



New measures to enhance civil aviation security

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The use of "Sky Marshals" - especially if it involves the carriage of weapons on board aircraft - should be strictly regulated, and measures such as the Commission decision on the carriage of liquids should expire after six months, says the EP Transport Committee. In a vote on Wednesday, the committee proposed heavily amending a draft regulation that lays down common rules for airport and aircraft security checks, searches, surveillance, prohibited items, and security patrols.

The committee proposed extensive amendments to the Council common position, in a second-reading report by Paolo Costa (ALDE, IT), that was adopted unanimously (38 votes in favour). "The necessity of new security measures that are implemented quickly and effectively is undoubted. Parliament has done its job and has presented a very balanced text", Mr Costa said.

Implementing measures such as the Commission decision to allow only certain amounts of liquids on board should normally expire after six months, say MEPs, and may be renewed "only after a thorough re-evaluation of the security risks and a thorough evaluation of costs and operational impact associated with those measures".

For the first time, EU rules will cover security measures during flights, including in-flight security officers. "Sky marshals", as they are commonly known, will have to be properly trained and MEPs insist that weapons "shall not be carried on board an aircraft, unless the required security conditions have been fulfilled, and authorisation has been given by the State granting the operating licence to the air carrier concerned". They demand prior approval by the State of departure, by the State of arrival and, where applicable, by "any State which is over flown or where intermediate stops are made".

MEPs also decided that the costs of the security measures should be met by airline users and Member States, though if a Member State wants to impose even more stringent measures, it will have to cover the whole cost. "This is a reasonable approach, taking into account the protection of airline customers', the industry's and the Member States' interests", Mr Costa said. The report also stresses that security taxes and charges must be used "exclusively to meet airport or on-board aircraft security costs".

Procedure: Co-decision, second reading ---Plenary vote: May 1, Brussels

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Committee on Transport and Tourism

Chair: : Paolo Costa (ALDE, IT)

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