

Transatlantic air traffic

BLUEPRINT FOR LIBERAL MARKET ACCESS

Transatlantic relations are currently under pressure. It is therefore all the more important to focus on the things which unify us. For example: 10 years of open skies over the Atlantic – a milestone of aviation policy and blueprint for continued liberalisation.

A boost for air traffic

In the summer of 2008, the EU and the United States set up the Open Aviation Area. Since then, US and EU airlines have been able to use any route between the two economic areas and passengers can continue their travels to third countries. Passengers benefit significantly from this: According to the EU Commission, since then prices have dropped by 230 euros per ticket on average. Dozens of new routes have been added and an additional 6.4 million passengers cross the Atlantic each year.

Liberal aviation needs clear rules

This was preceded by intense negotiations between the USA and the EU in order to give airlines on both sides opportunity for growth. This required legal conditions to be in general alignment. Three examples: subsidies for airlines and airports that distort competition are not allowed. Independent aviation authorities safeguard fair access to the market. Workers' rights such as the right to strike and protection against dismissal are incorporated into law, so that a price war at the expense of employees is prevented, for example. This is monitored by the Joint Committee, which meets each year.

The open-sky agreement is a success. In the areas where similar conditions are not in place, on the other hand, steps towards liberalisation jeopardise the proper functioning of the aviation markets. The EU Commission is drawing up a new competition regulation. The US is already a few steps ahead. When US airlines are shown to be harmed by unfair competition, sanctions come into play. This increases the willingness of airlines that want to fly to the United States to communicate. The Gulf carriers, for example: under current agreements with the US authorities, both the United Arab Emirates and Qatar have promised balance sheet transparency and, in addition, accepted a limitation to traffic through so-called fifth freedoms under additional agreements.

Further intensification of trusting cooperation

Intensified discussions pave the way for relations between the United States and the EU. The best example: in 2017, US authorities considered banning passengers from taking laptops with them into the cabin on flights from Europe to the US. This did not happen thanks to the intense discussions and trustful cooperation between the authorities on both sides of the Atlantic. This should serve as an example, not just in the aviation sector.

