

Addressing the airport capacity and quality challenge in Europe

Mission

The role of the Observatory is:

- a) To assist the Commission in addressing the airport capacity and quality challenge identified in the Commission's White Paper 2011¹ and its Communication 'Airport policy in the European Union - addressing capacity and quality to promote growth, connectivity and sustainable mobility'².
- b) To bring about an exchange of experience and best practices, within and outside Europe, on how to solve capacity and quality problems at airports.
- c) To establish a better view of the problem, the impact as well as the solution including policy ones.

The problem

1. One of the most striking quantitative results from Challenges of Growth 2013 was a sharp reduction in airports' expansion plans: an increase of just 17% in capacity by 2035 compared to 38% by 2030 reported five years earlier.

Building on Challenges of Growth 2013, the European Observatory will expand upon the theme of the capacity crunch at the EU's airports by developing a detailed analysis of bottlenecks in the Member States. In particular, it will invite Member States which have developed or will develop a national strategy on airport capacity to share it with the Observatory,. Equally, it will stay informed about the situation in key neighbouring countries.

2. The European Observatory will investigate the evolution in traffic and how changes in traffic patterns influence airport capacity in Europe. It will also look into airport capacity issues in other world regions and the relative position of Europe.

3. The European Observatory will pursue the question of acceptance of airport infrastructure as key to the promotion of sustainable development. In this connection, it will seek to identify the environmental variables influencing airport capacity.

The impact

4. Building on Challenges of Growth 2013, the European Observatory will seek to establish a comprehensive view of the consequences of the lack of capacity on the ground. In particular, it will

¹ European Commission's White Paper 2011 Roadmap to a Single European Transport Area - Towards a competitive and resource efficient transport system, COM (2011) 144

² European Commission's Communication Airport policy in the European Union - addressing capacity and quality to promote growth, connectivity and sustainable mobility, COM(2011) 823

seek to establish the economic impact of the unaccommodated demand for travel i.e. loss of GDP and employment for each Member State concerned.

5. Also, it will pursue the question of network congestion by paying attention to issues including changes between now and 2035, impact of intermediate levels of congestion in terms of delay and resilience, impact of adding extra demand to the network in terms of delay and resilience.

6. The European Observatory will look into the delay issue by focussing as a first step on how delays to air transport in Europe are currently recorded.

The solution

"New infrastructure will inevitably need to be part of the solution to bridging the capacity gap"
(Challenges of Growth 2013 – Mitigation of the Challenges)

7. Where appropriate, the European Observatory will make recommendations to the Commission on how the reported national strategies on airport capacity meet the objectives of the Single European Sky and the challenge of air traffic growth.

8. At the same time, the European Observatory will ensure, in close cooperation with Eurocontrol, that 'Challenges of Growth' is regularly updated so that it can continue to support long-term planning decisions for aviation in Europe.

9. The European Observatory will draw up and maintain an inventory of the best environmental practices and measures tested at airport level to promote better environmental performance including in terms of noise and air pollution.

10. The European Observatory will expand upon the mitigating measures identified in Challenges of Growth 2013 (larger aircraft, High Speed Trains, better use of existing capacity through local alternative airports, consensus benchmarks for smaller airports, SESAR, schedule smoothing). In particular, it will listen to and learn from the members themselves (airlines, airports including smaller ones, slot coordinators, ground handlers, environmental associations, Eurocontrol, SESAR) and other stakeholders (e.g. the railway and distribution sectors). On this basis, it will seek to establish a common understanding of the most cost-effective solutions.

11. One of the mitigating measures mentioned is additional High Speed Train investment, and thus more inter-modality. The Observatory will carry out follow up work on the recommendations adopted at its plenary meeting of November 2013, including surface access to airports and possibly air and rail partnership to improve airport access.

12. Regarding Airport-Collaborative Decision Making (A-CDM), the European Observatory will stay informed about the progress achieved. If needed, it will bring issues at EU level. In addition, it will look into other measures and concepts, beyond A-CDM, aiming at improving airport performance in general (e.g. performance criteria, Ground Coordinator, fully integrated air travel organization, performance under extraordinary circumstances and crisis management).

13. The European Observatory will pay attention to relevant developments in the Single European Sky and SESAR initiatives. If needed, it will raise airport-related issues at EU level.

14. Taking into account the current and future regulatory framework for airports, the Commission may seek the opinion of the European Observatory notably on the slot allocation system (e.g. methods and tools for capacity and demand analysis, determination of coordination parameters and local guidelines, cooperation between the coordinators and possible evolution of the system, transparency of slot allocation, annual survey of airport coordinators) and ground handling (e.g. notion of the airport operator as Ground Coordinator, issues around the setting of minimum quality standards and the introduction of A-CDM /contingency plans at the EU largest airports).

Dissemination

15. Where appropriate, the European Observatory will publicise analysis, reports and other information material with a view to increasing visibility of the aviation issues at EU, national and local level.