

EMBARGOED to 00:01 GMT, June 10th, 2021

European airlines exposed as significant opponents of EU climate policy

New documents shed light on systematic anti-climate lobbying campaign amid billions in government bailouts

Europe's largest airlines - which collectively received €30 billion in taxpayer support during the COVID-19 pandemic - have emerged as some of the most significant opponents of ambitious climate policy in the region, according to a *new report* by InfluenceMap.

These efforts have continued even though many companies are now being part-owned by governments due to the COVID-19 bailout agreements.

InfluenceMap's report is based on nearly 800 evidence pieces as well as dozens of documents obtained by Freedom of Information requests. Taken together, they shed new light on the extent of the aviation sector's anti-climate lobbying targeting the EU and European governments.

This is despite the sector publicly declaring its commitment to net-zero emissions for European aviation by 2050.

The report details the industry's two-level strategy to avoid effective regulation. The sector is lobbying against EU-level policies - such as the Sustainable Aviation Fuels blending mandate and the EU Emissions Trading System (EU ETS) while also trying to weaken the international carbon offsetting scheme, CORSIA.

Amidst all of this, airlines have initiated extensive climate-focused PR campaigns - like those undertaken by the oil & gas sector - to deflect responsibility for the sector's carbon footprint and to tackle growing 'flight shame' among the public.

Information revealed in the report includes:

- The ongoing industry campaign to weaken the EU ETS with regards to aviation and replace it with the CORSIA offsetting scheme, including direct lobbying by **Lufthansa**, **Air France-KLM**, and **International Airlines Group (IAG)**.
- **KLM** and **Lufthansa** privately lobbying EU Commission officials against an ambitious EU Sustainable Aviation Fuels blending mandate, just months after declaring their public support for such a policy.
- **Air France-KLM**, **Airlines for Europe**, **International Air Transport Association (IATA)**, and **Ryanair** directly advocating against an EU kerosene tax on jet fuel.
- Documents showing how the sector is using the COVID-19 pandemic as cover to undermine climate regulations – including **Air France-KLM** calling for a moratorium on new flight taxes.
- **Air France-KLM** and **Airbus** both privately urging the European Commission to consider subsidizing the purchase of new planes as part of a 'green stimulus' scheme.
- Detailed analysis on the sector PR strategy to tackle 'flight shame' while at the same time shifting responsibility for reducing emissions to consumers via carbon offset schemes.

A summary of key industry association & company-specific findings is *included as a download from this landing page*.

The five largest European airlines, **IATA**, **Airlines for Europe**, **Boeing**, and **Airbus** collectively disclosed €6.75 million in annual EU lobbying expenditure. This figure does not include national-level lobbying expenditure or PR campaigns.

The report also details how major legacy airlines have made use of an additional group - the **Airline Coordination Platform** - to lobby against climate policies. This group appears to be operated by an EU-based consultancy firm.

The behind-the-scenes lobbying effort comes ahead of the EU's expected announcement in July for how it plans to decarbonize the sector as part of the European Green Deal.

InfluenceMap aviation analyst Ben Youriev said: *"This research highlights a significant threat to the EU's climate targets if the aviation sector's climate impacts continue to grow unchecked.*

"Despite the increasingly positive top-line statements by Europe's airlines about acting on climate change, this report shows that behind the scenes, the same airlines have been trying to delay or undermine real-world policies being put forward to help decarbonize the sector.

"This anti-climate lobbying has been taking place at the same time as many airlines receive taxpayer-funded support during the COVID-19 pandemic, with some governments taking an equity stake. This effectively means that some governments are indirectly lobbying against the EU's climate ambitions."

UN Principles for Responsible Investments (UN PRI) Senior Specialist (CA 100+) Marshall Geck, said:

"InfluenceMap's detailed new evidence of European aviation companies' lobbying against EU measures to address the sector's climate impact is worrying from an investor standpoint.

"Such lobbying exposes these companies to both the risk of more drastic regulatory action to curtail the aviation sector's emissions in the future as well as the risk of reputational damage due to the inconsistency displayed between their stated climate positions and their real-world lobbying actions.

"Moreover, such lobbying risks undermining progress against the climate goals of both the EU and the Paris Agreement more broadly. Guided by frameworks such as the Climate Action 100+ Net Zero Company Benchmark and the Climate Action 100+ Aviation Sector Strategy, aviation company lobbying activities will increasingly come to the attention of investors in the sector."

Member of the European Parliament, Clare Daly, said: *"This well-documented report blows the lid on the efforts of airlines to use the global pandemic as a cover to avoid their environmental responsibilities. It exposes blatant airline practices designed not only to mislead their consumers about their 'green' credentials, but countless occasions when airlines have deliberately tried to mislead policymakers about their initiatives supposedly aimed at the reduction of aviation emissions. The double standards of publicly accepting their 2050 environmental targets while actively undermining them, behind the scenes, helps to explain the lack of progress in the sector's emissions and demonstrates the need for real political will to finally get the sector to contribute at a fair level. It is also imperative to underline the great responsibility of the Member States to make the sector contribute to the EU climate goals."*

COVID-Related Bailouts to Airlines & Climate Policy Scores



Climate policy organization score on A - F scale, with A being fully supportive and F being fully opposed

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Full report, graphics, and quotes on this landing page.

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About InfluenceMap

InfluenceMap is a London-based think tank providing data driven analysis to investors, corporations and the media on issues related to energy and climate change. Our metrics for measuring corporate influence over climate policy are in use by investors, including the global Climate Action 100+ investor engagement process. Our content has been covered widely in global media and is used by campaign groups.