

Press release

Airbus Group And The Heinrich Böll Foundation Present Views On 'Green Flight' At The ILA Airshow

Berlin, 1 June 2016 – Air traffic must become climate neutral and more environmentally friendly. The question of how to achieve this has been the subject of discussions since 2014 between Airbus Group and the Heinrich Böll Foundation, which has close ties to Germany's Green Party. Now, they have summarised the outcome of this dialogue in the publication 'Oben – Ihr Flugbegleiter' (Aloft – An Inflight Review). At the opening of the International Aerospace Exhibition (ILA) in Berlin, Ralf Fücks, President of the Heinrich Böll Foundation, and Tom Enders, Chief Executive Officer of Airbus Group, presented this document to the public.

It concludes that both technical innovations and political measures are necessary to make air travel more environmentally friendly. The standardisation of European airspace is mentioned as an example for more efficient regulation. Currently, the fragmented nature of European airspace with separate national flight regulatory authorities means that routes are often inefficient. A single European airspace could lead to shorter flight routes and fuel savings of up to 10 percent.

In addition, continual improvements to resource efficiency and the use of new propulsion technologies and fuels are required in order to halve global greenhouse gas emissions by the middle of the century.

The discussions, which have now lasted for two years, have been taking place between members of the Airbus Group Executive Committee and leading representatives from the Greens and environmental associations. Having started from opposing standpoints, both parties soon realised that, beyond their differences, they actually shared similar goals concerning the future of aviation.

"Economic and ecological considerations do not necessarily have to contradict one another. On the contrary: ecological and economic reasoning are mutually dependent. This also applies to aviation," said Ralf Fücks, President of the Heinrich Böll Foundation.

"In times when – despite the current moderate price of oil – fuel continues to be the number one cost factor in air travel, Airbus will only survive against global competition if its aircraft can fly as efficiently as possible," said Tom Enders, CEO of Airbus Group.

Currently around 3.3 billion passengers are flown each year. This number will likely double in the next 20 years, as will the number of aircraft. The democratisation of air travel, in other words falling prices and, at the same time, an increase in the global middle classes, are contributing to this growth.

Flight is a central component of the globally networked world and a factor in many people's lives. "This debate on flying sees individual freedoms and the global networks of business, science, culture and politics coming up against climate change, land use and noise protection. Gradual improvements won't be enough to resolve this conflict. Up to now, improvements to efficiency in fuel consumption have been offset by the rise in flight traffic," Ralf Fücks explained.

“Airbus is constantly working on technologies to reduce fuel consumption and thereby cut emissions of CO₂ and other pollutants. Thanks to intensive research, aircraft noise has also been reduced by more than 20 decibels since the 1950s (or by more than half as perceived by the human ear). This is already a substantial step, but it isn’t the end of the line by a long way,” said Tom Enders.

According to European emission targets, the objective by 2050 is to reduce NOx emissions in flight traffic by 90%, CO₂ emissions by 75% and perceived aircraft noise by 65%. By using such radical approaches as electro-hybrid engines and biofuels made from algae, Airbus Group wants to ensure that low-emission flight becomes a reality as soon as possible.

OBEN – IHR FLUGBEGLEITER (Aloft – An Inflight Review), 52 pages, published by the Heinrich Böll Foundation and Airbus Group. Available for download from 1 June at www.boell.de/publikationen/oben and www.airbusgroup.com/oben.

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About Airbus Group

Airbus Group is a global leader in aeronautics, space and related services. In 2015, the Group – comprising Airbus, Airbus Defence and Space and Airbus Helicopters – generated revenues of € 64.5 billion and employed a workforce of around 136,600.

About the Heinrich Böll Foundation

The Heinrich Böll Foundation maintains close ties to the German Green Party (Alliance 90/The Greens) and as a think tank for green visions and projects, we are part of an international network encompassing well over 100 partner projects in approxi-mately 60 countries. We maintain a world- wide network with currently 31 international offices.