360 destinations either by freighters or passenger aircraft. 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.