

EUROPEAN UNION



Committee of the Regions

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DRAFT OPINION

Commission for Territorial Cohesion Policy and EU Budget

Aviation Strategy

Rapporteur: **Ulrika Carlefall Landergren (SE/ALDE)**
Member of Kungsbacka Municipal Council

This document will be discussed at the meeting of the **Commission for Territorial Cohesion Policy and EU Budget** to be held **from 11 a.m. to 5.30 p.m. on Monday, 4 July 2016**. To allow time for translation, any amendments must be submitted through the online tool for tabling amendments (available on the Members' Portal: <http://cor.europa.eu/members>) **no later than 3 p.m. (Brussels time) on Tuesday, 21 June 2016**.

A user guide is available on <http://toad.cor.europa.eu/CORHelp.aspx>.

Reference documents

Communication on "An Aviation Strategy for Europe" COM (2015) 598 final;

Staff Working Document accompanying the Communication on "An Aviation Strategy for Europe" SWD (2015) 261 final;

Proposal for a Regulation on common rules in the field of civil aviation and establishing a European Union Aviation Safety Agency and repealing Regulation (EC) No 216/2008 COM (2015) 613 final

Draft opinion of the Commission for Territorial Cohesion Policy and EU Budget Aviation Strategy

I. POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

THE EUROPEAN COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS

1. shares the Commission's assessment of the aviation sector's importance for economic growth, jobs, trade and mobility both within and outside the European Union. The aviation sector itself is a significant economic activity that generates a large number of jobs;
2. would also underline the social significance of the aviation sector, as well as its great importance for territorial cohesion, not least because it can give peripheral and sparsely populated regions access to larger common markets. The Committee of the Regions considers a competitive European aviation sector that is sustainable in the long term as essential for development at both local and regional level;
3. like the Commission, also sees the need for an overall aviation strategy in view of the structural changes that have taken place in the international aviation market in recent years, and supports the aim of the strategy, namely to strengthen competitiveness and sustainability throughout the value chain for the EU aviation sector;
4. draws attention to the fact that the local and regional authorities have a crucial role to play in the development of airports and of aviation, by virtue of their responsibility for the population's quality of life, environmental conditions, and the spatial and physical planning involved. Continued sustainable development of aviation in Europe, with more efficient use and expansion of airport capacity, requires open, transparent and trusting collaboration between local and regional authorities and representatives of the aviation sector and airports in the context of spatial planning. This is an essential condition for obtaining the level of acceptance required to strengthen competition and put the European aviation sector in a leading position;
5. against this background, finds it remarkable that the local and regional levels and their authorities are not mentioned at all when describing the need for joint effort and collaboration. The territorial and spatial perspectives are also missing, as well as awareness of the local and regional environmental impact, which is a prerequisite for long-term aviation development. Representatives of the aviation sector are aware of this, but this is not expressed in the strategy;

Development of the aviation market

6. takes the view that the liberalisation of the European aviation market over the last 20 years has been a benefit for the regions and the public, and supports the proposed measures for developing the aviation market, including negotiations on a comprehensive aviation agreement with a number of countries and regions at EU level, as well as negotiations on competition rules, these being measures that could contribute to the continued liberalisation of aviation. It is important

for the comprehensive aviation agreements that are negotiated to result in real liberalisation that provides palpable added value and counteracts protectionist tendencies;

Capacity in the air and in the market inadequate?

7. with regard to capacity in the air, finds that the picture painted by dialogue with players in the market is that there is not actually any lack of airspace capacity and that average delays are very modest. On the other hand, there is considerable potential to increase efficiency and environmental performance and to limit costs by implementing the Single European Sky and the results from SESAR, among other things through common standards that can contribute to opening up the market for air-traffic management services. Efficient, well integrated air-traffic management is beneficial to the regions and of regional interest, not least for peripheral regions with small airports;
8. supports the proposal to develop strategic planning for the management of airport capacity at EU level in a situation where there are shortages at a number of large airports, while at the same time a large number of airports are underused and there is over-capacity on the whole, and would underline the fact that such planning at the national and regional levels must be based on the territorial dimension. One key question is how existing airport capacity could be used more efficiently. The strategy highlights the differences in connectivity that exist between various regions, which are not always explained by differences in the underlying circumstances and demand or conditions on the supply side. These differences result in considerable competitive disadvantages for certain regions, as well as poorer, more uneven exploitation of the overall potential, and they also act against territorial cohesion;
9. welcomes the fact that the Commission will continue to work with the airport observatory to monitor trends in both intra-EU and extra-EU connectivity in Europe and to identify any shortcomings and the appropriate measures to be taken. A coordinated, ongoing analysis of the regions' connectivity in relation to estimated demand, showing which regions are under-served together with information about existing airport capacity, should be a valuable basis for planning the exploitation and development of airport capacity. The accessibility and attractiveness of underused airports could be influenced through planning measures such as improved ground transport. The Committee of the Regions considers it essential for such planning to consider both passenger and cargo transport from an inter-modal perspective, and to pay attention to economic, social and environmental consequences;
10. notes that, in the strategy, the Commission invites the Council and the European Parliament to adopt quickly the proposal to revise the Slot Regulation that the Commission submitted in 2011. The Committee of the Regions considers that regional connectivity should be given a clearer priority than was the case when the revision proposal was published, and also considers that the proposal to revise the Slot Regulation should be re-written so that it addresses the prioritisation of regional connectivity more effectively;

Air cargo

11. points out that cargo is a significant part of the aviation sector, but the aviation strategy does not draw any attention to it whatsoever. Air cargo is an important part of goods transport and logistics that affects regions' development opportunities, and it is a significant matter in terms of regional planning. It is important for air cargo to be given due consideration in planning with an inter-modal logistics perspective. The Committee of the Regions is of the view that a cohesive aviation strategy for the EU must pay attention to air cargo with regard to airport capacity, inter-modality and logistics networks, and also the particular noise problems that can arise from traffic late in the evening, during the night and early in the morning;

Connectivity

12. notes that the conditions for a region's development largely depend on the quality of its international connectivity. From the regional perspective, good connectivity is the primary benefit that the aviation sector is expected to deliver. The Committee of the Regions is therefore of the view that being able to work towards strengthening and developing the regions' connectivity through route development is a legitimate interest for the regions. This could be involve incentives for establishing new direct destinations and destination marketing. Transparency is required in order to ensure that competition is not distorted and credibility is not lost;
13. at the same time, highlights the fact that it is the integrated, inter-modal transport system that gives the regions their connectivity. Aviation is of decisive importance for long-distance connections and for continental and inter-continental connectivity, but door-to-door journeys and the social benefits are determined by how well aviation interacts with other modes of transport in a cohesive transport system. In this context, attention should also be paid to the need for those who work at, or in connection with, airports to have public transport that is adapted to their commuting, which largely takes place outside normal working hours;

Airport charges as a control instrument

14. underlines the importance of transparency and dialogue between airports and airlines when determining airport charges. The Committee of the Regions would also like the EU aviation strategy to include a call for coordinated use of the option of linking airport charges to the environment with regard to noise, air quality and impact on the climate. The broad, coordinated application of environment-linked airport charges should have a considerable steering effect and it could be an incentive for faster renewal of the aircraft fleet, which is important for climate and environmental reasons. The Committee of the Regions would also like the question of incentives for faster renewal of the aircraft fleet with a view to reducing the impact of aviation on the climate and environment to be given general consideration in the strategy;

Support for under-served regions

15. regrets the fact that the Commission has not highlighted the role of regional airports and their importance for aviation development in the strategy. The Committee of the Regions underlines

the fact that the public service obligation is a very important matter from the regional perspective. Air connections to national economic and administrative centres and to hub airports for onward transport to the wider world are crucial for the long-term survival of peripheral and sparsely populated regions. In many cases, the creation of reasonable development conditions for these regions requires investment and operational contributions to airports in addition to publicly procured transport, as well as the safeguarding of take-off and landing slots at peak times at the hub airports that enable onward transfers to other destinations in Europe and other continents. This is crucial for territorial cohesion in the EU, and the Committee of the Regions is of the view that this must be made clear in the aviation strategy. The Committee of the Regions reiterates its view that those airports with average traffic not exceeding 300 000 passengers per annum should not fall within the scope of State aid;

16. considers that the application of State-aid rules in combination with the EU's rules governing services of general economic interest are perceived as complicated and that this results in uncertainty with regard to how local and regional authorities can provide economic support to regional airports. The Commission's handling of such matters is considered to take a very long time. On the whole, this risks making it harder to provide important support for maintaining reasonable connectivity for small and peripheral regions;

Research and innovation

17. welcomes the fact that the strategy highlights the importance of research, development and innovation for maintaining Europe's leadership in the aviation sector and the aeronautical industry. The Committee of the Regions highlights the role of the regions, not least within the framework of their responsibility for regional development work in collaboration with the public sector, the private sector and the academic world for research, development and innovation. Research and development that contribute to limiting the environmental impact of aviation are of particular interest for local and regional authorities. The development of fossil-free, cost-effective aviation fuels is one example of an important area of research;

Drones

18. sees great potential for the use of drones at local and regional level, not least in more sparsely populated parts of Europe, and it supports the ambition of putting Europe in a leading position in the development of drone technology and use. The scope and number of various drone-based services are expected to experience strong growth, to the benefit of business and citizens alike, but at the same time the increased use of drones means that attention and consideration must be given to questions relating to safety in airspace and on the ground, protection of privacy, liability, and acceptance by the general public. Against this background, the Committee of the Regions has carried out a Territorial Impact Assessment on drones. The Committee of the Regions would like to see basic risk-based, flexible regulation of all drone use at EU level, in line with the principle of subsidiarity, and it underlines the need for dialogue between EASA, which has the task of developing such fundamental regulation, and relevant players at national, regional and local level within the Member States. Drone technology will give aviation a different kind of local and regional proliferation than previously, and the spatial dimension must be considered in the context of legislation and regulation;

Climate, the environment, and inter-modality social planning for sustainable development

19. finds it strange that the issue of climate, which is one of the very greatest common challenges for the future, has been given such summary treatment in the strategy. Working through ICAO to achieve a global mechanism for limiting the impact of the aviation sector on the climate is good and it is important, but it must not prevent us in Europe from having a higher level of ambition than the floor set by ICAO, in line with the goal of high environmental standards being maintained and strengthened over time, as set out in the strategy;
20. highlights the fact that, with regard to the impact on the climate, all players have a common responsibility, and it is important to have a holistic perspective and not merely to focus on the impact of air transport on the climate. Ground transport and airport activities account for a considerable proportion of total carbon-dioxide emissions at the local and regional levels, at up to 50%. Collaboration between local and regional authorities, the private sector and airports on developing climate-smart inter-modal transport solutions is an example of an initiative that could make a palpable contribution to reducing the impact on the climate. Many airports are working ambitiously on programmes contributing to a marked reduction in carbon-dioxide emissions from airports in Europe. The Committee of the Regions is of the view that the aviation strategy should give due consideration to local and regional authorities' responsibilities and potential for making an active contribution to limiting aviation-related carbon-dioxide emissions;
21. considers aviation noise to be the great challenge that must be tackled in order for European aviation to continue developing. The Committee of the Regions considers it noteworthy that this issue of decisive importance for aviation has been treated so inadequately. Aviation noise causes significant health problems and is detrimental to people's well-being. Due to their responsibility for citizens' health, safety and well-being, as well as spatial planning, local and regional authorities have a key role to play in managing the aviation noise around an airport and the conflicts of interest that result from it;
22. would also like to see a more comprehensive treatment of the other effects of aviation on the environment, predominantly emissions of nitrogen oxides and particles into the air. The strategy refers to the expected results from research and development projects such as Clean Sky and SESAR, and points out that an annual environmental report will allow the EU, Member States and industry to better track the environmental performance of the air-transport sector and monitor the effectiveness of different measures. The Committee of the Regions welcomes such a systematic, consistent and regular assessment of environmental performance. It is of great value to local and regional authorities for data on lower geographic levels to be made available;
23. takes the view that there are two fundamental approaches to environmental impact that must complement each other. The first of these is to limit emissions at source, and international standards and instruments are of great importance for this. The second is to limit local emissions and/or their impact through effective spatial planning at the local and regional levels in collaboration between local and regional authorities and representatives of the airports and the aviation sector. Nonetheless, the significance of planning at the local and regional levels and the

key role of the local and regional authorities in this are not mentioned at all in the strategy, which is a major failing.

Brussels,

II. PROCEDURE

Title	Communication on "An Aviation Strategy for Europe"; Staff Working Document accompanying the Communication on "An Aviation Strategy for Europe"; Proposal for a Regulation on common rules in the field of civil aviation and establishing a European Union Aviation Safety Agency and repealing Regulation (EC) No 216/2008.
Reference(s)	COM (2015) 598 final; SWD (2015) 261 final COM (2015) 613 final
Legal basis	Article 307 TFEU
Procedural basis	Rule 41(a) of the CoR Rules of Procedure
Date of Council/EP referral/Date of Commission letter	Commission letter of 7 December 2016
Date of Bureau/President's decision	9 December 2016
Commission responsible	Commission for Territorial Cohesion Policy and EU Budget (COTER)
Rapporteur	Ulrika Carlefall Landergren (SE/ALDE) Member of Kungsbacka Municipal Council
Analysis	25 January 2016
Discussed in commission	2 March 2016
Date adopted by commission	scheduled for 4 July 2016
Result of the vote in commission (majority, unanimity)	
Date adopted in plenary	scheduled for 10-12 October 2016
Previous Committee opinions	Opinion on Implementation of the 2011 white paper on transport (CoR 1426/2015 fin ¹) Opinion on mobility in geographically and demographically challenged regions (CoR 1691/2014 fin ²) Opinion on EU guidelines to state aid to airports and airlines (CoR 5250/2013 fin ³) Opinion on Airport package (CoR 649/2012 fin ⁴) Opinion on the Single European Sky II (CoR 333/2008 fin ⁵) Opinion on the Future of European airports (CoR 406/2006 fin ⁶)
Date of subsidiarity monitoring consultation	N/A

1 [OJ C 195, 12.6.2015, p. 10](#)

2 [OJ C 415, 20.11.2014, p. 18](#)

3 [OJ C 114, 15.4.2014, p. 11](#)

4 [OJ C 277, 13.9.2012, p. 110](#)

5 [OJ C 120, 28/05/2009, p. 52](#)

6 [OJ C 305, 15/12/2007, p. 11](#)