

**Question for written answer E-008646/2013
to the Commission**

Rule 117

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Subject: The EU's external aviation policy - Gulf region IV

European aviation accounts for 2.4 % of EU GDP, around EUR 365 billion, and employs around 5.1 million people.

The economic and financial crisis in the EU has had and continues to have a negative impact on this sector, which is gradually becoming less competitive than international airlines in other parts of the world, where heavy investments are being made in renewing fleets, improving services and increasing the quality and capacity of airport infrastructure.

The 'Open Skies' judgment of 2002 gave the EU competence to negotiate international aviation agreements wherever internal EU rules have been agreed, and concluded that the nationality clauses in bilateral agreements violated EU law.

The EU's external aviation policy is based on three pillars: horizontal agreements; the creation of a Common Aviation Area with neighbouring countries; and comprehensive agreements with key partners.

In its Communication on 'The EU's External Aviation Policy – Addressing Future Challenges' the Commission emphasised that 'aviation growth will see a relative shift to areas outside the EU [...] [such as] Asia and the Middle East', whose airlines will represent 11 % of world traffic by 2030.

Governments in the Gulf region are investing heavily in the aviation sector, to promote and position the region globally, providing sixth freedom services.

1. Does the Commission have information on which Member States have bilateral agreements with countries in the Gulf region?
2. Will the EU favour a region-to-region or country-to-country approach in any comprehensive agreement with the Gulf region?