

An aviation strategy for Europe

Owing to the importance of aviation for the EU economy and to the many challenges with which the sector is confronted, in December 2015 the European Commission adopted a new aviation strategy for Europe. The purpose is to strengthen the competitiveness and sustainability of aviation, and to help it cope with traffic growth and increased competition, while maintaining high quality standards. The Parliament is due to debate on an own-initiative report on the aviation strategy during its February II plenary part-session.

Background

Directly employing between 1.4 and 2 million people, and contributing €110 billion to the EU's gross domestic product (GDP), the EU aviation sector has become a strong driver for growth, jobs, trade and mobility. The sector has also undergone substantial changes over the last 20 years, as the liberalisation of the internal market for aviation in the late 1990s boosted its competitiveness, leading to new services, new organisation of air services, wider access to air transport and lower fares. However, it is confronted with many new challenges, in particular its ability to deal with future air traffic growth while maintaining high quality standards, at a time of increased competition from third-country players.

The strategy

On 7 December 2015, the European Commission adopted a communication entitled '[An Aviation Strategy for Europe](#)', which aims to strengthen the competitiveness and sustainability of the entire EU air transport value chain. In this strategy, the Commission identified three key priorities: tapping into growth markets, by improving services, market access and investment opportunities with third countries, whilst guaranteeing a level playing field; tackling limits to growth in the air and on the ground, by reducing capacity constraints and improving efficiency and connectivity; and maintaining high EU safety and security standards, by shifting to a risk performance-based mindset.

The strategy also highlights the need for EU action in four other areas, to ensure that air transport develops in a sustainable way, including the social agenda in aviation; passenger rights; innovation and digital technologies; and the environment. Together with the communication, the Commission adopted a legislative [proposal](#) to revise the Aviation Safety Regulation, including the introduction of provisions on drones. The measures planned for coming years are set out in the aviation strategy indicative action plan.

The Commission has started implementing some of the measures enshrined in the strategy, notably regarding the international dimension. It obtained in [March 2016](#), [June 2016](#) and [December 2016](#) authorisation from the Council to open negotiations in order to conclude bilateral air safety agreements with third countries (China and Japan) and EU-level aviation agreements (the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, Turkey, Qatar, the United Arab Emirates and Armenia).

European Parliament position

In several resolutions (for example in [September 2015](#) and in [November 2015](#)), the European Parliament highlighted its position regarding air transport and the future of aviation. On 26 January 2017, the Committee on Transport and Tourism (TRAN) adopted an own-initiative [report](#) on an 'Aviation Strategy for Europe'. The report underlines the key principles upon which future actions of the European Parliament in the area of aviation should be based.

Own-initiative report: [2016/2062\(INI\)](#); Committee responsible: TRAN; Rapporteur: Pavel Telička, ALDE, Czech Republic.

