

Speech

The political reception and approach to the "General and Business Aviation" by the European legislator

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Remark: At a conference like this, you surely don't expect the presentation of facts and numbers or the presentation of existing commission communications and studies from a former member of the European Parliament.

Instead, I would like to present you some political comments and evaluations:

1. about the parliamentary reception and the adequate approach to the "General and Business Aviation" in the European legislation
2. about the problem of competition at coordinated airports and the future perspective
3. about my view on development trends in aviation policy

On 1: Until the commission communication in 2008, the "General and Business Aviation" was seen by us parliamentarians as a side-issue or even a luxury-problem.

But since the commission communication, the economic importance, the quick growth and the contribution of this sector to more mobility and flexibility has become clear to us.

And we also realize that it becomes more difficult to ignore European legislation,

- because of the tight regulation in the fields of environment and climate change
- because of the extension of community remits as regards safety and security
- and because of the future projects, such as "Single European Sky" and SESAR.

This was different before the commission communication of January 2008.

I have to say, that I myself as rapporteur for the second phase of the EU-OPS-legislation and after 6 years of legislative work, only concentrated on the solution of the main conflicts.

(To make decisions, the Parliament usually has to reduce the complexity after the first reading)

Medium enterprises and Business aviation were not in the focus.

This is the reason why they were not treated properly in the EU-OPS.

This is now also a matter of discussion within the commission.

And it leads to a battle for exceptions in the implementing rules.

It is therefore good to know, that the commission plans:

1. the research of a ground set of objective and coherent data
2. new studies
3. clearer definitions
4. supervision of the development
5. the principle of proportionality
6. and the concept of the gradual standards.

The last point is important for the legislator but could also lead to some distortion of competition.

For instance if an enterprise has to buy emission certificates because of a certain threshold, but another enterprise, which is only a little different, does not have to.

On 2: The phrase of Roland Berger "We have only a few big airports, and they are all too small, and we have many small airports, which are all too big" is still a precise description of our situation.

The expected doubling of aircraft movements every 20 years, leads to a growing congestion at more and more European hubs and in the fragmented and restricted air space.

So what about general and business aviation?

All measures, which lead to a more effective use of airport- and airway-slots, have highest political priority.

Even if the Single European Sky is making only slow process.

The management of shortages is one thing.

But we also need a massive extension of airport infrastructure at the right airports, as long as this is still possible structurally and politically.

The commission also sees the need for new hubs.

We will have more and more airport systems in urban areas, even if this term has been abolished.

But we don't expect a fundamental solution to the lack of infrastructure.

National plans and a future European airport master plan and a European capacity analysis through Eurocontrol are important but not sufficient political reactions to this crisis.

But what about general and business aviation?

This special aviation sector is pushed away from coordinated airports.

For economic reasons (passengers and charges), for technical reasons (wakes) and for reasons of punctuality and safety.

Exceptions exist where we have a special infrastructure or where enterprises have achieved to negotiate with the public authorities the preservation of slots as a condition for their location decision.

(Without political judgment: The biggest chance for the general and business aviation is in the context of investment or location decisions.)

What is left is the option to move to alternative airports, as long as the airspace is not congested or special corridors are established.

To avoid a further dominance of scheduled flights also at these alternative airports, which are close to urban areas, the actors of business aviation might have to become shareholders of these airports.

A network of regional airports with an improved transport connection could be another solution.

Only master plans can motivate the public authorities to provide funding.

On 3: In general we can say that the European transport policy has closed the chapter of the necessary liberalisation strategy.

In the future, the harmonisation strategy will be important.

Initiated horizontal issues, that means issues for all modes of transport, are:

1. All questions of safety and security
2. Contributions against climate change
3. Passenger rights
4. and Social and working conditions in transport.

After the last transport white paper, the Integration strategy concentrates on intermodal infrastructures, such as:

- Single European Sky
- SESAR
- New concepts for Trans-European Networks
- and Galileo.

Issues in the field of aviation in the new legislation are:

1. Security charges
2. Revision of the Slot regulation - towards secondary trading
3. Revision of the ground-handling regulation - some more liberalisation, quality standards for service and professional qualifications
4. More competence for the European Union in the field of accident-investigation
5. and Unmanned flight objects.

These are all topics, but not yet trends.

Trends: To spot out future political trends is highly speculative, because we have to deal with self-referential processes.

So please excuse my following points that I want to make:

1. In the medium term: The consolidation of airlines on the one hand and the constant shortage of airport infrastructure on the other hand endangers the system-partnership between airlines and airports.

Therefore, the European legislator will more and more have to deal with questions of competition law.

2. But in the long term I believe we will see a counter movement:

Already in the upcoming revision of the Trans-European Networks towards a core network and a further integration of the European transport system, ports and airports are mentioned as strategic interfaces.

This view is emphasized by the need for national master plans, in order to avoid the misallocation of public funds when it comes to the connection of the hinterland.

The European capacity-analysis will eventually even lead to a European master-plan.

In this context, questions of competition will again become less important.

3. But then we need a reform of the European funding guidelines for subsidies.

The decision of the European Court of Justice on "Charleroi" is already a first step, as it defines regions as economic actors.

4. Just think for a moment of the extension of passenger rights, which could one day also encompass access rights at airports.

Then we could have a political revival of airports under the aspect of services of public interest.

5. If General and Business aviation continues to grow and is properly treated by politics, the political allocation of slots can again become possible.

If some professors already demand this already today, then it is not yet on the political agenda.

Thank you for your attention.