

EU/USA/Iceland/Norway Air Transport Agreement: accession of Croatia to the EU

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PURPOSE: to conclude, on behalf of the European Union and its Member States, of the Protocol amending the Air Transport Agreement between the United States of America, of the first part, the European Union and its Member States, of the second part, Iceland of the third part, and the Kingdom of Norway, of the fourth part, signed on June 16 and 21, 2011, to take account of the accession to the European Union of the Republic of Croatia.

PROPOSED ACT: Council Decision.

ROLE OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT: Council may adopt the act only if Parliament has given its consent to the act.

BACKGROUND: under the Act of Accession, Croatia has undertaken to accede to the agreements concluded or signed by the Union and the Member States with third countries.

Among those agreements is the Air Transport Agreement between the United States of America, the European Union and its Member States, Iceland and Norway (“the Four Part Agreement”), which extends the scope of the Air Transport Agreement between the United States and the European Community and its Member States (“the EU-US ATA”) to those countries.

The Commission has accordingly negotiated a protocol amending the Four Part Agreement to provide for the accession of Croatia to that agreement.

CONTENT: this proposal seeks to obtain a Council decision on the conclusion of the protocol on behalf of the Union and the Member States, subsequent to its signing. The Protocol consists of a main body providing for the accession of Croatia to the Four Part Agreement and the consequential amendments to that agreement, and a Joint Declaration on the authentication of additional language versions.

The EU-US ATA was the first comprehensive air transport agreement with a key aviation partner of the Union. It is the most important air transport agreement in the world, providing more than 80 million seats per year, and as such a cornerstone of the EU’s external aviation policy. Its importance has increased by its extension to Iceland and Norway through the Four Part Agreement.

The protocol will allow Croatia to benefit from the Four Part Agreement, which creates equal and uniform conditions for market access and serves as a basis for new arrangements for regulatory co-operation and convergence in fields essential for the safe, secure, and efficient operation of air services.