

COTER-006

Brussels, 28 May 2002

OPINION

of the Committee of the Regions

of 15 May 2002

on the

Communication from the Commission to the Council and the European Parliament – Action programme on the creation of the Single European Sky; the

Proposal for a Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council laying down the framework for the creation of the Single European Sky; the

Communication from the Commission to the Council and the European Parliament on the creation of the Single European Sky; the

Proposal for a Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council on the provision of air navigation services in the Single European Sky; the

Proposal for a Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council on the organisation and use of the airspace in the Single European Sky; and the

Proposal for a Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council on the interoperability of the European Air Traffic Management network

COM(2001) 123 final – 2001/0060 (COD) and COM(2001) 564 final – 2001/0235-0236-0237 (COD)

CdR 4/2002 (COM 3/051)

The Committee of the Regions,

HAVING REGARD TO the Communication from the Commission to the Council and the European Parliament – Action Programme on the creation of the Single European Sky and

the Proposal for a Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council laying down the framework for the creation of the Single European Sky (COM(2001) 123 final – 2001/0060 (COD));

HAVING REGARD TO the Communication from the Commission to the Council and the European Parliament on the creation of the Single European Sky

the Proposal for a Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council on the provision of air navigation services in the Single European Sky,

the Proposal for a Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council on the organisation and use of the airspace in the Single European Sky, and

the Proposal for a Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council on the interoperability of the European Air Traffic Management network (COM(2001) 564 final – 2001/0235-0236-0237 (COD));

HAVING REGARD TO the decision of the Council on 15 November 2001 to consult the Committee on this subject, in accordance with Article 80, paragraph 2 of the Treaty establishing the European Community;

HAVING REGARD TO the decision of its Bureau on 12 June 2001 to instruct Commission 3 - Trans-European Networks, Transport and the Information Society to draw up the relevant opinion;

HAVING REGARD TO the Draft Opinion adopted by its Commission for Territorial Cohesion Policy* on 5 March 2002 (CdR 4/2002 rev. 1) (rapporteur: **Mr Verburg**, Member of the Noord-Holland Provincial Executive) (NL-EPP);

WHEREAS the achievement of a Single European Sky is in the interests of the safe and efficient provision of air transport at higher altitudes;

WHEREAS the large number of delayed flights in past years shows that improved efficiency, while maintaining the highest possible level of safety, is highly desirable in order to enable European air transport to continue to fulfil the quality requirements that must be met in order to secure the economic competitiveness of Europe and its regions and, where possible, improve it;

WHEREAS increasing the capacity of air routes at higher altitudes and making the provision of transport more efficient, in addition to various other measures, is necessary in order to bring about the desired improvements;

adopted the following opinion unanimously at its 44th plenary session of 15 and 16 May 2002 (meeting of 15 May).

The Committee of the Regions:

Introduction

1. welcomes the Commission's proposals. A Europe without internal frontiers should in any case make the unhampered transport of persons and goods also possible in the air. The existing serious shortfalls in punctuality when providing air transport cause economic and environmental disadvantages for airports and the surrounding regions. The Committee considers the Commission's proposals to be a necessary component of the measures that are necessary in order to find a solution to these problems. The Committee advocates the following three objectives when preparing further measures: (i) the maintenance and, where possible, improvement of safety, (ii) the increasing of capacity in the air transport system and (iii) the improvement of efficiency in accordance with the possibilities of continuing to maintain the environmental standards applying to air transport;

2. is in favour of rationalising the use of upper airspace. The organisation of Air Traffic Management should be recast in such a way that the number of air traffic control centres can be drastically reduced and instructions harmonised. As regards co-ordinating the civil and military use of airspace, the Committee advocates an optimisation based on the demands which, from both sectors, must be tailored to the actual possibilities of use. In general, and particularly on these points, a Single European Sky can only be achieved by removing existing institutional and organisational barriers. The Committee calls upon the European Council to do something about this;
3. thinks that independent and effective regulation is the first requirement for a safe and efficient use of airspace. As regards the improvement of efficiency, the Committee supports the Community's proposed entry into Eurocontrol in order to promote a situation where regulatory decisions rapidly become law in the Member States. As regards independence, the Committee urges that the responsibilities for regulation, implementation and supervision be separated, in accordance with generally prevailing administrative principles;
4. is aware that the success of the Single European Sky depends largely on the concrete measures that will be taken on the basis of the regulations being proposed now. For these to be implemented smoothly, it is important that all operational requirements and desires are set out during the preparation of the implementing measures. The Committee therefore advocates consultation of the various sector organisations. The interests of regional authorities with an airport within their jurisdiction can be looked after here by the Airport Regions Conference; the Airport Regions Conference (ARC) should be recognised as a spokesman together with regional and local authorities. The participation of regional and local government in airport planning must be guaranteed;
5. proposes that the process of creating the Single European Sky reflect the specific needs of peripheral and island regions, whose distance from major economic and urban centres puts a substantial brake on development. In particular, the Committee recommends, wherever possible, action aimed at making connections between transport nodes in the island regions and centres of economic, social and administrative activity more efficient and economic, if necessary by way of derogation from overall programmes;
6. urges that the implementation of the Single European Sky be pursued with vigour. The Committee calls upon all the bodies concerned in all the Member States to work together to make the Single European Sky a reality by December 2004 at the latest. The Community should already become a member of Eurocontrol in 2002.¹

Brussels, 15 May 2002.

The President

The Secretary-General

of the

of the

Committee of the Regions

Committee of the Regions

Albert Bore

Vincenzo Falcone

* Re-organisation of the commissions and their terms of reference, 6 February 2002.

¹ The Barcelona summit on 15 and 16 March already concluded in the same sense.

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