

**Question for written answer E-003899/2026
to the Commission**

Rule 144

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Subject: Protecting passengers and ensuring continuity of air connections when Catania Airport is closed because of volcanic activity on Mount Etna

Etna's eruptions and the resulting volcanic ash are causing a prolonged crisis for Catania Airport and Sicily's air transport system as a whole. In August 2026, some 700 flights were cancelled or disrupted; the current eruption, which started on Saturday 26 September 2026, has already affected around 300 flights.

The main challenge is dealing with the stranded passengers. Flights are diverted to Palermo, Trapani or Comiso, but the long distances, road and rail network conditions and lack of alternative transport options make travel to the Catania area difficult. Some carriers are also reportedly failing to warn passengers in good time, further complicating the organisation of travel.

In the light of the above:

1. Is the Commission aware of the recurrent problems encountered in managing the volcanic disruptions at Catania airport?
2. Are carriers, even in extraordinary circumstances, required to ensure timely and adequate communication to passengers in the event of cancellations and diversions?
3. Does the Commission consider the transfer to Palermo or other neighbouring airports to be sufficient within the meaning of Article 8 of Regulation (EC) No 261/2004, without guaranteeing transport to the final destination, and what steps will it take to ensure that passengers are protected, taking account of Sicily's specific geographical and infrastructural features?

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