

ORAL QUESTION O-0020/00

pursuant to Rule 42 of the Rules of Procedure

by Paul Lannoye, Danielle Auroi, Theodorus Bouwman, David Bowe, Carmen Cerdeira Morterero, Dorette Corbey, Paolo Costa, Gérard Deprez, Claude Desama, Laura González Álvarez, Catherine Guy-Quint, Juan Izquierdo Collado, Pierre Jonckheer, Eija-Riitta Korhola, Wolfgang Kreissl-Dörfler, Marie-Noëlle Lienemann, Caroline Lucas, Patricia McKenna, Nelly Maes, Miguel Martínez Martínez, Mihail Papayannakis, Béatrice Patrie, Per-Arne Arvidsson, Alonso Puerta, Frédérique Ries, Didier Rod, Alexander de Roo, Ulla Sandbæk, Elisabeth Schroedter, María Sornosa Martínez, Bart Staes, Dirk Sterckx, Anna Terrón i Cusí, Kathleen Van Brempt, Luckas Vander Taelen, Anne Van Lancker and Daniel Ducarme
to the Council

Subject: Night flights and noise pollution near airports

The problem of noise pollution in the vicinity of airports caused by night flights gives ever increasing cause for concern within the European Union. The considerable expansion in air transport and the slow progress in renewing aircraft fleets in the face of ICAO noise standards that have not changed since 1977 are creating an increasingly intolerable situation for many of those who live close to airports.

The recent Commission communication (COM(1999) 640) on air transport and the environment proposes a noise-reduction strategy that combines the use of economic mechanisms (in particular differentiated airport charges) with improved management of air-traffic and access to airports and efforts to promote technological progress.

Although such a strategy can help to limit the increase in noise pollution, it cannot be expected, either in the short or long term, to achieve the objective of ensuring that 'no one should be exposed to noise levels that jeopardise health and quality of life'.

It was in response to justified complaints from hundreds of thousands of residents of areas close to airports and in defence of their right to a good night's sleep that many local, regional and even national authorities banned the use of airports during part of the night.

The absence of European harmonisation measures in this connection unfortunately tends to undermine that approach; air transport undertakings respond by in effect threatening to take their business to airports not subject to restrictions on night flights.

Will the Council propose a relevant harmonisation measure? What strategy does it propose for the accelerated phasing out of the noisiest aircraft, bearing in mind that progress with the introduction of hushkits remains stalled.

Tabled: 09.02.2000

Forwarded: 10.02.2000

Deadline for reply: 02.03.2000