

## **Airlines head into winter season with increased certainty thanks to EU agreement on slot relief**

*A4E says any revision to Slots Regulation should reflect today's operational realities*

**Brussels, 27 October, 2022-** A4E airlines are heading into the winter season this weekend with more certainty for their operations following the final agreement on slot relief reached between the EU institutions. The agreement, which entered into force this week, ensures that exemptions from the normal slot rules can be granted in circumstances beyond airlines' control.

A4E maintains that a use rate of seventy percent for winter 2022/23 would have given airlines more flexibility to react to disruptive events in a volatile operational and economic environment, particularly in light of the latest Eurocontrol forecast. This shows air traffic recovering to 84% of 2019 levels this year and only making a full recovery by 2024 at the earliest. However, the final act includes important provisions on justified non-use of slots and simplifies the process for lowering the slot use rate if necessary.\*

This weekend will also see the removal of the passenger cap at Heathrow Airport, one of Europe's largest air hubs. Following the highly disruptive decisions by some European airports to reduce capacity in the middle of this year's summer season, A4E urges airports to ensure that they do not introduce any arbitrary limits on capacity during the winter. This is particularly important if such limits will disrupt the plans of passengers at short notice during the Christmas period, traditionally one of the busiest travel periods of the year.

The coming year represents an important juncture for the regulation of slots. The European Commission has launched a public consultation on the allocation of EU airport slots which will inform the review of the EU Slots Regulation. This review is expected to commence in the second half of 2023 and is critically important for air transport in Europe.

A4E believes that this review should be done in close consultation with all stakeholders. The past two years have shown the importance of having a stable yet flexible system for slots in Europe and any revisions to the Regulation will need to ensure airlines can quickly adapt to dynamic and unpredictable circumstances. This has become all the more important due to continued uncertainty driven by the war in Ukraine, lingering concerns over possible impacts of new waves of COVID-19 and turbulent economic conditions.

Commenting ahead of the start of the winter season, A4E Managing Director Thomas Reynaert said:

"Airlines across Europe will be able to operate their winter schedules with more certainty on the basis of the EU agreement, delivering connectivity for passengers while also being mindful of the potential headwinds they are facing. It is crucial for airlines that this certainty is maintained throughout the winter and is not subject to airport-imposed caps on capacity."

Reynaert continued:

"The intense debate that preceded this agreement underlines how important it is to get the review of the Slots Regulation right. We are hopeful that with the time and space afforded by the normal legislative process, stakeholders and the institutions will be able to work collaboratively to ensure an outcome that is fair, flexible and reflective of today's operational realities."

*\*Please note that A4E member Ryanair does not share A4E's position on winter slot relief and will communicate its views separately*

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**About A4E**

Airlines for Europe (A4E) is Europe's largest airline association, based in Brussels. A4E works with policymakers 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 over 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 tonnes 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](#).

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