

SIMPLIFICATION OF ADMINISTRATIVE BURDENS IN ENVIRONMENTAL LEGISLATION
SIMPLIFICATION OF AVIATION-RELATED RULES UNDER THE COMMISSION’S OMNIBUS INITIATIVE

A4E represents the united voice of Europe’s leading airlines in Brussels. Our 17 airline group members represent over 80% of European air traffic and carried over 771 million passengers in 2024. Leading global aircraft manufacturers are also members of A4E. Airlines with cargo and mail activities transport more than 4 million tonnes of goods annually.

A4E is presenting below our **recommendations to the Call for Evidence on the Commission’s initiative to reduce administrative burden related to environmental legislation**. This contribution addresses aspects relevant to aviation and airline operators, focusing on how regulatory simplification and streamlining can reduce unnecessary administrative costs while maintaining environmental objectives.

1. Introduction

The European Commission’s Omnibus package, announced on 26 February 2025, aims to streamline EU regulations by addressing overlapping and disproportionate rules that burden businesses. This initiative seeks to enhance competitiveness, unlock investment capacity, and create a more favourable environment for growth and innovation.

As outlined in its communication “A simpler and faster Europe,” published on 11 February 2025, the Commission published its first Omnibus package, focusing on sustainability, intending to deliver a “far-reaching simplification” of its regulatory framework covering sustainable finance reporting, sustainability due diligence, and the EU taxonomy, as well as an “easing” of the Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism. Accordingly, on 26 February, alongside its proposal for a Clean Industrial Deal, the Commission proposed changes to:

- a) The Corporate Sustainability Reporting Directive 2022/2464 (CSRD);
- b) The Corporate Sustainability Due Diligence Directive 2024/1760 (CSDDD);
- c) The EU Taxonomy on Sustainable Finance (Regulation 2020/852 and associated delegated and implementing acts);
- d) The Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism Regulation 2023/956 (CBAM);
- e) The InvestEU Regulation 2021/523.

The European aviation industry remains committed to delivering sustainability. However, excessive administrative complexity and fragmented regulatory frameworks continue to hinder efficiency, increase compliance costs, and undermine competitiveness. Regulatory costs of doing business in the European

Airlines for Europe (A4E) is Europe’s largest airline association, based in Brussels. A4E works with policy makers to ensure aviation policy continues to connect Europeans with the world in a safe, competitive and sustainable manner. As a key initiator of aviation's Destination 2050 roadmap, A4E and its members committed to achieve Net Zero carbon emissions for their own operations by 2050. With a modern fleet of over 3,200 aircraft, A4E airlines carried 270 million passengers in 2021 -- down from 700 million in 2019 due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Each year, A4E members with air cargo and mail activities transport more than 3.7 million tons of goods, life-saving vaccines and essential medical equipment to more than 360 destinations either by freighters or passenger aircraft. Follow us on Twitter @A4Europe.

Union tripled during the past decade. Skyrocketing compliance costs harm European jobs, economic value, and connectivity. The European Union is falling behind in global competitiveness.

In addition, uneven implementation of EU rules and differences in the level of administrative requirements or support across Member States risk creating competitive distortions within the Single Market and vis-à-vis global competitors. Streamlining and harmonising procedures is therefore essential to ensure a level playing field, while avoiding duplication of effort and ensuring that environmental objectives are achieved in the most cost-efficient way.

Therefore, as the European Commission moves forward with its **Omnibus Simplification Initiative**, with further sector-specific packages expected, A4E will set out recommendations concerning the proposal presented, but also sets out in this paper key proposals for an **aviation-focused Omnibus, which must be progressed alongside current Omnibus simplification efforts**. While the European aviation sector is committed to meeting its sustainability targets, it continues to be hampered by excessive, fragmented, and often unclear regulatory demands. This diminishes the efficiency of the sector in meeting the EU climate targets, endangers its global competitiveness, and increases costs for private citizens and companies alike. A course correction is long overdue: by addressing overlapping policies and regulatory inefficiencies, these measures will enhance the effectiveness of European regulations, maintain environmental integrity, and facilitate the industry's decarbonisation journey.

2. Omnibus on Sustainability – Recommendations

The European airlines consider that the proposal of an Omnibus package on sustainability legislation, published by the Commission on 26 February 2025, is a good first step towards its announced goal of reducing the reporting burden of EU companies by 25%¹. Many of the suggested changes align with the sustainability commitments of the aviation industry and would help to cut down on excessive administrative red tape. As a first step, the European Commission should act on the following regulatory burdens in order to support growth, competitiveness, and set out to ensure a level-playing field for the aviation industry in the European Union.

A) Corporate Sustainability Reporting Directive (CSRD)

Proposals released on 26 February by the European Commission—including delaying the implementation of CSRD reporting requirements for businesses not already covered by the first wave of reporting and simplifying reporting obligations for all companies—are welcome developments in the efforts to reduce administrative burden for airline operators. The postponement of CSRD reporting by two years for Wave 2 and Wave 3 companies also ensures better alignment with the Corporate Sustainability Due Diligence Directive (CSDDD), giving the sector additional time to prepare for a successful application of both regulatory frameworks.

A4E also welcomes the clarity provided by the Commission in maintaining the limited assurance standard. This ensures environmental integrity in sustainability auditing while reducing the bureaucratic burden on

¹ [Commission Work Programme](#) 2024, adopted on 17 October 2023.

companies. The Commission’s decision to rule out a transition to a reasonable assurance standard for the foreseeable future removes previous industry uncertainties.

We remain concerned by the fragmented status of CSRD implementation into national law across Europe². This complicates the Omnibus process and the fairness for all companies to benefit from its simplifications. It could also become a significant issue in reporting for the 2025 financial year. The ‘Quick Fix’ delegated act, released on 11 July 2025 is a welcome support for Wave 1 companies who can now take advantage of reliefs given to Wave 2 and 3 companies in this year’s annual reporting cycle, while long-term revisions are developed, consulted, and agreed. However, these reliefs will not be available for airlines and other companies registered in countries yet to transpose the CSRD. This will create an uneven reporting burden and costs across Europe, both between and within different industries. All efforts should be pursued to ensure that all companies can benefit from these simplifications fairly.

European Sustainability Reporting Standards (ESRS) Revision

A4E supports the Commission’s commitment to revising the ESRS to significantly reduce the number of required data points. This makes reporting more efficient, improves airlines’ ability to respond meaningfully to each point, and ensures that insights gained via ESRS are actionable.

EFRAG released on the 31st July 2025 details of proposed revisions to the ESRS, and a public consultation is open until 29th September 2025 for comments by all stakeholders. We will respond to specific proposals through the open consultation.

At first review, the proposed simplifications are welcome, and we generally support the reduction in the number of datapoints, simplification of formatting and presentation of the sustainability statement, and recognition that commercially sensitive information must be protected and not forced into public disclosures. We consider that more work needs to be done to ensure that these simplifications create meaningful, pragmatic simplification, to ensure that airline sustainability disclosures are comparable and relevant to our stakeholders needs. In particular, we consider the Commission’s intention to omit sector-specific standard requirements³ is a missed opportunity in this context. While we do not support sector additional datapoint disclosures (from the number of disclosure requirements proposed in the revised ESRS proposed by EFRAG), airlines, like many other sectors, report information in annual reports that are specific to our operations and help stakeholders assess performance on a like-for-like basis. The omission of sector-specific disclosures risks undermining transparency and creating inconsistencies across industries, plus means an unnecessary reporting burden while we continue to report datapoints that are irrelevant to our sector. We therefore urge the Commission to reconsider supporting the development of integrating sector-specific requirements as part of a proportionate and effective reporting framework.

Addressing Aviation-Specific Reporting Burdens

The costs associated with CSRD reporting for airlines—such as double materiality assessments, internal resourcing to meet disclosure requirements, and increased audit fees—must be considered in these proposals. Furthermore, airlines already face extensive reporting obligations under aviation-specific

² See: https://www.ropesgray.com/-/media/files/alerts/2025/08/20250819_CSRD_Transposition_Tracker.pdf

³ See: https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/bg/qanda_25_615

regulations, and the Commission should ensure that CSRD simplification efforts go beyond broad, cross-sectoral reductions. The various sustainability guidelines must be better coordinated. Airlines currently calculate and report the same emissions data three times: for EU ETS, ReFuelEU Aviation, and CSRD. This multiple reporting creates unnecessary internal coordination and bureaucratic effort. Instead, the Commission must leverage this opportunity to tailor reporting requirements to sector-specific needs, ensuring that retained disclosures remain clearly relevant to investors and uphold the CSRD principles of double materiality, as determined by each company's assessment.

B) Corporate Due Diligence Directive (CSDDD)

The Commission's proposals to simplify reporting burdens under the Corporate Sustainability Due Diligence Directive (CSDDD) are a welcome step toward reducing administrative complexity for airlines. A4E also supports the Commission's postponement of the CSDDD's entry into application by one year, which will provide companies with significantly more time to prepare for implementation.

Alignment with CSRD Reporting Obligations

Further alignment of CSDDD reporting requirements with the Corporate Sustainability Reporting Directive (CSRD) is essential and should be delivered as subsequent legislation is prepared. The Commission's decision to align the Climate Change Transition Plan requirements in the CSDDD with the CSRD reduces regulatory burden. However, it is important to ensure that this alignment preserves the credibility of transition plans established by airlines in the eyes of investors and the public.

Simplification of Value-Chain Reporting

The proposal to limit full due diligence requirements to direct business partners—unless plausible information suggests adverse impacts beyond these partners—is a sensible approach. This maintains the integrity of due diligence analyses while ensuring that companies are only held accountable for areas where they have direct influence.

C) EU Taxonomy

A4E supports the recognition in the Commission's working document² released on 26 February 2025 that changes to the EU Taxonomy are needed to streamline and simplify reporting. The materiality threshold of 10% ensures that companies can focus their taxonomy reporting on the activities that have a relevant impact. In addition, the recognition of the issues relating to the Do No Significant Harm categories and the need to simplify the requirements is critical.

A4E advocates for the following priorities to be addressed:

Materiality Threshold

We acknowledge the introduction of a 10% materiality threshold for KPIs in the EU Taxonomy. This threshold provides clarity on which activities are critical for taxonomy reporting, ensuring that efforts focus on truly material activities while reducing unnecessary administrative burdens. However, we seek further certainty on its scope. Specifically, we understand it to mean that any activity for which the

eligibility percentage is below 10% does not require alignment, but we would appreciate explicit confirmation of this interpretation.

Technical Screening Criteria

The core purpose of the EU Taxonomy is to guide financial markets in identifying environmentally sustainable activities. However, the current technical screening criteria for aviation⁴ impose excessive and unrealistic requirements, such as on Sustainable Aviation Fuel (SAF) usage, making it unnecessarily difficult to obtain financing for activities that objectively reduce emissions, such as investing in newer, more fuel-efficient aircraft. The European Commission's Staff Working Document, released on 26 February 2025, recognises the need to simplify the technical screening criteria. While the current Omnibus package does not address these issues, A4E urges the Commission to consider a dedicated aviation-focused revision in future updates, to facilitate investments in activities that promote decarbonisation, such as fleet renewal, SAF purchases, and operational improvements.

Removing Redundant Do No Significant Harm (DNSH) Requirements and Simplifying Appendix C

We support the Commission's recognition that Appendix C requirements are particularly burdensome for companies to evidence in detail. Many DNSH requirements are already covered by existing EU legislation, making additional taxonomy-specific compliance redundant. Companies should not face a situation where adhering to one set of EU rules prevents them from aligning with the Taxonomy.

In particular, certain products essential for air transport safety, such as halon and chromium (Cr VI), have no viable alternatives and are subject to European or national exemptions. However, they are still considered non-aligned with the Taxonomy. The reality in which airlines and manufacturers operate should be better reflected to ensure that necessary exemptions are appropriately accounted for. We therefore advocate for a fundamental simplification—or, where appropriate, removal—of DNSH requirements to streamline reporting while recognizing sector-specific constraints.

Minimum Safeguards

We encountered challenges in our discussions with the verifying consultant regarding the requirements for Minimum Safeguards, specifically in determining what constitutes alignment with the OECD Guidelines for Multinational Enterprises and the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights. We have been referred to by the consultant to the "Corporate Human Rights Benchmark Core UNGP Indicators" from September 2021 as a relevant reference.

To enhance clarity and consistency in assessments, we suggest that the Commission explicitly indicate, for example, through a reference, the specific requirements that companies must meet to be considered compliant with the Minimum Safeguards criteria. This would help ensure a common understanding among companies, consultants, and verifiers.

Remove the Requirement for OPEX KPI Reporting

The requirement to report Operating Expenditure (OPEX) under the Taxonomy is complex and inconsistent with standard accounting rules, as it requires reporting entities to deviate from International Financial Reporting Standards (IFRS) and carve out a subset of OPEX that does not align with normal financial

reporting. Additionally, the current definition does not accurately reflect the costs deployed for CO₂ emissions reduction. For instance, Sustainable Aviation Fuel (SAF) is not included in the OPEX definition under the Taxonomy.

Moreover, the OPEX ratio is complex in terms of scope, and various air transport actors may not interpret it consistently. Given that taxonomy-aligned assets require regular maintenance as part of business operations, OPEX is not an effective metric for assessing sustainability alignment. Instead, CAPEX and revenue-based KPIs provide a much more accurate measure of a company's ability to transition to net zero. We therefore recommend removing the OPEX KPI requirement from the reporting framework.

Limit the Global Replacement Ratio (GRR)

The 2023 revision of the EU Taxonomy introduced a Global Replacement Ratio (GRR) for aviation, requiring that newly introduced best-in-class aircraft can only qualify as fully taxonomy-aligned if an equivalent retired aircraft is scrapped. Otherwise, the eligibility of the claimable asset is limited based on a calculation of all worldwide aircraft entering operations versus those being retired. This framework impacts access to financing for new aircraft in Europe, as purchases elsewhere in the world influence EU carriers' alignment, leading to competitive distortions.

Furthermore, this requirement is unique to the aviation sector and does not reflect the realities of fleet renewal. Often, older aircraft are sold to airlines with even less efficient fleets, still resulting in overall emissions reductions. Additionally, further clarity is needed regarding the application and annual evolution of the GRR. For example, it is unclear whether aircraft acquired before 11 December 2023 are included in the 2024 replacement ratio or whether the ratio changes each year.

We therefore suggest that the EU remove the use of the GRR to ensure that EU carriers are not restricted in accessing finance due to the activities of non-EU carriers. This would also ensure a level playing field for aviation in relation to other sectors reporting under the Taxonomy. At the very least, more detailed guidance is necessary on its implementation.

Decouple Fleet Renewal and SAF Investments

Under the existing technical screening criteria for passenger and freight air transport, purchasing or leasing even the newest, most fuel-efficient aircraft will only count as taxonomy-compliant (i.e., as a sustainable investment) if the aircraft is supplied at least with 15% Sustainable Aviation Fuel (SAF) starting 2030, increasing by 2% annually. This requirement vastly exceeds the EU's own ambitious SAF mandate under the ReFuelEU Aviation Regulation, which sets a 6% SAF supply target for 2030—making the taxonomy requirement 2.5 times higher. This threshold is unreasonably high, particularly as SAF remains significantly more expensive than conventional jet fuel. Additionally, since aircraft are ordered years in advance and market dynamics remain unpredictable, this criterion paradoxically makes it less attractive to secure financing for newer aircraft—undermining the very objective of the EU Taxonomy.

A4E therefore suggests excluding SAF consumption from the technical screening criteria for purchasing or leasing of new aircraft, evaluating claimable aircraft exclusively based on their emissions savings. The existing mandate under ReFuelEU Aviation already ensures that aircraft operators will still refuel those airplanes with appropriate amounts of biofuel and synthetic e-fuels.

3. Aviation Regulatory Simplification: Priorities for an “aviation-specific” Omnibus proposal

A4E would hereby like to offer its recommendations for future aviation regulatory simplification. These suggestions aim to improve legal clarity, policy alignment, reduce bureaucratic burden, and improve the competitiveness of EU carriers, all while maintaining environmental integrity and a clear commitment to the shared climate ambitions of the EU and the European aviation sector.

A) Harmonisation and better communication between existing sustainability reporting frameworks for aviation

Overlapping sustainability frameworks create redundant compliance obligations for airlines and fuel suppliers. A coordinated approach that aligns the EU ETS Directive 2003/87/EC, the ReFuelEU Aviation Regulation (EU) 2023/2405, and the Renewable Energy Directive 2018/2001 (RED III) under a unified reporting structure would reduce administrative duplication and increase efficiency.

Airlines currently report emissions under EU ETS and CORSIA⁴, fuel consumption under ReFuelEU Aviation, while sustainability criteria are defined in RED III. Further complexity is added for fuel self-supplying airlines, who report further data points under ReFuelEU Aviation and under RED III.

A possible point for harmonisation of reporting formats would therefore be the reduction in redundant data requests across all legislations, through the deployment and consolidation of EU reporting tools like a single platform Union Database (UDB) for fuels, which airlines could use to access all their aviation fuels information, including sustainable specifications (“one stop shop”).

Redundant data requests across different reporting frameworks also lead to **duplicative data verification requirements**, driving up compliance and **excessive data verification costs**. Increased audit fees, already highlighted under “Addressing Aviation-Specific Reporting Burdens” (p. 2), are a direct consequence of this fragmentation and should be addressed as part of streamlining efforts.

There is also a critical need for better coordination between the Commission, Member States, enforcement bodies, and industry stakeholders. Establishing a dedicated EU aviation regulatory liaison group could enhance communication and preempt compliance challenges.

B) ReFuelEU Aviation Regulation (EU) 2023/2405⁵

ReFuelEU Aviation anti-tankering provisions

The current ReFuelEU Aviation framework⁶ does not sufficiently address **operational realities linked to aircraft operators' fuel policies** complying with EASA AMC1 CAT.OP.MPA.181. The current list of exemptions also fails to fully consider airlines' **flight planning complexities**, such as alternate

⁴ The International Civil Aviation Organisation's (ICAO) “Carbon Offsetting and Reduction Scheme for International Aviation” (CORSIA).

⁵ Article 5.

⁶ Article 5.

configurations for each flight leg, special landing patterns that require additional fuel uplifts but are not always performed, direct routing or shortcuts, and fuel curfews at certain airports.

The current exemptions application process is onerous and imposes significant challenges for airlines. Specifically, evidence required to support the exemptions application, as well as the need to fill in the application separately for each airport in each Member State, is not only complex, but in practice also difficult to execute. The documentation requested by the Competent Authorities include operational flight plans and journey logs indicating the delays, communications with the fuel suppliers or ground handlers providing evidence that the airport facilities are not operational, any penalties by Civil Aviation Authorities, the slot coordinator or other authority that occurred in previous year at the airport for which the exemption is being filed for, or at subsequent airports, operational documents and analysis that provide evidence about how much time the aircraft needs to tank fuel and aircraft operator's historic turnaround data. In addition, little is explained as to what such specific analysis should entail to suffice as evidence, and information provided by each aircraft operator may vary.

Furthermore, all the requested evidence must be copies of the originally issued documents and appropriately signed by the commander or other authorized entity. Such evidence requirements create real obstacles for exemption applications, limiting therefore the feasibility of their issuance. As the ultimate decision on whether an exemption will be granted rests with each competent authority, the assessment risks perceived subjectivity and lack of uniform interpretation of the evidence provided. Since exemptions on fuel-safety grounds are granted post-hoc in the following year, airlines also have no visibility as to which documents for which flights will ultimately be accepted, with consequences for their fuel planning.

Simplification of the Exemption Process

A4E recommends simplifying the exemption process to better reflect operational challenges while still incentivising fuel uptake at each airport. Currently, airlines must **submit exemption requests post hoc** (e.g., based on fuel safety grounds⁷) during annual reporting, justifying—separately for each flight—why fuel was tankered. Given **potentially thousands of flights affected per year**, this places a **significant administrative workload burden** on airlines within a **concentrated short timeframe**. Introducing a **mechanism to request exemptions a priori** for each flight would help **distribute the reporting workload** more evenly while improving certainty for airlines in meeting their refueling obligation. This would also reduce unnecessary burdens on airlines during the verification process while still incentivising fuel uptake per airport.

Moving the 90% Uplift Requirement to the Union Level

To further ease compliance burdens, the EU should consider **shifting the 90% uplift requirement from an airport-specific obligation to a Union-level threshold**. This would **simplify reporting for airlines** without undermining overall fuel uplifting obligations in the region.

⁷ Article 5, paragraph 2.

Market Distortion and Monopolistic Practices at Airports

Additionally, the requirements for exemptions related to **market distortion** should be **simplified** to better capture **monopolistic practices at certain airports**. The EU should ensure that airlines are **not obligated to uplift fuel at airports where these practices occur**, thereby reducing the burden on airlines to **demonstrate loss of competitiveness** in such cases.

ReFuelEU Aviation Flexibility Mechanism

To enable SAF supply chains to develop most cost-effectively, the SAF flexibility mechanism⁸ allows an aviation fuel supplier until 31 December 2034 to meet its minimum share of SAF at EU level by calculating a weighted average of all the aviation fuel supplied across Union airports, instead of physically delivering SAF at each Union airport. This way, the mechanism allows an aviation fuel supplier to compensate for lower shares of SAF supplied at certain Union airports with higher shares of SAF supplied at other Union airports.

However, this flexibility mechanism does not always work in practice as intended. In several Member States, the mechanism is implemented at the national level, meaning the mandate applies per Member State rather than across the Union. In practice, this requires that at least 2% SAF be supplied to one Union airport within that Member State, whereas the regulation foresees that 2% of the overall EU-wide supply would be sufficient.

In Member States with a limited number of Union airports and monopolistic fuel distribution structures, this results in airlines having no possibility to tender for the best SAF price. This highlights the urgent need for a **proper and harmonised implementation of the flexibility mechanism**. The issue can be traced back to the ReFuelEU definition of “supplier”, which is based on the definition under the RED. Clarification and alignment are therefore necessary to ensure the mechanism works as designed.

The **Report from the Commission to the EP and the Council on the ReFuelEU Aviation SAF flexibility mechanism**⁹, based on the Guidehouse report (**flexibility mechanism report**) published by the European Commission on 28 February 2025, states that a virtual SAF accounting mechanism for quantities supplied under the ReFuelEU supplier mandate will not be implemented at this stage, due to concerns that suppliers and producers will otherwise not sufficiently diversify their supply chains across the geographic scope of ReFuelEU to meet the 2035 obligation.

A4E considers, however, that a virtual market for SAF sustainability certificates could, on the contrary, help ensure that all airlines can access SAF, even though SAF is not yet available in all EU airports.

Such a mechanism would have to be accompanied by appropriate changes in the EU ETS, where virtual SAF certificates should be usable, within the safeguards of non-double counting, for emissions reporting. Restricting these benefits to suppliers alone could undermine market efficiency and regulatory coherence.

With the entry into force of the EU SAF mandate, some airlines are seeing the introduction of a ‘SAF fee’ or ‘green premium’ by suppliers in their aviation fuel contracts without the guarantee of any SAF supply.

⁸ Article 15.

⁹ Published on 27 February 2025.

Through the extension of this flexibility, access to the environmental attributes of SAF will be facilitated across the EU.

The Commission maintains that the current 10-year SAF flexibility mechanism, coupled with increased SAF production capacity, is sufficient to ensure supply at Union airports until 2035, particularly for aviation biofuels. It will enhance SAF traceability through updates to the Union Database by 2025, enabling voluntary tracking by aircraft operators. We continue to advocate for a basket of measures that will drive down SAF costs and boost its availability, including extended and increased SAF allowances, Contracts for Difference, market intermediaries, and a functional Book & Claim system at the EU level.

It should be emphasised that any Book & Claim system must uphold the integrity of EU ETS and embed in its design necessary provisions to ensure no competitive distortions occur, i.e. that SAF can be claimed under the ETS pro-rata depending on the share of intra-EU vs extra-EU emissions (for example, a carrier whose emissions are only 20% covered by the EU ETS can claim only 20% of its SAF under the EU ETS), unless sufficient proof exists that the SAF was purchased entirely with the intent of being used on an ETS-covered flight (e.g., through freight forwarder contracts).

Flight Emissions Label under ReFuelEU

While intended to inform consumers, the proposed Flight Emissions Label adds complexity without reflecting operational realities, especially placing the obligation on airlines to adapt the sales channels of their external partners. The tool is retrospective and complex, making it difficult to provide accurate, flight-specific information to passengers—particularly on routes operated by mixed fleets where aircraft assignments can change daily. Given these limitations, the cost-benefit ratio of the proposed label is disproportionate. A voluntary industry-led standard, aligned with international methodologies, would be more effective.

C) Renewable Energy Directive 2018/2001 (RED III): Union Database (UDB) ¹⁰

The introduction of a single digital platform for reporting all aviation fuel transactions (including SAF and compliance data), incorporating the current aircraft operator reporting requirements set out in ReFuelEU Aviation, would eliminate redundant submissions and ensure consistency across the supply chain.

RED III Article 28(2) and Regulation (EU) 2022/996 should require full functionality and interoperability of the Union Database (UDB) with national systems like NABISY and with applications such as the EASA Sustainability Portal. This would streamline proof of sustainability, avoid redundancy, and enable seamless reporting under ReFuelEU Aviation.

D) EU Emissions Trading System Directive 2003/87/EC (EU ETS)

¹⁰ RED III, art. 28.

Fuels eligible under EU ETS (zero rating and FEETS) - sustainability certification acceptance by National Authorities

The lack of harmonisation in the acceptance of sustainability certification methodologies across Member States results in legal uncertainty and potential market distortions. In addition, requirements for airlines to furnish multiple types of documents to claim SAF, such as proofs of sustainability and proofs of purchase, are onerous when put in the context of airline operating realities, which span hundreds of airports and fuel deliveries. Tracking and reconciling information between different documents is further complicated by the absence of an established standard, timely exchange between fuel suppliers, airlines, and regulators, and the lack of full functionality of the UDB. **Simplification, including the acceptability of a single document type, is therefore essential.**

Clear obligations on the provision of necessary documentation between fuel suppliers and airlines, as well as ensuring the timely readiness of any infrastructure to support the process, such as the UDB, are essential. There is a need for the authorities to make the guidelines and expectations for the acceptable documentation explicit, including exact types of documentation accepted, contents, and formats. This should also be communicated to the parties issuing documentation to airlines, i.e. fuel suppliers.

Separately, practicalities and impacts of the documentation processing and handling by the parties should be addressed. For example, under ReFuelEU, fuel suppliers should provide PoS, PoC, or equivalent to the airlines by 14 February of the reporting year. Airline operators would subsequently need to ensure that all the documentation received is internally reconciled, as well as compliant and correct, to report by the end of March, which presents a challenging timeline.

Separately, regulations such as ReFuelEU and EU ETS (which both include the component of SAF reporting), are handled by different competent authorities, including differences in oversight between airlines and fuel suppliers. Coordination and alignment between these authorities should be improved as it directly impacts information availability, as well as sharing, and in effect, reporting capabilities of airlines.

ReFuelEU Aviation generates considerable additional work in contract drafting with suppliers due to unclear regulations (e.g., delayed definition of the flexibility mechanism and lack of airline access to the UDB) and new or duplicate reporting obligations as an airline and as a supplier. To enhance clarity and practicability of ReFuelEU, several changes are necessary: define key terms such as "supplier" and "anti-tankering," eliminate redundant reporting duties (e.g., double SAF reporting by suppliers and airlines), and standardise data requirements for complex metrics like aromatics, naphthalenes, and sulfur content based on average property values. Requirements for data collection clearly need to consider market conditions and availability of data across the value chain.

Following the chain of custody for SAF, conditions to allocate SAF Allowances (FEETS) need to be streamlined and simplified. Current FEETS allocation methods use an unfavourable price calculation for airlines, especially for non-existent eSAF. As FEETS allocation is limited, it does not provide an investment incentive. Price calculations should allow the use of market prices for crediting established SAF types (e.g., HEFA-SAF) and guarantee long-term continuation of FEETS allocation, particularly for long-term purchase obligations. Concepts to avoid the EU ETS cap issue around 2034 should be addressed to provide airlines with a clear reward pathway for SAF usage in the future.

The lack of harmonisation in rules—and in their interpretation and practical application—creates competitive distortion in the aviation market. While some airlines receive zero rating and full FEETS support based on certain documentation in one country, others receive nothing with the exact same documentation in another country. Some authorities have already granted zero rating and FEETS for a given airline operator certificate (AOC), while others are still reviewing the same application. Certain authorities have introduced a higher documentation threshold late in the reporting period, requiring all suppliers to hold specific certifications. While other authorities agreed that these new requirements should not apply retroactively, the stricter authorities have warned that zero rating will only apply to volumes recorded in an external database.

Uncertainties and Delays in Non-CO₂ MRV¹¹

The ongoing delays¹² in finalising the necessary digital infrastructure to accurately monitor non-CO₂ effects, in particular the required NEATS platform and the integrated Numerical Weather Prediction (NWP) model, creates significant compliance uncertainty. The introduction of a robust yet streamlined Monitoring, Reporting, and Verification (MRV) framework for non-CO₂ effects should ensure consistency with existing aviation emissions schemes while avoiding excessive complexity. The current limitation of reporting flight information and aircraft properties is not conducive to producing any interpretable result without this necessary infrastructure. The current data collection requirements are extremely burdensome and lack scientific validation, providing minimal benefit to climate science or policy development.

The accuracy and robustness of these methodologies are crucial, as they will determine how non-CO₂ effects are accounted for. **There is also a significant risk that these effects could be overestimated**, such as for instance, through fuels supplied via pipeline (e.g., CEPS), which cannot be allocated to a specific flight and are therefore currently unfairly assumed to have maximum fuel property values. This could also lead to a disproportionate focus on non-CO₂ emissions at the expense of CO₂ reduction efforts. Such an imbalance could distort policy incentives and investment decisions, potentially undervaluing CO₂ mitigation measures that remain central to long-term decarbonisation goals. Regarding fuel data in the non-CO₂ MRV system, it is impractical for airlines to provide flight-specific fuel property data. These data are typically unavailable at the airline level and require complex fuel blending calculations, which are not currently outlined in the legal framework, particularly where fuel is supplied via pipeline (e.g., CEPS). Fuel property reporting obligations should therefore be re-evaluated or suspended, particularly as default maximum values would unfairly penalise airlines. The MRV cannot and should not be used to conduct research on the back of airline passengers and freight customers. Targeted research projects are needed as they would yield more reliable and actionable insights than an operational-level MRV.

Improving the Flow of Regulatory Information

¹¹ Monitoring, Reporting, and Verification framework for non-CO₂ effects under EU ETS, as detailed in Implementing Regulation 2018/2066.

¹² While the legal requirement to have an MRV in place starting 1 January 2025 (cf. EU ETS Directive art. 14) does not necessarily encompass NEATS, the current application of the MRV without the software does not produce interpretable results, as weather effects are not taken into account.

There is a critical need for better coordination between the Commission, Member States, enforcement bodies, and industry stakeholders. The number of reporting activities required to be undertaken by the aircraft operators across the different regulatory schemes and initiatives needs to be acknowledged. Aviation is a global industry, and airlines operate, as well as are obliged to report against and comply with multiple environmental policy schemes and regulatory frameworks beyond the EU, such as UK ETS and UK SAF Mandate or CORSIA. Establishing a dedicated EU aviation regulatory liaison group could enhance communication and preempt compliance challenges, as well as ensure that enough clarity and certainty is provided for those impacted by the changes. The flow of regulatory information must be improved in order to ensure predictable and consistent climate policy framework development and a transparent legislative process with involvement of the industry to ensure implementation feasibility.

4. Addressing Administrative Overreach across Policy Areas

Excessive EU administrative burden imposes disproportionate costs on airlines and weakens the EU's global competitiveness. While the goal of ensuring robust regulatory oversight is valid, the current approach often prioritises administrative control over economic efficiency. The following examples highlight areas where regulatory burdens should also be reduced:

Empowering Consumers Directive

While designed to prevent greenwashing, the Directive's overly restrictive requirements risk discouraging companies from providing valid sustainability information. Consumers should retain access to credible environmental claims without unnecessary regulatory barriers.

Green Claims Directive

The requirement for external pre-auditing of sustainability claims, with costs estimated at up to €54,000 per claim, is excessive. Streamlining verification procedures and allowing for internal audits under standardized EU guidelines could reduce costs while maintaining credibility.

Both these Directives **could and should have greater interoperability with CSRD assurance requirements**—if a company makes a statement under CSRD, this should support evidencing the information presented in any consumer-focused sustainability claim.

A mandatory certification system for environmental claims should be avoided or, at a minimum, remain optional. International aviation schemes led by ICAO or IATA, such as CORSIA, should be formally recognised without additional EU requirements to prevent market fragmentation and ensure global competitiveness. To avoid competitive disadvantages, CORSIA should be subject to the same requirements and regulations across regions and should be exempted from the Green Claims Directive. Article 11a of the ETS Directive 2003/87/EU should be amended so that European airlines can use all ICAO-specified emission units to comply with CORSIA. This approach would facilitate the establishment of a globally harmonised market, providing a stable and predictable environment for investors. The current absence of the implementing act regulating unit usability for EU airlines creates significant legal uncertainty.

Consistent and standardised terminology for net targets across the industry is crucial to ensure clarity and effectiveness. The Council's position to exclude ReFuelEU-Aviation-related claims from the Green Claims Directive should be adopted to avoid duplication.

Any compliance certificate issued under the Green Claims Directive should carry legal weight to provide businesses with legal certainty and prevent penalties under misleading advertising laws.

5. Conclusion

The European aviation sector welcomes most of the proposals contained in the first Omnibus package on sustainability. However, as stated in the Commission's communication of 11 February 2025, this must only be the start to further simplification and regulatory enhancement, which is vital to ensure that EU air carriers can remain globally competitive and meet their net-zero ambitions.

The EU must therefore take decisive action to simplify aviation-related regulations in the form of an aviation-specific Omnibus proposal. This will be a crucial step to ensure that sustainability goals are met without imposing unnecessary burdens on industry stakeholders. **By harmonising frameworks and communication, implementing initiatives that reflect the challenging environment airlines operate in, eliminating redundant reporting requirements, and improving existing regulations,** the EU can enhance efficiency, reduce costs, and strengthen its global competitiveness. The Commission's Omnibus Simplification Initiative provides a unique opportunity to achieve these objectives while maintaining environmental ambition.

We urge policymakers to integrate these recommendations into ongoing legislative reviews and implementation processes.