

Air transport: environmental impact, towards a sustainable development

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The committee adopted a report by Caroline LUCAS (Greens/EFA, UK) warmly welcoming the Commission communication on aircraft and the environment. The report called for targets and dates to be set to enable the air transport industry to adapt to legislative measures in good time. For example, the Community should support the ICAO (International Civil Aviation Organisation) process of revising noise stringency levels in order to meet as far as possible the needs of densely populated, industrialised areas. A global system of airport classification agreed under ICAO auspices should be endorsed and a new time-frame set to phase out older aircraft. Community-wide night noise exposure targets should be adopted, based on WHO guidelines, and these should come into force by 2002. The committee argued that for reasons of environmental policy a kerosene tax should be introduced on all routes departing from the EU if international and/or bilateral rules so allowed. If no international agreement was reached on a kerosene tax or other economic instruments to secure the desired improvements, a Community-wide environmental charge should be introduced, based on the polluter-pays principle. This should create fair competition in relation to other modes of transport, notably high-speed trains, which the committee would like to encourage. The Commission was asked to examine the possible distorting effects of zero-rating of VAT on air tickets, kerosene and the purchase of new aircraft, as well as the exemption of kerosene from excise duty and direct subsidies to airports and airlines.