

**Address by Mr Barrot on the occasion  
of the inauguration of the European  
Aviation Safety Agency (EASA)**

**Cologne, 13 December 2004**

**Introduction**

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It gives me great pleasure to inaugurate the European Aviation Safety Agency today, in Cologne, in the company of my colleague, Günter Verheugen. For the Commission, this inauguration marks the completion of a long period of work of which it can legitimately be very proud.

The Commission has always endeavoured to ensure that the completion of the internal market in air transport is accompanied by the development of common safety rules of a high standard which are uniformly applied throughout all the Member States.

The internal market was created at the beginning of the 1990s and led to an unprecedented development in air transport. In an aviation market that is now unified and fully liberalised, air travel has become an everyday means of transport.

However, despite tangible progress, in particular in the prevention of air accidents and incidents, very little progress had been made on the harmonisation of safety rules until the Agency's founding Regulation was adopted. Yet, what is the point in continuing to have these differing safety rules?

Of course, in general terms and notably within the Community itself, air transport has an excellent safety record, and the world of civil aviation has not had to wait for the Commission, or even EASA, to help bring this about. You know better than I do that aviation and safety are two sides of the same coin!

Organisations which ensure cooperation between States have existed in this sector for a long time: aircraft are too fast and travel too far for aviation to be regarded as a purely national affair.

Uppermost among these organisations is of course the ICAO, which endeavours to establish rules for worldwide application. In Europe, at intergovernmental level, there is the European Civil Aviation Conference (ECAC) and its "technical body", the Joint Aviation Authorities – the JAA.

So why, then, set up a Community body?

The JAA have drawn-up plenty of requirements which cover the entire field of air safety, but their application is left to the discretion of the States which sign up to them and which implement them in very different ways, or do not implement them at all.

There are consequently significant differences between nations and sometimes, it has to be admitted, the standards applied are not the highest. These differences are exacerbated even further by the large number of regulatory authorities.

It is high time, Ladies and Gentlemen, to guarantee a high and uniform standard of civil aviation safety for the citizens of the European Union. Safety is an essential factor in the internal market.

And, given the shortcomings of simple intergovernmental cooperation to which I referred, the Community method of adopting and enforcing common rules is clearly a superior way of achieving this objective.

This is why the Commission argued for the European Aviation Safety Agency to be set up.

## **1. The establishment of the Agency**

### **The Commission's efforts**

To achieve this result, the Commission made considerable efforts. First of all, it had to overcome a great deal of scepticism in order to accomplish this project. It then had to race against the clock for the Agency to be operational by the date set by our legislators: 28 September 2003 or in other words barely one year after the founding Regulation was published.

During the course of this year, we started to work out the operational set-up of the Agency, made arrangements for the Management Board's meetings and started to act on its decisions. We also recruited and put in place the first members of staff of EASA.

The Commission made its facilities available for all of this work and adopted the regulatory basis required for certification operations.

All of this has been done within the deadlines and thanks to these efforts, Ladies and Gentlemen, the Agency will be in a position to certify the Airbus A380, the European aviation industry's latest challenge.

*Support from industry*

In all of our efforts, we have always enjoyed the active support of industry. I would like to express my thanks to the industry for this and to say once again that it is important for industry to play its full part in the Agency's life, in particular through the consultation procedures that are provided and to which the Commission attaches the greatest importance.

From the outset, Ladies and Gentlemen, the industry understood what the benefits of the Commission's project would be.

Nothing is better than common rules to avoid the distortion of competition and to prevent unfair practices within the internal market under the cover of national regulations.

Only common rules can simplify certification operations for products at Community level and reduce overall costs.

Nothing is more effective than common rules to enable mutual recognition on an international level and thus to boost trade in aviation products and services with our principal partners.

There is one point I would like to stress: from now on, the Member States will recognise all certificates and approvals issued by the Agency without any further requirements or technical evaluation. This means that the common rules apply to everyone. No derogations are allowed without valid grounds. Trying to add additional national requirements on the basis of various pretexts will also not be allowed. I can assure you that the Commission will carry out continuous and specific monitoring and will not hesitate to overturn measures which contravene the common rules.

## **2. External relations**

### **International agreements**

To facilitate the international trade in aviation products to which I have just referred, the Community will conclude agreements for the mutual recognition of certificates with its principal partners. These agreements will replace any similar agreements concluded by the Member States. The Commission is already conducting negotiations on this subject with the USA and Canada. It will shortly be starting negotiations with Brazil, and then with many others.

During these negotiations, the Commission will benefit from the Agency's technical assistance, which will be sought whenever necessary.

The Agency, for its part, may adopt working arrangements, in the form of technical cooperation agreements specific to certain products, with its principal partners outside the EU. Similar agreements have already been signed with Canada, Brazil and Russia; others are being prepared with China, Japan, Australia, Israel and New Zealand.

### **Pan-European coherence**

On the subject of international relations, for the Commission, it is also of the utmost importance to maintain and if possible to strengthen pan-European coherence with regard to civil aviation safety rules.

This is why we have ensured that the benefits of the “EASA system” can be extended to non-EU countries through specific agreements. The Commission is already involved in negotiations with Switzerland, Norway and Iceland, and we hope that they will soon be completed.

### **3. Prospects**

#### **The Agency must gain its partners' confidence**

So, Ladies and Gentlemen, the Agency has finally been installed in this magnificent city of Cologne and now it can start work.

First of all, it must gain the confidence of its natural partners, the industry and the national authorities, and of its principal partners outside the EU. I am sure it

will swiftly gain their confidence through its work and technical competence and become a global model for aviation safety.

For its part, the Commission itself will also be one of the Agency's partners.

We wish to draw all the benefits we can from what we have set up. The Agency has also been set up to provide the Commission with any technical expertise it may require, and to assist the Commission in the performance of its legislative and regulatory tasks, and in its relations with third countries and international organisations. In this area too, Ladies and Gentlemen, I am sure we will get an excellent return on our investment!

#### **The next steps**

We now have to consider the next steps to be taken.

The Agency we are inaugurating today is responsible for the airworthiness and environmental compatibility of aeronautical products. From now on, the Community will have exclusive competence in these fields.

This is enormous progress, but it is not enough. Following the logic that has led us this far, it is our intention to cover the entire field of aviation safety needs by common rules implemented by a single regulator. EASA must therefore become the cornerstone of Community policy in this field.

As requested by our legislators, the Commission will very soon be putting a proposal before the European Parliament and the Council to extend the common

rules, and thus the Agency's powers, to include air operations and flight crew licensing. In this way, nearly all the rules which have been developed by the JAA will be incorporated in Community law and will be applied uniformly throughout the Community: common operational rules for a common market.

Aviation safety also means the safety of airport operations and air traffic management. The Commission will therefore be initiating work immediately to have these areas covered by Community rules as well. This work will of course be carried out together with the Agency and in particular with Eurocontrol, whose experience and expertise in this field are essential.

The Agency will therefore be responsible for the proper completion of the "Single European Sky" which is intended both to increase air safety and improve the flow of traffic.

### **Conclusion**

Finally, Ladies and Gentlemen, as you will have understood, the Agency we are inaugurating today has a brilliant future ahead of it.

Last but not least, since the same laws of physics apply both in the air and at sea, I am sure we would all like to wish the European Aviation Safety Agency a fair wind on its journey!

Thank you for your attention.

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