

'OPEN SKIES' AGREEMENT MET WITH FIRM RESISTANCE



After a number of years of ongoing negotiations, a deal finally seems to have been struck to allow American and European airline companies to conduct more transatlantic flights. The agreement is centred on London's biggest airport, Heathrow, where there is expected to be at least a 30% increase in inbound and outbound American air traffic in years to come. The deal seems, on the surface, to be perfect for both EU countries and the US, as European passengers are set to save around L7.7 billion per year travelling to the States thanks to the introduction of low-cost airline flights across the Atlantic.

The core of the deal, which has been given the name 'open skies', is focused upon European airlines being able to run flights to any American city and American carriers having reciprocal rights. However, there are some pitfalls in the agreement. Critics say that it favours the US, as the American airlines are certain to reap more benefit from the deal than Europeans ones. Indeed, whereas American companies will be able to pick passengers up in one European city and then continue to another one, the US side forbids European airlines from doing the same.

On a similar note, whereas American companies will enjoy the option of buying out European airlines in years to come, only 25% of an American airline at one time can be owned by a European company.

Green campaigners have strongly criticised Brussels for acceding to the controversial agreement. Just weeks after declaring that global warming is becoming a serious issue to be addressed by the EU, Brussels has given the green light to 3.5 million metric tons of carbon dioxide being released into the atmosphere as a consequence of the agreement. Such impact on the environment is another reason why the agreement has been strongly opposed.

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