Air transport between the Community and third countries: negotiation and implementation of air service agreements

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The committee adopted the report by Ingo SCHMITT (EPP-ED, D) broadly approving the proposal under the 1st reading of the codecision procedure, subject to a number of mainly technical and drafting amendments. MEPs called for a three-stage plan to be laid down, as follows: (1) there should be negotiations between the EU and the US to establish an open aviation area; (2) Community air service agreements should thereafter be negotiated and concluded with all third countries which likewise have or are seeking to achieve a liberalised air transport market; (3) it would then be determined in each individual case whether a Community agreement with a third country would constitute value added for the Member States. The committee added that negotiation of an open aviation area with the US should address the implementation of the "polluter pays" principle and should also ensure the elimination of market-distorting direct or indirect subsidies to US air carriers. Moreover, Member States should progressively integrate implementation of the "polluter pays" principle into all past or new bilateral agreements with third countries. To that end the Commission should submit guidelines, within a year of the Regulation's entry into force, on the calculation and internalisation of external costs in the air transport sector. Lastly, the committee wanted implementing measures to be adopted under the regulatory procedure rather than the advisory procedure, arguing that the former was the best way to underpin the Commission's action and ensure that Parliament and Council could exercise scrutiny.