



Copenhagen, 11.6. 2020

Letter to the respective National governments before the upcoming EU meeting:

Stop Aviation Bailouts - Support trains as an alternative to flying!

The French government's plan to support the airline industry with 15 billion euro threatens the Paris Agreement and should be rejected. Every European country and the EU must use the opportunity to support climate friendly initiatives like international night trains.

This is the message from rail activists all over Europe in the Back on Track network.

Aviation is responsible for a growing global climate impact. There is a lot of greenwashing talk about sustainable flights, but in reality no technical solutions are available to reach the Paris agreement with the amount of air traffic we had before the Corona crisis. For example, there is not enough sustainable bioenergy available and also not enough electricity to produce hydrogen for all air traffic globally. Airplanes not only consume much more energy than any other means of transport, but they are also more dependent on high energy density than any other vehicles, and even carbon-neutral fuels have significant climate impact because of specific effects of emissions in the high atmosphere.

The crisis has shown that many of the flights can be avoided through digital meetings. It made many people realise that weekend flights to New York or to the beaches in Thailand are no necessity.

If Governments and the EU consider support is justified for air transport under certain conditions, this must be limited to unavoidable flights. Moreover, it must be combined with the introduction of taxes on flights. No airlines should be supported on distances where you can reach the destination by train in four hours or less. The Austrian government agreement proposing a three hour limit is a good step in this direction.

To encourage environmentally friendly travel in European night trains for distances up to 12 hours is a good solution. With modern night trains you can have dinner, go to bed and reach your destination in another European country in the morning with very low climate impact.

State money and any EU package aimed at starting up the economy after Corona should be focused on climate friendly alternatives, and investments in rail and night trains is one good solution. In order to save air transport workers from unemployment, retraining for work in the railway or urban transport industry is a more sustainable solution than postponing the inevitable decrease of air transport for some years.

As aviation pays almost no taxes, it is not fair to save the aviation industry with taxpayers money. This gives aviation an unfair advantage over lower emission modes of transport. Tax exemptions therefore must be stopped: airlines must be obliged to pay a tax on kerosene or a CO₂-tax; and

instead of Air Miles programmes which incentivise air travel, fair and progressive levies on frequent flying must be put in place.

It is important to use the current unintended pause in aviation for building a climate-safe transport sector and creating resilience for future crises.

Statement agreed by Back on Track representatives in Sweden, Denmark, Germany, Austria, France, Great Britain, Belgium and The Netherlands.

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