

Some MEPs call for parliament to reject Maltese commissioner-designate:

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It is no longer questioned whether pilot fatigue is a threat to flight safety

ECA

A new report says that pilot fatigue is a "common, dangerous and an under-reported" phenomenon in Europe.

The survey, carried out in Austria, Sweden, Germany, and Denmark, says that four out of five pilots have to cope with fatigue while in the cockpit.

It says that 43 per cent to 54 per cent of pilots surveyed in the UK, Denmark, Norway and Sweden reported falling asleep involuntarily in the cockpit while flying.

In the UK, a third of the pilots said to have woken up finding their colleague sleeping as well.

Some 65 per cent of Dutch and French pilots report problems with "heavy eyelids" during flight.

And more than three out of five pilots in Sweden (71 per cent), Norway (79 per cent) and Denmark (80-90 per cent) acknowledge to have already made mistakes due to fatigue, while in Germany it was four out of five pilots.

The survey was conducted by the European Cockpit Association (ECA).

The Brussels-based group says it's "Barometer on pilot fatigue" is a first attempt to quantitative the issue of aircrew fatigue.

It assesses eight surveys carried out by ECA member associations between 2010 and 2012, covering a total of over 6000 airline pilots in Europe.

The report said, "Pilot fatigue is a common, dangerous and an under-reported phenomenon in Europe."

Publication comes at a time when the European Aviation Safety Agency (EASA) has published a final proposal for flight and duty time regulations and the commission is to approve or amend it.

An association spokesman said, "The only way to recover from fatigue is to get adequate rest.

"A reality check shows however that this remedy is not a solution for many pilots across Europe. Long duty and standby hours, night flights and disruptive schedules often result in long times awake, sleep deprivation and are followed by insufficient rest and poor sleep opportunities."

He added, "The series of surveys conducted by ECA member associations among 6000 pilots in Europe illustrate the scope of the problem."

"Despite the high prevalence of this phenomenon, pilot fatigue continues to be significantly under-reported.

"Results show that only 20 to 30 per cent of the pilots have actually filed a report when they felt unfit for duty. This means that 70-80 per cent did not

report when fatigued."

"It is no longer questioned whether pilot fatigue is a threat to flight safety. Ever since the 1944 Chicago convention it

is recognised that fatigue can pose a risk to the safety of air operations.

"Fatigue and exhaustion are common reactions of the body and can occur in healthy individuals as a normal response to physical and mental efforts.

"Nonetheless, fatigue is considered a safety hazard because it reduces alertness and impairs performance.

"Insufficient rest and sleep opportunities, shift work and long duty hours make pilots and cabin crew particularly prone to fatigue."