To the Directorate-General for Competition,

Response to consultation on the draft Guidelines on State aid to airports and airlines
Reference: HT.2365

I am writing in response to your consultation on the revised draft guidelines on state aid to airports and airlines.

First of all, I welcome your acknowledgement of the importance of smaller and regional airports, and their role in regional development.

I represent Wales in the European Parliament. We have one major airport in Wales, in Cardiff, of which the Welsh Government recently completed the purchase. The long term development of this airport is a key part of wider efforts to strengthen and develop the Welsh economy. Equally, there are a number of small airports in Wales, their development should also be promoted.

Therefore I welcome your proposal to allow state aid in terms of operating aid to airports. I note that regional airports will be eligible for this aid for a period of up to 10 years only, with the exception that if a public authority determines that the economic activities carried out by the airport are services of general economic interest. In this case, the airport could continue to receive this aid after the 10-year period. I welcome this and ask that the European Commission ensures that devolved governments and local authorities are able to give an airport in their nation or region this definition. The Welsh government is responsible for economic development, and of course the convergence funding which is allocated to West Wales and the Valleys.

Yours faithfully,

J. Evans

Jill Evans MEP
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