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Can we be confident that Europe's aviation system still maintains and increases safety levels – and is able to do so in future ?

Safety is a dynamically unstable situation. If we don't continuously maintain it, it will collapse.

Some figures:

1. Accident and incident data show that safety levels are not improving anymore, and might actually start going down.
2. Europe has fallen behind other regions. In terms of accident rates, we are now on place 3 – behind North America and Asia.
3. IATA figures: the number of hull losses in Europe last year was 0.45/mio flights.
  - If we take EuroControl's estimated traffic growth until 2028
  - and if we just want to keep this rate of 0.45
  - we will get 8 hull losses / year in 2028
  - What does this mean concretely? It means 1 airliner crash every 48 days – obviously broadcast over millions of TV sets all over Europe and beyond.

I think, we all agree that this is not a situation we want to be in.

And I am sure this will be one of the focuses of the EU's High Level Safety Conference, in January next year.

Today, I would like to outline 3 factors that *will* affect our ability to increase safety levels in Europe.

### **1. Competition:**

- Economic competition has increased tremendously since the introduction of the Single Aviation Market. This is a good thing ! However:

- The economic players in the market are all now under strong commercial pressure, particularly in times of economic crisis;
- The need to cut costs has become an imperative – for everybody;
- Comfortable safety buffers that many companies still had in the “good old times” are gradually being skimmed away; and
- More and more operators are now flying – or want to fly – strictly to the legal limits – meaning: what the *law* says is safe.

## 2. The Law:

- EASA, the Commission and Member States are all busy drafting the next generation of EU safety rules, entering into force in just about 17 months.
- This is good – one safety rule for everybody.
- But: will those national rules which currently provide higher safety levels than the future EASA rules be lowered to the lower EU-wide level?
- Also: the new rules will be more flexible, than in the past:
  - We are paving the way for performance-based safety regulation;
  - And EASA is rolling out an ambitious system of ‘soft-law’ – based on so-called Acceptable Means of Compliance.
- This new regulatory approach has many merits. But:
  - Soft & performance-based rules are more likely to come under pressure when the companies themselves are under commercial pressure;
  - They are more likely to be interpreted and implemented in differing ways;
  - And it will be much more difficult for national – and European – authorities to oversee and actually enforce them.

## 3. Effective *Ability* of Safety Oversight.

- We are about to move from a Member State based regulatory oversight system to an EASA-centred system.
- This is good: a single safety regulator cooperating with national authorities.
- The problem is that, since EASA’s creation:
  - many national authorities have seen their resources, manpower and expert knowledge cut down;
  - more and more authorities do not anymore have the capacities to properly oversee the industry, and

- What makes this worse is: neither the European Commission, nor EASA have the necessary manpower and in-house expertise to fill this vacuum.

ECA – the European Cockpit Association – does not believe that this combination of dwindling resources and more flexible safety rules – in a more aggressive market place – will help us to maintain our safety levels – let alone improve them.

What will help, is a coordinated and well-resourced common effort by regulators and stakeholders, based on a clearly defined safety target, a strategy and an action plan.

For this, the EU needs to do many things, for example:

- catch up on ICAO requirements on Safety Management System
- move forward on State Safety Programs
- set up a predictive and proactive safety data base
- protect sensitive safety information obtained through accident investigations and occurrence reporting

And maybe we should look across the Atlantic for what the US are doing on:

- strengthening Pilot Training and Pilot Performance
- establishing a scientific management & regulation of air crew fatigue
- implementing SMS throughout the industry.

The list would still be long.

But what is really needed, to start with, is strong political will and a political signal that safety comes first ...

... and an acknowledgement that safety does not come for free. It costs money and it costs resources.

Spending them – even in times of economic hardship – is a worthwhile investment.

Thank you.

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