

Access to the groundhandling market at Community airports

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The Committee had come to vote the report of Mr Barry SEAL (UK, PES) on the proposal for a Council Directive on access to the groundhandling market at Community airports. With 123 amendments tabled, the electronic voting system in the hemicycle had to be used. a) background: Groundhandling covers the supply of a variety of airport services which are essential to carriers for performing their air transport activities. These services are directly related to air transport and range from passenger and baggage registration and handling to leading the aircraft on the ground as well as the cleaning and refuelling of the aircraft. Without these services, flights would not be able to take off. A key characteristic of the groundhandling market is that often only the airport itself or the national carrier are entitled to supply groundhandling services. In addition, selfhandling is not always allowed or is reserved to certain carriers, often selected on the basis of criteria which are not transparent. b) the rapporteur's remarks: The Commission feels that access to the groundhandling market should be such as to allow users to choose the supplier who comes closest to their quality and cost requirements. Rapporteur SEAL is of the opinion that this liberal viewpoint cannot be the only one to be taken into account : "A great many workers are employed in groundhandling services. The aim of opening up the groundhandling market must go hand in hand with social harmonization measures, as competition will otherwise inevitably be distorted by social dumping, given that social security costs have a decisive bearing on production costs. It is obvious that companies will attempt to increase their productivity and cut their work-forces". The rapporteur's most serious criticism of the Commission proposal relates precisely to the fact that the Commission is utterly neglecting the social aspects of harmonization which must be in place as the market is opened up. c) The amendments: 1. Article 2: What will be the scope of the airports ? : 6 millions of passengers, as proposed in am 9, or 4,5 in am 6, or 3 million and 2 million at a latter stage in am 51 and 115?; 2. Article 4: As regards unbundling the management and accounts of groundhandling services, the unbundling should take place for everybody without limits (am 58 and 59), or only when they have a 25% share (am 7) or only 25% for air carriers but not for independent suppliers (am 10); 3. Article 5: The user's committees: the following amendments were tabled: am 8, 12 and 64 on who should be represented; 4. Article 6 and 7: Groundhandling for third parties or selfhandling: more categories of services should be exempted (am 13, 65, 73, 67, 68, 75 and 76) or less categories? (am 70 and 74?). Should there be a transition period of 2 years (Commission text) or 3 years?; 5. Article 9: Exemptions: who decides on these? Member States with control by the Commission? (am 11 and 80) or airport operators? (am 16); 6. Article 10: Selection of suppliers: who selects when the airport supplies services? The managing body of the airport after consulting the users? (am 12, 87 and 92) the user committee according to the Commission text or the user of the service? (am 93). 7. Article 12: On the approval of a public authority independent of the managing body of the airport: am 97 and 98; 8. Article 14: On the access to installations: Should the airport only collect an infrastructure fee as proposed in the Commission text or also a competition fee for exploitation of business opportunities created by the airport operator? (am 103, 104, 105 and 18). The following amendments were carried: 18, 19, 20, 1, 4, 22, 23, 24, 2, 5, 36/30, 38, 41, 6, 57, 7, 63, 11, 8, 65, 9, 10, 80, 85/86, 12, 95, 13, 97 and 99/17.