

Statistical returns in respect of carriage of passengers, freight and mail by air

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The Commission has presented a report on experience acquired in the application of Regulation (EC) No 437/2003 of the European Parliament and of the Council on statistical returns in respect of the carriage of passengers, freight and mail by air, after data have been collected over a period of three years, the Commission shall submit a report to the European Parliament and the Council on experience acquired in the application of this Regulation. This report is aimed to comply with this requirement once the first three years of data collection have been completed (2003-2005).

After a general description of the background, objectives and policy context of the legal act, some issues linked to the implementation are discussed. The report also presents information on the main results achieved. The final section provides conclusions and possible future developments.

The experience gained and the results obtained on the implementation of Regulation 437/2003 can be considered, in general, as very positive. Even if a similar system was running before the adoption of the Regulation, the work and resources put into the setting up of the legal requirements, both at national and Eurostat level, have allowed a quick production of comparable and reliable results. This is particularly relevant in the case of the ten Member States which joined the EU in 2004, where previous experience in air transport data collection was limited.

Most of the issues linked to the interpretation of the Regulation, data collection, compilation, transmission and validation have been addressed and properly tackled. The implementation of this Regulation has led to an increase in the availability of information on the sector as well as an improvement on data quality and timeliness.

Regarding the use of the data, the results obtained have an immediate application for policy-making, particularly for the development, implementation and monitoring of the air transport sector policies at national and EU level. Data dissemination through different public means has contributed to give visibility to the whole process and to provide a return to the citizens for the investment of resources made on it.

Short term developments:

In the short term, the efforts should be concentrated on the following issues:

- further improvement of data quality for certain elements. Some reporting countries need to make additional efforts to supply regularly reliable and comparable data for the freight variables, the information on seats available or some of the elements contained on dataset C1;
- provision of airline information. The delivery of airline information separating, at least, EU from non-EU carriers should be a reachable objective for all Member States without diminishing their confidentiality restrictions. Furthermore, under special circumstances such as the negotiation of air transport agreements with third countries, it maybe needed to define a procedure for which the Commission could request Member States to provide detailed airline information not delivered under the regular data provision;
- enlargement of the EU to Bulgaria and Romania. Eurostat will pay particular attention to ensure that these two new Member States comply with the EU legislation on air transport statistics.

Long term developments:

Long term developments would probably imply the extension of the data collection to new variables such as: (i) true origin/final destination of passengers when the journey includes multiple flights (at least, for passengers having one single ticket for the complete journey); (ii) nationality of incoming extra-EU passengers; (iii) ticket pricing; number of indirect transit passengers (i.e. transfer passengers) by airport; (iv) or a breakdown of the number of movements by period of the day and by technology according to standards on certified noise levels.

These variables are addressed by new policy needs and go beyond the present scope of the Regulation. However, reporting countries have clearly expressed the current impossibility of collecting such information and the need to duly justify any further burden linked to the collection of air transport statistics. Anyway, at least two future developments not linked to new data requirements could be envisaged:

- a short reduction on the data transmission period to five months after the end of the period of observation, in line with the statistical data collection of other modes of transport;
- extension of the geographical coverage due to either future EU enlargements or the voluntary involvement of third countries through co-operation agreements.