Air traffic management: freeing europe's airspace. White paper

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The Committee endorses, in general, the Commission's description of the shortcomings of the current air-traffic management system in Europe and strongly supports the need for action to improve the system in the interest of reducing delays, air safety and in providing consistency of national management systems. The Committee believes the situation demands a multinational solution and supports the Commission's conclusion that EUROCONTROL should be "reinvented" with stronger regulatory powers. The Commission does, however, need to provide more detailed information on its view on the differences between regulatory and operational functions and the role of the bodies responsible for their performance. The Committee's view is that central flow management should be the responsibility of the "re-invented" EUROCONTROL with all other operational services being provided by national authorities. In any event the Committee would welcome the membership of those EU Member States and other European States that are not members currently. Indeed, the Committee believes that the jurisdiction of EUROCONTROL should be comprehensive of all European countries. The Commission's proposal - that the EU should be a party to the "re-invented" EUROCONTROL - is, in the Committee's view, a possible political solution. However, it does raise questions that need to be answered such as "what would be the role and mandate of the Commission?" "What would be the voting balance of the European Union vis-à-vis other non-EU states?" and "under which jurisdiction would military airspace fall?" Variants on the Commission's proposal should, in the Committee's view, be considered. However, a Commission involvement is necessary, particularly if there is a need to translate EUROCONTROL decisions into Community legislation or other action. Finally, an obligation should be placed on any new structure to submit annual reports on its activities to the Council, the European Parliament and the Economic and Social Committee.