Reducing the Climate Change Impact of Aviation

2005/2249(INI) - 30/05/2006

The committee adopted the own-initiative report drawn up by Caroline LUCAS (Greens/EFA, UK) in response to the Commission communication on reducing the climate change impact of aviation. Pointing out that international aviation is not subject to Kyoto or other commitments, the report urged the EU to "show leadership" and set an example of how to tackle aviation's impact on the climate. It advocated an aviation scheme as well as its inclusion in the EU Emissions Trading Scheme (ETS).

MEPs backed the immediate introduction of kerosene taxes by requiring a tax on all domestic and intra-EU flights (with the possibility to exempt all carriers on routes on which non-EU carriers operate). They also called on the Commission to propose arrangements for the worldwide introduction of such taxes. The report underlined that tax exemptions on air transport and other imbalances also resulted in very unfair competition between aviation and other transport sectors, especially the railway sector which was covered not only by taxes but also by the ETS. To create a level playing field, it was necessary to consider "not only a fair solution for the environmental problems caused by aviation but also the reduction of taxes or other burdens which are obligatory for other transport systems but not for aviation".

The committee also called for further research into the full effects of aviation on climate change and into improving the environmental and energy efficiency of aircraft and helicopters. The Commission was urged to promote the introduction of bio-fuels for aviation.

On the inclusion of aviation into the EU ETS, the report recognised that emissions trading has the potential to play a role as part of a comprehensive package of measures to address the climate impact of aviation, provided it is appropriately designed. MEPs stressed that the environmental effectiveness of any emissions trading scheme would depend on it having sufficiently broad geographical scope; a rigorous cap; full auctioning of initial allocation; the technological level and early actions taken into account in the allocation; and addressing full climate impact. The committee shared the Commission's view that incorporating aviation into the EU ETS was the most appropriate approach, but proposed the introduction of a separate dedicated scheme for aviation emissions, recognising that, due to the lack of binding commitments for international aviation emissions under the UNFCCC (United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change) and the Kyoto Protocol, the aviation sector would be unable to actually sell into the ETS. The report stressed that, if aviation is to be eventually incorporated into the wider ETS, there should at least be a pilot phase of a separate scheme covering the period 2008-2012. It proposed that, should aviation be eventually incorporated into a wider ETS, special conditions be applied to ensure it does not distort the market to the detriment of less protected sectors: a cap on the number of emission rights it is permitted to buy from the market, and a requirement to make a proportion of the necessary emissions reductions without trading, before being allowed to buy permits.

The committee called on the Commission to put forward other policy instruments to address the non-CO_2 impacts of aviation in parallel to the ETS, and said that special attention should be paid to air and noise pollution during the ascent and descent of aircraft.