Framework for the creation of the single European sky

2001/0060(COD) - 16/12/2015 - Follow-up document

In accordance with Regulation (EC) No 549/2004, the Commission presented this report on the implementation and progress of the Single European Sky (SES) during the 2012-2014 period.

Since the launch of the SES initiative in 2000, **two packages of legislation have been adopted and almost fully implemented**. They aim to reduce the fragmentation of European airspace and increase capacity by introducing additional rules on safety, airspace management, cost transparency and interoperability. The legislation adopted in 2009 by the Council and European Parliament (SESII), which is intended to accelerate the implementation of a truly Single Sky from 2012 onwards, is now being implemented and its results can therefore be measured.

(1) Achievements relating to performance: for the first reference period of the SES performance scheme (**RP1 – 2012-2014**), the main findings are as follows:

- ***Security***: there have been no fatal accidents in which ATM was a contributing factor since 2011. **The number of serious incidents has been falling since 2010** and marked improvements have been made in safety management. However, the ATM system is not very transparent because targets are restricted to processes and do not measure safety performance as incidents are not automatically reported.

- ***Environment***: horizontal en-route flight efficiency (shorter routes) improved slightly in 2013 (5.11 %) but did not meet the target (4.92%). In 2014, flight efficiency stood at 4.9 %, falling short of the target of 4.67 % for the first reference period. Airspace users (airlines) sometimes preferred to fly the cheapest routes (in terms of charging zones) rather that the shortest. The Single European Sky has **positively impacted** ATM over the past years from an environmental perspective. This was mainly the result of the SESAR project. In fact, SESAR technology and operational improvements enables **more direct flight paths** and smooth descent and climbing. In this context, a major operational achievement was the start of the implementation of free routing in upper airspace allowing more direct routes, cost saving and reduction in CO2 emissions.

- ***Capacity***: good progress has been made in reducing capacity delays. In 2012 and 2013, the EU-wide target was met. In 2013, en route air traffic flow management (AFTM) delays decreased by **15 %** compared with 2012, as traffic volumes fell by 1.3 %. By contrast, the ATM sector failed to achieve the network target of **reducing delays to 0.5 minutes per flight in 2014.**

- ***Cost-efficiency***: air navigation service providers (ANSPs) were able to reduce their cost bases because of lower-than-planned traffic volumes. **Actual costs were each year between -3.4% and -5.9% lower than planned costs (or determined costs).** As a result of lower air traffic levels, the actual en-route unit costs were 0.4% higher than EU-wide target for 2014. The fact that performance targets were not met in 2014 despite lower than planned traffic indicates that more work needs to be done in the second reference period (RP2 – 2015-2019).

- ***Sector fragmentation***: the European ATM sector remains fragmented and the costs of its services are comparatively high. The unit cost of air navigation services is particularly high, with users pay around **EUR 10.5 billion annually (in user charges, delay costs and flight inefficiencies)**.

- ***A strengthened network***: the report noted that the network manager function has developed from a theoretical concept into a successful entity recognised by stakeholders that brings tangible daily performance benefits to the EU network and to neighbouring countries. The network manager contributed directly to curb en route delays below the target level in the capacity plans declared by EU Member States. Coordination at network level reduced the effects of unexpected events, such as a series of strikes in 2013 and 2014 in some Member States, especially in France.

- ***Functional airspace blocks (FABs)***: the nine FABs, which had to be established by 4 December 2012, have now been established. However, the **FAB operational objectives have not been achieved regarding the optimisation of airspace and resources**, which in turn generates inefficiencies in the entire European air traffic management system and **extra costs of close to €5 billion a year**. Infringement proceedings have been initiated against 23 Member States.

(2) Social conditions and employment: these conditions have been **improving** for air transport sector employees over the last years, including for ATM. However **industrial action** continues to take place in the ATM sector, in particular in France, while in other countries the social peace has been constantly guaranteed through a constructive employer-employee dialogue.

(3) Institutional and regulatory developments:

- several SES-related bodies have been set up since 2011 and are operating successfully. In 2014, the designation of the **Performance Review Body** (PRB) has been extended in time;
- **Eurocontrol** has been appointed Network Manager until 2019 and has performed the network functions and coordinated the response to crisis situations;
- for the technical pillar of the SES, the SESAR Joint Undertaking was created in 2007 to ensure the modernisation of the European ATM system by coordinating and concentrating all relevant research and development efforts in the EU. With regard to the deployment phase, the SESAR Deployment Manager was appointed by the Commission in 2014;
- the SESII package **extended the competencies of European Aviation Safety Agency (EASA)** to include ATM and aerodromes;
- the European Defence Agency's (EDA) Steering Board asked EDA to facilitate the **coordination of military views** on SES and SESAR deployment;
- the Commission launched initiatives such as the Communication on "opening the aviation market to civil use" setting out a series of concrete measures, including the possibility of adopting a **European regulatory framework** covering all relevant areas to make the operation of Remotely-piloted aircraft systems (RPAS) safe and secure.

(4) SES vision and future challenges: the Commission aims to:

- support the development of the European aviation industry by increasing its competitiveness, maintaining **high standards** and investing in **innovation**. Technology is likely to be the main driver in the development of the SES over the next two decades. Industry should play a more effective role in the deployment of network-focused solutions, and common and virtual services;
- consider the **global dimension** of ATM in order to optimise the performance of aircraft operations;
- **strengthen social dialogue** which will be essential for ensuring efficient change management affecting human resources within the ATM sector, limiting industrial action;
- ensure **regulatory stability**, meaning consistent and timely implementation of EU regulations, and effective regulatory market intervention if monopolistic conditions persist among ANSPs.

As regards the immediate next steps, action in the years 2015-2019 should focus on:

-

- **fully implementing SESII successfully and, starting to implement SESII+** once adopted;
- **continued investment in the SESAR project** will help to bring about major improvements in the way the ATM system works in Europe. All stakeholders must continue to contribute to meeting targets relating to the key performance indicators (safety, cost-efficiency, capacity and environmental sustainability);
- **tackling new and existing challenges** relating to: (i) looming airport capacity crunch, (ii) the integration of RPAS into non-segregated airspace and (iii) the resilience of the ATM sector to cyber-attacks.