Sustainable aviation fuels (ReFuelEU Aviation Initiative)

2021/0205(COD) - 13/09/2023 - Text adopted by Parliament, 1st reading/single reading

The European Parliament adopted by 518 votes to 97, with 8 abstentions, a legislative resolution on the proposal for a regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council on ensuring a level playing field for sustainable air transport.

Parliament's position adopted at first reading following the ordinary legislative procedure amended the Commission proposal as follows:

Subject matter and scope

The RefuelEU aviation rules are part of the 'Fit for 55 package', the EU's plan to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by at least 55% by 2030 compared to 1990 levels and to ensure the EU becomes climate neutral by 2050.

This Regulation lays down harmonised rules on the **uptake and supply of sustainable aviation fuels** (SAF) in order to reduce emissions from the sector. It should apply to aircraft operators, EU airports and their respective EU airport managing bodies, and aviation fuel suppliers. It should only apply to commercial air transport operations.

Accelerated integration of sustainable aviation fuels

Members secured an ambitious timeline on the provision of the jet fuel mix, obliging EU airports and fuel suppliers to ensure that, starting from 2025, at least 2% of aviation fuels should be green, with this share increasing every five years: 6% in 2030, 20% in 2035, 34% in 2040, 42% in 2045 and **70% in 2050**. In addition, a specific proportion of the fuel mix (1.2% in 2030, 2% in 2032, 5% in 2035 and progressively reaching 35% in 2050) must comprise synthetic fuels like e-kerosene.

Broader definition of sustainable aviation fuels

Parliament amended the proposed definition of sustainable aviation fuels, a term which covers synthetic aviation fuels, aviation biofuels, or recycled carbon-based aviation fuels.

However, Members excluded fuels made from food or feed crops, intermediate crops, palm fatty acid distillate and all materials derived from palm and soya, as well as soap stock and its derivatives.

The amended text also stated that other aviation fuels such as **electricity or hydrogen** are promising technologies and are expected to progressively contribute to the decarbonisation of air transport, beginning with short-haul flights.

Promoting hydrogen and electricity supply at the Union airports

Union airport managing bodies, aviation fuel suppliers and fuel handlers should cooperate and undertake efforts to **facilitate the access of aircraft operators to hydrogen or electricity** used primarily for the propulsion of an aircraft and to provide the infrastructure and services necessary for the delivery, storage and uplifting of such hydrogen or electricity to refuel or recharge aircraft in line with national policy frameworks for deployment of alternative fuel infrastructure where relevant.

Environmental Labelling Scheme

A voluntary environmental labelling scheme enabling the environmental performance of flights to be measured is hereby established. This eco-label should indicate the **carbon footprint of a flight per passenger and the expected carbon saving per kilometre**. It should enable passengers to compare the environmental performance of flights operated by different airlines on the same route. The labels should be valid for a limited period not exceeding one year.

Where the aircraft operator does not submit all the information necessary for the Agency to issue the requested label, the Agency shall reject the request. The Agency should review periodically whether the factors on the basis of which a label was issued for each flight or set of flights operated under the same conditions have changed. If the Agency concludes that a label is no longer appropriate, it should, after giving the operator the opportunity to be heard revoke the existing label or issue a new label.

By 1 July 2027, the Commission should identify and assess the developments on the functioning of the labelling scheme.

Flexibility mechanisms

The Regulation provides for a flexibility mechanism to be designed and applied to allow a **lead-time of 10 years** for the SAF industry (from 1 January 2025 to 31 December 2034), to develop production and supply capacity accordingly and to allow aviation fuel suppliers to meet their obligations in the most cost-effective way, without reducing the overall environmental ambitions of this Regulation, as well as to allow Union airports managing bodies, aviation fuel suppliers and aircraft operators to make the necessary technological and logistical investments.

Reports and review

By 1 January 2027, and every four years thereafter, the Commission should present a report to the European Parliament and to the Council, on the application of this Regulation.

The resolution should:

- contain a detailed assessment of the evolution of the aviation fuels market, and the impact of that evolution on the functioning of the aviation internal market of the Union including on the competitiveness and connectivity, in particular for islands and remote territories, and on the cost-effectiveness of lifecycle emissions reductions;

- assess the need for investments, employment and training, and research and innovation in SAF;

- inform on technological advancements in the area of research and innovation in the aviation industry which are relevant to SAF, including with regards to the reduction of non-CO2 emissions or direct air capture technologies;

- evaluate the possible widening of the scope of this Regulation to include other energy sources and other types of synthetic fuels.