

Airline leaders call for EU aviation reforms

- A Monitor Desk Report

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Dhaka: The heads of Europe's largest airlines have issued a renewed call for urgent regulatory reform, warning EU leaders that failure to act could undermine the region's aviation competitiveness and connectivity.

In a joint statement, the CEOs said that more than a year into the current European Commission term, there has been limited progress on critical issues such as operating costs, airspace resilience, and the shift to net-zero emissions.

The European aviation sector accounts for over 4% of the EU's GDP and supports more than 12 million jobs, but executives say carriers are increasingly disadvantaged compared to global competitors facing fewer regulatory constraints.

Key concerns raised include:

Air Traffic Management Delays - Airlines reported over 12 million

minutes of delays during the summer, blaming fragmented European airspace and capacity shortfalls. They called for EU-level measures including mandatory arbitration before strikes, advanced notice for industrial action, and protection for overflights to reduce disruption.

Passenger Compensation Rules – Current rules requiring compensation for delays over three hours were labelled unrealistic. The CEOs proposed extending the threshold to five hours, arguing it would lower cancellations and emissions.

They also rejected political proposals for mandatory free cabin baggage, saying passengers value low fares and flexibility.

Sustainable Aviation Fuel Costs – Executives warned that SAF mandates have created severe cost imbalances due to limited supply and a lack of price transparency.

They urged the EU to step up support via investment incentives, multi-year transitional allowances, book-and-claim systems, and a CBAM-style mechanism to avoid carbon leakage and protect competitiveness.

The group warned that without significant reforms by year-end, Europe risks losing traffic, jobs, and environmental oversight to non-EU hubs.

They called on the European Commission to establish a Strategic Dialogue for European Aviation, similar to efforts already underway for other industrial sectors.

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