Aviation strategy for Europe

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The Committee on Transport and Tourism adopted the own-initiative report by Pavel TELIKA (ALDE, CZ) on an aviation strategy for Europe.

The Committee on Employment and Social Affairs, exercising its prerogative as an associated committee in accordance with Article 54 of the Rules of Procedure, also gave its opinion on the report.

The report recalled that the lack of proper implementation of EU legislation and political unwillingness in the Council prevent the aviation sector from unleashing its full potential, thus damaging its competitiveness and leading to greater costs at the expense of businesses, passengers and the economy.

A more ambitious approach: Members stressed that a further holistic and more ambitious approach should be embraced in order to provide the necessary boost for a sustainable and competitive European aviation industry. They also stressed that safety is a guiding principle for the European aviation strategy and that it must be continuously improved. In this regard, they welcomed the review of the EASA (European Air Safety Agency) Basic Regulation (Regulation (EC) No 216/2008), aimed at achieving the highest levels of safety in aviation. The EASA should be equipped with sufficient resources and staff to ensure high safety standards and to strengthen its role on the international scene.

The Council and the Member States are urged to make swift progress on other essential dossiers which are currently **deadlocked**, such as the Recast of the Regulation on the Implementation of the Single European Sky (SES2+) and the revision of the Slot Regulation and the Air Passenger Rights Regulations. The Commission is called upon to rethink ongoing initiatives and propose viable alternatives to remove the deficiencies of the aviation sector resulting from the late and incomplete implementation of EU legislation such as the Single European Sky (SES).

International dimension: the report welcomed the initiative to negotiate at EU level air transport agreements and bilateral aviation safety agreements with third countries representing emerging and strategic markets (China, Japan, ASEAN, Turkey, Qatar, the UAE, Armenia, Mexico, China, Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman and Saudi Arabia), and that any new agreements should be correctly implemented and enforced by all parties and need to include a fair competition clause on the basis of international standards (ICAO, ILO). Parliament should be fully involved at all stages of negotiations.

EU single market in aviation and trans-European motorway of the sky: Article 3 of Regulation (EC) No 551/2004 that foresees the establishment of a single European Upper Flight Information Region (EUIR), without prejudice to Member States' sovereignty, has not been implemented yet. Such EUIR would allow building a Trans-European Motorway of the Sky to **mitigate the current fragmentation of the European airspace** and disruptions to the air transport system that are greatly affecting the continuity of air services and damaging EU competitiveness. To meet the goals of the EU aviation strategy, it is therefore urgent to translate such a concept into reality.

Improved connectivity: Members acknowledged the significant **connectivity gap** within the EU, characterised by a lower number of air connections in certain parts of the Union, and the importance of regional connectivity (including geographical areas excluded from the TEN-T). Members suggested the development of a **connectivity index**: a connectivity index should aim at reflecting the actual added value of a specific route.

Encouraging multimodality: Members stressed the need for fast, efficient and user-friendly connections between public transport networks and airport infrastructure and in this regard called on both the Commission and the Member States to give greater priority to the multimodal objective within the TEN-T corridors while removing bottlenecks. The Commission should promptly present its proposal for a multimodal and interoperable approach to transport, with the aviation sector fully integrated.

Creating a favourable environment for smart investment: Members stated that the entire aviation value chain has the potential to be a strategic sector for investment, which needs to be further exploited by setting long-term objectives and by granting incentives to smart initiatives fulfilling those objectives, such as greener airports or aircraft, noise reduction, connection between airport facilities and public transport. The Commission and the Member States are invited to look into **further measures** to promote such initiatives, including through the effective use of the European Fund for Strategic Investments (EFSI), and to continue promoting and financing programmes such as Clean Sky and SESAR.

Delivering environment objectives: Members welcomed the Commission's intention to review the EU's measures to reduce CO2 emissions from aviation. They stated that, in view also of the Commission's Circular Economy Package, further initiatives aimed at increasing environmental capacity and reducing emissions and noise from operational activities from, to and within airports should be encouraged, for example by adopting renewable fuels (e.g. biofuels), by promoting "green airports" and "green way-to-airports", and by achieving the most efficient logistics management.

Improving security: Members stressed that the security challenges, including cybersecurity, facing the aviation sector will increase in the future, requiring an immediate shift to a more risk-based and intelligence-based approach.

Lastly, they welcomed the Commission's proposal for an EU certification system for aviation security screening equipment and insisted on the need for a consistent implementation of the existing rules regarding staff recruitment and training. They called on the Commission to look into the possibility of deepening the one-stop security concept, and of developing an **EU precheck system** allowing pre-registered EU travellers to transit security clearance in a more efficient manner.