

Future Sustainability and Decarbonisation of Aviation

GBTA's position on the ReFuel EU Aviation & EU ETS

The Paris Agreement has set a goal of limiting global warming to 1.5C and countries across the globe are working towards the goal of reaching net zero by 2050. To achieve this and balance the demand for travel, the future European transport system must provide consumers with sustainable alternatives and enable them to make sound environmental decisions when choosing transport modes for any part of their journey.

Business travel is fundamental to the world economy and brings many benefits in terms of international connections and wealth creation. For this to continue also in the future, the Global Business Travel Association (GBTA) has endorsed the Toulouse Declaration on the sustainability and decarbonisation of aviation by 2050 and encouraged other sectors to do the same.

To support the travel and transport industries to decarbonise, GBTA calls on the EU co-legislators to enact ambitious and cost-efficient policies to help realise the binding 2030 and 2050 decarbonisation goals with basket of measures from sustainable aviation fuels and emissions trading to financial incentives and technological innovation.

1. Ensuring a level playing field for sustainable air transport

GBTA welcomes the ReFuelEU Aviation Regulation proposal and urges the increased use and development of sustainable alternative fuels for air travel. The new legislation should ensure that the supply of cleaner fuels – and in the future also zero-emission fuels such as e-fuels and hydrogen – is adequately **supported in a way that avoids the final costs of the transition falling unfairly onto the consumer**. This is because the availability of affordable mobility is a necessary condition to the functioning of the Single Market and the free movement of people.

The new rules for SAF use must balance the requirements of sustainability, cost-efficiency, and availability. It is therefore essential that the co-legislators maintain realistic and gradual targets for SAF blending mandates to ensure sufficient availability of alternative fuels and reasonable costs for the transition. It is also **important that the blending obligation is set at the EU level without separate national obligations** to avoid distorting the emerging SAF market and ensuring that the supply of SAF is available for all regions of the EU. A failure to ensure sufficient supply of SAF to EU hubs across regions would otherwise undermine the efforts made by the aviation sector to decarbonise their operations and result in higher ticket prices in those regions that lose in the competition for mandated alternative fuels.

GBTA also supports the EU's efforts made at the **ICAO level** to establish an ambitious global system that promotes the use of sustainable aviation fuels and provides for an international level playing field.

With this in mind, we urge the MEPs and representatives of the Member States in the Council to:

- Support the establishment of a specific **Sustainable Aviation Fund** to support the development and deployment of sustainable aviation fuels with contributions from the administrative fines from the blending obligation.
- Maintain the proposed blending obligations from **2% in 2025 to 63% by 2050** to allow for both the supply and demand sides to sufficiently prepare for the gradual increase of SAF usage in air travel.

- Establish a **labelling system for the environmental performance of aviation, such as the WEF SAF certification¹** to provide transparent and harmonised information to consumers on the SAF uptake of air operators.
- Ensure the competitiveness of European hubs and **avoid carbon leakage** by collecting data of the amount of SAF supplied and purchased at third countries with which the EU has a European Air Services Agreement in place.

2. Aviation's contribution to the EU's emission reduction target

GBTA commends the EU's ambitious steps to continuously improve its emissions trading system (ETS) which has proven to be one of the most successful policies to tackle various industries' emissions. In the context of air travel, GBTA would like to emphasise the importance of **reinvesting the revenues from carbon allowance trading into sustainable aviation solutions through a binding public support mechanism** – in the deployment and development of SAF in particular – as to mitigate the impact of higher carbon pricing on consumers.

In addition, GBTA encourages the EU to avoid a patchwork of regulatory frameworks across the globe and to work jointly with its international partners at the ICAO level to ensure the successful implementation of the Carbon Offsetting and Reduction Scheme for International Aviation (CORSA). In this context, GBTA is ready to support the EU in its quest for higher international standards on sustainable aviation fuel deployment and to ensure that CORSA leads to **a single global emissions reduction scheme for the aviation sector**. An ambitious global regulatory framework would encourage cost-effective decarbonisations of air travel worldwide and help set a common global ambition.

Lastly, GBTA would like to emphasize that future-proofed legislation should **improve the transparency of real-life industry data to address emissions**. Currently, emissions data displayed on online tools are based on standard emissions factors that do not take into account the SAF mix in aircraft or the efficiency of newer engines and therefore do not allow travel buyers to make sustainable choices.

On emissions trading, we urge the MEPs and representatives of the Member States in the Council to:

- Earmark a share of the EU ETS **revenue from the aviation sector to be invested into sustainable aviation solutions** and in the modernization of airline fleets through the EU Innovation Fund and other schemes.
- To avoid undue market distortion from the SAF blending obligation between direct long-haul flights and indirect flights connecting via an airport hub outside the EU, allow airlines to **obtain free allowances for the uptake of sustainable aviation fuels** under the ETS.
- Align the phasing out of free allowances under the EU ETS with the beginning of the mandatory second phase of the CORSA (**1 January 2027**).
- Ensure the **availability of transparent emission data** to consumers and authorities by reporting the emissions, offsets, SAF, and carbon allowances of aircraft operators annually.

About the Global Business Travel Association

The Global Business Travel Association (GBTA) is the leading business travel and meetings trade organization with operations on six continents. GBTA's members manage more than \$345 billion of global business travel and meetings expenditures annually. GBTA delivers world-class education, events, research, advocacy, and media to a growing global network of more than 28,000 travel professionals and 125,000 active contacts. To learn how business travel drives lasting business growth, visit www.gbta.org.

¹ World Economic Forum - [Powering Sustainable Aviation Through Consumer Demand: The Clean Skies for Tomorrow Sustainable Aviation Fuel Certificate \(SAFc\) Framework](#)