

PRESS RELEASE

Flight Safety Compromised

Strasbourg/Brussels, 9 October 2013

“Today the European Parliament (EP) voted for a Regulation that is not to the benefit of the flying public in Europe,” says Nico Voorbach, ECA President, after the adoption of the new EU Flight Time rules by the EU Parliament this afternoon. “With this approval the EP took a step away from a ‘precautionary’ approach, ignored scientific expert advice and put passenger safety at risk.”

Pilots and cabin crew from across Europe have repeatedly highlighted the safety loopholes of the regulation proposed by the EU Commission: excessively long night flights of up to 12hrs30 – while scientists have set the safe limit at 10 hours – and a combination of standby and flight duty, which could lead to pilots landing aircraft after having been awake for more than 22 hours.

“These safety concerns remain as valid after the Parliament’s vote as before,” says Philip von Schöppenthau, Secretary General of ECA. “The ‘clarifications’ from Commissioner Kallas yesterday did not offer any genuine solutions, came in the last minute and, again, did not take account of what numerous scientific reports recommend as safe practices.”

“By adopting these rules, the Parliament endorsed the Commission’s approach of taking risks – avoidable risks,” stresses Voorbach. “Now that these rules are adopted, in case of an accident related to aircrew fatigue, Europe’s citizens will have to hold accountable those who promoted this flawed proposal.”

The EU Parliament passed the EU Commission proposal despite the vote for rejection of the rules on 30 September in the EU Transport Committee. Pilots have in the past few months intensively sought improvement of the rules through the European Aviation Safety Agency (EASA) and the European Commission. Regrettably, the Commission has not amended its flawed proposal despite some verbal ‘clarifications’, which do not constitute any improvement to the rules.

“The rules have been rushed through the EU Parliament after the EP Transport Committee firmly rejected them, only last week. And this vote today is not a ‘victory for common sense’, as Mr Kallas claims. It is victory for intransparency, commercial interests and short-sightedness”, says von Schöppenthau. “Europe has lost a unique opportunity to be a forerunner on flight safety, to have safe, science-based rules, based on best practices.”

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Note to editors: ECA is the representative body of European pilot associations, representing over 38.000 pilots from across Europe. Website: www.eurocockpit.be & www.dead-tired.eu