The European airline industry: competitiveness, from singlemarket to world-wide challenges

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In adopting the report drafted by Mr. Dirk STERCKX (ELDR, Belg), the European Parliament approves the resolution on the communication from the Commission to the Council, the European Parliament, the Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions - the European Airline Industry: from Single Market to World-wide Challenges. Overall, the European Parliament considers that the development of a single market in the European airline industry has led to positive competition with the result that consumers now have a greater choice of flights, often at more favourable prices. However, the features of liberalisation which are welcome for passengers should not be diminished by other factors such as delays and congestion. The Parliament insists that safety concerns must remain an underlying principle in all measures and policies in air transport. It reiterates its support for the initiative to set up a European Aviation Safety Authority which should extend beyond the EU and include as many European States as possible. Evidently, it supports the plan to set up a single air transport safety regulatory authority. Furthermore, it requests for completion of the internal market by creating a single European airspace for the benefit of all its users, including the need for more use to be made of military airspace for civil aviation purposes. It, therefore, calls on the Member States to transfer to the European Union regulative competencies for ATC and calls on the EU to establish a uniform system of European air safety. The European Parliament also believes that the scientific and technological research effort to develop new traffic management systems must continue to be given active support by the aeronautical industry to alleviate the current problems regarding air traffic management and congestion. Therefore, it supports the Galileo project as a state of the art navigation system. With regard to slot allocation, the Parliament urges the Commission to revise the present system of slot allocation which encourages a static and inflexible situation and, as a matter of urgency, to present a proposal for revision of the slot allocation regulation, giving due consideration to slot allocation according to environmental criteria, and in particular the noise and emissions from aircraft. As regards competition, the Parliament considers that competition authorities should rigorously enforce rules against unfair practices or other practices having similar effects, since effective application of competition rules is essential to the good functioning of a liberalise market. The concept of a Transatlantic Common Aviation Area with the objectives of ensuring full market access and convergence of other commercial and regulatory issues such as safety, etc, is supported by the European Parliament. Passenger rights is a very important issue and the Parliament considers that the overbooking, ticketing and seat allocation arrangement does not always work to the benefit of travellers and is in need of review. Moreover, passengers should be fully informed in advance about details of the services, in particular the name of the operating carrier. Finally, the Commission is called upon to propose measures torestict as far as possible the adverse effects of the growth in aviation. It requests that the Commission support all measures which may be taken by the airlines and the aviation industry to achieve a further reduction in emissions (a further reduction in kerosene consumption and development and use of huskits).