Press release | 16.04.2014

Airport noise

New EU rules aimed to boost flights from airports rather than addressing citizens' concerns

The European Parliament today confirmed a legislative agreement revising EU rules dealing with airport noise (second reading). The Greens hit out at the final legislation, which is aimed at boosting capacity at airports and could undermine moves to introduce noise abatement measures at airports (like flight restrictions and night bans) aimed at mitigating problems faced by local communities. After the vote, Green transport spokesperson **Eva Lichtenberger** said:

"Instead of seeking to ensure stronger EU rules, with a view to helping to reduce the nuisance, pollution, health problems and safety risks posed by airports, this legislative review is aimed at boosting capacities at European airports. The EU Commission gave in to heavy lobbying from the air transport industry and MEPs have now cleared these wrongheaded plans for take-off. This is a blow for all those living near airports and others who are confronted with the myriad of problems from the ever-increasing number of flights to and from our airports.

"The new legislation promotes the 'balanced approach' principle, which is being pushed by the aviation industry through the ICAO (International Civil Aviation Organisation). This 'approach' is anything but balanced however, and aims to ensure the economic interests of airports and airlines win out over the interests of those confronted with the noise nuisance, pollution, health problems and safety risks posed by airports. Under the rules endorsed today, it will soon become very difficult to impose new flight restrictions aimed at limiting noise nuisance at airports and their surrounding areas (like night flight restrictions). This is exactly the opposite of what EU legislation should be doing: namely, to ensure that all options are available and used where appropriate to uphold European citizens' rights to a healthy and reasonably quiet living environment."

Commenting on the current context at Zaventem airport, Green transport spokesperson and European Parliament vice-president **Isabelle Durant** added:

"This vote has an added and ironic significance in the context of the current situation at Belgium's main airport just outside of Brussels. The new flight plan, which was introduced by the federal government on 6 February, with scant consultation and impact assessment, has seen flights now being directed towards the most-densely populated parts of the country in downtown Brussels, spreading the nuisance and increasing the risks instead of curbing them. This is exactly the kind of ill-conceived policy and absurd outcome that will become increasingly common under these revised EU rules, which so narrowly confine the set of abatement measures available to those trying to tackle noise pollution around airports."

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