

(English version)

**Priority question for written answer P-002837/26
to the Commission
Maria Zacharia (NI)
(8 July 2026)**

Subject: Protection of residents from aircraft noise and air pollution at regional airports below the 50 000 movements threshold

According to a response from the Hellenic Civil Aviation Authority, Rhodes International Airport is not subject to the strategic noise mapping obligations of Directive 2002/49/EC because in 2025 it carried out 48 482 aircraft movements, i.e. below the 50 000 movements threshold. However, residents live a short distance from the runway used for take-off and landing and are exposed daily to aircraft noise and air pollution, especially during the tourist season, due to increased air traffic. This is a burden that is not reflected in the annual number of movements.

Accordingly:

1. Can the Commission confirm that not exceeding the 50 000 movements threshold only provides an exemption from the specific obligations of Directive 2002/49/EC and not from the obligations of other acts of Union law, such as Directive 2011/92/EU on environmental impact assessment and Directive 2008/50/EC on ambient air quality?
2. When aviation activity increases significantly and affects populated areas near an airport, are the competent authorities required to review the environmental operating conditions and assess the cumulative effects on human health, noise and air quality, even if the 50 000 movements threshold has not been reached?
3. Does the Commission consider that the threshold of 50 000 annual movements adequately reflects the exposure of residents to noise at regional and island airports with heavy seasonal tourist traffic, where the burden is concentrated in a few months of the year?

Submitted: 8.7.2026

**Answer given by Ms Roswall on behalf of the European Commission
(21 August 2026)**

The obligations under the Environmental Noise (END) Directive ⁽¹⁾ are mandatory to major airports which are above the threshold of 50 000 take-off or landings per year.

This is without prejudice to the application of other EU legislation, including the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) Directive ⁽²⁾ and the Ambient Air Quality (AAQ) Directive ⁽³⁾, which apply under the conditions set in that legislation.

The EIA Directive applies to certain projects likely to have significant effects on the environment before their authorisation. Any changes or extensions to already existing projects fall under the scope of that directive only if they involve works or physical interventions ⁽⁴⁾.

The AAQ Directive sets out limit values for major pollutants such as particulate matter and nitrogen dioxide, which are to be met throughout the territory of the Member State and irrespective of the source.

While the END refers to the threshold of 50 000 annual movements, it does not exclude the possibility of Member States to apply the requirements of the directive to the airports which are below this threshold.

Regulation (EU) No 598/2014 ⁽⁵⁾ regarding rules and procedures for the introduction of noise-related operating restrictions at EU airports limits its scope to airports with more than 50 000 annual movements.

The Commission recognises that noise exposure may be experienced differently depending on local circumstances that are not necessarily related only to the number of annual movements. The Commission is currently evaluating the regulation.

⁽¹⁾ Directive 2002/49/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 25 June 2002 relating to the assessment and management of environmental noise, OJ L 189, 18.7.2002, pp. 12.

⁽²⁾ Directive 2011/92/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 13 December 2011 on the assessment of the effects of certain public and private projects on the environment, OJ L 26, 28.1.2012, p. 1-21, as amended by Directive 2014/52/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 16 April 2014, OJ L 124, 25.4.2014, p. 1-18.

⁽³⁾ Directive 2008/50/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 21 May 2008 on ambient air quality and cleaner air for Europe, OJ L 152, 11.6.2008, p. 1-44.

⁽⁴⁾ Changes to the number of annual movements only, in the absence of any works or interventions involving alterations to the physical aspect of an airport, do not fall under the scope of the EIA Directive.

⁽⁵⁾ Regulation (EU) No 598/2014 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 16 April 2014 on the establishment of rules and procedures with regard to the introduction of noise-related operating restrictions at Union airports within a Balanced Approach and repealing Directive 2002/30/EC, OJ L 173, 12.6.2014, pp. 65.