



ECA
Piloting Safety

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Public Call for Action for a meaningful Social Pillar for Europe's Aviation

Dear Commissioners,

One year ago, we jointly discussed the need to fill the 'Social Agenda' chapter of the Commission's EU Aviation Strategy with concrete life (see [here](#)).

One year later, we are still awaiting concrete proposals and initiatives on this Social Agenda. Especially on precarious atypical crew employment, applicable law & jurisdiction, 3rd country crews, and growing social dumping practices.

Social Dialogue – both at national and EU level – has, since then, been mentioned by your services as one of the avenues to accompany urgently needed legislative and regulatory measures.

Social Dialogue, to succeed, must be practiced in a fair, respectful manner and according to set rules. This also applies when one side decides to take legitimate industrial action, abiding by all the rules required for carrying out a legal strike.

Social Dialogue is NOT to potentially [sack 100 pilots and 200 cabin crew](#) to *de facto* punish the Dublin crew base for the strikes that Irish-based pilots are carrying out, and Cabin Crew carried out in Spain, Italy, Portugal & Belgium, last week.

Social Dialogue is NOT to shout 'hurrah, we signed a recognition agreement with union X, Y or Z' – but then to [drag their feet at the negotiating table for a collective labour agreement](#), to reject union representatives because they work for 'competitor' airlines, to reject demands for a fair seniority agreement, or to reject local law for local contracts for local crew in the country where there are based, live and work.

Social Dialogue is NOT to sack cabin crew – or any other workers – for a supposed ‘refusal to operate’ – when, in reality, they followed the law and EU safety regulations by declining to operate while being seriously fatigued after a long stressful work day, and where the last flight would have gone beyond the legal flight time limit.

Delivering on the ‘European Pillar of Social Rights’ – as adopted by Ministers and the Commission, last autumn – also applies to the aviation sector. Europe’s citizens – and the many aviation workers among them – more than ever expect the EU to address the social deficiencies of European integration.

We call on you, Commissioners Thyssen and Bulc, to take notice of what goes wrong ‘out there’. Out there in the air, in the cockpit & cabins, and in the behaviour of certain airlines that claim to engage in Social Dialogue, but whose actions tell a completely different story.

We call on you to take action and use the power of legislative initiative to finally deliver on the promised Social Agenda for Europe’s aviation. Not only words, but concrete and meaningful initiatives and actions.

We call for actions that will address the many social shortcomings and regulatory loopholes in the aviation sector. Loopholes that some players are only too happy to exploit – to the detriment of European aviation workers. But also to the detriment of those airlines that do practice genuine Social Dialogue, employ their employees directly (not via broker agencies or as ‘self-employed’ on zero-hours contracts) and treat them fairly, and who abide by the rules – but who are punished for this ‘out there’ in the market place where other players play a different game.

The current Commission’s term comes to an end next summer. Not much time left. And 2.5 years have already passed since the publication of the Aviation Strategy, in December 2015. But: Still time to act, still time to be bold, still time to show that ‘SOCIAL’ also matters in Europe’s aviation !

We count on you – we count on Europe!

Best regards,



Dirk Polloczek
President



Philip von Schöppenthau
Secretary General

Annex: ECA Press Statement, 26/07/2018

100 Ryanair pilots on strike in Dublin, 100 pilot jobs in Dublin threatened – a striking coincidence!

Brussels, 26 July 2018

Ryanair announced cuts to 20% of its Dublin-based fleet this winter and possibly the dismissal of 100 pilots and 200 cabin crew in the weeks to come. This decision comes in the immediate aftermath of a series of one-day strikes by Irish based pilots and further industrial action across Europe. It will fuel frustration among its workforce even further and risks exposing Ryanair passengers to ever more uncertainty about their travel plans over the summer. Rather than responding in a positive manner to its [crew's demands](#) for fair and decent working conditions (this dispute is not about pay), Ryanair has determined to take a decision that has significant potential to harm even more of their customers.

“This unfortunate and entirely avoidable decision by Ryanair can be interpreted at best as a very immature response to legitimate strike action. At worst as a **bold attempt at union busting** and an effort to put maximum **pressure on pilots to stop industrial action**” says ECA President Dirk Polloczek. “But most of all: this decision can only backfire. Ryanair pilots in Dublin and across Europe are united and determined to obtain **direct employment contracts governed by the local law** of the country they are based in – not Irish law. They strive for a fair and **transparent [Master Seniority Agreement](#)**, something that is a common standard across the industry. Why not at Ryanair? It would be entirely feasible for Ryanair to address these concerns in a constructive manner. **Why chose confrontation and put the travel plans of thousands of their passengers at risk?** Weren't the 18.000+ cancelled flights and over 700.000 affected passengers enough, last autumn, when Ryanair messed up their pilot rostering system?”

“The **myth of [union 'friendly' Ryanair](#)** is falling apart – and this in front of everybody's eyes”, says ECA Secretary General Philip von Schöppenthau. “It is more than obvious that the airline's current **management is not open to any genuine social dialogue** or meaningful negotiations. Worse, it is reverting to its previous anti-union tactics, while claiming publicly to constructively engage with its unions. Nothing could be further from the reality on the ground, where negotiations in most countries are blocked or progressing at a snail's pace. Crucially, such provocation and unnecessary behavior will only **encourage even more pilots to leave Ryanair for competitor airlines**. This decision risks entering aviation history as a sad episode of **human resources hara-kiri**.”

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Note to editors: ECA is the representative body of European pilot associations, representing over 38.000 pilots from across Europe, striving for the highest levels of aviation safety and fostering social rights and quality employment for pilots in Europe. Website: www.eurocockpit.be & twitter [@eu_cockpit](https://twitter.com/eu_cockpit)