

EU/Qatar Air Transport Agreement

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PURPOSE: to conclude, on behalf of the European Union, the Air Transport Agreement between the State of Qatar, of the one part, and the European Union and its Member States, of the other part.

ROLE OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT: Council may adopt the act only if Parliament has given its consent to the act.

BACKGROUND: as authorised by the Council on 7 June 2016, the Commission has negotiated the Air Transport Agreement between the State of Qatar, on the one hand, and the European Union and its Member States, on the other.

The negotiating directives set out the general objective of negotiating a comprehensive air transport agreement with the aim of gradually and reciprocally opening market access, enhancing regulatory co-operation and convergence and ensuring fair competition and transparency.

The conclusion of air transport agreements is a key element in the development of the EU's external air transport policy.

Qatar is one of the fastest growing markets outside the EU. Almost all Member States have already granted full market access through bilateral air services agreements with Qatar prior to the signature of the Agreement. However, these bilateral agreements lacked adequate provisions on essential elements to avoid abuses of a liberalised marketplace such as fair competition, transparency or social matters.

CONTENT: the Commission proposes that the Council decide to approve, on behalf of the EU, the Air Transport Agreement between the State of Qatar, of the one part, and the European Union and its Member States, of the other part.

The agreement creates simultaneously for all European Union air carriers' equal and uniform conditions for market access and establishes new arrangements for regulatory co-operation and convergence between the European Union and Qatar in fields essential for the safe, secure, and efficient operation of air services.

The agreement:

- includes detailed provisions on subsidies, anti-competitive practices and transparency, as well as robust enforcement mechanisms, thereby contributing to a level playing field for air services between the EU and Qatar, as well as between the EU and other destinations, e.g., in Asia, operated via Qatar;
- ensures that all EU air carriers have access to commercial opportunities, such as ground handling, code sharing and intermodality, as well as the possibility to freely establish prices and removes the requirement for Union air carriers to work with a local sponsor to establish local offices in Qatar;
- contains provisions on social matters, in line with those contained in the EU's international trade agreements, committing the Parties to improve employment and social policies in line with their international commitments, notably under the International Labour Organisation (ILO).

A Joint Committee, composed of representatives of the Commission and the Member States as well as Qatar, will be established to discuss matters relating to the implementation of the agreement.