

# Access to the groundhandling market at Community airports

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The ESC welcomed in principle the Commission's efforts to ensure rapid, functional handling at Community airports. However, it drew attention to: - the need to make a technical distinction between the land side and the air side, where the individual areas of activity should be listed in detail; - the fact that the proposal lacked clear definitions in many respects. Initially it would be necessary to establish business transparency before contemplating any further measures; - the danger that safety, environmental and employment concerns were not heeded, with users' and passengers' interests suffering as a result. With regard to security, the ESC felt that it would be necessary to make a detailed analysis of the effects on safety and security and ensure that the validity of national security provisions was binding. It also criticised the proposal's complete failure to consider the social consequences. In its comments on the articles of the directive, the ESC stated that it was important to: - reconsider the scope of the proposal by closely scrutinising the practical operations at airports; - ensure that all airport companies and other providers of groundhandling services were obliged to unbundle their accounting and management; - provide further details on the establishment and operation of the Users' Committee. The ESC thought that the exemption criteria should be very precise and legally binding so that Member States really were in a position to grant exemptions and that provision should be made for consultation between the Commission and the Member States concerned prior to initiating action before the Court of Justice. Finally, in view of the wealth of unanswered questions and objections to the Commission's approach, implementation of the directive by July 1996 in the interests of all parties did not make much sense. This was also true, in particular, of the Commission's basic idea that the proposal ought to improve economic efficiency.