

WRITTEN QUESTION E-1568/09  
by Ignasi Guardans Cambó (ALDE)  
to the Commission

Subject: Lack of transparency in the rates used by airlines which include a fuel surcharge

Article 23 of Regulation (EC) No 1008/2008<sup>1</sup> of the European Parliament and of the Council of 24 September 2008 on common rules for the operation of air services in the Community establishes an obligation to communicate optional price supplements at all times and in a transparent and unambiguous way, and differentiates 'other charges, surcharges or fees, such as those related to security or fuel' from other rates.

During 2008, European airlines raised ticket prices by means of a 'fuel surcharge' (Eurostat data from July 2008 recorded increases of 13.5% in Germany, 17.5% in Spain or 67.6% in Estonia over the previous summer) on the grounds of higher oil prices. The gradual slowdown in the world economy has seen the price of oil fall from almost 150 dollars a barrel in July 2008 to 51 dollars today. Despite what the Regulation says on common rules for the operation of air services in the Community, most airlines have never at any time given a breakdown of this surcharge but simply state that it is included in the rates. This lack of transparency is not just an irregularity, but also makes it impossible to check whether airlines are continuing to impose this fuel surcharge, a price supplement that would now be unfair and unjustifiable following the drop in the price of crude oil.

In order to achieve and ensure maximum transparency in consumer price information, what steps will the Commission take to demand that the rates include a breakdown of the fuel surcharge?

Given that the price of a barrel of Brent crude oil has fallen by two-thirds since airlines decided to raise ticket prices to offset the increase in oil prices, does the Commission not consider that European consumers have the right to demand a proportionate reduction in the cost of air fares?

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<sup>1</sup> OJ L 293, 31.10.2008, p.3.