International Air Law and Air Services Agreements Training Course

14 - 18 Dec 2026

Vienna

5800 € (Per Person)

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Course Introduction / Overview:

This comprehensive course provides an in-depth exploration of the complex legal and regulatory framework governing international civil aviation. In an industry built on cross-border connectivity, a thorough understanding of international air law and bilateral air services agreements is indispensable for sustainable growth and operational success. This program delves into the foundational principles established by the Chicago Convention of 1944 and examines the roles of key international bodies such as the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) and the International Air Transport Association (IATA). As noted by the distinguished academic Paul Stephen Dempsey in his extensive works on aviation law, the architecture of global air transport is built upon a delicate balance of national sovereignty and international cooperation, primarily manifested through bilateral agreements. This training, offered by BIG BEN Training Center, moves beyond theoretical concepts to provide practical insights into the negotiation, interpretation, and application of these critical agreements. Participants will analyze the structure of air services agreements, from traffic rights and capacity clauses to modern "open skies" policies, equipping them with the strategic knowledge needed to navigate the complexities of international airline market access and ensure regulatory compliance in a dynamic global environment.

Target Audience / This training course is suitable for:

- Government officials from civil aviation authorities and transport ministries.
- Legal counsel and lawyers specializing in aviation law.
- Airline executives and managers in network planning and international affairs.
- Airport management personnel involved in international operations.
- Regulatory and compliance officers within the aviation sector.
- Aviation consultants and industry analysts.
- Corporate strategy and government relations professionals in airlines.
- International trade and transport policy advisors.

Target Sectors and Industries:

- Commercial airlines and air cargo operators.
- National civil aviation authorities and regulatory bodies.
- Government ministries of transport, foreign affairs, and trade.
- International and regional aviation organizations.
- Airport authorities and operators.
- Aviation-focused law firms and legal consultancies.
- Aerospace manufacturing and services companies.
- Global logistics and freight forwarding companies.

Target Organizations Departments:

- Legal and General Counsel Departments.
- Regulatory Affairs and Compliance Departments.
- Government and International Relations Departments.
- Network Planning and Route Development Departments.
- Corporate Strategy and Business Development Units.
- Commercial and Marketing Departments.
- Flight Operations and International Services Divisions.
- Cargo and Freight Operations Departments.

Course Offerings:

By the end of this course, the participants will have able to:

- Analyze the historical development and sources of public international air law.
- Interpret the provisions of the Chicago Convention and its associated annexes.
- Understand the roles and functions of ICAO, IATA, and other key aviation bodies.
- Deconstruct the key clauses within a traditional bilateral air services agreement.
- Differentiate between various types of air traffic rights (Freedoms of the Air).
- Evaluate the commercial and political implications of "open skies" agreements.
- Develop effective strategies for negotiating air transport agreements.
- Assess the impact of code-sharing and airline alliances on market access.
- Manage compliance with international aviation safety and security regulations.
- Identify and apply appropriate mechanisms for aviation dispute resolution.

Course Methodology:

The training methodology at BIG BEN Training Center is designed to foster a dynamic and interactive learning environment that bridges legal theory with practical application. This course rejects passive learning in favor of an immersive experience where participants actively engage with the material. The program is built around a series of in-depth case studies analyzing real-world bilateral air services negotiations and disputes, allowing participants to understand the strategic considerations behind legal clauses. Interactive workshops will guide attendees through the process of drafting and interpreting agreement provisions, while group discussions will encourage the sharing of diverse perspectives from different sectors of the aviation industry. Expert-led presentations will break down complex legal doctrines into understandable components, supported by practical examples and contemporary industry challenges. Participants will benefit from simulation exercises that mimic negotiation scenarios, providing a safe space to practice and refine their strategic communication and advocacy skills. Continuous feedback from the instructor and peers is a core component, ensuring that participants can confidently apply their newfound knowledge to their professional roles immediately upon completion of the course.

Course Agenda (Course Units):

Unit One: Foundations of Public International Air Law

- Introduction to the history and evolution of air law.
- Sources of international air law: conventions, treaties, and customary law.
- The principle of national sovereignty over airspace.
- The Paris Convention of 1919 and the Havana Convention of 1928.
- The Chicago Convention of 1944: cornerstone of modern aviation.
- Understanding the Freedoms of the Air (First to Ninth Freedoms).
- The distinction between scheduled and non-scheduled international air services.

Unit Two: The International Regulatory Framework

- The International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO): structure and functions.
- The role of ICAO Standards and Recommended Practices (SARPs).
- The International Air Transport Association (IATA): role in commercial aviation.
- The Warsaw Convention and Montreal Convention on air carrier liability.
- Regional aviation organizations and their impact on air law.
- The legal framework for aviation safety oversight (ICAO USOAP).
- The legal framework for aviation security (Annex 17).

Unit Three: Bilateral Air Services Agreements (BASAs)

- The purpose and function of bilateralism in air transport.
- Anatomy of a traditional air services agreement.
- Analyzing key clauses: designation, capacity, and routing.
- Tariff regulation and the role of government approval.
- The Bermuda Principles and their influence on capacity regulation.
- Negotiating strategies and the preparation process for bilateral talks.
- Understanding Memoranda of Understanding (MoUs) and their legal standing.

Unit Four: Liberalization and Commercial Agreements

- The evolution towards air transport liberalization.
- The concept and characteristics of "Open Skies" agreements.
- Analyzing the impact of liberalization on competition and market access.
- The legal and regulatory aspects of code-sharing agreements.
- Global airline alliances and antitrust immunity.
- The role of competition law in international aviation.
- Wet-leasing, dry-leasing, and their regulatory implications.

Unit Five: Contemporary Issues and Dispute Resolution

- Mechanisms for resolving disputes under air services agreements.
- The role of arbitration and the ICAO Council in dispute settlement.
- Environmental challenges and aviation law (CORSIA).
- The legal implications of unmanned aircraft systems (drones).
- Passenger rights regulations and their international impact.
- Future trends in international air transport agreements and policy.
- Final course review and practical application workshop.

FAQ:

Qualifications required for registering to this course?

There are no requirements.

How long is each daily session, and what is the total number of training hours for the course?

This training course spans five days, with daily sessions ranging between 4 to 5 hours, including breaks and interactive activities, bringing the total duration to 20 - 25 training hours.

Something to think about:

How might the rise of regional liberalization, such as the EU's single aviation market, challenge the traditional bilateral model of air service agreements in the coming decade?

What unique qualities does this course offer compared to other courses?

This course distinguishes itself by moving beyond a purely academic recitation of legal texts to provide a strategic, commercially-focused perspective on international air law. While other programs may focus heavily on the letter of the law, this training emphasizes the "why" behind the "what," exploring how air services agreements function as critical instruments of foreign policy, economic development, and corporate strategy. We delve into the practical realities of negotiation, providing participants with the frameworks and tactics used by seasoned diplomats and airline executives to secure favorable market access. The curriculum is uniquely structured to bridge the gap between legal departments and commercial teams, ensuring that lawyers understand the business drivers and that network planners grasp the regulatory constraints. By integrating case studies of landmark negotiations and contemporary disputes, the course provides a dynamic and relevant learning experience that is directly applicable to the challenges facing the aviation industry today. The focus is not just on understanding the rules, but on mastering the art of using those rules to achieve strategic objectives in the competitive global aviation landscape.