Single European Sky: organisation and use of the airspace

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PURPOSE : to establish a Community airspace as a single operating airspace where common procedures for design, planning and management ensure the efficient and safe performance of air traffic management. CONTENT : The Single European Sky must also be conceived as a single airspace without frontiers. The first thing which this harmonisation implies if the adoption of a basis for organising the upper airspace for all Member States and ensuring consistency between the national organisations responsible for the lower airspace. This zone will merge the existing national zones. The organisation of this area will be uniform on the basis of the principle of flexible and efficient use, ultimately making it possible to do away with the system of airways. To this end, the Commission is proposing: - the creation of a single flight information region covering the upper airspace in which air traffic control services will be subject to the same rules; - reconfiguring this airspace into optimum control areas in terms operational efficiency, without taking account of national frontiers. To ensure that the organisation of the upper airspace is consistent with that if the lower areas, the size if and geographical location of these optimum transfrontier control areas will be proposed by the service providers in coordination with Eurocontrol, the Commission will then decided on the organisation of airspace into a minimum number of optimised transfrontier controlled areas; - harmonisation of airspace categories; - organisation and management of airspace with a view to allowing allocation of sectors to service providers and the transfer of sectors between service providers. With regard to increased cooperation between civil and military authorities: - coordination will be increased between the civilian and military authorities, in particular for the allocation and efficient use of airspace for military purposes, including the criteria and principles which should govern allocation and use, and in particular access for civilian flights; - a safeguard clause will enable the Member States to request the suspension of the application of the Community rules in the event of conflict with national military requirements. The Commission will also adopt the rules and general conditions applicable to air traffic flow management in order to optimise capacity utilisation. These rules will be developed in collaboration with the service providers, airports and airspace users. They will cover: - flow management, including rules concerning planning, priority-setting in the event of congestion, relief routes and a crisis mechanism; - mechanisms for more disciplined use of airspace in order to integrate airports into airspace management and improve coordination between airport and airspace slots.