

# Qatar, EU sign landmark air transport agreement



Qatar and the European Union initialled a comprehensive air transport agreement at the European Commission headquarters in Brussels on Monday.

The first of its kind ever between the EU and a Gulf Co-operation Council (GCC) member state, the agreement allows for open airspace between Qatar and all the EU member states with unlimited access to their respective territories, in addition to daily shipment flights between the two sides.

The agreement was initialled by HE Qatar's Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) Chairman Abdulla bin Nasser Turki al-Subaey and Head of Unit, International Transport Affairs, Directorate-General for Mobility and Transport, Carlos Acosta.



HE the Minister of Transport and Communications Jassim bin Seif Ahmed al-Sulaiti, HE Qatar Airways Group Chief Executive Akbar al-Baker and Qatar's ambassador to Belgium Abdulrahman bin Mohamed al-Khulaifi attended the signing.

HE the Minister of Transport said: "This agreement, which reflects the EU's trust in Qatar's potentials, will allow for

the liberalisation of the fundamental mobility rights between Qatar and EU markets – one of the oldest and largest in the world in the realm of air transport.”

“This will contribute to increasing the mobility, tourism and trade exchange between Doha and EU capital cities, widening the partnership with EU countries and developing our national carrier’s network, thus supporting economic growth across all sectors,” the minister added.

“This agreement,” HE al-Sulaiti noted, “is a completion to the pivotal role the State of Qatar has been playing in developing the global air transport industry and also boosts Qatar’s ranking as one of the leading countries in the region in air transport.”

He added: “The agreement also recognises the key role our civil aviation bodies play and their compliance with global standards as well as the role of Qatar Airways, which is widely recognised as one of the best carriers in the world and the best in terms of efficiency and quality, while consistently reporting the highest growth rates regionally and universally.”

HE al-Baker said: “This historic landmark agreement will offer a host of opportunities for airlines in Europe and Qatar to collaborate and co-operate together, ensuring fair access to markets, competing for market share based on products and services that the customer wants and is willing to purchase.”

HE al-Subaey noted the significant role the agreement would play in opening up future horizons for broader co-operation between Qatar and the EU member states, as well as boosting their bilateral relations.

With this agreement in place, he said, Qatar could upgrade its mobility rights and increase its cooperation with the EU member states in all aviation aspects.

He said the agreement was a historic event, particularly under the unjust blockade on Qatar and confirmed that the country is continuing to meet ever more ambitious targets in the aviation industry, which is one of the country’s most active economic sectors.

“This event comes in the context of the significant development Qatar’s air transport industry has been witnessing. It also fits in our plan for exploring more new opportunities to enable our national carrier to reach as many destinations as it can around the world. In addition, it enables Qatar Airways to boost its operational processes; something which helps widen Qatar-EU co-operation and secure a common ground for airlines from both parties to explore and find new gateways for broader cooperation and co-ordination.”

The agreement provides a new level of competition for carriers in Europe and Qatar.

Both parties are expected to take bold steps through agreeing upon the terms and conditions relating to fair competition, the environment, consumer protection, social aspects and transparency, in addition to an item relating to doing business under which Qatar will no longer force European carriers to have a local sales agent to be able to operate flights to Doha.

The agreement was initialled following a series of consultative meetings and full-scale discussions that covered the agreement’s terms and conditions and all particulars to conclude a final version.

The parties also discussed matters relating to air safety, aviation and navigation security and environment.