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Council approves updated rules for the introduction of noise-related operating restrictions at EU airports

The Council today adopted its position at first reading on a new regulation which **harmonises and strengthens rules on how authorities take decisions to set operating restrictions at EU airports to limit nuisance from aircraft noise** ([5560/14](#); statement of reasons: [5560/14 ADD 1](#); statement: [7583/14 ADD 1](#)).

The rules are based on principles agreed by the International Civil Aviation Organisation (ICAO), known as the **Balanced Approach to noise management**. They are designed to identify the most cost-efficient way of tackling aircraft noise at each individual airport, with operating restrictions being a last resort option only.

Today's approval by the Council paves the way for final adoption, which requires endorsement by the European Parliament at second reading - expected to take place in April.

Aim of the regulation

The purpose of the regulation is to ensure consistent application of the Balanced Approach. It aims to strike a balance between citizens' quality of life in terms of protection from aircraft noise, and the needs of air transport. It will make the noise assessment process more robust and put competent authorities in a better position to phase out the noisiest aircraft in the fleet. Incorporation of the international rules should also reduce the risk of international disputes in the event of third country carriers being affected by noise abatement measures.

P R E S S

Rue de la Loi 175 B – 1048 BRUSSELS Tel.: +32 (0)2 281 6319 Fax: +32 (0)2 281 8026
press.office@consilium.europa.eu <http://www.consilium.europa.eu/press>

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Scope

The regulation only applies to larger airports, with more than 50 000 civil aircraft movements per year. It covers aircraft engaged in civil aviation, while military, customs and police aircraft are excluded.

The regulation includes, inter alia, the following provisions:

- **Right of review:** Before introducing an operating restriction, the competent authorities will have to inform the other member states, the Commission and interested parties. The Commission may, within three months, review the planned process. If it finds that the process does not satisfy the rules, it may notify the competent authority, which must examine the Commission notification and inform the Commission of its intentions before introducing the operating restrictions.
- **Health considerations:** The regulation's aim to facilitate noise abatement includes health aspects. Common European rules in this area should be respected, in particular the environmental noise directive, which is currently being revised.
- **Noise performance information:** As decisions on operating restrictions are based on the aircraft's noise performance, aircraft operators must provide certain information free of charge for each aircraft using an EU airport. That information will comprise the aircraft's nationality, registration mark and a necessary minimum of noise documentation.
- **Information to the citizens:** The competent authorities are to ensure that information related to operating restrictions is made available free of charge and is promptly accessible to people living near airports and to the local authorities.
- **Phasing-out of noisier aircraft:** The measures to deal with a noise problem may include the withdrawal of marginally compliant aircraft, if deemed necessary. The competent authorities will decide on the annual rate for reducing the number of movements by marginally compliant aircraft for each operator at a given airport, within a maximum annual rate of 25%. Marginally compliant aircraft means aircraft with a noise level only slightly lower than the maximum permitted noise levels defined by the ICAO. The new definition gradually extends the margin so as to include aircraft that previously would have been considered fully compliant: while under the current rules the margin is 5 EPNdB (effective perceived noise in decibels) or less, it will be extended to 8 EPNdB during a period of four years, and after that to 10 EPNdB.

Who decides on noise limits?

Setting specific noise thresholds remains within the remit of national or local authorities.

Airport package

The noise regulation is part of the airport package, a set of three legislative proposals aimed at increasing the capacity of European airports and improving the quality of their services. The other two relate to groundhandling services, on which the Council adopted a general approach in March 2012, and to slots, on which the Council reached a general approach in October 2012.

When will the regulation come into effect?

The regulation will enter into force two years after its publication in the EU Official Journal. A one-year transition period will allow the adoption of an operating restriction in accordance with the [old, repealed directive](#) if the prior consultation process was ongoing when the new regulation entered into force.

See also:

- [Environmental noise directive](#)
 - [ICAO website: aircraft noise](#)
 - [Airports policy](#)
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