

Jobs and prosperity at risk in Madrid Airport noise ruling

The importance of air transport to regional economies has been highlighted by a recent ruling by the Spanish Supreme Court that threatens to reduce the number of flights at Madrid Barajas Airport, following a case brought by residents of Santo Domingo, close to Madrid, on the grounds of aircraft noise.

As well as compensating the affected residents, the Spanish Civil Aviation Authority has been ordered to take whatever steps are necessary to reduce noise – including the possibility that flights may be curtailed.

The ruling threatens to severely undermine Madrid Airport's position as one of Europe's success stories. As industrial and commercial progress has elevated Spain into the top rank of European economies, the process has been accompanied by a growing demand for air travel. As flights have increased, the aircraft operating them have become ever quieter, and the great majority of the aircraft serving the airport are those with the smallest and least intrusive 'noise footprint'.

Currently, more than 170,000 jobs are dependent on Madrid Airport. Its continued contribution to the regional and national economy should be maintained, and noise issues dealt with by investment into protecting the airport's neighbours through home-insulation schemes and operational measures to vary flight paths, rather than punitive compensation payments and movement restrictions.

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