

Proposition for a Directive on Airport Security Charges: A positive step towards reducing aviation security costs

The Commission has adopted on May 11th a proposal for Directive on security charges. This new Directive will on the one hand increase transparency on the security charges levied by airports and on the other hand oblige Member States wishing to apply additional measures, above the EU security standards for aviation security, to justify them with an impact assessment.

For major European hubs, the security charge per passenger can vary from €2.15 to €11. Applying the principles of transparency, cost-relatedness and consultation with airport users to security charges will significantly contribute to a better understanding of what these discrepancies are based upon and ultimately lead to a more cost-effective system. According to airlines' experience in some countries, "transparency talks" on security costs have already greatly contributed to improving the effectiveness of security measures. AEA also evaluates that a better dialogue between airports and airlines on security fees could contribute to around 10% of cost savings.

Furthermore, in some EU countries, the costs implied by more stringent measures, going beyond the EU requirements, represent between 30% and 50% of the total security costs. These measures may reflect a higher risk at national level, which is linked to political and diplomatic positioning of certain States. AEA very much welcomes the proposal to oblige Member States to produce an impact assessment, including a risk assessment, prior to the introduction of more stringent measures. This will certainly further contribute to a better understanding by aviation stakeholders and the travelling public of discrepancies in measures and costs among EU Member States. Ultimately this could also lead to a reduction in the number of more stringent measures, achieving a more harmonised security regime across Europe.

The benefits of transparency and consultation with regard to airport charges have already been recognised by the European Parliament and the Council in a Directive adopted in March 2009. On the basis of this previous legislation, AEA very much hopes that the adoption of the present proposal, applying the same principles, can be fast tracked to enter into force in conjunction with the Airport Charges Directive, in March 2011 at the latest.

Aviation security measures not only protect the travelling public, but the population at large, and as such should be considered as a part of national security policy and financed by the national budget.

This has been acknowledged by the US government, who spent 25 times more than the EU on security measures at airports after 9/11. This proposal is certainly a positive first step towards a better control of the level of security costs and should now be swiftly adopted. AEA still wishes to see further proposals from the Commission addressing the public financing of aviation security.

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Note to the Editor: The Association of European Airlines (AEA) brings together 34 European established scheduled network carriers. These collectively carry 370 million passengers and 7 million tonnes of cargo each year, operating 2,600 aircraft serving 615 destinations in 165 countries with 11,575 flights a day. They provide around 423,000 jobs directly, and generate a total turnover of €78 billion