

## Citizens' summary

### Investigation of civil aviation accidents – proposed EU law



#### WHAT'S THE ISSUE?

- Aviation is one of the safest forms of transport. But with air traffic steadily increasing, accidents do happen despite the best efforts of regulators and industry.
- To make flying safer, independent investigations into accidents are essential – as the surest way of identifying the causes of an accident and answering the fundamental question "what really happened?"
- The current EU rules on investigating air accidents need to be updated, to reflect the current realities of Europe's aviation market and the complexity of the global aviation industry.
- Today, investigating air accidents takes new kinds of expertise and more resources than a decade ago. The organisational set-up has also changed substantially, with the [European aviation safety agency](#) (EASA) now responsible for certifying aircraft in the EU.

#### WHAT EXACTLY WOULD CHANGE?

- Air accident investigations across the EU would be of a better and more consistent quality.
- Victims' rights would be better protected.
- Accident investigation bodies would have greater independence, and sensitive safety information (and persons providing it) would be better protected.
- The roles of national and EU bodies involved in accident investigation would be clarified.
- Better implementation of safety recommendations would improve air safety.

#### WHO WOULD BENEFIT AND HOW?

- **Passengers** – improved safety thanks to better implementation of recommendations and independent technical investigations
- **Victims and families** – improved access to assistance in the immediate aftermath of an accident and reliable information about the fate of relatives and progress of the investigation
- **National accident investigation bodies** – more cost-effective use of scarce investigating resources, better exchange of safety information and clarity of roles of all the parties involved
- **Aviation industry** – better coordinated, more efficient accident investigations and increased safety
- **Aviation professionals** – better protection of sensitive safety information from inappropriate use or unauthorised disclosure
- **Judicial authorities** – more clarity as to the roles of the various bodies involved in investigating air accidents.

### WHY DOES ACTION HAVE TO BE TAKEN BY THE EU?

- Only the EU is able to coordinate the use of scarce investigation resources and flow of safety information across Europe.
- Air accident investigations involve cooperation between various national and EU bodies; their roles and authority must be clearly defined in advance.
- EU citizens should enjoy equal protection throughout the EU in the case of an air accident.
- Safety recommendations resulting from an investigation in one EU country may be relevant to other countries.

### WHEN IS THE PROPOSAL LIKELY TO COME INTO EFFECT?

- Probably 2011 – once the EU Council of Ministers and European Parliament have considered the proposal.