Question for written answer E-000044/2022
to the Commission
Rule 138
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Subject: Empty planes being operated in the EU

Since the beginning of the pandemic, airlines have had to operate numerous empty flights in order to maintain their take-off and landing slots in the EU. At the same time, Europe is focused on reaching the goals of the Paris Agreement and its own climate goals.

Before the pandemic, airlines had to operate flights in at least 80 % of their scheduled slots, or they would risk losing them. As a measure to deal with the pandemic, this has since been revised to 50 %, but thousands of empty flights are still being operated across Europe to secure slots. In the light of the prolonged nature of the pandemic, 50 % is clearly much too high.

This is incomprehensible from both an environmental and economic perspective. Europe needs the aviation industry to take responsibility for finding a sustainable way to operate. For that to happen, regulations must allow for more flexibility.

1.   How does the Commission intend to immediately solve the issue of airlines having to fly empty or close to empty planes to secure their slots?

2.   What will it do in the longer term to ensure that EU regulations regarding the aviation industry become more flexible and sustainable?