

PRESS RELEASE

ReFuel EU Aviation: a game-changing EU sustainable aviation fuel plan?

Brussels, 29 June 2021 – At the second webinar organised by the European Logistics Platform (ELP) this year, around 50 EU policymakers and industry representatives met to discuss with experts the challenges, the potential and use-cases of sustainable aviation fuels (SAF). With the upcoming Refuel EU Aviation initiative expected to be published mid-July as part of the ‘Fit for 55’ package, policy makers and industry representatives debated how the EU can create incentives and set the right regulatory framework to increase the uptake of SAF that will help to reduce aviation’s footprint.

Jan-Christoph Oetjen MEP, Vice-Chair and Member of the EP Transport and Tourism Committee, expressed the importance of the Refuel EU Aviation initiative, noting that “the EU now has the opportunity to build a better, greener, and cleaner aviation business model.” The Green Deal provides a momentum for the industry to act on the ambition of decarbonization and reaching climate neutrality by 2050.

Filip Cornelis, Director Aviation, DG MOVE gave some insights in the content of the expected proposal, which will be published on 14 July as one of the proposals of the Fit for 55 package. He highlighted that the Commission will seek to come up with a balanced proposal, noting that there will be some obligations on the industry for blending which have been missing so far. As the uptake of SAF is currently very low, without legislative action, it will remain at only 3,5% in 2050. He emphasized the urgent need to accelerate the uptake of SAF. Mr Cornelis confirmed that the upcoming ReFuelEU Aviation initiative will impose a SAF blending mandate; it will apply to all flights taking off from European airports, regardless of whether their destination is inside the bloc. Rather than placing a requirement on each airline, the regulation is expected to oblige suppliers to provide SAFs, meaning all tanking aircraft will use a share of green jet fuel. “We’re hoping to create a very simple instrument, without a take-up obligation on airlines individually if we manage to secure the supply of those blends everywhere.” Mr Cornelis also announced that the general sustainability rules contained in the soon-to-be-revised Renewable Energy Directive will act as a guide.

Sebastian Dreyer, Head of Parliamentary & Government Relations, Bundesverband der Deutschen Luftverkehrswirtschaft e.V. (BDL) noted that deploying SAFs requires overcoming even greater economic and technological challenges for the aviation sector. There would be challenges for the sector, such as the eligibility of the feedstock to produce the most advanced SAF, as well as the distribution systems around airports. Mr Dreyer also noted that the BDL had called for any SAF mandate in Germany to be competition-neutral. Whereas the BDL gave preference to an international regulation, e.g. SAF quota via CORSIA, he noted that the EU should have equally binding/equal blending quotes and equal eligibility conditions for all Member State in case of an EU legislation.

Karlijn Arts, Policy and Sustainability Lead, SkyNRG, gave a presentation from the perspective of a SAF producer. Noting that SAFs can be blended to high percentages with kerosene without requiring changes to the aircraft engine, she highlighted that this makes them an attractive means to cut emissions – going beyond CO2 reduction. She stressed that whereas the upscaling takes many years, this is not preventing planning for SAF facilities and production as she was giving an overview of multiple production facility development projects around the world. The first dedicated SAF plant in

Europe is being built in the Netherlands. She noted that there is only one commercially developed solution that can be deployed with high emission savings when the right feedstocks are used. Future technologies are necessary, but more R&D is needed. She agreed that “targets should be binding on the one hand, but on the other hand, they must be realistic, initially modest, and then become more ambitious beyond 2030.”

Carlos Agnes & Lloyd Pinnell, Aviation Co-Lead, Energy Transition Commission illustrated why SAF is the primary decarbonisation solution for the sector to achieve net-zero emissions. According to their projections, SAF production must increase at a 30+% Compound Annual Growth Rate for net-zero alignment globally by 2050. But current production volumes remain minimal, that’s why the new EU regulatory framework must trigger both the supply side, e.g. by supporting early deployment through de-risking investments, and the demand side by SAF blending mandates. At the same time, it is important to ensure a level playing field through a global approach at ICAO level and to use support mechanisms to bridge the cost differential between SAF and conventional jet fuel.

In concluding the event, and thanking the ELP for organising the event, **MEP Oetjen** reflected on the presentations given by the speakers, welcoming the high level of ambition expressed by both the industry and policymakers that are already exploring how to achieve the necessary targets. He reiterated the need to find a balanced solution to support the aviation industry in become greener and to capitalize sustainable European solutions which would allow to grow into the global leader in sustainable aviation.

The European Logistics Platform consists of more than twenty industry stakeholders representing a wide variety of actors involved in logistics and supply chains across Europe. Current members are ACEA, Amazon, BDL, CER, CLECAT, Deutsche Bahn, Deutsche Post DHL Group, duisport, ECG, ERFA, ESC, ESPO, FEPORT, FERRMED, Hutchison Whampoa, IRU, Logistics UK, Michelin, NLA, Port of Rotterdam, TLN, UIRR, Volvo Group.

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