

Temporary relief from the slot utilisation rules at Community airports due to the COVID-19 pandemic

2020/0358(COD) - 11/02/2021 - Text adopted by Parliament, 1st reading/single reading

The European Parliament adopted by 683 votes to 3, with 4 abstentions, a legislative resolution on the proposal for a regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council amending Council Regulation (EEC) No 95/93 as regards temporary relief from the slot utilisation rules at Community airports due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

The proposed regulation aims at introducing specific rules and relief from the general slot utilisation rules for a limited period of time in order to mitigate the effects of the COVID-19 crisis on air traffic.

Parliament adopted its position at first reading in accordance with the ordinary legislative procedure by amending the Commission proposal as follows:

Slot allocation in response to the COVID-19 crisis

Due to the drop in passenger demand caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, the ‘use-it-or-lose-it’ rule imposed by the Slot Regulation was suspended in March 2020 to prevent airlines from flying empty aircraft during the pandemic. This exemption expires on 27 March 2021.

For the period starting after more than one year of the abandonment of the ‘use-it-or-lose-it’ rule (1 February 2020 to 27 March 2021), which preserves the 2019 acquired slots of air carriers until the end of the winter 2021/2022 scheduling season, the proposed regulation aims to establish a way to return to a normal application of the ‘use-it-or-lose-it’ rule.

Thus, with the updated rules, airlines would have to use only 50% of their take-off and landing slots scheduled during the summer of 2021 (instead of the 80% required before the pandemic) in order to be able to retain them for the following season.

In addition, the European Commission could adopt, where strictly necessary to take account of the evolution of the impact of the COVID-19 crisis on air traffic levels, delegated acts to adjust the utilisation rate within a range of 30% to 70%.

Information for the coordinator

Air carriers operating or intending to operate at a schedule facilitated or coordinated airport shall submit to the schedules facilitator or coordinator respectively all relevant information requested by them. In particular, an air carrier should inform the coordinator, at the time of the request for allocation, whether it would benefit from the status of new entrant, in respect of requested slots.

Restrictive measures to combat the spread of COVID-19

The amended text clarifies that the negative consequences of possible measures, adopted by public authorities of Member States or third countries to combat the spread of COVID-19 and to restrict the

ability to travel at very short notice, cannot be imputed to air carriers and should be mitigated where they have a significant impact on the viability of travel or the possibility to travel or on demand on the routes concerned.

This should include measures that result in:

- a partial or total closure of the border or airspace or a partial or total closure, or reduction in capacity, of the airports concerned,
- restrictions on airline crew movement significantly hindering the operation of air services, or
- a serious impediment to passengers' ability to travel with any carrier on the route concerned, including travel restrictions, restrictions on movement or quarantine measures in the country or region of destination or restrictions on the availability of direct support services essential to the operation of an air service.

Specific relief from the effects of the imposition of such measures should be of limited duration and, in any event, should not exceed two consecutive scheduling periods.