

Developing the agenda for the Community's external aviation policy

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The committee adopted the own-initiative report drawn up by Saïd EL KHADRAOUI (PES, BE) in response to the Commission communication on developing the agenda for the Community's external aviation policy. MEPs insisted on the need for a coherent strategy and said that agreements with the USA, Russia and China were "prerequisites". Although the conclusion of Community agreements under the "horizontal mandate" was preferable, these could take a long time. Existing bilateral agreements should therefore be brought into line with Community law as soon as possible in order to avoid legal uncertainty.

The committee wanted to see "new and ambitious agreements" between the Community and third countries, which would be balanced in terms of market access and might include issues such as cabotage, rights of establishment, ownership and control and state aid, but only on a basis of strict reciprocity. Where "open skies" agreements were not possible, existing bilateral regimes should be continued and the Commission should develop fair and transparent mechanisms for the distribution of traffic rights among Member States in such cases.

The report acknowledged that safety and security standards were of vital importance to passengers, crew and the aviation sector in general and said that the EU could play a "pioneering role" in applying and upholding internationally recognised standards on a global scale. It suggested that references to ICAO and EU safety regulations be made in agreements with third countries and that Member States increase their efforts to help countries which lack a sufficient safety level to attain such a level.

As far as the environment was concerned, MEPs recognised that the aviation sector had several negative effects, particularly as a source of noise and as a significant contributor to climate change. However, they also acknowledged that airports and air carriers had already made, and were continuing to make, significant efforts to reduce and avoid noise and emission pollution. The committee called for clear policies for better air traffic management and for "the operational procedures and infrastructural circumstances" of airports, and hoped that other measures would be implemented, such as the inclusion of aviation in the European emissions trading system, with equal treatment of EU and non-EU air carriers.

Lastly, MEPs urged the Commission to insist on the introduction into new agreements of references to relevant international legislation on social rights, in particular the fundamental conventions of the ILO, the OECD guidelines for Multinational Enterprises and the 1980 Rome Convention on the Law Applicable to Contractual Obligations. They added that EU social legislation should be applied to employees recruited and/or employed in EU Member States.