

MEPs call for far-reaching action on aviation

The European Parliament has taken a step that may accelerate efforts to tackle the environmental impact of air travel.

Earlier this month, the full parliament voted by 439 to 74 (102 abstentions) in support of a package of measures to address the impact of aviation on the global climate and apply the "polluter pays" principle to flights.

The resolution, based on a report by the Green MEP Caroline Lucas, has two central recommendations:

Myth and reality of air transport

The day before MEPs voted, T&E released a report *Clearing the Air*, an analysis of the current state of aviation's contributions to global warming which uses the latest carbon dioxide data released by the European Environment Agency (EEA).

Subtitled "The Myth and Reality of Aviation and Climate Change", it gives an overview of the impact of aviation on climate change, and then looks at some of the policy options under consideration to combat the impact of air transport on the global climate.

Among the report's main findings are:

- CO₂ emissions from international flights departing from EU airports increased by 86% between 1990 and 2004, an average of 4.5% per year
- aviation has by far the greatest climate impact of any transport mode
- today's passenger aircraft are no more fuel-efficient than those in use 50 years ago
- every segment of the

that aviation should join an emissions trading scheme specifically for air transport, and that kerosene should be taxed.

The vote is not legally binding, but with the Commission currently working on proposals due to be published by the end of this year on how to deal with aviation's impact on climate change, it puts pressure on Commission officials to come up with proposals that genuinely tackle air transport's contribution to climate change.



aviation industry – including makers, airlines and airports – is subsidised and enjoys major tax exemptions.

RYANAIR SUBSIDIES

To emphasise the point about subsidies, the Commission last month approved further state aid for the low-fares airline Ryanair. The owners of Toulon airport on the French south coast have been given permission to subsidise Ryanair's proposed service between Toulon and London's Stansted airport for up to five years.

Among *Clearing the Air's* recommendations are for aviation to be included in an emissions trading system, but with additional measures such

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Lucas said: "The strong majority in favour of the report sends a clear signal to the Commission that strict and binding legislation is needed to curb the fast-growing climatic damage caused by airlines. Doing nothing is clearly not an option. At this rate the increased emissions from aviation will neutralise more than a quarter of the reductions required by the EU's Kyoto target by 2012."

The Lucas report's recommendation that a separate emissions trading system should be created exclusively for aviation reflects concerns in the Parliament that the existing EU ETS is not strict enough to cause major changes in behaviour.

Reacting to the vote, Ulrich Schulte-Strathaus of the Association of European Airlines said the Parliament had opted, "for the systematic dismantling of a key industry by political manipulation of its price structure." If the measures were introduced, "the economies of Europe's tourist regions would be devastated" he said.

Airlines unsure over support for aviation in ETS

Environmental groups generally welcome the inclusion of aviation into the EU ETS, but as a first step, while the airlines seem to be hoping joining the ETS will end pressure for further environmental action. Yet not all airlines are singing the same tune.

In recent months, British Airways, Air France/KLM have supported the idea of air transport becoming part of the ETS. But last month the German airline Lufthansa rejected the idea. Wolfgang Mayrhuber, Lufthansa's chief executive, told *The Times* newspaper that global warming needed a global, not European solution, adding: "It would be better to work on improving technology to reduce emissions," he said.

A spokesman for British Airways said Lufthansa had severely overestimated the costs to airlines of joining the ETS.

Revised EU transport policy is 'unsustainable and illegitimate'

The Commission has approved a revised Common Transport Policy (CTP) that contradicts the EU's sustainable development strategy published just six days earlier. The juxtaposition of the two documents led T&E to describe the new CTP as "unsustainable and illegitimate".

EU heads of government last month agreed a revised

EU sustainability strategy. It contains "operational objectives and targets" for sustainable transport in eight areas, including climate change, energy use, air and noise pollution. As part of this, it defines objectives to break the link between economic growth and the growth of transport.

Six days later, the revised CTP paper was approved by

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Transport undermining EU progress on Kyoto target

Greenhouse gases from Europe's transport sector are preventing the EU from meeting its obligations under the Kyoto protocol.

That is the conclusion from an analysis by T&E of the latest data the European Environment Agency (EEA) has prepared for the UN's Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). The EEA reports every year as part of the EU's commitment – as a bloc – to reducing its climate-changing emissions by 8% between 1990 and 2008-12.

With the latest figures covering the period 1990-2004, overall greenhouse gas emissions in the 25-member EU have decreased by either 2.7% or 4.8%, depending on whether emissions from international aviation and shipping are included. If transport were taken away – or had remained stable since 1990 –

overall emissions would be down by 8.1%, which would leave the EU on target to exceed its commitment.

With less than four years until the first Kyoto targets need to be met, the trend is going the wrong way, with EU greenhouse gas emissions rising for the second year running.

European emissions increased by 35 million tonnes (0.7%) between 2003 and 2004, with the increase from transport up by 3.1%. Even if aviation and shipping were excluded, transport's increase would still be 2.2%. Neither aviation nor shipping is regulated by the Kyoto protocol or any other international agreement.

Transport is now responsible for 19.4% of the EU's greenhouse gas emissions, up from 15% in 1990. If aviation and shipping were included, the percentage goes

up from 17.4% in 1990 to 23.6% in 2004. Emissions from aviation and shipping have been increasing at higher rates than those of the rest of the transport sector.

Spain was the biggest emitter with a 4.8% increase, followed by Italy with 0.9%. Germany, Denmark and Fin-

land all reported decreases in greenhouse gas emissions.

"This report highlights that the trend is still going in the wrong direction," said Jacqueline McGlade, the EEA's director. "Europe must implement all planned policies and measures relating to reducing emissions."

Legal action against Spain and France on road charges

The Commission is threatening to take legal action against Spain and France over unfair discounts from road user charges.

Spain and France both charge for use of their motorways, but Spain offers a 50% discount for frequent users, and France a 30% discount. Under the *Eurovignette* directive, discounts can only be given for frequent road users if the frequency of use results in savings to the cost of administering the road, and even then only up to 13% of the charge.

The Commission has sent a "reasoned opinion" – the first stage of legal action – to Madrid and Paris, saying there is no evidence that the 50% and 30% discounts are consistent with any administrative cost savings.

T&E policy officer Nina Renshaw said: "Our concern with the Eurovignette directive is that it doesn't allow member states to charge for all the externalities involved in road use, such as pollution from vehicles. There is therefore absolutely no justification for discounts for frequent users, especially as more journeys do not lead to a reduction in pollution per kilometre driven."

CHARGING SUPPORT

A study from Great Britain suggests motorists are becoming increasingly willing to

accept road charging, as long as it is part of a deal that helps overall mobility.

The survey of more than 1000 motorists by the motoring club RAC found that two thirds of motorists are so irritated by traffic congestion that they would accept strict measures to reduce it, as long as there were better public transport and a reduction in other motoring taxes to make the cost of motoring fiscally neutral.

The survey also found a willingness to accept satellite-based charging systems, as long as they were accompanied by improved anti-theft measures, such as tracking of stolen cars.

CTP 'unsustainable and illegitimate'

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the 25 commissioners. Not only does it fail to mention the sustainability strategy's commitment to reducing greenhouse gas emissions from transport, and reducing levels of air and noise pollution to levels acceptable for health and the environment, but it has abandoned the commitment to breaking the link between economic and transport growth that was a cornerstone of the original 2001 CTP white paper.

T&E director Jos Dings said: "It is bizarre and wrong that the Commission has put out a revised transport strategy that ignores objectives set by EU leaders only six days ago. Apparently the Commission finds the wishes of Europe's transport industry more important than those of our political leaders who rightly take a broader per-

spective."

Fears that the revised CTP would also abandon the EU's commitment to a modal shift from road and air to rail and water have only partly been realised. The revised strategy does not abandon the principle of a modal shift, but the target of increasing rail freight to 1998 levels has been dropped.

The transport commissioner Jacques Barrot said: "We will continue to work with the modal shift approach, particularly on long-distance transport." But speaking about the *Eurovignette* rules on road user charging, he added: "We are also going to make sure rail takes a greater share of the market, but that does not mean we are going to reduce traffic from other modes."

The revised CTP now goes to the European Parliament.

Changes at T&E



João Vieira is T&E's newest recruit. A 27-year-old Portuguese, he becomes one of T&E's policy officers, after spending the last 2½ years working on a bus priority project in Lisbon. As well as Portuguese, he speaks English, Spanish and French. He will be working mainly on aviation and shipping.

VCD's pioneering conflict resolution agency in great demand

When the VCD launched its Conciliation Board for Long-Distance Travel 1½ years ago, it was sailing in uncharted waters. Until then, people using public transport were completely on their own if they encountered difficulties on their journeys, whether by train, bus, plane or boat. There wasn't a body to which complainants could turn if they weren't happy with the way the customer services staff of the relevant transport company had dealt with their case, or if they had any questions about their legal entitlements. Now there is something positive to report.

These days there are legally enforceable rights for air passengers set at European level, and similar rights are on their way for train and bus passengers. Now in Germany the Conciliation Board for Long-Distance Travel – called "Schlichtungstelle Mobilität" – offers a neutral institution from which passengers on

land- and air-based transport can receive reliable information about their rights free of charge. So far, more than 3000 people have made use of the service. The enquiries have been about 50% to do with flights, and 45% train travel.

The cases reported to the board can be divided into concrete disputes and simple requests for information. In about 600 cases, proposals for settling disputes were worked out and presented to both the complainants and the transport companies. Unfortunately, over 300 of these could not be resolved, as many airlines refuse to take part in the conflict resolution process.

In air travel, many complaints have involved difficulties arising out of delayed and cancelled flights. Very often the area of contention was the European declaration of air passengers' rights. In this

new and highly contentious area of law, the conciliation board managed to find a solution in 43% of the disputes.

On train travel, many cases involved delays, but also people with tickets having to pay extra, and difficulties with the services. The Schlichtungstelle was able to mediate successfully in 82% of cases. All 100% of rail cases were able to be processed because Deutsche Bahn works very well with the agency.

During the resolution work, stark differences in attitudes to customers among the various parties come to the fore. While some transport bodies are very willing to embrace an approach to problem solving that avoids the courts – so they can win back the favour of even their most irritated customers and improve their own customer service procedures – others appear to think they can still

afford to turn a deaf ear to the grievances of customers. And there is a broad range of reasons for dissatisfaction: from simply ignoring complaints to disproportionately high costs for customer service phone numbers. There have even been cases of customer service officials simply not speaking the language of the customer.

This all shows why the demand for a neutral, out-of-court process for resolving disputes is so great. Only when transport users have easy and quick access to their rights do they have a realistic chance to insist on those rights. And on the other side of the equation, the transport operators also stand to gain, through improving their image, establishing contact with customers, and thereby avoiding the possibility of complex and expensive lawsuits.

Anke Lobmeyer is the project leader of T&E member VCD's Schlichtungstelle Mobilität.

Anke Lobmeyer
FORUM

Changes to car taxes make case for registration tax

The Netherlands and Portugal have this month introduced differentiations into their car registration taxes to encourage car buyers to opt for the cleanest models.

In the Netherlands, the new registration taxes, payable when a car is sold to its first buyer, can earn the owner of a hybrid a discount up to

€6000. Conventional cars are divided into seven categories (A-G), with the best cars bringing buyers a registration tax discount of €1000; the worst now cost their owners €540 more than they paid up to 30 June.

The seven classes are based on fuel consumption, CO₂ emissions and an efficiency indicator relative to other cars of a similar size.

In Portugal, the new rules mean 10% of a car's registration tax is differentiated according to CO₂ emissions in four classes, with hybrid vehicles earning their owners a 40% reduction.

T&E director Jos Dings said: "These new systems show how useful registration taxes can be and forms evidence supporting our view that mandatory abolition of

registration taxes in the EU would be a bad idea. Member states can make good use of them to promote the introduction of greener cars.

"Both the Dutch and the Portuguese systems, although a step in the right direction, are not perfect. The Portuguese system has only four CO₂ classes, which is too blunt to have a big impact. Both systems give hybrids preferential treatment; we favour a technology-neutral approach because it is better to reward good performance than specific technologies."

Austria has had a registration tax based on fuel consumption for several years. Denmark, Finland and Greece also have registration taxes but so far have not differentiated them on the basis of CO₂ or fuel.

Myth and reality

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as fuel taxation and nitrogen oxides emissions charges, which the report says are not only important but are justified in terms of cost-effectiveness. It also says tackling the environmental impact of aviation would not affect the competitive position of EU airlines, and would not harm the poorest citizens.

- A study from the University of Manchester's Centre for Air Transport and the Environment says technological solutions to increasing pollution from aircraft lag well behind the growth of air travel. The study also said much more research was needed into the non-CO₂ effects of aviation emissions, including cirrus clouds, which could show a situation much worse than currently believed.

How to speed up fuel efficiency
T&E has teamed with Renault, Toyota, and the British and Dutch governments to stage a one-day conference on 13 September on how to speed up progress towards fuel-efficient cars in Europe. The EU environment commissioner Stavros Dimas will be among the speakers. See Events, page 4.

Commission enquiry postpones Swedish air ticket tax

France's tax on air tickets aimed at raising money for fighting Third World diseases came into effect this month, but a similar tax in Sweden has been delayed by an enquiry by the Commission.

Sweden's tax was due to come into effect on 1 July, but the decision to exempt certain airports caused Brussels to ask Stockholm certain questions, which means the tax cannot yet come into effect.

No movement on the Swedish tax is likely until after the general election on 17 September.

As *Bulletin* went to press, the Commission announced draft legislation that would ban airlines from advertising €1 flights. The idea is to force airlines to advertise the price customers will pay after taxes and charges, rather than the base price.

GREATER POTENTIAL FOR GREEN TAXES

There is "high potential" for governments to introduce more environmental taxes. That is the main conclusion of a report for the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development

New Publications and Events

• **Clearing the Air**, the myth and reality of aviation and climate change, T&E 06/2006, from T&E website

• **How much bioenergy can Europe produce without harming the environment?** European Environment Agency report 7/2006, <http://reports.eea.europa.eu>

Events

• **Driving Low Emissions**, T&E conference on fuel-efficient cars, 13 September, Brussels. www.transportenvironment.org

(OECD) which commissioned the report after becoming concerned at the declining popularity among governments of taxes to steer changes in environmental behaviour. It shows that fears about green taxes harming industrial competitiveness have led to so many exemptions for industry that the burden of such taxes falls "almost exclusively" on households and transport. This reduces the taxes' effectiveness and contradicts the principle that the polluter should pay. The report recommends eliminating many of these, and compensating households – where necessary – through social security or general taxation.

ITALY'S GREEN BASE

The new Italian government has agreed a general principle that environmental protection and sustainability should be the basis for all other government policies. It is the first time an Italian programming document, which sets out economic and financial plans for the next five years, has had such an environmental principle. How much the new centre-left coalition under Romano Prodi will be able to follow this principle will become clearer in the autumn when the financial law underpinning the programming document is agreed.

OBLIGATORY FILTERS

Denmark is to introduce a new law forcing diesel-powered lorries and buses to have particle filters if they operate in special inner-city environmental zones. All vehicles over 3.5 tonnes will be affected unless they meet certain EU vehicle emission standards. Environmental or "low emission" zones are becoming increasingly popu-

lar in Scandinavia and are being considered as part of the EU clean air strategy.

MEPS WIN POWERS

MEPs are to get new powers over certain sensitive environmental issues in a small but radical alteration to EU rules on "comitology". The word is little-known outside the corridors of the EU bodies: it refers to what happens between a legislation completing its passage through the EU legislative process and coming into effect as a piece of law. Since the 1960s, MEPs have had no say on comitology – once the legislative process is complete, Commission officials and lawyers put it into a form that can be implemented, with final approval coming from committees set up by ministers. But under an agreement reached earlier this month, MEPs will soon be able to "call back" legislation whose implementation arrangements they are unhappy with, if it was debated under the "co-decision" procedure.

MARITIME POLICY?

The Commission has launched what it calls one of the largest consultation exercises in the EU's history. It has published a green paper "Towards a future Maritime Policy for the Union" and wants interested citizens and organisations to help form a European vision for the oceans and seas. The central question in the paper is: can Europe afford to manage its seas and oceans in a sectoral, unconnected way or has the time come to establish a truly integrated maritime policy? See <http://ec.europa.eu/maritimeaffairs>

HIGH-RISK CASE

A coalition of states and environmental groups in

America is asking the US Supreme Court to force the imposition of carbon dioxide regulations on energy producers and car makers. A lower court has already ruled that the US government is under no obligation to regulate CO₂ as it is not a pollutant, but the coalition says that as the principal greenhouse gas, it should have the same status as a pollutant. A spokesperson for the Sierra Club, and environmental NGO, said the case is a high risk strategy – if the coalition wins, it could move the USA significantly forward in environmental regulation, but if it loses, it could set progress back several years.

AND FINALLY ...

Residents in north-west Cambodia have created their own rail service – using pieces of bamboo as tracks. A report by the BBC says cuts to national rail services mean there is only one regular train a week to the capital, Phnom Penh, so the locals have built up their own rail services. The "bamboo train" service seems to work, though as the lines have only one track, when two trains meet, the one with the lightest load has to be lifted off the track to let the other pass.

Bulletin

T&E *Bulletin* is the official news sheet of the European Federation for Transport and Environment (T&E). It appears 10 times a year and is free to members of the Federation.

T&E has 40 members registered in a total of 21 countries. It lobbies for an environmentally sound approach to European transport issues.

The next issue will appear in late August. The deadline for contributions to reach either the T&E secretariat or the editor is Friday 18 August 2006.

T&E Secretariat: Rue de la Pépinière 1, 1000 Bruxelles, Belgium. Tel: +32 2 502 9909; fax: 502 9908; website: www.transportenvironment.org.

Editor of *Bulletin*: Chris Bowers, tel & fax: +44 1273 813331; e-mail: editor@transportenvironment.org.