



Wopke Hoekstra
Commissioner for Climate Action and Taxation
European Commission

Apostolos Tzitzikostas
Commissioner for Sustainable Transport and Tourism
European Commission

17 January 2025

Re: Meeting request: ending aviation's exemption from taxation to address the climate crisis

Dear Commissioners,

We are writing to express our urgent concern about the increase in air traffic and the continued tax exemptions and subsidies granted to the aviation sector, which jeopardize Europe's ability to meet its climate goals. In light of recent scientific evidence and your stated commitment to a step-by-step elimination of fossil fuel subsidies, Greenpeace and Stay Grounded urge the European Commission to end aviation's exceptional fiscal privileges.

Since 1946, aviation has benefited from exemptions on value-added tax (VAT) for international flight tickets and excise duties on kerosene. These measures distort competition, incentivize polluting travel over cleaner alternatives, and leave aviation unaccountable for its significant environmental impact.

Recent studies on aviation by the [Netherlands Aerospace Centre \(NLR\)](#), [CE Delft](#), and [Breda University of Applied Sciences](#) highlight the urgent need for action. They demonstrate that without significant interventions in the aviation sector, emissions will continue to rise, rendering the Paris Agreement's climate goals unattainable. The consequences of inaction include escalating climate disruption and severe economic and social costs.

As you begin your new term in December, you are uniquely positioned to champion bold, harmonized action that addresses the aviation sector's disproportionate climate impact. While many member states hesitate to act alone due to competitive concerns, the European Commission can and must provide the leadership needed to align aviation policies with Europe's climate objectives.

Greenpeace and Stay Grounded urge the European Commission to take the following actions:

1. End aviation's tax exemptions:

- Propose EU-wide legislation to phase out VAT exemptions on flight tickets and push to end the exemption of the tax on jet fuel in the EU.

2. Address aviation's growth in emissions:

- Establish clear caps on aviation to align with IPCC-derived carbon budgets, ensuring equitable contributions across all sectors.
- Impose an EU-wide ban on any flights where a rail journey would take under six hours.

3. Redirect public subsidies:

- Support investments in sustainable mobility, particularly in expanding and refurbishing rail infrastructure.

4. Reduce non-CO2 impacts of aviation ASAP:

- Mandate airlines to tweak flight paths to avoid contrail formation and [significantly reduce their net warming effect](#).

5. Introduce a Frequent Flying Levy (FFL)

- Implement a progressive tax on frequent flights to curb emissions, promote fairness, and fund green initiatives. CE Delft analysis shows an FFL could [cut emissions by 21% and generate €63.6 billion annually by 2028](#).

The facts are clear: technical improvements alone cannot decarbonize aviation in time to meet climate targets. For instance, studies show that even with measures such as fleet renewal, operational efficiencies, and polluting alternative fuels, [emissions reductions fall far short of what is required](#). Without demand management policies, including reducing unnecessary flights, aviation will continue to [overshoot its fair share of global carbon budgets](#).

The climate crisis demands bold action. We trust that, under your leadership, the European Commission will prioritize these reforms, demonstrating to citizens that the EU is serious about addressing the climate emergency. We would welcome the opportunity to discuss this matter further and offer our support in shaping these critical policies.

Yours sincerely,

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Greenpeace European Unit

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