

# Air transport and the environment

[A5-0187/2000](#)

**European Parliament resolution on the communication from the Commission to the Council, the European Parliament, the Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions - Air Transport and the Environment: Towards meeting the Challenges of Sustainable Development (COM(1999) 640 - C5-0086/2000 - 2000/2054(COS))**

## **The European Parliament,**

- having regard to the Commission communication (COM(1999) 640 - C5-0086/2000),
- having regard to Article 2 of the EU Treaty, which makes sustainable development an explicit goal of the EU,
- having regard to Article 6 of the EC Treaty, which obliges the Community to integrate environmental concerns into all policy areas,
- having regard to the fact that safety has always been the air transport industry's top priority, which has been an important factor in its success; safety levels must continue to be protected - whatever environmental strategies are required,
- having regard to the fact that the EU Treaty clearly states that the principles of sustainable development should be applied to all modes of transport (road, rail and air),
- having regard to the economic and social importance of the aviation industry in EU Member States in which air transport has brought work, prosperity, increased trade and new travel and tourism opportunities,
- having regard to the fact that the EU should not create unnecessary differences where global standards exist; where new rules need to be created for example in environmental protection, there must be an international approach for such a universal industry as air transport,
- having regard to the Fifth Environmental Action Programme of the European Union which recommends the use of fiscal instruments for environmental policy in order to ensure that natural resources are used in a responsible manner by consumers and suppliers and its resolution of 17 November 1992 on a Community Programme of Policy and Action in relation to the Environment and Sustainable Development<sup>(1)</sup>,
- having regard to the the OECD Council of May 1999 where ministers stated that sustainable development requires the integration of economic instruments for environmental protection, namely the internalisation of external costs<sup>(2)</sup>,
- having regard to the European Conference of Ministers of Transport (ECMT) which published a comprehensive in depth review of the state of the art of internalisation policies with a range of concrete proposals for the introduction of environmental levies in all transport sectors<sup>(3)</sup>,
- having regard to the Commission White Paper "Fair payment for infrastructure use: a phased approach to a common transport infrastructure charging framework in the EU" (COM (1998) 466), in which the Commission presented a new framework for infrastructure charging, in which the marginal social costs of transport are taken into account and Parliament's resolution<sup>(4)</sup>,
- having regard to the final report on "options for charging users directly for transport infrastructure operating costs" issued by the High Level Group on Transport Infrastructure Charging on 9 September 1999,

- having regard to the Cardiff process of environmental integration, started in 1998, during which the internalisation of external costs in the transport sector has been put forward by Ministers on numerous occasions<sup>(5)</sup>,
- having regard to the IPCC (Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change) Special report on Aviation and the Global Atmosphere, which recognises that the effects of some types of aircraft emissions are well known, but which also reveals that there are a number of key areas of scientific uncertainty that currently limit the ability to project aviation impacts on climate and ozone,
- having regard to the World Health Organisation Guidelines for Community Noise , adopted March 2000, and the World Health Organisation Charter on Transport, Environment, and Health, June 1999,
- having regard to the fact that the EU is represented through certain of its member states in ICAO and is itself an observer to the ICAO committee on Aviation Environmental Protection (CAEP) where these global environmental standards are developed,
- having regard to its resolutions of 30 March 2000 on hush-kitted aircraft<sup>(6)</sup> and of 14 April 2000 on night flights and noise pollution near airports<sup>(7)</sup>, and of 4 May 2000 on the European Airline Industry: from Single Market to World-wide Challenges<sup>(8)</sup>,
- having regard to Rule 47(1) of its Rules of Procedure,
- having regard to the report of the Committee on Regional Policy, Transport and Tourism ([A5-0187/2000](#)),

A. whereas Principle 16 of the UN Conference on Environment and Development's Rio Declaration calls on member states to promote the internalisation of environmental costs and the use of economic instruments, taking into account the approach that the polluter should, in principle, bear the cost of pollution, with due regard to the public interest and without distorting international trade and investment,

B. whereas Annex 4.2b of the Convention to Combat Global Warming commits Annex 1 Parties to "adopt national policies and take corresponding measures on the mitigation of climate change, by limiting its anthropogenic emissions of greenhouse gases and protecting and enhancing its greenhouse gas sinks and reservoirs" ,

C. whereas the Kyoto Protocol to the UNFCCC in Art. 2.2 requires Annex 1 parties to strive to limit or reduce greenhouse gases from aviation,

D. whereas at the 32nd ICAO Assembly, at the request of the Member States of the European Union, decisions were taken aimed at continuing and accelerating the work of ICAO in the area of aviation environmental protection,

E. whereas CAEP formed a specific working group to identify and evaluate the potential role of market-based options, including emissions charges, fuel taxes, carbon offset and emissions trading regimes,

F. whereas ICAO is the specialised agency with global responsibility for the establishment of standards, recommended practices and guidance on various aspects of international civil aviation, including environmental protection and its standards and recommended practices are global in scope, providing benchmarks for both regional and national legislation,

G. whereas air passenger traffic both within the Community and between the Community and third countries increased by nearly 40% between 1993 and 1997; whereas passenger numbers are expected to double over the next 15 years in the European Union, leading to a negative impact on the environment which must be limited,

H. whereas ICAO is expected to agree new noise certification standards and associated measures in January 2001 and to establish the global parameters for new market-based options, including emission charges,

I. whereas other efficient means of surface public transport must be treated as an alternative to air transport over shorter distances,

J. having regard to the current work of ICAO/CAEP to reduce the impact of aircraft noise and gaseous emissions, and having regard to the 33<sup>rd</sup> ICAO Assembly to be held in 2001, which will aim to introduce stricter worldwide aircraft noise standards,

K. hoping that, for this Assembly, in matters of EU competence Member States will give the Commission a clear negotiating mandate which reflects the Treaty obligation to integrate environmental protection requirements into all policies,

### **General**

1. Welcomes this important initiative from the Commission; considers that there has been a major policy gap and so believes that the introduction of appropriate policy measures is urgently needed;

2. Considers it essential that targets are set and dates introduced, in order to enable the aircraft industry, airlines, and users to adapt to legislative measures in good time;

3. Considers that one of the factors which separates air transport from other modes is that it requires common world wide business practices and international regulatory framework;

4. Calls on the Commission to put forward an EU strategy to feed into the ICAO process before the CAEP 5 meeting in January 2001;

5. Welcomes the introduction in May 2000 of the Working Radiation Directive, for airline crew, which is now being implemented by all EU airlines;

### **Aircraft noise**

6. Considers that the Community should support and strengthen the ICAO process of revising noise stringency levels in order to meet as far as possible the particular needs of the densely populated, industrialised EU and to take account of the particular needs of third country airlines from the developing world who operate into the EU; this could include a global system of airport classification agreed under ICAO auspices and therefore calls on the Commission to pursue complementary measures to be implemented if ICAO cannot reach appropriate agreement;

7. Welcomes the approach adopted by the Commission of insisting on transitional rules allowing the noisiest categories of Chapter 3 aircraft to be phased out ;

8. Urges the Commission to develop a common definition of average noise level at ground level, which must serve as a basis for developing noise standards at European airports;

9. Recommends setting a new and ambitious time frame for phasing out aircraft within a 5d BA margin of the Chapter 3 threshold and other Chapter 3 aircraft as and when new standards have been formulated;

10. Recommends that to safeguard the health of citizens living near airports, the EU should develop community-wide guideline values taking into account e.g. the WHO guidelines for Community Noise and all sources of environmental noise;

11. Further recommends that the EU adopt Community-wide noise exposure targets that ensure that nobody is exposed to unacceptable noise levels at night; these noise levels should be based on the WHO Guidelines;

12. Asks the Commission to create a Community-wide framework in order to provide member states with the necessary guidelines in order to achieve the targets referred to in paragraphs 7 and 8; considers that a reduction in the noise pollution around airports can best be achieved by a combination of measures;

13. Asks the Commission to develop targets to define the concept of "noise sensitive airports" ;

14. Encourages the Community to continue to actively contribute to the work of the ICAO in identifying and evaluating market-based mechanisms and new emission parameters for the climb and cruise phases of flight;

### **Gaseous emissions**

15. Regrets the vague wording adopted by the Commission regarding this issue; and calls on the Commission to define clear objectives for gaseous emissions, particularly in the context of the examination of this issue under the CAEP/5 work programme;

16. Considers that there should be a level playing field between the demands made on international aviation and the demands made of other industrial and transport sectors, and therefore considers that an ambitious but feasible target for Annex 1 (developed) countries would be the same target as that set out for other sectors under the Kyoto Protocol;

### **Air traffic management**

17. Asks the Commission to develop a new policy framework to allow slot allocation also to be linked to the environmental performance of aircraft and operations, including the prioritisation of slot allocation for journeys where high speed rail alternatives do not exist;

18. Supports the current efforts of the Commission to re-structure Air Traffic Management in Europe since, according to the IPCC Report, ATM improvements could help to reduce fuel burn by 6 to 12%;

19. Calls on the Member States to adopt the necessary measures to develop a coherent airports policy, seeking to create complementarity between regional and national airports;

### **Kerosene tax**

20. Considers it necessary, for reasons of environmental policy, to introduce a kerosene tax on all routes departing from the EU (paragraph 26, Option A), if international and/or bilateral rules permit this; the Commission should investigate the introduction of such a measure , only if it is proven that such a solution is technically feasible, economically reasonable and environmentally beneficial; encourages cooperation between the Member States and the Commission, in their discussions on this subject within the ICAO framework;

### **Environmental charges**

21. Considers that if international agreement is not reached on a kerosene tax, or on other economic instruments to ensure sufficient environmental improvements, a Community-wide environmental charge should be introduced, based on the polluter pays principle, and therefore supports the Commission's proposed actions in this field; such a charge should ensure a fair competition between modes of transport; while the charge would be introduced at EU level, the revenue should be returned to member states to be invested in further reducing the environmental damage caused by aviation;

### **Direct Subsidies,**

22. Calls on the Commission urgently to examine the economic impact of the zero-rating of VAT on air tickets, kerosene, and the purchase of new aircraft, as well as the exemption of kerosene from excise duty, and direct subsidies to airports and airlines, in the context of ensuring fair competition between modes, and to bring forward a report by the end of 2000;

### **Land-use Planning**

23. Supports the Commission proposal to establish, in close cooperation with Member States, recommended best practice on land-use planning in the vicinity of airports;

24. Asks the Commission to develop guidelines on land-use planning in order to standardise national legislation and to co-ordinate Member States' action; Member States should prevent the development of urbanisation in the vicinity of airports so as to safeguard citizens' health and airports' long-term expansion opportunities;

### **Traffic reduction and modal shift**

25. Notes the Commission's recognition that encouraging a modal shift from air travel to rail alternatives may be an important part of the strategy to reduce the environmental problems associated with aviation; asks the Commission to produce a report by the end of 2001 setting out the scale of likely environmental gains under a range of different scenarios;

### **Environmental auditing**

26. Urges the aviation sector, in cooperation with the Commission, to examine in greater detail the legality and practicability of awarding an environmental performance certification mark, along the lines of EMAS, which can be used by aircraft manufacturers, airlines, airports and the tourist industry to promote their performance;

### **Concluding remarks**

27. Calls on the Member States to give the Commission a clear mandate for negotiation for the 33rd ICAO Assembly in 2001, so environmental and transport policy objectives are able to be vigorously pursued and carried through at the assembly;

28. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council, the Commission and the Governments of the Member States.

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<sup>(1)</sup> OJ C 337, 21.12.1992, p. 34.

<sup>(2)</sup> Press Communiqué SG/COM/NEWS (99)52 of the OECD on the High Level Meeting of the OECD Council, Paris 26-27 May, 1999.

<sup>(3)</sup> "Efficient Transport for Europe: Policies for Internalisation of External Costs", ECMT, Paris 1998

<sup>(4)</sup> OJ C 219, 30.7.1999, p. 460.

<sup>(5)</sup> Eg "Follow-up to the conclusions of the European Council of Cardiff: Report to the European Council of Vienna on integrating the environment and sustainable development into the transport policy of the Community", 13811/98, Brussels, 30.11-1.12.1999.

<sup>(6)</sup> Texts adopted, Item 3.

<sup>(7)</sup> Texts adopted, Item 1.

<sup>(8)</sup> Texts adopted, Item 8.

