(English version)

Question for written answer E-001703/24
to the Commission
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(13 September 2024)

Subject: Consequences of suspension clauses for the survival of Air Austral

Air Austral is an airline based on La Réunion which connects the islands in the Indian Ocean — La Réunion and Mayotte — with continental France and Europe. It plays a crucial role in improving access, connections and integration in those European regions.

The airline is currently at great risk, however. The suspension clauses imposed by the Commission are a major obstacle to the continued existence of Air Austral, particularly after COVID-19, as part of its medium-haul fleet remains grounded. Insisting on the clauses may spell the end of an airline that provides a public service.

Does the Commission plan to relax the suspension clauses to allow Air Austral to get back in the skies?

Submitted: 13.9.2024

Answer given by Executive Vice-President Vestager on behalf of the European Commission
(20 November 2024)

On 19 December 2022, France notified the Commission of its intention to grant state aid totalling EUR 136.8 million to Air Austral and its subsidiaries.

On 5 January 2023, 17 days later, the Commission informed France that it had no objections as, with the conditions and measures envisaged by France, the aid was compatible with the internal market in accordance with Article 107(2)(b) and Article 107(3)(c) of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union ([1]).

In its assessment, the Commission took into account in particular the fact that the plan and measures proposed by France would contribute sustainably and effectively to the development of Air Austral and its transport services activity based on Réunion, addressing the market failure and avoiding social hardship.

The Commission also assessed the restructuring plan in order to limit the systemic negative impacts on the region, with less stringent requirements for capacity reductions or market presence, especially as Air Austral provides a service that plays a part in improved access to and the territorial continuity of an outermost region such as Réunion.

The plan proposed by France and approved by the Commission comes to an end in March 2025.

([1]) OJEU C 301, 25.8.2023, pages 8 and 9.