

R11 No To Airport Expansions — Not in Barcelona, Not Anywhere

Proposer: Joves Ecosocialistes
Agenda item: 4. Resolutions

Motion text

1 In the context of climate emergency, when science and activists worldwide are
2 urging for the decarbonisation of the global economy, the transport sector plays
3 a major role. Specifically, air transport requires a massive reformulation
4 effort. Despite the warnings –and obviousness– regarding the high impact of
5 aviation on the environment, the operators of several major European airports
6 are putting forward expansion proposals. Scaling up these facilities is in line
7 with a strategy of growth in the aviation sector that is in clear contradiction
8 with the need for decarbonisation. Once again, the economic powers and elites
9 are making profit at the expenses of our rights to live in a healthy
10 environment.

11 In Spain, the national airport operator AENA has put forward plans to expand
12 virtually all major Spanish airports. In the case of Barcelona - El Prat
13 Airport, the expansion project envisions a new terminal and the extension of one
14 the airport's three runways, with the goal of reaching 70 million passengers per
15 year by 2030. The airport is located right by the Llobregat Delta, a space of
16 critical ecological importance within the dense, heavily urbanized Barcelona
17 conurbation. There are several swamps and two main lagoons around the airport
18 area, one of which would be removed to allocate the runway extension. Overall,
19 the Barcelona Airport expansion project would generate the following negative
20 impacts:

- 21 • Massive biodiversity loss, as 43 protected bird species, fish and reptiles
22 would be deprived of their natural ecosystem

- 23 • Greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions coming from airport operations would surge
24 by 33%, which go in the opposite direction of international agreements to
25 reduce drastically overall emissions by 2030

- 26 • Direct health impact due to air and noise pollution generated by airport
27 activity, such as cardiovascular and respiratory diseases, as well as an

28 impact on the mental health of airport workers, passengers, and nearby
29 residents; also, an indirect, global health impact from increased GHG
30 emissions contributing to climate change worldwide should be considered.

- 31 • 10 million additional tourists would visit Barcelona annually, further
32 increasing pressure on public services, and speeding up gentrification,
33 directly impacting on the inhabitants' housing rights

- 34 • A model based on an unstoppable growth which benefits big companies
35 fostering ecocide capitalism, undermining the very universal right to live
36 in a habitable planet

- 37 • 1.7 billion euro would be lost to an unupdated and unsustainable transport
38 system; instead this budget should be allocated to improve and expand the
39 local rail network, with a focus on night trains and international
40 connections—as of 2019, 54.5% of airport passengers could be provided with
41 competitive rail alternatives

42 With this resolution, the Federation of Young European Greens:

- 43 • Call on the appropriate authorities and institutions to protect the
44 environment and health by halting all expansion plans of all European
45 airport operators, which constitute a threat for a green and just
46 transition.

- 47 • Urge all European countries and institutions, specially those that are
48 members of the European Union, to develop a competitive intra-european
49 train network, creating new cross-border services through high-speed and
50 night trains, with the goal of reducing airplane use.

- 51 • Urges the European Commission to halt all EU-funded subsidies to airlines
52 and airport expansion projects of already developed airports

- 53 • Urges national European governments and European institutions to put
54 forward a ban on air routes where a competitive rail alternative exists,
55 as was already approved by France on national air routes where an
56 alternative rail service with travel times under 2.5 hours is offered

- 57 • Call on the European Commission to create an air carbon tax that may be
58 dynamically adjusted depending on the distance and the existence of
59 competitive rail alternatives over the same route; the obtained revenue
60 should be used to further develop competitive rail alternatives

- 61 • Call on civil society and local governments on showing their discontent
62 with such projects and claim for a green and just transition

Reason

It may look like science fiction, but national administrations across Europe are still pushing for airport expansions. As air traffic is a major greenhouse gas (GHG) emitter, it makes no sense to keep subsidizing airlines and funding airport expansions; instead, all European institutions should coordinate to provide competitive rail alternatives on all major air routes across Europe. In the case of Barcelona Airport, the proposed expansion project envisions removing an entire lagoon in the Llobregat Delta, an area of the utmost ecological importance in the Barcelona metropolitan area.