

**Question for oral answer O-000051/2011
to the Commission**

Rule 115

Roberts Zile

on behalf of the ECR Group

Subject: Volcanic ash crises

The closure of large sectors of European air space in April/May last year due to the volcanic eruption in Iceland caused severe traffic disruption and economic damage and affected 10 million passengers directly. In order to ensure there is no possibility of this kind of crisis happening again, the following measures need to be taken.

In view of the fact that the data used to forecast the development of ash clouds was incomplete because of insufficient on-site ground and air installations, further investment in technological equipment on the ground and in the air (LIDAR equipment, radar installations, fully equipped verification aircraft, satellite imagery) is necessary. Only through increased technical provision and 100% accurate real-time data can a reliable forecast be provided.

The roles of the individual institutions in the management of the crisis were unclear, thus causing the situation to deteriorate further. The parties involved (the regulator, the Volcanic Ash Advisory Centres (VAAC) and the air navigation service providers) must be fully prepared. To this end, training courses involving simulated crises (training in crisis management procedures) must be introduced.

The primary responsibility for the safety of flights rests with the operators, therefore they must be provided with accurate data. Pilots are trained to manage extraordinary flight conditions, the commercial airlines' safety manuals are reviewed, overseen and confirmed by regulatory authorities, and airlines have the necessary experience of operating over volcanic areas, as is shown by their safety record. The airline operator (the pilot) should therefore be responsible for assessing the risk and ensuring the safety of flights by, for example, choosing routes or deciding if rerouting is necessary, taking into account all the information available (provision of more information and improved technical equipment on board aircraft).

We would like to ask the Commission:

1. What is the status of the above measures?
2. Should the collaborative decision-making process not be more transparent, in order to ensure better and more coordinated responses in times of crisis?
3. Should the increased volume of traffic expected in the future not lead to accelerated implementation of the SES?
4. What has been done to put EASA in charge of this matter and to steer the operational change that Europe needs in this area?

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