Citizens' summary

EU airports – boosting capacity and promoting quality

The European Commission is proposing new ground rules to help EU airports keep up with demand and provide good service in future. The rules would cover:

- **airport slots** (the permission to land or take-off at a congested airport at a specific time on a specific day)

- **groundhandling** (such as passenger services, baggage handling, catering, aircraft services, fuel and oil)

- **aircraft noise**.

WHAT'S THE ISSUE?

- If no action is taken, by 2030 19 European airports will be operating at full capacity all day, every day, and an estimated 10% of demand for air travel will go unmet through lack of airport capacity.

- When you add up the minutes and hours of flight delays in Europe, 70% of the total is linked to aircraft turnaround at airports.

- It is not always clear who is responsible for coordinating groundhandling, which is crucial to airport safety, efficiency and good passenger service – particularly during severe weather.

- Where restrictions on airport noise are necessary, they need to be adopted in a more transparent way and should be proportional to the identified problem.

WHAT EXACTLY WILL CHANGE?

Slots:

- Airlines will be able to sell slots they cannot use effectively to others that can. Result: optimal use of existing capacity.

- More transparency about which airlines hold/use which slots and which slots are available. Greater independence for the authorities that allocate slots.

- Stricter conditions on use of slots, to ensure airlines make best use of them.

- Improved information flow and coordination between the authorities that allocate airport slots and those that manage the airspace.

Groundhandling:

- Airports will have a stronger role in coordinating groundhandling operations carried out by different service providers, in order to improve quality.

- Airlines will have a greater choice of groundhandling companies to use at airports where the number of companies is restricted.

- National governments will be able to protect the working conditions of groundhandling staff when an airport chooses a new service provider.

Noise:

- Clearer procedure to ensure that any decisions on necessary restrictions are transparent and that the restrictions are cost-effective.

WHO WILL BENEFIT AND HOW?

- **Passengers** – more reliable and punctual airport services, more seats available thanks to better slot allocation (24 million extra passengers a year), more destinations and lower fares thanks to competition for slots.

- **Airlines** – will be able to adjust their slot holdings at busy airports more easily, by exchanging or transferring slots to other airlines and will have more choice of groundhandling companies.

- **Airports** – better use of their infrastructure by airlines and higher quality services for airlines and passengers.

- **Groundhandlers** – fairer competition conditions at airports.

- **Local residents, airports and airlines** – clearer procedure for noise restrictions, which should provide greater certainty and stability.

- **EU economy** – new slot-allocation rules could generate net economic benefits of €5 billion (2012-2025).

WHY DOES ACTION HAVE TO BE TAKEN BY THE EU?

- By its very nature, aviation is a cross-border business. Some common rules are essential – to guarantee fair competition, enable airlines to schedule services efficiently.

- A patchwork of national or regional slot-allocation systems would increase costs for airlines and result in higher prices for passengers.

WHEN ARE THE PROPOSALS LIKELY TO COME INTO EFFECT?

- **Late 2013** – earliest date by which the European Council and Parliament are expected to approve the Commission's proposals.

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Title tag	EU airports package - citizens' summary
Description	European Commission proposes new rules on slot allocation, groundhandling services and noise restrictions at EU airports - December 2011.
Link name	Summary - EU airports package
Keywords for url/filename	EU + aviation + airport + slots + coordination + groundhandling + capacity + noise + Single European Sky