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Reply to the Report on the Second Session of the European Civil Aviation Conference

Report[1]
Committee on Economic Affairs and Development
Rapporteur: Mr Hendrik VOS, Netherlands, Socialist Group

1. 1957 - 9th Session - Second part

A. I. Draft Resolution - presented by the Economic Committee

The Assembly,

1. Having before it the Report of the Second Session of the European Civil Aviation Conference (E. C. A. C), thanks the Conference for transmitting this Report to the Consultative Assembly and congratulates the Conference on its work during its Second Session;

2. Welcomes the numerous recommendations on facilitation adopted during the Session and hopes that in the months to come particular effort will be made to achieve implementation of these recommendations, in view of their importance for developing European collaboration and the European tourist industry;

In this connection the Assembly draws the Conference's attention to the work of the Council of Europe for the simplification of frontier formalities, and expresses the hope that there will be continued collaboration between the two bodies in this field;

3. Welcomes the proposals to establish Study Groups to consider and report on European co-operation in the basic training of flight personnel and in the training of Air Navigation Services ground personnel;

4. Regrets that, in the economic field, virtually no progress has been made in the development of a multilateral agreement to liberalise air transport in Europe—the basic objective of the European Civil Aviation Conference—and that the study on bilateral agreements (Conference Recommendation No. 25) does not cover provisions relating to capacity control and the allocation of routes, in view of the fundamental lack of agreement on these questions;

Urges the Conference to take up this matter again at its next Session, and recommends, in particular, that the aircraft of all Member States of E. C. A. C. should be enabled as soon as possible, freely to land and to put down and to take up passengers, mail and cargo on the territory of other Member States;

5. Calls upon the Conference to give its attention to the following further problems :

a. the need for a comprehensive examination of the question of airport charges, with a view to reaching an agreement among Member States to abolish airport passenger service charges;

b. the need for an agreement between the participating States of E. C. A. C. whereby any particular State taking a decision likely to have international repercussions on air transport policy or air transport economy, should, first, consult with the other countries affected;

6. Hopes that collaboration between the Conference and the Assembly may continue to be built up, so that the recommendations made by the Conference can receive, wherever possible, the support of the legislatures of member countries, profiting also from the influence there of Representatives to the Consultative Assembly;

7. Requests accordingly that the suggestions made in Assembly Resolutions replying to ECAC Reports be placed on the agenda of Sessions of the Conference;

8. Invites the European Civil Aviation Conference to hold its next Session in Strasbourg.

B. II. Explanatory Memorandum

1. The present Report of the E. C. A. C. refers to its Second Session, and the Conference is, of course, still at an early stage of development. The Committee will certainly wish to encourage collaboration between the Assembly and E. C. A. C, and at this early stage it should be possible to lay the foundations of close and cordial relations, in particular by creating parliamentary support for recommendations for action at the European level in this important sector of the economy.

2. The following comments may be made on the proposals mentioned in the draft Resolution.

3. Regarding the call for special attention to the fourteen recommendations of E. C. A. C. on facilitation (paragraph 2 of the draft Resolution), the Council of Europe has already, of course, considerable experience in this field, and, in particular, through the activities of the Council of Europe's Special Committee of Senior Officials for the Simplification of Frontier Formalities. It will be recalled that at its meeting at Paris (Orly) in July to study the simplification of formalities at airports, in the light of the Consultative Assembly's Recommendation 85, the Special Committee heard a statement by the Secretary-General of E. C. A. C. on the facilitation recommendations. Close co-operation in this field should be achieved.

4. The training of pilots and telecommunications experts (paragraph 3 of the draft Resolution), is becoming more and more difficult because of the disparity between the enormous expenditure required to provide good training facilities (suitable airfields, flight equipment, Link trainers), and the limited requirements for such personnel in the various European countries. For example, France, which has one of the largest airline networks in Europe, needs to recruit approximately only 15-20 transport pilots and 6-7 civil telecommunications expertsa initially. It is clear therefore that the pooling of such facilities could lead to considerable economies.

5. Whereas, regarding facilitation, technical questions, aircraft interchange etc., progress has been made, no real progress has been possible in the vital economic field. The Report stages (paragraph 48) that a number of proposals concerning action to be taken to achieve a multilateral agreement on scheduled services in Europe were presented, but that also there was a fundamental lack of agreement on the main questions of provisions relating to capacity control and the allocation of routes. Although the recommendations adopted on economic questions (Nos. 25 to 30), if implemented by the Governments, could mean a step in the right direction, they should not distract attention from the really important question put forward in Recommendation No. 26—" the achievement on a multilateral basis of progressive and orderly liberalisation of intra-European scheduled air transport ". The Assembly should therefore urge the E. C. A. C. to take up this matter again at its next session.

6. In paragraph 5 (a) of the draft Resolution, the abolition is called for of airport passenger service charges, which some Governments continue to charge the air companies and which have been passed on to passengers. The latter thus pay directly for the use of the airport. Apart from what seems to be the undesirability of the principle involved here (railway passengers are nowhere asked to pay separately for the use of the railway station), there is the practical inconvenience of having to make this payment separately. Passengers waste^time at airport terminals and often do not have the local currency readily available to pay. If the Governments involved should really be unable to abolish the charge altogether, at least an arrangement should be made to include the charge in the price of the ticket.

7. The draft Resolution also calls (paragraph 5 (b)) for an agreement by which any country taking a decision likely to have international repercussions on air transport policy or air transport economy, should, first, discuss the measures in question with the other countries affected. This would bring Member States' practice on air transport into line with their practice on transport generally. As is known, the Council of Ministers of the European Conference of Ministers of Transport have already decided that this prior consultation should take place—and, in view of the fact that in some countries the Minister of Transport is not himself responsible for Civil Aviation, an additional agreement between the participating countries of E. C. A. C. seems to be necessary.

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