



**UECNA**

EUAAN European Union against Aircraft Nuisances  
EVGSAL Europäische Vereinigung gegen die schädlichen Auswirkungen des Luftverkehrs  
EVTGN Europese Vereniging tegen Geluidshinder door Vliegtuigen

Union Européenne contre les Nuisances des Avions

# European Commission's Better Airports Package



## Not Good for Residents

**Reaction and Proposals from UECNA,  
representing residents at European airports**

# Introduction

[http://ec.europa.eu/transport/air/airports/airports\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/transport/air/airports/airports_en.htm)

At the end of last year the European Commission published its 'Better Airports Package.' The Better Airports Package will now go to the European Parliament and member states under the co-decision procedure.

## The Better Airports Package: Key Features

Its starting point is that "if no action is taken, by 2030 19 European airports will be operating at full capacity all day, every day, and an estimated 10% of demand will go unmet through lack of airport capacity". It, therefore, wants to find ways of making airports more efficient so that they can handle more planes. The Commission has identified a number of ways in which this can be done:

### Slots

At present it is quite difficult for airlines to sell slots. This means that airlines often operate planes that are fairly empty simply to keep their slot. The Commission is proposing to make it easier to sell slots to other airlines.

### Ground-handling

The Commission has found that 70% of flight delays are caused by problems on the ground, not in the air. Therefore, it has come up with a number of proposals to make operations on the ground – known as 'ground-handling' – more efficient.

### Noise

The Commission recognizes that, if these measures are effective, it will enable more planes to use Europe's airports and that this will mean increased noise levels for residents. Therefore, it is proposing some measures which would reduce noise:

- It will make it easier for airports to phase out the noisiest aircraft
- It is suggesting that the Commission is given a role to scrutinize noise procedures at airports. It wants to see consistency across Europe. It wants to see decisions about noise taken in a transparent way, with residents properly informed. It also wants decisions about noise to be based on factual evidence. But it goes into very little detail about this. And it stresses that the interests of residents must be 'balanced' against the interests of passengers and of the aviation industry.

The Commission is proposing that **Directive 2002/30/EC** (which covers airport noise) be repealed and be replaced by the proposals in the Better Airports Package. They will not form a new directive. They will simply be rules and procedures.

# Reaction and Proposals from UECNA

We agree that airports and airlines should operate as efficiently as possible. We are concerned, though, that the main purpose of the measures proposed by the Commission to increase efficiency is to permit more aircraft to use the airports. We are opposed to an increase of aircraft as this increases noise for residents. There is also a potential contradiction between "handling more planes" at European airports and the challenges of rising oil prices, decarbonizing transport and climate change. Indeed, there is a strong case for a reduction in the number of planes using most of Europe's airports.

## UECNA Proposals

We welcome the Commission's proposal to make it easier to phase out the noisiest aircraft currently using European airports. However, this does not offer sufficient opportunity to protect residents.

**1. Directive 2002/30/EC needs to be retained and strengthened.** It should include noise targets which airports are required to meet. These targets should be based on the guidelines produced by the World Health Organisation. There should be a date by which these targets should be met. It should follow the pattern of the Air Quality Directive which set legal limits to be met by 2010. We recognise that it will take some years for the World Health Organisation noise guidelines to be met but without a target date there is no incentive for the aviation industry to significantly reduce the noise it creates.

**2. The aim of the Commission's proposals – to make full use of capacity at Europe's airports – is in conflict with the needs of residents.** It is the sheer number of aircraft using Europe's airports that causes the real problem for most residents. An increase on the scale envisaged by the Commission, even allowing for the fact that some of the aircraft would be quieter, would make life unacceptably noisy for many residents. We recommend an annual cap is placed on the total number of flights permitted to use each of Europe's airports. This is not incompatible with improving the efficiency of airports. We envisage it is combined with an accelerated and large-scale transfer of short-haul flights within Europe to high speed trains. Such a transition would result in sufficient slots being freed up to accommodate any growth of aviation demand for many years.

**3. The Commission's proposal on slots is a missed opportunity to control the number of aircraft using Europe's airports.** Slot auctioning would provide such an opportunity. It would be a mechanism member states could use to limit the number of aircraft using an airport. It would also raise a considerable amount of money for the member states. We recognise this might require new EU legislation.

**4. The Commission's proposal that it wants to see decisions about noise taken in a transparent way, with residents properly informed, is welcomed in principle, but it is too vague.** The population surrounding airports and under flight paths need to be given the status of "interested" parties in a retained and strengthened Directive 2002/30/EC in order to guarantee them a voice in decisions related to noise. In particular, residents should have a right to be involved in decisions about changes to flight paths, operational procedures and an increase in the number of flights using a particular flight path.

## **UECNA'S Proposals**

- 1. Retain and strengthen Directive 2002/30/EC.**
- 2. Set noise reduction targets for airports based on World Health Organisation guidelines.**
- 3. Place an annual cap on the total number of flights permitted to use each of Europe's airports.**
- 4. Introduce slot auctioning.**
- 5. Give residents the status of "interested" parties in decisions about noise matters; in particular, about changes to flight paths, operational procedures and an increase in the number of flights using a particular flight path.**

This response has been written by UECNA President John Stewart. UECNA is the only Europe-wide organisation representing residents living around Europe's airports or under their flight paths. We can be contacted at 13 Stockwell Road, London SW9 9AU. Email: [johnstewart2@btconnect.com](mailto:johnstewart2@btconnect.com)  
[www.uecna.eu](http://www.uecna.eu)

January 2012