Common rules for the operation of air services in the Community in view of the COVID-19 pandemic

2020/0069(COD) - 13/05/2020 - Text adopted by Parliament, 1st reading/single reading

The European Parliament adopted by 541 votes to 29, with 17 abstentions, a legislative resolution on the proposal for a regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council amending Regulation (EC)

No 1008/2008 of the European Parliament and of the Council on common rules for the operation of air services in the Community in view of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Parliament adopted its position at first reading under the ordinary legislative procedure. As an agreement was reached between Parliament and Council, Parliament's position corresponds to the final legislative act.

The proposed Regulation aims at temporarily amending the rules applicable to air services in order to help airlines and airports to cope with the sharp decline in air traffic caused by the COVID-19 outbreak.

Specifically, the Regulation:

- amends the rules for the licensing of air carriers in the event of financial difficulties due to the COVID-19 pandemic in order to avoid unnecessary administrative burdens: on the basis of assessments carried out between 1 March 2020 and 31 December 2020, the competent licensing authority may decide before the end of this period not to suspend or revoke the operating licence of the Union air carrier, provided that safety is not jeopardised and that there is a realistic prospect of a satisfactory financial recovery within the following 12 months;

- introduces a derogation from the procedures used by Member States to impose restrictions on traffic rights in order to deal with emergency situations: Member States shall thus be able, without the Commission's agreement, to refuse, limit or impose conditions on the exercise of traffic rights if such measures are necessary to deal with the COVID-19 outbreak. These measures must respect the principles of proportionality and transparency and be based on objective and non-discriminatory criteria. The Commission may suspend this derogation at the request of any Member State involved or on its own initiative;

- introduces new temporary rules on the provision of ground handling services: the aim is to help airports continue their activities in the event of the bankruptcy of a ground handling company (i) by introducing a direct procedure for the selection of service providers to provide these services for a maximum period of 6 months or until 31 December 2020 and (ii) by allowing the prolongation of existing contracts until 2022.