

RYANAIR TO APPEAL EU COURT RULINGS ON AIR FRANCE AND SAS STATE AID

Ryanair today (17 Feb) noted the EU Court's rulings on French and Swedish State aid schemes favouring Air France and SAS over all other EU airlines. The French airport tax deferral and the Swedish loan guarantee were introduced at the beginning of the Covid-19 crisis with nationality conditions. The French scheme was reserved for French registered airlines and the Swedish scheme to Swedish registered airlines, while excluding all other EU airlines, which were also damaged by Covid-19, despite their contribution to connectivity, jobs, traffic growth and the wider economy in France and Sweden. Ryanair appealed the European Commission's approvals of these schemes to the EU General Court in May 2020. Following today's rulings, Ryanair will now refer these matters to the Court of Justice of the EU.

Ryanair's spokesperson said:

"One of the EU's greatest achievements is the creation of a true single market for air transport, underpinned by the principle of a common EU airline licence – one for each airline. A nationality condition in a State aid scheme is plainly incompatible with the single market.

Ryanair is a truly European airline. We have no rich and powerful 'home country' to subsidise us in times of trouble. Nor do we want discriminatory aid. Our instinct in a crisis is to seek efficiencies and cost savings, to offer more routes at lower fares – while remaining Europe's greenest airline.

During the Covid-19 pandemic over €30bn in discriminatory State subsidies has been gifted to EU flag carriers and, if allowed to stand, this will distort the level playing field in EU aviation for decades to come, giving chronically inefficient national airlines a leg up on their efficient low-fare competitors.

We hope that the Court of Justice will overturn the European Commission's approvals of the French and Swedish schemes, to give airlines and consumers a glimmer of hope that national politicians obsessed with their flag carriers will be sent back to the drawing board and required to use State aid wisely to assist the recovery of traffic in the post-Covid world instead of bailing out their favoured airline at the expense of fair competition and consumers. Now is the time for the European Commission to stop caving in to national governments' inefficient bail-out policies and start protecting the single market, Europe's greatest asset for future economic recovery."

*NOTE TO EDITORS:

The EU Commission's spineless approach to State aid since the beginning of the Covid-19 crisis has allowed Member States to write open-ended cheques to their inefficient zombie flag carriers in the name of faded national prestige. The EU Commission has hastily approved over €30bn of discriminatory State aid since the crisis began. Discriminatory State subsidies given by EU Member States or planned to be given are set out here:

Lufthansa Group	€11bn
Air France-KLM	€10.6bn
Alitalia	€3.5bn
SAS	€1.3bn
TAP	€1.2bn
Finnair	€0.9bn
Norwegian	€0.8bn
LOT	€0.65bn
Condor	€0.6bn

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**For further info
please contact:**

Alejandra Ruiz
Ryanair DAC
Tel: +353-1-9451799
press@ryanair.com

Piaras Kelly
Edelman Ireland
Tel: +353-1-592 1330
ryanair@edelman.com