R11 A1: No To Airport Expansions — Not in Barcelona, Not Anywhere

Proposers DWARS, GroenLinkse Jongeren

Motion text

From line 51 to 52:

- Urges the European Commission to ~~halt all EU-funded subsidies~~revise the 2014 Aviation Guidelines, adopting new rules halting state aid to airlines, airports, and airport expansion and nonessential infrastructure investment projects of already developed airports, with the continued exemptions of 'very small airports' meeting the criteria to constitute a Service of General Economic Interest (SGEI) insofar a competitive train or sea alternative is not feasible

Reason

The amendment:

1. Clarifies the law regarding funding of airlines,
2. Adds the inclusion of airports and nonessential infrastructure investment projects,
3. Specifies the exemptions of SGEIs.

Why:

1. To the best of our knowledge, there are no specific EU(-funded) subsidies for airlines and airport expansion projects. These are provided by Member States and constitute state aid. The EU may however adopt rules regarding the provision of state aid (Article 107 of the TFEU), as it has done with the Aviation Guidelines. However, this was last revised in 2014.
    1. We see this as the strongest possible means to halt public funding for airlines and airports.
    2. The original text specifying the European Commission seems to imply this specific power of the EC, thus the amendment intends to align this with said authority.
2. Airports and nonessential infrastructure investment projects were added:
    1. The former because state aid of airports is just as self-explanatory as state aid of airlines;

    2. The latter because nonessential infrastructure investment projects (such as those beyond maintenance) may not necessarily constitute expansion projects but for all intents and purposes serve the same goals.
3. The current Aviation Guidelines provides exemptions to very small airports (<700.000 passengers per annum), particularly those constituting SGEIs. The amendment focuses solely on those airports that constitute SGEIs. The purpose of such airports is to connect "isolated, remote or peripheral regions of the EU", for example the island and other peripheral territories of Member States, with the rest of the EU and without such an airport, "part of the area that it serves would be isolated from the rest of the EU to an extent that would hamper its social and economic development".
    1. We see the regional connectivity and thus inclusion of all regions of the EU regardless of how remote it is as an essential aspect of EU integration and the right to movement of peoples. This is especially important for the special territories of the EU, particularly the 9 Outermost Regions and the Åland Islands, territories in which EU state aid rules apply, in order to ensure their connectivity to the rest of the EU.
    2. Thus the revised rules should continue providing exemptions for SGEIs, with the conditionality that a similarly competitive rail or sea connection is not feasible.