

DEVE-002

Brussels, 22 March 2002

OPINION

of the

Committee of the Regions

of 14 March 2002

on the

Proposal for a Directive of the European Parliament and of the Council

on the establishment of rules and procedures with regard to the introduction of noise-related operating restrictions at Community airports

COM (2001) 695 final – 2001/0282 COD

The Committee of the Regions

HAVING REGARD TO the Proposal for a Directive of the European Parliament and of the Council on the establishment of rules and procedures with regard to the introduction of noise-related operating restrictions at Community airports (COM (2001) 695 final);

HAVING REGARD TO the Council's decision of 29 January 2002 to consult the Committee of the Regions, under Article 80(2) of the Treaty establishing the European Community, on the matter;

HAVING REGARD TO the Bureau's decision of 6 February 2002 to instruct the Commission for Sustainable Development to undertake the preparatory work;

HAVING REGARD TO its president's decision of 13 March 2002 to appoint **Mr Wim van Gelder** (NL-EPP) as rapporteur-general for this opinion, under Rule 40(2) of the Rules of Procedure;

HAVING REGARD TO the opinion unanimously adopted by the Committee of the Regions on 14 June 2000 on the Communication from the Commission to the Council, the European Parliament,

the Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions on Air Transport and the Environment: Towards meeting the Challenges of Sustainable Development (CdR 14/2000 fin)¹;

having regard to the opinion adopted by the Committee of the Regions on 14 February 2001 on the Proposal for a Directive of the European Parliament and the Council relating to the Assessment and Management of Environmental Noise (COM (2000) 486 final – 2000/0194 (COD)/CdR 271/2000 fin)²;

unanimously adopted the following opinion at its plenary session held on 13 and 14 March 2002 (meeting of 14 March):

Views and recommendations of the Committee of the Regions

The Committee of the Regions

1. notes that any proper assessment of the draft directive requires thorough technical knowledge of the various different components of the aviation sector as a whole;
2. feels that at this stage in decision-making - bearing in mind the point made above, and also taking account of the very tight deadline for this opinion - the Committee will have to confine itself to making a clear reference to earlier recommendations set out in CoR opinions on the issue, as indicated in the recitals above;
3. emphasises that any proposal must be based on the need to strike a balance between aviation industry interests and (i) the often significant social and economic implications these entail for regions, (ii) consumer concerns and (iii) ecological considerations, i.e. the need for an acceptable reduction in environmental noise. This last point is particularly important for efforts to maintain the quality of life of people living in the direct vicinity of airports;
4. in order to give more substance to a balanced promotion of interests in this field - which is one part of the wider aviation issue - fully supports an existing European Commission plan. This involves setting up a technical working party to assist the appropriate directorate-general in making a detailed study of the various policy implications of airport-related environmental noise. Realistic objectives and clearly defined tasks could be laid down. The guiding principle is that any line of action should be specific, measurable, acceptable, realistic and time-limited (so-called "smart" options);
5. with regard to European regional involvement in consultations on (regional) aviation issues, draws attention to the Airport Regions Conference, an international discussion and consultation forum. The forum is made up of 28 European regions that are particularly concerned by the need for an overall assessment of the environmental implications of aviation noise, and could carry out useful consultative work for the European Commission and the Committee of the Regions. In this connection, the mutual exchange of information among experts and the regional application of examples of best practice could be considered.

Brussels 14 March 2002.

The President

The Secretary-General

of the

of the

Committee of the Regions

Committee of the Regions

Albert Bore

Vincenzo Falcone

¹ OJ C 148, 18.5.2001 pp. 7-8

² OJ C 317, 6.11.2000 pp. 31-32

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