

Ladies and Gentlemen, dear colleagues,

It is my great pleasure and a great honour to open this ANIMA workshop by this short welcome address. Let me please thank first the organizers – Dr Delia Dimitriu from Manchester University, Alexandra Covrig and Alena Maximova from Airport Regions Council – for having pitched this event on environmental challenges at large.

As you may know, ANIMA is not on the environment. It is focused on aviation noise and related annoyance. In ANIMA, questions to which we strive to reply are “what are the annoyance patterns within aviation noise?”, “who is annoyed and when?”, “is there some indicators that would describe non-acoustical factors?” or “is there any way to compensate, to remedy or to provide respite to impacted people?”

All these questions were very relevant when the ANIMA project started, and then the COVID crisis erupted. Basically, there is nearly no more traffic, and there is nearly no more noise, there is nearly no more annoyance. The most optimistic scenarios envisage a recovery no sooner than in 2022 or 2023. Is it, therefore, time to take a break in our collective effort? To wait and see?

Definitely no. On the contrary, we must take this respite as an outstanding opportunity to enforce guidelines and to set rules to avoid going back to the former situation.

In this extraordinary context, Horizon 2020 – the current Framework Programme for Research and Innovation of the EU – is ending and the new one – Horizon Europe is starting. As you may know, the top priorities of Horizon Europe are the economic recovery, decarbonisation, digitalisation and health. One of the first work programme having been released is the famous Green Deal, which is fully in line with this decarbonisation priority. Does it mean that research on noise and implementation of related outcomes are no more relevant?

Once again, the reply is definitely no. We must take benefit of the current situation to imagine and to enforce air traffic system and air traffic management that would alleviate both the noise burden experienced by airports’ neighbours and the global environmental footprint of aviation. This is not chimeric views, and, by the way, this is a matter of health. In

ANIMA, we tackled the issue of interdependencies, and our experts are now going to share their findings, on how and how far we could gain on both aspects. Probably, it will be easier to find this narrow path for combining noise and environment solutions in this category of small airports “starting the journey” – as we call them in ANIMA – than for big hubs with much more constrained environment. That is why I am very pleased to see that this workshop is primarily targeting such airports starting the journey, mainly from Central and Eastern Europe – that have not enforced so much any definite policy on noise or environment. There is here, and now, an opportunity for them to spearhead the way for better aviation and a better society.

Let me please insist that we must contest the idea of a kind of curse, according to which gaining on noise means loosing on the environment. This kind of preconceived idea has never been proved, nor the contrary. But in the same vein, some claimed that countries which took the most stringent measures to protect their population from the epidemics would be the ones with the most impacted economies. Recently released statistics show the exact contrary: countries that protect the best their population were less impacted economically. So, let’s be optimistic and let’s find the way to marry low noise aviation with low carbon aviation.

Let me also express the hope that the exchanges you are going to have during this workshop and maybe after will exemplify our catalogue of best practices and that they will eventually enrich the Best Practice Portal that is being one of the main outcomes of ANIMA. I recall that this portal is indeed dedicated to knowledge transfer. It is made with your inputs and is intending to provide various categories of stakeholders – airport managers, aviation authorities, urban planners and local policymakers as well as engaged airports neighbours – with recipes and tailored solutions for their aviation noise-related issues. In this respect, let me recall too that if you – as authorities or responsible for airports of Central and Eastern Europe – may find inspiration in the experience of big hubs from Western Europe, adaptations will certainly be required. In our view, there is no ultimate or precooked solution. There are only compromises leading to consensus, and the crucial step for achieving such consensus is for all the parties to engage in a fair and informed dialogue. Therefore, our exchanges, our dialogue, even in the limited scope of the present workshop, are key.

To conclude, I would like to say a few words on the forthcoming Horizon Europe programme. This programme is a big bang; it generalizes the trend that we could have already felt in H2020: the time for isolated, tiny and specialised projects is over and even more over than in H2020. In these times of strong competition and of critical societal challenges, the European Commission chose to favour transversal projects and projects with high socio-economic impact. Your next project will not be a follow-up of ANIMA, and even less a follow-up of a specific research project on a given noise source. We will be compelled to consider the noise issue in a comprehensive stream of environmental considerations deriving from transport at large. And we will be compelled to find out comprehensive solutions that will involve all the stakeholders, from citizens to industry, from companies to policymakers. In this regard and far beyond the noise, ANIMA has been pioneering, and it provides us with a strong legacy for embarking upon these forthcoming projects.

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