EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

Working Documents

1979 - 1980

Report

drawn up on behalf of the Committee on Regional Policy, Regional Planning and Transport

on the promotion of efficient air traffic management and control

Rapporteur: Mr L. NOÈ

/21.

At its sitting of 10 May 1978, the European Parliament adopted a resolution drafted by Mr Noè, on behalf of the Committee on Regional Policy, Regional Planning and Transport, on the promotion of efficient air traffic control. Under paragraph 20 of this resolution, it asked its President to organize a public hearing on this matter with all relevant organizations.

In his letter of 23 November 1978 the President of the European Parliament instructed the Committee on Regional Policy, Regional Planning and Transport to organize this public hearing on his behalf.

By letter of 1 February 1979 the Committee on Regional Policy, Regional Planning and Transport requested authorization to draw up, following the hearing, a report on the promotion of efficient air traffic management and control. Authorization was given by the President of the European Parliament in his letter of 2 March 1979.

The Committee on Regional Policy, Regional Planning and Transport appointed Mr Noè rapporteur on 28 March 1979.

It considered the draft report at its meeting of 3 April 1979 and unanimously adopted the motion for a resolution and the explanatory statement at that meeting.

Present: Lord Bruce of Donington, chairman; Mr Noè, rapporteur; Mr Alber (deputising for Mr McDonald); Mr Albers; Mr Brugger; Mr Corrie; Mr Delmotte; Mr Fuchs; Mr Howell (deputising for Mrs Kellet-Bowman); Mr Jung; Mr Nielsen (deputising for Mr Damseaux) and Mr Osborn.

C O N T E N T S

A.

The Committee on Regional Policy, Regional Planning and Transport
hereby submits to the European Parliament the following motion for a
resolution together with explanatory statement:

MOTION FOR A RESOLUTION

on the promotion of efficient air traffic management and control

The European Parliament,

- having regard to the Report from the Committee on Regional Policy,
  Regional Planning and Transport (Doc. 106/79),

- referring to its previous resolution[1] and report on the promotion of
  efficient air traffic control (Doc. 49/78),

- following the public inquiry which its Committee on Regional Policy,
  Regional Planning and Transport held accordingly on 19 and 20 March 1979
  in Paris in which the relevant international and European organizations
  and parties concerned participated,

1. Stresses its conviction that the present relatively high safety
   standards of air transport in Europe can be raised yet further, and
   that all possible efforts in each branch of air traffic management
   should be directed towards this end, especially in view of the expected
   increase of air traffic;

(a) With regard to the general organization of air traffic in Europe

2. Notes that the air traffic system, both in the Community and in
   Europe as a whole, suffers from inadequacies which cause expensive
   delays and disruptions and results in a heavy burden on control systems
   and the airspace users;

3. Is convinced that it is essential, both for reasons of safety and for
   a more efficient use of available airspace, to establish full cooperation
   between civil and military control units with a view to possible
   integration, and wishes in this respect to draw attention to the
   original solution adopted in the Eurocontrol air traffic control

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[1] OJ No. C 131 of 5.6.1978, p.31

centres of Maastricht and Karlsruhe, where civil and military controllers are co-located and are using the same equipment;

4. Notes that the presence of uncontrolled aircraft in a controlled airspace represents a major threat to flight safety, and therefore recommends that no aircraft flying according to Visual Flight Rules (VFR) should be allowed in a controlled airspace, but should be kept strictly segregated, except when regular air traffic permits otherwise;

5. Stresses that, in order to avoid fatal misunderstandings in the transmission of instructions and information between pilots and controllers, only the English language should be used; that controllers and pilots should keep strictly to the specified R/T phraseology, and that a study presently being undertaken to achieve an even more precise air traffic control vocabulary should be expedited; further consideration should also be given to making more use·of visual data equipment;

6. Notes that, with certain exceptions, the present incident reporting systems are in general inadequate, not only because they are not compulsory, but because both controllers and pilots fear that frank reporting may result in disciplinary action; and therefore recommends that :-

   (i) the laws of the Member States should be harmonised to ensure that excusable human error does not automatically render them liable to criminal prosecution,

   (ii) anonymity should, as far as possible be ensured when incidents affecting safety are reported and no unwarranted disciplinary action taken,

   (iii) reports on incidents or 'near misses' should therefore be made compulsory and available to all interested bodies as soon as possible;

7. Urges that the procedures for providing advance information both to pilots and controllers of hazardous weather conditions or changes, in particular on wind shear, fog and storm, should be improved and brought up to day in the light of further understanding of these factors;

(b) With regard to technological development

8. Deplores the unnecessary fragmentation of research and development in the field of air traffic control in Europe and, bearing in mind the high costs of research, testing and development of advanced techniques, advocates a common selection of air traffic control research and development projects and more effective cooperation on agreed objectives;

9. Notes that, although the relevant European industrial sectors can provide high quality equipment for air traffic control and other avionic requirements, their competitiveness on the world market is affected by the lack of specific agreed compatible requirements from the responsible European authorities;

10. Expresses its concern at the danger and delays resulting from this lack of compatibility between air traffic control equipment and installations used in the different European countries;

11. Stresses, therefore, the need to ensure the adequate transmission on a fully compatible basis of air traffic control equipment located in adjacent traffic control sectors, taking into account also the need for compatibility with a possible future air-ground data link system and therefore recommends the laying down of precise technical specifications to guide national administrations and industries:

12. Is of the opinion that the equipment of airports and aeroplanes with devices permitting instrument landing should be encouraged;

13. Notes with satisfaction that wind shear detection devices will soon enter into use at some US airports, but hopes, nevertheless, that research will be continued in order to equip aircraft with similar devices;

14. Calls for action in order to ensure that airport installations and facilities can meet the growing demands of air traffic. and in particular that airport authorities should be encouraged to make full use of all existing technology that will facilitate the safe movement and identification of aircraft under varying weather conditions whilst still on the runway;

(c) With regard to social aspects

15. Is aware of the relationship between high standards of air traffic control performance and satisfactory social conditions for the air traffic controllers, their assistants and the pilots;

16. Is deeply concerned by the unrest and resulting disturbances in the West European air space due to the dissatisfaction of air traffic controllers about their social and professional conditions;

17. Emphasizes, therefore, the need for proper recognition of the heavy responsibilities controllers have to face, and the extremely heavy stress imposed upon them by the nature of their work, and considers it essential that proper recognition of this should be reflected in their working conditions, including inter al . the maximum working hours,

holidays and leave, early retirement and commensurate remunerations;

18. Calls upon the Commission to explore the possibilities for harmonisation of the social provisions relating to air traffic controllers within the Community;

19. Considers it also desirable that air traffic controllers should not be considered as national civil servants, and that they should be consulted in the choice of the equipment they are supposed to handle; moreover, their career prospects should be improved, and special attention should be given to vocational retraining in view of problems arising from early retirement;

20. Believes that both initial and refresher vocational training of air traffic controllers should be to a standard which will enable them to face increasingly complex situations, and to make full use of increasingly sophisticated techniques; a higher quality in training could also contribute to the most efficient use of available airspace within, of course, the reasonable limits of human capability;

(d) With regard to air traffic management and cooperation

21. Feels that air traffic management should, in the long term, contribute to enabling the adjustment of capacity to air traffic demands and not vice versa as is now unfortunately the case; in so doing, cost-effectiveness should of course be taken fully into account;

22. Considers it desirable to ensure full exploitation of the available capacity of the existing air traffic control systems, that the day to day management of the air traffic be organized on a centralized basis through the development of a central tactical air traffic flow management;

23. Considers it desirable, in view of present inadequate communications between a certain number of air traffic control centres in Western Europe, the immediate setting up of a centre charged mainly with improving the coordination of information on flight movements between the various air traffic control centres;

24. Recognizes the broad planning function presently being efficiently performed by the International Civil Aviation Organization, but nevertheless advocates, because of the lack of integration of air traffic management in Western Europe, the setting up of a single traffic management agency with executive powers in the field of long and medium term planning and the implementation of all air traffic services facilities;

25.   Is convinced that such an agency might well become comparable with the
      US Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) and that it would not only
      bring about higher safety standards, but would also reduce the
      operational costs both of air traffic control and air navigation in
      general, and give an impetus to the further development
      of the European aircraft construction, electronic and avionic
      industries and in this field become an essential link with European
      airlines and IATA;

26.   Deplores the fact that because of lack of political goodwill,
      Eurocontrol, notwithstanding its proven efficiency and advanced
      technical skills, has not been enabled to fulfil the executive
      functions of control of air traffic which it was designed to perform
      in a signficant part of the Western European airspace;

27.   Calls therefore on the signatories to the Eurocontrol Convention, in
      the knowledge not only that such a lead would be welcomed by the other
      Western European states, but would surely encourage them to follow it,
      to take the opportunity, when the current Convention is re-examined,
      to revise the Convention in such a way that Eurocontrol would be able
      to assume the responsibilities of such a 'European Air Traffic Agency'
      embracing all European states;

28.   Points out however that, if - again because of lack of political
      goodwill - the present signatories to the Eurocontrol Convention are
      unable to achieve this, then the Commission and the Member States of
      the Community, acting in conjunction with regional organizations of
      such relevant international bodies as ICAO, should take the initiative
      concerning the establishment of such an agency which would incorporate
      the present personnel, skills and equipment of Eurocontrol;

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29.   Charges its relevant committees to continue to follow developments in
      the field of air traffic control and management and to report when
      necessary;

30.   Instructs its President to forward this Resolution to the Council and
      Commission of the European Communities and, for information, to the
      national parliaments, Council of Europe, the Western European Union,
      ICAO, Eurocontrol, IATA and other interested bodies.

B.

EXPLANATORY STATEMENT

1.   The present Motion for a Resolution arises directly from paragraph 20 of the Motion for a Resolution in Mr NOE's Report on the promotion of efficient air traffic control[1], which was agreed to by the European Parliament on 10 May 1978[2].

2.   Paragraph 20 asked "the President of the European Parliament , following the adoption of the Resolution, to organise a conference of all interested parties, including the Council of Europe, with a view to developing the recommendations contained in this Resolution". The President of the European Parliament entrusted this organization to the Committee on Regional Policy, Regional Planning and Transport and, drawing on the experience they had already acquired at the Hearings which the Committee had already held on inter-urban transport and on accidents to shipping, they made arrangements for holding a Public Hearing in Paris on 19 and 20 March 1979.

3.   Annex I to this explanatory statement lists the organizations and interests who were invited to attend, and Annex II reproduces the questionnaire which was prepared by the Committee and sent to all participants well in advance of the Hearing. Your Rapporteur would like to take this opportunity of recording the gratifying response from all participants to this questionnaire; not only did they submit detailed replies to the questions, but also in many cases, written statements which have proved of the greatest help in preparing this Report.

4.   In accordance with previous practice, a full transcript of the proceedings has been prepared and is available in the original language used by each speaker, considerations of time having unfortunately made it impossible to prepare translations of the verbatim report into the six official languages.

5.   Considerations of time have also in part led to your Rapporteur preparing an extremely brief explanatory statement, but even if this had

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[1] Doc. 49/78

[2] OJ No. C 131/5.6.1978, p. 31

not been the case he would have not felt it necessary to accompany the
present Motion for a Resolution with too lengthy an explanation, since the
basic problems of air traffic control are explored in detail in his Report,
referred to in paragraph 1 above. In addition, the verbatim report, though
of course not having the status of an official working document of the
European Parliament, provides a complete account of the arguments which
were advanced during the course of the Hearing, and which were taken into
full account in drawing up this Report and, in particular, the Motion for
a Resolution.

6.   As indicated in paragraph 20 of the earlier Motion for a Resolution,
the Public Hearing was intended to develop the recommendations contained
in it, and your Rapporteur has no hesitation in saying that it fulfilled
this intention admirably. It is only by bringing together, as we were
able to do, the leading figures and representatives of the principal
organizations and interests in a particular field that it is possible to
get a real 'in depth' understanding of the complexity of the problems
involved. A further advantage of assembling such people on one occasion
rather than conducting a series of hearings or exchanges of view with
individual bodies is that it is possible to benefit from an interplay of
different, and sometimes diverging, views. This is not only of great
benefit to members of the Committee but also, your Rapporteur believes,
to the participants themselves; a view which was certainly expressed by
them both on this occasion and at our earlier Hearing on accidents to
shipping.

7.   The Committee were then encouraged by the welcome which was given on
all sides to this initiative of the European Parliament. They believe that
Hearings of this nature are, when conducted into appropriate areas, a
valuable part of the European Parliament's armoury in that investigatory
rôle which it must play, not only in giving adequate examination and
consideration to specific proposals from the Commission but also, as in
the case of the present Hearing, when it is considering at its own initiative
areas for possible future Community action. This is particularly true when
Committees of the European Parliament are looking into matters which
directly affect the lives and well-being of the peoples of the Community.

8.   Although it is not the purpose of this explanatory statement to
provide the customary detailed analysis of the points contained in the
Motion for a Resolution, there is one point which is worth emphasising, or

rather repeating, since it is already made in paragraph 8 of the Resolution contained in Doc. 49/78: "efficient air traffic management should be organised on a supranational basis and . . . close cooperation is vital in Europe because of its special geographical pattern". Air traffic control is only a part, though a vital part, of the totality of air traffic management, and it should be stressed that when the admittedly unsuccessful attempt was made to set up a unified air traffic control system, it was not envisaged that EUROCONTROL should limit its executive operations to the air space of the then seven, and indeed EUROCONTROL is, of course, not a Community organization even though its members include certain of the Member States. Even in a Community of twelve, the very nature of air traffic management makes it difficult to conceive a purely Community body which could assume overall responsibility for all aspects of air traffic management within its air space. This, however, is not to say that there should not be the greatest possible degree of coordination and cooperation within the countries of the Community, always provided that there is at the same time an adequate 'interface' not only within the Member States, but between them and the other European States. Cooperation within Europe does of course already exist through the membership of the States in international bodies such as ICAO, but this cooperation must be extended and intensified.

9.   The question of the definition of 'European' in this context is not easy to resolve, and no attempt to do so is made in this Report.   With this reservation, the Committee have no hesitation in endorsing the statement made at the Public Hearing by the Director General of IATA, Mr HAMMARSKJOLD, of the "compelling need for some pan-European authority with executive power to create long and medium-term plans, including implementation plans, for all the facilities which will be needed to develop an efficient, integrated, overall European air traffic system".

10.   It is clear that such a system will not be created overnight, and that it will have to evolve step by step; in accordance with the views expressed by all the participants at the Hearing, the Committee consider that the European Parliament has a clear duty to do all it can by investigations and Hearings of the sort which have led to this Report, and by continuing pressure on the Council of Ministers, the Commission and the governments of the Member States to ensure that the Community plays an effective part in its creation. The appropriate Committees of the Parliament should therefore be requested to keep all aspects of air traffic management, including technological development, meteorological science and social conditions under constant review.

PUBLIC HEARING ON THE PROMOTION OF

EFFICIENT AIR TRAFFIC CONTROL

List of participants

1. Commission of the European Communities

2. Assembly of the Western European Union   (WEU)
    Committee on Scientific Technological and Aerospace Questions

3. EUROCONTROL

4. Industry

5. International Air Transport Association   (IATA)

6. International Civil Airports Association   (ICAA)

7. International Civil Aviation Organization   (ICAO)

8. International Federation of Air Line Pilots' Association
    (IFALPA)

9. International Federation of Air Traffic Controllers'
    Associations   (IFATCA)

10. Italian Military ATC Authority

11. North Atlantic Treaty Organization   (NATO)

12. Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe
    Committee on Science and Technology

13. Trade Union of the European Communities - Section EUROCONTROL

QUESTIONNAIRE

for the participants attending the public hearing on the promotion of efficient air traffic control and air safety

A. GENERAL QUESTIONS

1. What general comments would you like to offer on Mr Noè 's report, especially with regard to the recommendations laid down in the motion for a resolution?

2. Given that air transport is currently conducted with a relatively high degree of safety - bearing in mind the rapid expansion of air transport - what priority actions should, in general terms, be taken in order to reduce the risk of fatalities in the air?

3. What are, according to you, the main causes for air collisions and air disasters? What importance do you attach to weather conditions, especially to fog, storm and wind shear?

B. SPECIFIC QUESTIONS

I. QUESTIONS IN CONNECTION WITH THE ORGANIZATION OF AIR TRAFFIC CONTROL

1. What measures could be taken in order to achieve a more effective cooperation and/or coordination between the military and civil authorities responsible for ATC?
What particular form should this cooperation take?

2. To what extent does the fact that, within a controlled airspace certain aircraft (e.g. private airplanes) are not controlled in some areas, represent a danger?
What solution would you propose in this respect?

3. What are your views on the present division of the airspace into upper and lower airspace?
Bearing in mind the type of aircraft now in service, do you think this division should be maintained as it exists nowadays?

4. What would you propose in order to improve the handling of aircraft on the ground and in the vicinity of airports?

5. In order to avoid fatal misunderstanding in the transmission of instructions and information between pilots and controllers what measures would you advocate in improvements in the field of language and R/T phraseology?

III. QUESTIONS RELATED TO SOCIAL ASPECTS

1. In view of the fact that bad social conditions have an adverse effect
   on ATC capacity (e.g. work overload with consequent disruptions, strikes)
   what specific measures would you favour to improve the working conditions
   of air controllers?

2. What observations have you to offer on the current minimum qualification
   requirements for air traffic controllers in Western-Europe?

3. Given the fact that air traffic controllers have to face more and more
   complex air traffic situations (due for example to the ever increasing
   volume of air transport, higher speeds etc.) and that they have to
   utilize increasingly sophisticated techniques, do you think that a special
   effort should be made as far as the vocational training of controllers is
   concerned?

4. What comments would you offer on the question of adequate remuneration.
   Are the remunerations in the different Member-Stated of the Community
   consistent with the heavy responsibilities of air traffic controllers?

5. Do you think that the professional status of air traffic controllers
   receives just recognition?
   What can be done in order to make their professional status more attractive

IV. QUESTIONS ON AIR TRAFFIC MANAGEMENT

1. What is the balance between the capacity of the existing ATC-systems and
   the traffic demand imposed on them?

2. What steps can be taken in order to avoid disruptions and delays in air
   traffic movements?

3. What would you suggest in order to have a more efficient traffic flow
   system, especially on crossing points and in congested areas?

4. On the basic assumption that more effective use can be made of the
   available airspace, what would you propose as far as strategic planning
   is concerned?

5. Do you consider the action taken by ICAO through informal flow control
   meetings as satisfactory?

6. Is the present incident-reporting system adequate?
   What measures would you favour in order to improve the systematic collection and analysis of data on near-misses in order to avoir in future the recurrence of narrowly avoided air incidents or conflict situations?

7. Given the very dense air traffic and frequent congestion in the Western-European airspace, would you consider it possible or desirable to reduce the current minimum safety separation standards between aircrafts? If so, by what means could this be achieved?

II. QUESTIONS REGARDING TECHNOLOGICAL DEVELOPMENT

1. Do you consider the present state of research into ATC-equipment and devices as satisfactory?
   If not, what are the main shortcomings?

2. Do you feel that the currently available control techniques and systems are adequate in view of the safe and expeditious management of air transport, especially with regard to the Western-European airspace:
   - on board airplanes
   - in ATC-centres
   - in airports?

3. Bearing in mind the high cost of research, testing and development of advanced ATC-techniques, what criteria should, in your opinion, guide the selection of R & D projects?

4. What are your views on achieving reductions in the weather minima for landing? Could you comment on the requirements for instrument landing system (ILS) and microwave landing system (MLS)?

5. What could be done in order to strenghten the competitive position of the relevant European industries?
   How could the cooperation with the respective industrial sectors in the U.S.A. be improved?

6. What are your views as to the existing mutual compatibility between ATC installations and equipment in Europe?
   Do you consider the present situation satisfactory, or do you think that a higher degree of compatibility is required?
   Do you think that standardization is necessary or would adequate compatibility be sufficient?

7. What are your views on ATC with the aid of satellites?
   Do you think that research in this sector should be stressed?

V. QUESTIONS ON COOPERATION

1. In connection with the above topic, are you in favour of the setting up of one single traffic management centre responsible for the whole Western-European airspace?
   How would you envisage the organization, responsibilities, financing, etc. of such a joint traffic flow centre?

2. As regards safety, would you think that a similar common ATC centre is desirable?
   How would you envisage the organization, responsibilities, financing, etc. of such an ATC centre?

3. In connection with the above questions (V, 1 & 2) what should be the future role of Eurocontrol?

4. What contribution could, in your view, the institutions of the Community make towards improved flight safety?
   What specific measures should be undertaken by the Community in the field of ATC and safety?