

**Question for oral answer O-000138/2012
to the Commission**

Rule 115

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on behalf of the PPE Group

Jörg Leichtfried, Zita Gurmai

Subject: Building a more competitive European aviation sector

Air transport makes a key contribution to the European economy, with more than 150 scheduled airlines, a network of over 400 airports, and 60 air navigation service providers. The aviation sector employs more than three million people in the European Union. Airlines and airports alone contribute more than EUR 140 billion to the European GDP. Linking people and regions, air transport plays a vital role in the integration and the competitiveness of Europe, as well as its interaction with the world.

European network carriers continue to struggle and they risk losing more and more intercontinental business to the Middle East's rapidly growing carriers. The Gulf carriers keep expanding, while their European rivals fall into a downward financial spiral. The structural differences between Middle East airlines and their global rivals are numerous. For years, airlines in Europe have criticised the Gulf carriers over the level of state support afforded to them by their government owners, often claiming they received unfair financial support and business-friendly regulatory environments such as the absence of corporate taxes. In addition, European carriers cannot gain access to European export credit guarantees that have been used by airlines in the Middle East and elsewhere to obtain favourable financing. All these factors create an uneven playing field in the ultra-competitive global aviation marketplace.

1. Does the Commission plan to conduct a comprehensive investigation regarding unfair competition from Middle East airlines on routes to and from the EU?
2. Given the competences bestowed upon the Commission with regard to enforcing a level playing field for EU airlines, what measures does it intend to take in this regard?

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Deadline for reply: 6.7.2012