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

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Air carriers and air passengers pay an annual price of billions of ecu yearly due to the fragmentation of Europe's air traffic management (ATM) systems. Reporting on the Commission's White Paper on ATM - "Freeing Europe's airspace" transport committee chairman Mr Pam CORNELISSEN (EPP, NL) accused the Commission of not putting forward one single specific measure nor any form of action programme to achieve a single consistent and uniform ATM system throughout Europe. The Commission must rewrite its White Paper, which the committee considered as falling far, far short of expectations. The rapporteur's conclusion: "This means that the airspace must be unified and managed as a common resource, regardless of national borders, to optimise its use and satisfy all users on the basis of clear policies on access to it". In 1995, 18% of flights were delayed by more than 15 minutes and a total of 100.000 - 170,000 hours of departure delays could be attributed to ATM. There is also the necessity to fly longer routes determined by border considerations and the placing of ground-based navigation aids. Said the rapporteur: "Just because of this one factor, aircraft cover a distance 10% greater than the length of the most direct route. If these penalties could be overcome, 2,600 million ECU could be saved per year in Europe. Furthermore, 60 to 70 additional aircraft are usually in the air at any given moment because of this congestion". The cost of ATM in route services now accounts for 5,6% of the cost of intra-European services. Finally, the rapporteur had figured out that the current cost of ATM infrastructure in 33 European states is in the range of mecu 15,000-20,000 per year. The capital investment programme is running at around mecu 1.000 per year. The cost of the European commercial fleet - 2.200 yets and 500 turboprops - is estimated around mecu 150,000. The investment-service ratio accordingly stands at 10 : 1.