

Europe urged to tackle airspace bottlenecks as delays soar

July 18 2018



Delays were caused by staffing shortages, bad weather and strikes

The world airline body on Wednesday urged European governments to urgently fix the region's airspace bottlenecks, saying that delays had more than doubled during the first half of the year.

The International Air Transport Association called on the European Commission, member states and ANSPs (air navigation [service providers](#)) to "take urgent action" to address the problem.

It pointed to recent data from Eurocontrol, the Brussels-based agency in charge of monitoring the continent's skies, showing delays of some 47,000 minutes per day during the first six months of 2018—133 percent more than during the same period last year.

"We are in the summer season in Europe. Travellers want to get to their holidays on time. And too many will be disappointed because of [air traffic](#) delays," IATA chief Alexandre de Juniac said in a statement.

"We should be making progress, but delays are double those of last year," he said.

He acknowledged that "there is no quick fix for this year," but added that "the needed solutions are well-known. With the correct investment and planning by governments and ANSPs we can, and must, make next year better."

Staff shortages, strikes

IATA was particularly critical of the so-called ANSP's, which include [air traffic management](#), for not making "needed investments in their businesses, preferring instead to make super-normal profits."

The ANSP's that manage each country's airspace charge overflight fees for the services they provide, and as flight numbers have increased over the continent, so too has their revenue, it said.

At the same time, "the largest service providers have either under-invested in staff or use outdated employment practices which don't

deploy staff when and where they're most needed," IATA charged.

It said that most of the delays have been caused by staffing and capacity shortages, along with poor weather and "disruptive events" like strikes.

"The average delay for flights delayed by [air traffic control](#) limitations reached 20 minutes in July, with the longest [delay](#) reaching 337 minutes," it said.

IATA called for countries and ANSPs to urgently invest in modernising their infrastructure and to reform "outdated work practices".

"The impact of (air traffic control) delays ripple throughout the economy," Juniac said.

"At a time when Europe's competitiveness urgently needs to be improved, increasing (such) delays is totally unacceptable," he said, insisting that "change must start now."

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