



ECA
Piloting Safety



PRESS RELEASE

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Airlines Undermine EU Air Crew Fatigue Safeguards

Just two days after over 300 pilots and cabin crew demonstrated in front of the European Aviation Safety Agency (EASA), calling for fatigue rules to be based on science and safety, EASA's rulemaking meeting on the subject ended in deep disagreement, last week. Air crew fatigue experts were alarmed by proposals brought to the table on behalf of airlines, which will lower the protections even further in EASA's current proposal. Some of the worst existing practices, which are in stark contrast to EASA's scientific advice, were supported by the airlines in the name of commercial benefit.

"Sadly, despite the attempts of pilots, cabin crew, scientists and national aviation regulators to improve the proposed rules, this meeting has made it abundantly clear that airlines' commercial wishes are driving the creation of these regulations" said Nico Voorbach, ECA's President.

"It was apparent during the meeting that the agenda of these two days had been hijacked by airlines trying to push EASA into letting them avoid many of the proposed protections against fatigue" said ECA Secretary General, Philip von Schöppenthau. "The airlines sought to water down rest requirements on long distance flights, and to invoke an absurd concept of 'cultural specificities' as a flimsy justification to evade some of the fatigue protections. They also insist on longer night duties and multiple flights beyond those deemed safe by science. We clearly expressed that putting profits before safety will not be tolerated by us."

"The airlines' objective to degrade cabin crews' in-flight rest facilities on long haul flights to economy seats has no scientific basis whatsoever. EASA must not give in to commercial requests but has to stick to science-based arguments" said Francois Ballesterio, ETF Political Secretary and Elisabetta Chicca, President of ETF Cabin Crew Committee. "We strongly call on the Agency to listen to their scientific advice and fulfill their duty to champion safety in the face of such blatant commercial pressure. Passenger safety must govern EASA's proposal, not cost cutting for airlines."

In a joint statement following the meeting, ECA and ETF declared: "We had hoped that this last expert meeting on Air Crew fatigue rules would improve on EASA's proposal and inject much needed scientific input and safety considerations to an already controversial draft law. However, the opposite happened and we witnessed a concerted effort to weaken safety protections in order to lower airlines' costs."

"We have a Professional responsibility as European Pilots and Cabin Crews to act to protect the safety of our industry and above all, our passengers. Rest assured – we will."

For further information, please contact:

Philip von Schöppenthau, ECA Secretary General, Tel: +32 2 705 32 93

Nico Voorbach, ECA President, Tel: +32 491 378 982

Francois Ballesterio, ETF Political Secretary for Aviation, Tel: +32- 474 91 69 79

And visit: www.dead-tired.eu

European Cockpit Association AISBL

Rue du Commerce 20-22, B-1000 Brussels

T +32 2 705 32 93 | F +32 2 705 08 77 | eca@eurocockpit.be

European Transport Workers' Federation

Rue du Marché aux Herbes 105, B-1000 Brussels

Tel: +32 2 285 46 60 | etf@etf-europe.org

*Note to editors: ECA is the representative body of European pilot associations, representing over 38.000 pilots from across Europe. Website: www.eurocockpit.be.
ETF represents 100,000 air crews across Europe and more than 2.5 million transport workers from 243 transport unions and 41 European Countries. - ETF Website: <http://www.itfglobal.org/etf/index.cfm>*

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