

Air transport

Pilots and cabin crew protest flight and rest time rules

By Isabelle Smets | Monday 14 May 2012

On 15 and 16 May, the European Aviation Safety Agency (EASA) will hear the views of aviation sector players on the planned revision this year of rules on flight time and rest periods for airline pilots. On 14 May, some 300 pilots and cabin crew members demonstrated in Cologne, Germany, where the EASA is based, to express their disapproval of the agency's proposals. The demonstration was organised by the European Transport Federation (ETF) and the European Cockpit Association (ECA). For these two associations, the rules raise safety issues. Three airline associations – the Association of European Airlines (AEA), the European Regions Airline Association (ERA) and the International Air Carrier Association (IACA) – released a joint statement denouncing the “misleading picture” the unions give of the reform. Unions and employers have been battling over this reform for two years.

The EASA published its latest proposals – those that will be discussed on 15-16 May – on 18 January. They will then be transferred to the European Commission with a view to revision of Regulation 1899/2006 on flight time limitations and rest periods. The ECA and ETF denounce the number of hours a pilot may be on duty when a flight is preceded by a stand-by period. The two associations speak of possible 20-hour days. Airlines maintain that the rules proposed by the EASA are not a relaxation of today's standards. Flight time rules “have been and continue to be safe,” they assure.