



## ECA Press Conference on Pilot Fatigue, 16 June 2011

### Introductory Statement by ECA President Nico Voorbach

- Dear members of the press, I would like to welcome you to this ECA Press Conference and for your interest in aviation safety and the issue of pilot fatigue.
- The European Cockpit Association (ECA) is the European voice of pilots, with our headquarters in Brussels. We represent over 38.650 from 38 European countries.
- Flight Safety is our core mission, and flight safety is what we fight for in our daily work in Brussels.
- As pilots, we are safety professionals. Every gesture in a cockpit has safety implications. Our job is to deliver a safe flight – even under the most demanding circumstances. Safety is part of our DNA and, hence, we consider ourselves as the most uncompromising and most outspoken defenders of aviation safety.
- Why are we here today and why do we want to raise the EU Transport Ministers' attention to the issue of pilot fatigue? Because we think that strong, science-based EU rules are needed to prevent pilot fatigue from posing a threat to flight safety.
- Why are pilot fatigue rules needed? Pilots are human beings subject to the same physiological constraints as any other human being, getting tired after long hours awake and being subject to the human body clock.
- When fatigued, a pilot's alertness and cognitive ability are compromised and the safety of the flight cannot be guaranteed anymore.
- 15-20% of all global fatal air accidents have pilot fatigue as a contributing factor. That's why we as pilots believe that strict science-based EU-wide rules are of vital importance to ensure the safety of passengers, crews and the people living under our flight paths.
- These pilot fatigue rules will have to define how long and frequently pilots can fly before they become 'fatigued' and how long a pilot has to rest to be fit for duty. The most challenging part of the flight, the landing, comes at the end of the flight duty when fatigue is at its highest level.
- The good news is that the EU – and in particular the European Aviation Safety Agency, EASA – is currently in the process of drafting new pilot fatigue rules – the so-called Flight Time Limitations (FTL) – to replace the current rules by 2012/2013.
- Therefore, Europe has a unique opportunity to come up with FTL safety standards at the highest level, based on scientific + medical knowledge, as many other countries have done.

- The UK CAA, for example, has developed state of the art FTL rules for its airlines, covering 20% of EU market, based on scientific knowledge, airline experience and stakeholder involvement. Spain and other EU countries have done likewise.
- And the US FAA (after the Colgan air accident which killed 50 people in 2009) is in the process of replacing their old rules by new, science-based ones, in Aug. this year.
- The bad news, however, is that the EU is going into the opposite direction. The current EASA proposal:
  - largely ignores scientific evidence (incl. EASA's own scientific study);
  - has been prepared without input from any scientific fatigue expert;
  - is not complying with ICAO requirements (this forces Member States' to apply for non-compliance with ICAO rules);
  - proposes safety standards well below those the US FAA will adopt in Aug., and
  - proposes safety standards well below those in place in several EU countries, which will significantly lower safety levels for passengers in parts of EU;
- The result is an unsound set of draft rules that is inadequate to protect against the safety threat of pilot fatigue and which is against what scientific and medical experts would recommend as safe.
- Just as an indicator for how problematic these rules are: the EASA proposal collected almost 50.000 comments from stakeholders, incl. from many concerned pilots.
- This is bad news for Europe's travelling public. Because the safety standards which are there to protect them against accidents will go down, rather than up.
- This is why we are here, today, in Luxembourg, where the EU Transport Ministers are meeting.
- We want passenger safety to be their Priority Number 1, when the Ministers and the EU Institutions prepare new EU-wide rules to prevent pilot fatigue.
- We do not want passenger safety to be put second, simply because the airlines are concerned that stricter, science-based rules would cost them extra money.
- No commercial interest should come into the way of the passengers' basic right to a safe flight.
- We therefore call upon the Ministers present at today's EU Transport Council, to
  - wake up to the real safety risk pilot fatigue poses to the travelling public;
  - strongly support science-based EU rules to effectively combat these risks;
  - ensure that the current proposal is changed in line with scientific evidence.

Thank you very much for your attention.

Final --- Luxembourg, 16/06/2011