

Regional airlines at breaking point over passenger rights reform amid an unprecedented fuel crisis

An open letter from Europe's regional airline CEOs to European policymakers

Europe's regional airlines are reaching breaking point.

We urge policymakers to pull the brakes on the EU261 passenger rights revision as an unprecedented fuel crisis deepens, threatening what remains of our competitiveness.

For years, we have weathered crisis after crisis, from pandemic losses, rising labour and energy costs to mounting regulatory pressure. Today, we face yet another shock: surging jet fuel prices driven by instability in the Middle East, adding high strain to already fragile operations.

The proposed revision of EU passenger rights risks becoming the last straw, rather than the alleviation that was promised to industry way back in 2013.

We want to be clear: we support strong and fair passenger rights. We are devoted to our passengers, not because they are simply our customers, but because they are our neighbours, our friends, and our families. We serve the communities we live in. We fly the routes others do not, because the revenues are not there. We provide the essential connectivity that keeps Europe's regions alive, all year round, not just in the high season. Our priority is to bring passengers safely to their destinations; not to save costs by cancelling flights, leaving them stranded.

But the current proposals fail to reflect operational reality.

Regional airlines connect countries to Europe's economic and political centres and they link regions to international hubs, thus ensuring global connectivity for Europe's regions. However, they typically operate thin routes with very low profit margins, leaving these services vulnerable to any additional cost they must bear.

Many regional airlines also operate smaller fleets, often from a single base, with limited access to spare aircraft, maintenance and repair facilities, or replacement parts, especially in remote regions. When disruption occurs, solutions are not immediate. They require time, coordination and resources that differ fundamentally from those of large network or low-cost carriers.

Yet the revised rules would impose compensation delay thresholds and rates that ignore these constraints, costs that can far exceed the total revenue of a flight. At a time of soaring fuel prices and geopolitical uncertainty, this could simply push us to breaking point.

The consequences will be real and immediate. Thin air links, the lifelines connecting islands, remote regions, and smaller communities, will become unviable. More routes will be cut. Aircraft will be grounded; some airlines will not survive. And when a regional airline disappears, the stable connection it provided is often lost forever.

This means fewer options, higher fares, weakened access to education and healthcare, and loss of economic opportunity for the very communities Europe seeks to support. This is not a choice between passenger rights and connectivity. It is a question of balance.

We urge European policymakers to pause and reassess. Conduct a full impact assessment, in the new geopolitical scenario, recognise the unique role of regional aviation, adjust the compensation regime to reflect operational realities, discourage flight cancellations and avoid pushing essential air links out of existence.

ERA and its member airlines remain open to working with policymakers towards a constructive compromise that preserves European regional connectivity while serving the interests of both passengers and regional airlines.

Passenger rights should protect and connect citizens, not isolate them. Europe's strength lies in its connectivity, not only between major capitals, but across every region and community. Regional aviation is what makes that connectivity possible. Do not let this be the last straw.

Signed,

European Regions Airline Association CEOs

Alain Regourd

Founder and CEO,
Amelia

Anders Fred

CEO, Jetttime

Daniele Cereghetti

CEO, Zimex Aviation

David Curmi

Executive Chairman,
KM Malta Airlines

David Manzanos

General Manager, Binter

Eric Vincent

Managing Director, ASL
Airlines France

Gaetano F. Intrieri

CEO, Aeroitalia S.p.A

Gilles Feith

CEO, Luxair

Giovanni Gottardelli

CEO, JumpAir

Hervé Boury

CEO, HOP!

Jasmin Bajic

President and CEO,
Croatia Airlines

Jiří Marek

CEO, Air Serbia

Jóhanna á Bergi

CEO, Atlantic Airways

Jonathan Hinkles

Managing Director, Isles of
Scilly Skybus

Juha Ojala

Managing Director, Nordic
Regional Airlines (Norra)

Katarzyna Szczepkowska

CEO, SprintAir

Keith Butler

CEO, Emerald Airlines

Luke Farajallah

CEO, Loganair

Maarten Koopmans

Managing Director, KLM
Cityhopper

Marko Cvijin
Managing Director,
Trade Air

Markus Baumann
Managing Partner,
AvantiAir

Mário Lobato de Faria
Managing Director,
Portugália Airlines

Matija Krajnc
Accountable Manager,
Aero4M

Mikael Wångdahl
VP Airline Operations,
SAS

Nico Bezuidenhout
CEO, Aurigny Air
Services

Nicolae Petrov
President and CEO,
Carpatair

Pierre Muracciole
CEO, Air Corsica

Robert Rungholm
CEO, DAT Group

Robert Campbell Smith
Accountable Manager,
MelAir

Sandrine de Saint Sauveur
President and CEO, APG
Airlines

Thanos Pascalis
CEO, Cyprus Airways

Theodoros Krokidas
President B.O.D, Sky
Express

Tiago Santos
CEO, SATA Air Açores

Tore Jensen
CEO, Widerøe

Valdemar Warburg
CEO, Sunclass Airlines







































































