

WRITTEN QUESTION P-0274/08
by Mario Mantovani (PPE-DE)
to the Commission

Subject: Sale of Alitalia to Air France-KLM

The successful conclusion of the exclusive negotiations launched between Alitalia and Air France-KLM, with the Italian Government's consent, would without a shadow of a doubt disadvantage Malpensa airport, which is a focal point for everything produced in Northern Italy. The downgrading of the Milan Malpensa hub, with the planned transfer of international flights from Milan to Rome, would in all likelihood result in huge job cuts and financial losses, as well as prejudicing businesses and consumers in the whole of Northern Italy – where the majority of Italians live and work – and forcing them to travel further, thus having a negative knock-on effect on production and the neighbouring cross-border areas.

The transfer of flights would not in itself reduce potential passenger traffic management capacities at Malpensa, but the shrinkage in financial resources and staff will prejudice the future development of the hub in practice, preventing it from developing to its full potential. It should be specified that the decision to transfer flights from Milan to Rome was not taken by Air France/KLM, but forms part of Alitalia's restructuring plan.

Moreover, recent estimates confirm that as early as 2010, six of the major European airports will be saturated, and another 20 will be approaching crisis point. If air traffic continues to increase at the current rates, it is estimated that European airports will be handling an additional 150 million passengers by 2011. Might it not be possible that the increase in traffic and its centring on a single point (Fiumicino), especially in a very elongated country such as Italy, will lead to more environmental pollution (CO₂), an increase in noise pollution and a greater risk of accidents?

Does the Commission intend, in its evaluation of conformity with the rules on competition, and in particular with Regulation (EC) No 139/2004¹ on concentrations between undertakings, to take into account the risks entailed for consumers now served by this hub? Will it also assess any measures that the Italian Government may adopt to safeguard legitimate interests associated with Milan Malpensa airport?

¹ OJ L 24, 29.1.2004, p. 4