

Contact: Pauline Constant press@beuc.eu | **Tel:** +32 (0)2 743 15 90
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European authorities acknowledge airlines' greenwashing denounced by consumer groups

Today, the network of EU consumer protection authorities has [announced](#) that many airlines operating in the EU have misled consumers about the sustainability of their activities. They call on companies to abide by the rules. This announcement is a follow-up to the [complaint](#) the European Consumer Organisation (BEUC) launched in June 2023 together with member organisations¹ from 19 countries.

BEUC applauds that the European Consumer Protection Cooperation network (CPC) has heeded our call to consider the issue sectoral. Authorities have teamed up to investigate the practices of 20 airlines, i.e. three more than the 17 we called out.²

Monique Goyens, BEUC's Director General, has commented:

"It is great news that authorities from across Europe acknowledge consumers have been fooled by airlines' greenwashing. It is unacceptable that airlines have freely lured consumers into offsetting their flight's emissions, sometimes at a high price. One can never be sure that the trees planted to compensate a flight's high emissions will capture the carbon back into the ground – if they are planted at all.

"The fact that European consumer protection authorities are calling on airlines to get their act together shows there's a wind of change. Greenwashing is no longer acceptable, and the fact that aviation is one of the most highly polluting sectors makes it even more intolerable. Today's crack down on greenwashing is encouraging at a time when consumers are expected to shift to more sustainable lifestyles."

Background

More information [here](#) on our complaint launched in June 2023.

¹ BEUC member organisations participating in this action are: Arbeiterkammer (**Austria**), Testachats/Testaankoop (**Belgium**); Асоциация Активни потребители (**Bulgaria**); Forbrugerrådet Tænk (**Denmark**); CLCV and UFC-Que Choisir (**France**); Kuluttajaliitto – Konsumentförbundet ry (**Finland**); EKPIZO (**Greece**); Tudatos Vásárlók Egyesülete (**Hungary**); Altroconsumo (**Italy**); Consumentenbond (**Netherlands**); Forbrukerrådet (**Norway**); Fundacja Konsumentów and Federacja Konsumentów (**Poland**), DECO (**Portugal**), Spoločnosť ochrany spotrebiteľov (S.O.S.) (**Slovakia**), Zveza potrošnikov Slovenije (**Slovenia**), ASUFIN, CECU and OCU (**Spain**), Sveriges Konsumenter (**Sweden**), Fédération romande des consommateurs (**Switzerland**).

² We targeted (in alphabetical order): Air Baltic, Air Dolomiti, Air France, Austrian, Brussels Airlines, Eurowings, Finnair, KLM, Lufthansa, Norwegian, Ryanair, SAS, SWISS, TAP, Volotea, Vueling, Wizz Air.

BEUC members identified numerous examples of misleading practices targeting consumers:

- Claims that paying extra credits can “offset”, “neutralise”, or “compensate” the CO2 emissions of a flight are factually incorrect
- Airlines are misleading consumers when charging them more to contribute to the development of ‘Sustainable Aviation Fuels’ (SAFs)
- Implying that air travel can be “sustainable”, “responsible” and “green” is deceptive.

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