

Civil aviation



Today, low-cost flights to Athens, Barcelona, Bordeaux or Florence for a weekend are possible – also thanks to the Civil Aviation Agreement with the EU. This has resulted in greater competition and improved aircraft capacity utilisation. Today, airlines have the freedom of choice in terms of destinations and tariffs. All that counts is customer demand.

Air travel has become even easier since 2002. While in the past states had to give their consent to an airline flying to a country, the only deciding factor today is the market. For example, if there is demand for additional flights from Geneva to London, the airport operator contacts airlines and offers them take-off slots in Geneva. Or conversely: If a Swiss airline wishes to fly to Cyprus, it negotiates directly with the airports concerned. Thanks to this ruling, foreign airlines can quickly take over routes from Geneva or Basel-Mulhouse, for example, which have been given up by Swiss.

Liberalisation of the aviation market has enabled low-cost airlines to enter the European market. Increased competition has made air travel generally more attractive and cheaper. In the past, even flight tariffs and aircraft capacity utilisation were subject to state approval. The removal of these regulations, as well as the far-reaching freedom of choice regarding destinations, increases the capacity utilisation of flights and promotes competition between airlines.

Safety regulations have also been harmonised. They are controlled by the European Aviation Safety Agency (EASA). This agency is responsible for licensing aircraft and for supervising technical requirements, for example, regarding aircraft maintenance.

Switzerland is also involved in the creation of the Single European Sky (SES). The aim of the SES is to restructure air traffic control in Europe by defining airspace on the basis of effective traffic flows and no longer on the basis of national borders.

Abflug AGREEMENTS Departure

Key data

Date of signing: 21 June 1999 (in the framework of Bilaterals I)
Approval by the electorate: 21 May 2000 (in the framework of Bilaterals I)
Date effective: 1 June 2002

“ The Air Transport Agreement with the EU offers the advantage that the free market has created fundamentally equal market conditions throughout Europe. We are very active in terms of acquisition and are approaching airlines in a targeted manner with the aim of convincing them to fly to and from Bern. Nevertheless, the market has become tougher. Ultimately, airlines do not mind where they fly to; the routes must quickly become profitable and fit in with their strategy. As a result of the increased volumes and load distribution, large airports undoubtedly benefit more from liberalisation than small airports, such as ours. Overall, however, the Agreement is in line with the times and a good thing for our country. ”

Charles Riesen, Airport Director

