

## European Parliament approves dangerous traffic management reform

The Transport and Tourism Committee (TRAN) Committee of the European Parliament last week adopted its position in support of the controversial Single European Sky 2+ (SES2+) and Performance Review Body (PRB) reforms of the air traffic management (ATM) sector. This opens a new phase of trilogue negotiations on the reform package which will start during the summer. The consolidated version of both SES and PRB files are expected to be made public in the weeks to come.

Taking a different approach to the Member States, the Parliament's TRAN committee expressed its favour for an approach that would liberalise the sector. Charles-Andre Quesnel, Chair of the ETF's ATM Committee explained how *“the MEPs showed a clear lack of understanding on the essential public role of ATM services and preferred a liberalised approach based on competition which will only serve to fragment the sector. As the representative of the European citizens, the European Parliament needs to fully understand the potential impact and the dangers of this proposal”*.

### More liberalisation, more trouble

The position taken by the European Parliament shows little consideration for the social and human consequences the major ATM reform will have. Contrary to the concerns raised by the ETF on many occasions, MEPs still seem to believe more competition will benefit the ATM sector. The MEPs have chosen to follow the direction of the European Commission and, in some parts of the SES2+ proposal, go even further, by adopting an ultra-liberal dogmatic approach. The MEPs clearly neglected the fact that ATM is a public service infrastructure, critical for aviation safety. It is the ETF's strong view that ATM is designed to serve the public interest, and support air transport, it is not a money-making tool and we are disappointed that this has not been realised. This shows again not only lack of consideration towards the workforce but also blatantly disregards the negative consequences of liberalisation on the workforce.

Experience shows airspace design changes cannot be done easily. Fragmentation through an increased number of players in the sector, would make the network more complex, and have a detrimental impact on overall ATM operations. An example of this can be seen in the UK, where [a separate entity has been created in order to re-align the heavily fragmented ATM sector](#) which has been heavily liberalised.

While the text adopted by the TRAN committee includes numerous references to climate change and the environment, it is unclear how exactly the massive

environmental improvements MEPs advertise could be achieved, as the ETF has previously [pointed out](#).

The Member States however seem to be aware of potential risks of excessive liberalisation within the ATM sector, and see through the greenwashing of the TRAN committee's opinion. Therefore, the approach the Council adopted earlier this month has the potential to enable smooth transition towards a modern ATM system. Similar to what workers have said, the [Council points out](#) that the provision of ATM service is, and should remain within the remit of each Member State. Crucially, they should have their say of how to structure and organise both ATM as well as other parts of the ATM industry within their own borders, which is indispensable for safe and secure air transport operations.

The ETF have been pointing out that ATM is a human-centred industry, and as such cannot be regulated without taking into account the workforce and their working and social conditions. One of the major drawbacks of the SES2+ recast is precisely the lack of consideration for social and human impact of the reform. Despite the devastating impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, the European Commission had decided not to prepare a social impact assessment ahead of the SES2+ recast. Nevertheless, following concerns raised by numerous stakeholders, the Commission's DG MOVE has agreed for the ATM professional staff organisations to assess social impact of both SES and PRB texts and provide it to the decision makers ahead of the trilogue. It is hoped that this will contribute to an informed and facts-based inter-institutional negotiation, that will start in the months to come.

Following the divergent positions adopted by the institutions, the upcoming Presidency of the Council of the EU in 2021 and 2022 will be faced with a difficult task to find the right balance between the initial proposal, the needs of workers, Member States and the views of the MEPs. The ETF strongly believes that the concerns of workers have been ignored by MEPs, but calls on negotiators from both the Parliament and Council, as well as the Presidency, to give more consideration to the effects that these reforms will have on the working and social conditions of workers in ATM sector in the upcoming trilogue negotiations.

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