

## PRESS RELEASE

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Jennifer Janzen, A4E  
Tel +32 499 828294  
jennifer.janzen@a4e.eu  
[www.a4e.eu](http://www.a4e.eu)

Ms. Christina Russe  
(on behalf of NET)  
Tel: +32 2 644 34 50  
e-mail: [secretariat@ectaa.org](mailto:secretariat@ectaa.org)

### **Leading EU Tourism Associations join A4E efforts to minimize impact of damaging ATC strikes**

- 29 strike days in first six months of 2018 have caused delays and cancellations affecting millions of travellers.
- Members of NET, the Network for the European Private Sector in Tourism, voice their concerns.
- Since 2004, EU airlines and their passengers have faced 423 ATC strike days, 70 percent of which occurred in France.

In the first half of 2018, EU travellers were subjected to an unprecedented 29 Air Traffic Control (ATC) strike days -- 22 of them occurring in France -- affecting millions of passengers through delays and cancellations. Today, the Network for the European Private Sector in Tourism, NET, a grouping of major European tourism trade associations, announced it is joining A4E's efforts to minimize the strikes' damaging impact on travellers and tourism across the EU.

Pawel Niewiadomski, President of ECTAA, the group of national travel agents' and tour operators' associations within the EU and a member of NET, said: "We are concerned about the increasing number of ATC strikes that result in major travel disruptions for our customers. In the midst of the busiest tourist season, ATC strikes cause major delays for millions of holidaymakers, many of which are families with young children".

Susanne Kraus-Winkler, President of HOTREC, the voice of the hospitality industry in Europe and also a member of NET, added: "Travel disruptions caused by ATC strikes have a cascading effect on all other services supplied in the tourism value chain. Flight delays or cancellations lead to lost accommodation, missed cruise connections, travel attractions, etc. We deplore that our customers are ultimately paying for the strikes with lost enjoyment of their vacations".

ATC strikes 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.

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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.

“2018 is shaping up to be one of the worst years ever for ATC strikes in Europe. We stand together with NET, its members and Europe's tourism industry as a whole in calling on authorities to take immediate action to improve the situation and reverse the trend”, said Thomas Reynaert, Managing Director, Airlines for Europe (A4E).

Solutions proposed by A4E include a mandatory 72- hour individual notification period for employees wishing to strike, protection of overflights (while not at the expense of the country where the strike originates), and an improved continuity of service for passengers. 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.

Travellers can join A4E's Free Movement Call for Action by signing its online petition at [www.keepeuropesskiesopen.com](http://www.keepeuropesskiesopen.com). The petition will be presented to the relevant authorities in Brussels and EU capitals by the end of 2018.

### **About NET**

NET, the Network for the European Private Sector in Tourism is a high-level contact group of key European trade associations in the tourism sector. Its members include trade associations representing cruise companies (CLIA), travel agents and tour operators (ECTAA), campsites, holidays parks and holiday villages (EFCO&HPA), European inbound tourism operators (ETOA), rural and farm tourism operators (EUROGITES), hotels, restaurants and cafés (HOTREC), amusement parks and attractions (IAAPA), and bus, coach and taxi operators (IRU). NET's purpose is to develop common goals for the tourism industry and work with policy makers and other partners to achieve them.

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### **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. 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.

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