

Specialised Committee on Air Transport - Minutes of the Meeting
DG MOVE, Brussels and online, 11 June 2025

1. Opening Statements

Both sides welcomed participants both present in the room and virtually. The implementation of the air transport chapter of the TCA was considered relatively smooth by both sides. Covid recovery remains an important issue of discussion, though significant progress has been made on both sides.

2. Adoption of the Agenda

The agenda was adopted, with the addition of several flagged issues to be discussed under point 6 (“Any Other Business”).

3. Market Developments

Both sides presented statistical data on the evolution of the EU-UK market. Scheduled capacity has demonstrated a complete recovery, even surpassing 2019 levels in some metrics. Overall capacity has still to fully recover, with passenger traffic demonstrating a 98% recovery while cargo shows a more hesitant recovery trend. The greatest levels of recovery are demonstrated by Low-Cost Carriers (LCC) which maintain a strong position in the market. In terms of city pairs, a slight consolidation has been noted compared to 2023, though major destinations have demonstrated an increase in traffic.

4. Exchange of information on legislative and policy developments

On the **Recast of the EU’s Air Services Regulation (EU Reg. 1008/2008)**, the EU informed of the relaunch of a review process. In that context, an Impact Assessment is currently being conducted. Furthermore, a public consultation is expected to commence in summer 2025 with another targeted consultation following later in the same year. A Commission proposal is expected in mid-2026.

On the **SES2+**, the EU informed of the recent adoption of Regulation 2024/2803 in December 2024. The EU outlines the significant improvements that this Regulation brings to the table. The UK expressed interest in the modulation of charges for airspace users, in terms of conformity with Article 15 of the Chicago Convention 1944.

On the **Slots Regulation (EU Reg. 95/1993)** the EU informed of an “airport fitness check” taking place – further including the **Airport Charges Directive (EU Directive 12/2009)** and the **Ground Handling Directive (EU Directive 67/1996)**. In that context, open consultations are likely to take place starting July 2025, with the evaluation being complete by the end of 2025. On slots policy, the UK informed of internal examination to determine the necessity for domestic reform. The UK also provided an overview of the fitness of the UK ground handling market, highlighting the issue of low resource and financial resilience. To combat these issues, the UK is working to develop a regulatory framework for ground handlers and expects this to be implemented by 2027.

On **Passenger Rights**, the EU gave an overview of the goals for the recast Regulation currently considered as well as of the proposed amendments to the existing framework. A second complementary proposal for multimodal passenger rights is also under review. A General Approach for both proposals has been put forward since December 2024 and are being currently examined by the EU Parliament, with early 2026 noted as a likely adoption time. UK reiterated its commitment to the highest degree of passenger protection and informed the EU that the UK Aviation Accessibility Task and Finish Group is expected to publish a report on achievable actions to improve accessibility for passengers in summer 2025.

On **Airspace Modernisation**, the UK gave an overview of challenges currently faced in providing Air Navigation Services. To combat those, a UK National Airspace Design Organisation will be launched focused on modernising London airspace as well as an Airspace Design Support Fund to support airspace change in the rest of the UK. Finance solution is currently being explored with hints given towards a possible airspace design charge. Implementation is likely expected in early 2026.

On **London Heathrow Airport**, the UK gave an overview of the proposal to expand through construction of a third runway to tackle capacity constraints. An implementation plan is expected in summer 2025. The UK also informed on progress relating to the resilience of the airport in the aftermath of the fire and power outage incident in March 2025.

On **Sustainable Aviation Fuel (SAF)** the EU reported on its significant production capacity, which has tripled since the entry into force of the ReFuelEU mandates. However, investment remains limited due to enduring long-term investment uncertainty. To address this issue, the EU is preparing the Sustainable Transport Investment Plan (STIP) aimed at ramping up investments. The UK presented its three-pronged approach to SAF, namely 1. The establishment of a SAF mandate, 2. The creation of an Advanced Fuels Fund, and 3. Efforts towards derisking SAF by legislating to introduce a revenue certainty mechanism.

On **ICAO CORSIA** the EU reaffirmed its support for a global approach to air transport decarbonisation and highlighted the significance of the upcoming 42nd ICAO General Assembly. The UK echoed the support for a global approach and informed of preliminary regulatory efforts to support CORSIA's internal implementation on top of already existing regulatory framework.

On **non-CO2 emissions** the EU gave a presentation on the Monitoring Reporting and Verification system under the EU ETS. A corresponding IT tool is in the final stages of development, but a voluntary pilot phase has already been launched. The UK is focused on understanding the effects of non-CO2 emissions and has launched funding for several research programs and a non-CO2 (Jet Zero) task force, both focused on the impact and availability of mitigation options. Both sides committed to work together and with international partners on this issue.

5. Issues regarding the implementation of the Title on Air Transport

5.1. Bilateral arrangements between the United Kingdom and Member States (Art.419)

The UK offered an overview of its bilateral arrangements with individual EU Member States. Agreements are now concluded with 23 Member States, 3 more are currently under negotiation and 1 has been refused by the concerned Member State. The UK informed of its intention to

re-engage in a number of concluded bilateral arrangements in order to better reflect current practical needs.

5.2. Wet-leasing arrangements

The UK expressed concerns about inconsistencies between EU Member States in the authorisation of wet-leasing arrangements and perceived disproportionately stringent national authorisation procedures. The EU informed that a questionnaire on the matter, addressed to Member State authorities, had not revealed any reason for concern and requested the UK to provide more details in order to address potential issues effectively. The EU also flagged EU carrier concerns relating to delayed authorisation of wet leasing arrangements by the UK and offered to come back on the issue with more details.

5.3. Operational arrangements of the TCA

The UK referred to the significant volume of applications for ad hoc non-scheduled flights up to 4th freedom. In order to simplify the authorisation procedures, a system of block permits has been introduced to grant airlines authorisation to perform non-scheduled services for a predetermined time period. Most EU Member States have reciprocally implemented such an approach; however, the UK noted several procedural discrepancies between EU Member States and called for standardisation. The EU explained that this issue remains within the competence of the Member States. On ad hoc non-scheduled flights beyond 4th freedom, the UK explained that it adopted a flexible approach, but that, ultimately, decisions were determined by the availability or otherwise reciprocity. The UK requested the EU confirm with Member States that they can be similarly flexible and pragmatic under the terms of the TCA. The UK also called for standardisation regarding ad-hoc, non-scheduled “higher freedom” services – the EU reiterated that, as with block permits, this was a matter of Member State competence.

5.4. Airline ownership & control

The UK reiterated its wish to liberalise airline ownership and control requirements under the aviation chapter of the TCA. The EU explained that its position in this respect has not changed and that does not envisage such liberalisation at this stage.

6. Any Other Business

On the **Entry Exit System (EES)** the EU informed of its progressive implementation starting October 2025. The UK expressed concerns at the apparent discrepancy in different legal frameworks as regards exemptions granted to cabin crews. The EU explained that the EES does not in fact introduce a new procedure but is aimed at enforcing existing requirements, while also reminding that the future ETIAS provides for an exemption to crew members. The UK underlined the need for effective communication channels on the matter.

On **Liquid Security Procedures** the EU requested a clarification as regards cabin crews, following relevant concerns expressed by EU carriers regarding stringent enforcement mechanisms. The UK did not have an Aviation Security official in attendance to discuss any potential regulatory change but confirmed they would explore the issue internally to identify the source for concern.

On **Air Ambulance Operations** the UK expressed concern about the lack of reciprocal flexible treatment of such operations by Member State Authorities and offered to return on the subject with specific cases in point.

The UK flagged an instance where one Member State refused a UK carrier operation on the grounds of **lack of designation**. The EU pointed out that it had reminded the Member States that a requirement for designation is not in accordance with the aviation chapter of the TCA.

On **PNR Data in Poland** the UK requested clarification on the status of the fines previously imposed against carriers for the delay in providing data under the Polish PNR Act. The EU explained that such issues fall under the competence of the Law Enforcement and Judicial Cooperation Committee under the TCA and offered to facilitate contact with the appropriate bodies.

7. Closing remarks

Courteous closing remarks were exchanged.

*Approved by the Joint Secretariat of the
Specialised Committee on Air Transport*

Annex – Participants of the 5th Meeting of the Specialised Committee on Air Transport

EU delegation

- EU Co-chair of the Specialised Committee on Air Transport
- European Commission Officials
- Delegation of the European Union to the UK Official
- Representatives of the EU Member States

UK delegation

- UK Co-chair of the Specialised Committee on Air Transport
- UK Civil Aviation Authority
- UK Department of Transport Officials
- UK Mission to the European Union Official
- Cabinet Office Officials
- Transport Scotland Official