

**Answer***(7 April 1998)*

The Presidency intends to make every effort, with the support of the Commission and taking account of the views of the European Parliament, to achieve the necessary conditions in the Council so that a decision on this issue may be taken at the earliest opportunity.

(98/C 196/134)

**WRITTEN QUESTION E-4188/97****by Eolo Parodi (UPE) and Guido Viceconte (UPE) to the Commission***(21 January 1998)*

*Subject:* Allocation of slots at Community airports

At some EU airports — in particular those with the worst traffic congestion — a lack of available slots is preventing some carriers from operating in accordance with the rules designed to ensure healthy, balanced competition.

Is the Commission aware of any instances of slot trading?

How does it intend to ensure that slots are allocated on the basis of transparent criteria in accordance with Community competition law?

What means does it have at its disposal to ensure that slots are made available and allocated to the airlines applying for them?

**Answer given by Mr Kinnock on behalf of the Commission***(23 February 1998)*

The Commission is very concerned by the lack of available slots at very congested Community airports. Regulation (EEC) No 95/93 of 18 January 1993 on common rules for the allocation of slots at Community airports <sup>(1)</sup> establishes the rules to be followed by airport co-ordinators in order to ensure a neutral, transparent and non-discriminatory allocation of slots.

The Commission is monitoring the proper application of the existing Regulation to ensure, in particular, that new entrants benefit from access to congested airports to the extent provided in the Regulation. The Commission has recently become aware of certain practices involving transactions between airlines which raise questions as to their compatibility with the Regulation and has asked for further information from the Member States concerned. The Commission will not hesitate to take action, when justified, in order to ensure a proper enforcement of the Regulation.

The Commission also recognises, however, that the existing Regulation is not a sufficient instrument to respond effectively to the needs of all air carriers. Whilst it ensures fair distribution of the slots which become available, it does not create new possibilities for access to the airports. Moreover, in many cases, an increase in airport capacity will either not be sufficient to resolve the congestion problem, or simply will not happen.

The Commission is therefore preparing a proposal to amend the existing Regulation in order to optimise the use of slots and giving particular consideration to the advantages and disadvantages of introducing a fair mechanism in order to facilitate slot movements. Various means of reinforcing the position of new entrants and making the existing Regulation more easily enforceable are also being considered.

The Commission proposal will attempt to offer a balanced package of measures to remedy the situation described by the Honourable Members. Of course, in cases where dominant carriers at congested airports abuse their position, the competition rules of the EC Treaty can always be used as a basis for action.

<sup>(1)</sup> OJ L 14, 22.1.1993.