

Air transport: Community air traffic controller licence, Single European Sky package

2004/0146(COD) - 12/07/2004 - Legislative proposal

PURPOSE : to increase safety standards and to improve the operations of the Community air traffic control system through the issuance of a Community air traffic controller licence.

PROPOSED ACT : Directive of the European Parliament and of the Council.

CONTENT : this proposal aims to introduce a Community licence for air traffic controllers. The decision forms part of the implementing rules of the Single European Sky and will contribute to safety and the cross-border provision of air navigation services.

The adoption of the Single European Sky legislation earlier this year triggered off a range of implementing regulations. Furthermore, this legislation paved the way to the development of a specific proposal for a Community licence for air traffic controllers in order to ensure common qualification levels. It will enable the necessary harmonisation of the current patchwork of national licensing schemes that the existing international standards developed in the framework of ICAO and Eurocontrol have not adequately addressed up to now. Nonetheless the proposal builds on material developed by Eurocontrol and is fully consistent with it, in order to facilitate its integration into national law.

The new Community license aims at harmonising the licensing systems for controllers and promoting the mutual recognition of national licences. This is an important social aspect of the Single European Sky. The proposal will equally reinforce safety levels of air traffic management by introducing common standards for the European training system. Finally a more flexible use of manpower is likely to facilitate the organisation of cross-border service provision and the establishment of functional airspace blocks.

Every link of the licensing chain is regulated: the institutional framework; the conditions for access to the profession; the structure of competences to ensure transparency and comparability; training standards appropriate to the complex and dense European air traffic environment, including linguistic and medical requirements.

Lastly, the adoption of the four regulations composing the Single European Sky package will fundamentally change the air traffic management landscape. This complementary proposal for a Community air traffic controller licence is important for several reasons.

- The licence contributes to the balance between the different elements of the Single European Sky package, to ensure that not only institutional, economic or technical aspects are dealt with, but also social aspects.
- The licence is part of a wider safety policy enshrined in the package: it should provide the opportunity to revise or reinforce safety aspects of air traffic management and introduce high standards for the training system.
- The Single European Sky legislation will lead to the establishment of cross-border functional airspace blocks. The consolidation process of air navigation service providers will require more flexible use of manpower. The licence will facilitate the organisation of transnational work.

- The proposal will recognise training as a specific service and contribute to the quality of the different types of training. The certification process would effectively create a level playing field for training services.