



European Commission
To attention of Executive Vice President
Mrs. M. Vestager
Rue de la Loi
1049 Brussels
Belgium

By email: Margrethe-vestager-contact@ec.europa.eu
Cc: kim.jorgensen@ec.europa.eu, ec-president-vdl@ec.europa.eu, frans-timmermans-contact@ec.europa.eu

February 12, 2021

Dear Madam Vice President of the European Commission,
Dear Mrs. Vestager,

The Dutch trade unions - VNV, De Unie, NVLT, VKP, CNV Vakmensen, VNC and FNV - representing the employees of KLM Royal Dutch Airlines Group, are concerned about reports in the media and the public statement by the Dutch minister of Finance, Mr. Hoekstra, that the European Commission will demand to abandon slots in return for allowing aid measures to the Air France-KLM (AFKLM) group. We would like to share with you our point of view as trade unions representing the employees.

The Air France-KLM Group, as well as the entire Air Transport sector in Europe and around the world, is facing the most serious crisis in its history. As all European states have done with their airlines most exposed to the health crisis, the Dutch state has supported KLM with a state-guaranteed loan. In return, strict conditions were imposed on the company, e.g. with regard to sustainability and reducing labour costs. While this support was essential for the short-term survival of our company, it will not be sufficient in the long run due the ongoing restrictions and bans in the aviation sector aimed at preventing a further spread of the corona virus.

Like the European Commission, we support fair competition. And like the European Commission we believe that our social standards have brought and will continue to bring prosperity. As trade unions, we firmly support your statement that Europe's prosperity also depends on a level playing field and we agree with you that it is important to protect our standards against activities from outside the EU, that undermine the level playing field within.

We believe that the gravity of the current crisis requires extraordinary support systems for those sectors who face existential problems in this pandemic and who are of vital importance for maintaining a strong, connected and prosperous European economy. In that regard, the disappearance of leading players in the European aviation sector will have grave consequences. Therefore, Air France-KLM has initiated an unprecedented restructuring plan, impacting thousands of their employees by job cuts and significant salary reductions. Besides these efforts, both the Dutch and the French government are exploring how they could support the AFKLM group further.

We fear that the additional demand to abandon slots in return for allowing additional government assistance would further enhance the negative impact on KLM. It will make recovery even more difficult, if not impossible.

In these extraordinary times we therefore ask the Commission, in accordance with and in spirit of the EU temporary State Aid Framework, to reassess the request to give up slots at Schiphol airport and decide on a more balanced proposal. Foremost because it is our strong conviction that the objective to maintain fair competition inside the EU will not be achieved but further weakened by this proposal. It runs the risk of achieving precisely the opposite by allowing airlines who are not adhering to the EU standards of fair competition but do achieve much stronger state support from their own non-EU governments to take over these slots. Slots which have been used in the past in a profitable way and would have continued to do so, had it not been for the pandemic situation. We strongly believe that giving up slots without firm conditions for other parties to obtain these slots will disproportionately open up the Dutch market to players who are not contributing to the objectives and standards of the European Union. It will also prevent the efforts of the Air France – KLM group from fully achieving the financial and environmental transformation that is required by the existing state support. A transformation to which our employees are strongly committed.

We will highly appreciate it if our concerns and considerations can help the European Commission to decide on a balanced proposal. We are looking forward to your reply.

Yours sincerely,

W. Schmid - Vereniging Nederlandse
Verkeersvliegers (VNV)

R. Castelein – Vakbond De Unie

R. Swankhuizen - Nederlandse Vereniging
van Luchtvaart Technici (NVLТ)

M. Rademaker - Vereniging van KLM Professionals
(VKP)

M. Wallaard - CNV Vakmensen

A. Groeneveld - Vereniging Nederlands
Cabinepersoneel (VNC)

J. van den Brink – FNV Luchtvaart

B. Nelen – FNV Cabine