



Aviation litigation and regulation

Our aviation litigation and regulation team advises on a range of national, supranational and international regulatory issues affecting airlines, avionic companies and manufacturers.

The team is regularly involved in advising on contentious and non-contentious aviation regulatory matters including compliance with EU Regulations, state aid and other aspects of competition / antitrust law, foreign ownership rules, EU blacklisting, passenger liability, the effect of sanctions, and issues arising out of aircraft accidents and incidents and ensuing investigations.

The nature of our experience and track record of acting for airlines, lessors, insurers, airline associations and the global transportation banks means that we have a 360 degree understanding of how the aviation industry works from a regulatory viewpoint, enabling us to leverage this knowledge and experience for the benefit of our clients without any re-invention of wheels or costs inefficiencies.

Our aviation regulation team forms part of the wider transport team at Stephenson Harwood, regarded as one of the leading transportation firms in the market.

Our experience

- We advise our clients on antitrust, competition, state aid, cartel, mergers and alliance issues, price fixing investigations, slot sales, acquisitions and transfers, regulatory safety compliance, and ground handling issues.
- We advise on compliance with various EU Regulations including EC Regulation 1008/2008 and foreign ownership rules, and regulations relating to environmental issues including the Emissions Trading Scheme and noise emissions.
- We regularly handle claims arising out of such EU Regulations both in the UK and across Europe.
- We assist airlines with advice on sanctions that may affect their operations and business.
- We advise non-EU airlines included on the EU Air Safety List as blacklisted airlines, and have a successful track record of securing the removal of airlines that are subject to a complete or partial operational ban from the EU blacklist.
- We advise on all issues governed by and arising out of the Chicago Convention, its Annexes and guidance provided by ICAO.
- We advise on issues and processes arising out of aircraft accidents and incidents with reference to ICAO Annex 13 of the Chicago Convention, and relevant national law and procedure.
- In the context of passenger liability, we frequently advise and act on claims arising out of the Montreal Convention, EC Regulation 261/2004, EC Regulation 1107/2006 (Passengers with Reduced Mobility), conditions of carriage, and domestic and European consumer protection legislation.
- We also advise on the Tokyo Convention and issues surrounding disruptive passengers, including advice for flight crew in handling such situations.
- We have acted for several airlines in relation to fines levied by the UK Border Force. We also assist with the review of contracts in relation to leasing, and conditions of carriage.
- We act for Ryanair in respect of an ongoing judicial review against the UK Civil Aviation Authority. The judicial review concerns certain actions taken by the CAA in 2018/2019 in relation to its powers as the designated body for approving providers of alternative dispute resolution, within the aviation market, in the UK.
- We advise on the prospects of judicial review proceedings against decisions handed made by public bodies, and are representing Ryanair DAC in judicial review proceedings brought against the UK Civil Aviation Authority in the English Administrative Court relating to the Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) scheme administered by the CAA relating to passenger claims. We also defend airlines in enforcement proceedings brought by the UK Civil Aviation Authority against airlines for non-compliance with UK law and/or EU regulations.

Get in touch



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Legal 500 UK Awards 2020

Transport Firm of the Year

Stephenson Harwood is a law firm with over 1100 people worldwide, including more than 190 partners. Our people are committed to achieving the goals of our clients - listed and private companies, institutions and individuals.

We assemble teams of bright thinkers to match our clients' needs and give the right advice from the right person at the right time. Dedicating the highest calibre of legal talent to overcome the most complex issues, we deliver pragmatic, expert advice that is set squarely in the real world.

Our headquarters are in London, with eight offices across Asia, Europe and the Middle East. In addition we have forged close ties with other high quality law firms and an integrated local law capability in Singapore and the PRC. This diverse mix of expertise and culture results in a combination of deep local insight and the capability to provide a seamless international service.

"Stephenson Harwood's aviation practice has won our business 10 years and has managed to keep it since despite strong competition in London. We feel they understand our business needs and culture very well."

Legal 500 UK 2023, Aviation

"A dedicated and experienced team, who have successfully helped us navigate some very tricky disputes and difficult situations with heavyweight counterparties."

Legal 500 2023, Aviation