

Action plan for airport capacity, efficiency and safety in Europe - Council conclusions

The Council adopted the following conclusions:

"THE COUNCIL:

1. WELCOMES the Commission communication on airport capacity, efficiency and safety in Europe¹.
2. SHARES the view that due to the emerging gap between available airport capacity and future demand for air transport there will be a “capacity crunch” and that such a gap can affect the efficiency and competitiveness of the air transport system and RECOGNISES the need to find solutions to this problem.
3. CONSIDERS that the actions proposed by the Commission in its communication could be the basis of a coherent approach, and its implementation could make for better use of existing airport infrastructure and facilitate delivery of necessary new capacity at national and subnational level, while maintaining a high level of safety.
4. EMPHASISES that these actions should respect the principles of proportionality and subsidiarity and take into consideration national, local and regional characteristics and requirements, including those of peripheral regions.
5. REQUESTS that any actions should be coherent with those of other initiatives addressing the same issues, in particular those suggested in the report of the Commission’s High Level Group for the future European Aviation Regulatory Framework; those contained in the Single European Sky initiative and those to be presented in the SESAR masterplan.
6. CONSIDERS that environmental factors should be fully taken into account when considering existing and planned airport infrastructure, since it is only if environmental constraints are effectively taken into account that a harmonious development of airport activities can be ensured.
7. RECOGNISES that although airport planning and development are Member States’ competencies, action at Community level to develop guidelines for capacity assessment may be useful to assist Member States and airports with their decision making and to improve interoperability and the management of airport capacity in Europe.

¹ 5886/07

8. RECOMMENDS that discussions be initiated at Community level on better use and development of airport capacity, notably on the basis of an exchange of experience and best practice in this area. These discussions should involve all parties with a legitimate interest in civil aviation issues.
9. RECOMMENDS that the planning of new airport infrastructure be conducted in coordination with the planning of other modes of transport, primarily rail and road networks, so as to promote comodality and the establishment of as integrated and efficient a transport network as possible. ACCEPTS that, where appropriate, the level of Community funding might be subject to compliance with these criteria.
10. INVITES the Commission to assist Member States in the development of European airport capacity and interoperability, while paying attention to coordination with other relevant programmes, including the Single European Sky initiative and the SESAR programme, in particular by:
 - i drawing up guidelines for assessing existing and planned airport capacity, using the expertise already available in the Member States and within the relevant international organisations;
 - ii developing specifications for new equipment and procedures (ground- and air-side) guaranteeing compatibility of new technologies, mature or under development, to be implemented by airports, air navigation service providers and aircraft operators, paying specific attention to the need to promote interoperability of airport equipment and aircraft equipment; and
 - iii pursuing its efforts aimed at research and the development of new technologies in order to introduce more efficiency into airport operations, while maintaining high levels of safety.
11. Without prejudice to Member States' positions to be taken on the respective Commission proposals, TAKES NOTE of the Commission's intention to:
 - i provide the Council with a report on Community financial support granted to European airports, together with suggestions for improving the effectiveness of such aid as regards its impact on the efficiency and interoperability of the transport system as a whole;

- ii envisage measures to ensure more consistency between airport slots and flight plans submitted by aircraft operators;
- iii submit to the Council a report on the implementation of Directive 2002/30 on the establishment of noise-related rules at Community airports;
- iv submit to the Council, in 2008, a proposal to amend Regulation No 1592/2002 on common rules in the field of civil aviation and establishing a European Aviation Safety Agency, in order to extend the scope thereof to aerodromes, taking full account of the capacity of the Agency to take on the associated tasks;
- v set up as soon as possible the Community airport capacity observatory, which should be a forum for the exchange of all information, best practice and data relating to airport capacity;
- vi submit to the European Parliament and the Council all appropriate proposals needed to implement the plan of action proposed in the abovementioned Communication."