EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT SEES BUSINESS AVIATION UPSWING

It was announced from Brussels on 20 January that Members of the European Parliament (MEPs) began the year discussing the challenges and economic opportunities of business aviation, at an event hosted by MEP Ismail Ertug and MEP Massimiliano Salini, Members of the Transport & Tourism Committee.

Business aviation in 2014 delivered its first positive growth figures since 2011, and the industry is optimistic that this is just the beginning of its upswing. Three of the four key European markets – France, the UK, and Italy – contributed robust figures (up to 2.2%). However, since business aviation is intimately tied to the health of the economy, the overall growth rate was a muted 0.7% on the previous year.

Competitiveness was at the heart of the discussion. Often construed as meaning solely a level playing field for European versus foreign competitors, the more immediate challenge to business aviation is of a different nature, pertaining to distortions within the European market. A competitive air transport ecosystem must allow all its components to flourish alongside one another; access to air and ground infrastructure cannot be based on a zero-sum game. For business aviation, a distinct, but sometimes overlooked segment of the air transport sector, this is crucial.

The European Commission has announced that it will unlock up to €315bn to reinvest in Europe, and this comes at the right time. But the question remains: how much of this will be allocated to air transport? Perhaps a more promising announcement has come in the form of the Commission’s Aviation Package; however, details are still pending, it is understood.

Said Ismail Ertug, MEP, S&D Co-ordinator for Transport and Tourism: “As Members of the new Transport and Tourism Committee, we are eager to work with all stakeholders on the Aviation Package, so as to develop legislation that addresses current challenges and to further strengthen the competitiveness of the sector. Air transport is a major connector of Europe’s regional and economic centres; but it is also a complex sector. This event offered the possibility to exchange expertise and to gain a deeper understanding of the industry’s position.”

CEO of the European Business Aviation Association (EBAA), Fabio Gamba commented: “It is all about connectivity. Deploying modern technologies to improve access to regional airports, such as satellite-based systems, is both a quick and affordable means to maximise the use of an unparalleled number of airports. This would eventually benefit the whole air transport community.”
Added Massimiliano Salini, MEP, Member of the Committee on Transport and Tourism, and Rapporteur on Slot Regulation: “We are thankful to the EBAA for having pinpointed the lesser known aspects of a waning competitiveness of air transport in the EU, and for identifying those elements in dire need of reform. Business Aviation is too important not to be a direct beneficiary of these reforms.”

About EBAA
The European Business Aviation Association (EBAA) was founded in 1977 to defend the interests of business aviation. Today, more than 800 business aviation companies (direct members or members of associate organisations) rely on the EBAA to protect their business interests. It is the only voice to represent business aviation among the European institutions. More information is available at: www.ebaa.org