

## **Europe and US sign aviation agreement to improve safety and cut costs**

***As of today, aviation relations between the European Community and the United States will be further strengthened through an agreement on aviation safety. Thanks to the mutual recognition of aviation safety certificates, the agreement will result in better harmonised safety systems on both sides of the Atlantic, as well as less cumbersome technical and administrative procedures for the recognition of certificates. It is expected that this will entail further improvement in safety levels and reduce costs by several millions of euros every year for European and US manufacturers alike. These savings should in turn be reflected in fares for passengers.***

"The agreement is a historical milestone not only because it is the first aviation safety agreement the European Community has concluded with a third country, but also because of its impact on aviation safety on a global scale", *declared European Commission Vice-President in charge of Transport, Antonio Tajani.*

The EU and US have among the best aviation safety records in the world: less than 0.6 accidents per million of departures between 1996-2005. However, both partners want to improve this further by working together.

The agreement specifically provides for joint participation in the inspection of civil aviation authorities and undertakings, for cooperation and assistance in any investigation or enforcement proceeding and on the exchange of safety data, including data on accidents and incidents. The agreement also foresees mutual recognition of aviation safety certificates obtained through shortened product approval procedures and mutual acceptance of products tests. In turn, EU and US citizens will benefit from harmonised safety systems, as well as faster and less costly technical and administrative procedures for the recognition of certificates.

Aviation is central to the macro-economic, social and political relationship between the US and the EU: their markets represent more than 50 percent of global aviation. US and European industry combined carry close to 1.5 billion passengers a year; for cargo, the combined US and EU freighter fleet accounts for over 70 percent of the world total. Furthermore, forecasts for the next five years show a net increase: 25 millions extra passengers, €12 billions benefit and an extra 80.000 jobs in the US and EU, following the success of the recent first stage Open Skies Agreement between both sides.

The manufacturers' organisations covered by this agreement are the world leaders in the field. EU-US trade in aerospace products is significant: last year the overall trade of aircrafts, spacecraft and parts was worth more than 31 billion \$.

The economic returns for European Community and US manufacturers represent millions of Euros in annual savings thanks to shorter product approval procedures and the mutual acceptance of product tests. This will in turn facilitate exchanges and healthier competition. Airlines will also benefit, since the agreement provides for the use of each others approved repair and maintenance facilities.

Furthermore, in October the EC will pursue this approach with Canada, thus boosting safety in the entire North Atlantic area, through the cooperation of the world's three major players in aviation and avionics manufacturing.