Press release | 10.04.2014

Airport noise

EU citizens to suffer under rules aimed to boost flights from European airports

The European Parliament's transport committee today voted to confirm a legislative agreement revising EU rules dealing with airport noise (second reading) (1). The Greens hit out at the agreement, which would enable the European Commission to intervene to overrule future decisions made to introduce flight restrictions (like night bans) at airports. Commenting after the vote, Green transport spokesperson **Eva Lichtenberger** stating:

"This review is a blow for all those European citizens 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. 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 European Commission gave in to heavy lobbying from the air transport industry and the US administration with its proposals, and now MEPs and EU governments have cleared these wrongheaded plans for take-off.

"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, the EU Commission would be empowered to intervene in the future to overrule flight restrictions introduced by airports, for example those aimed at limiting noise nuisance (like night flight restrictions), although the European Parliament has reduced this scope for intervention. This is exactly the opposite of what the Commission should be doing: namely, to ensure European citizens' rights are upheld."

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

"This vote today in Brussels takes on an added and ironic significance in the context of the current situation at the national airport in Zaventem. The new flight plan in operation since 6 February has led to a massive increase in the numbers of those affected by the problems from Belgium's main airport. The flight plan, which was imposed by the federal government with scant consultation and impact assessment, has seen flights now being directed towards the most-densely populated parts of the country in downtown Brussels. This is

exactly what EU legislation should be aiming to prevent and today's vote is a source of regret to this end."

(1) The vote confirmed the second reading agreement revising EU noise legislation, which is part of the 'airports package' and the final report (Leichtfried) will now be voted by the European Parliament plenary as a whole next week.

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