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Airlines greenwashing still rife despite improvements

Two years after BEUC [denounced](#) airlines' widespread greenwashing to EU authorities, the situation has improved but more still needs to be done. As the Paris Air show is in full swing, BEUC encourages the European Commission and the network of consumer protection authorities (CPC-Network) to keep investigating the airlines' practices and agree on commitments to make their marketing more trustworthy.

In June 2023, BEUC and 23 of its members¹ filed an EU-wide complaint denouncing climate-related claims by 17 European airlines that were breaching unfair commercial practices rules. In April 2024, the EU Commission and the CPC-Network [launched](#) an investigation into 20 airlines, calling on them to abide by the rules. The case is pending.

Two years on, our [stocktaking](#) shows that:

- Some airlines have removed or changed their climate-related marketing claims.
- However, some of these changes are minor (e.g. wording or colour tweaks).
- Two key arguments we identified in 2023 are still prominent, i.e. carbon offsetting claims and overselling the airlines' long-term sustainability goals.
- 'Green fares' are getting popular and reward consumers with discounts for future flights, thereby fuelling the sector's emissions.
- Court decisions in Europe and beyond are increasingly acknowledging airlines' greenwashing.

Agustín Reyna, Director General of BEUC, commented:

"It is positive that some airlines have heeded consumers' concerns on greenwashing and that they took steps to comply with the law. However, these improvements should not hide that greenwashing is still widespread. One shouldn't miss the forest for the trees.

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

“When booking a flight online, “green” options and messages abound. Whether it is a ‘green fare’, chipping in to develop ‘sustainable aviation fuels’ or investing in climate protection projects to offset the flight’s emissions, travellers are lulled into believing they are choosing a sustainable transportation rather than a highly polluting one.

“By breaching EU rules, airlines’ greenwashing is misleading consumers, the majority of whom want to travel more sustainably.² That is why consumer groups are looking forward to seeing the EU-wide investigation move forward to ensure consumers are no longer misled.”

Background:

- [Report](#)
- [Annex](#)
- [BEUC Green \(F\)lying action webpage](#)

² According to a Eurobarometer study of April 2025, more than three quarters of respondents replied that environmental impact is important to them when planning a regional or long-distance journey. From <https://europa.eu/eurobarometer/surveys/detail/3178>

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