

PRESS STATEMENT

‘Walkout’ for Passenger Safety – Safe Flight Time Rules for Europe!

Press Conference statement, ECA-ETF Joint Press Conference, 22 January 2013, Brussels

Dear members of the press,

Welcome, and thank you for your interest. I'd like to present you Francois Ballestero, Political Secretary of ETF, Elisabetta Chicca, Chair of the ETF Cabin Crew Committee, and Philip von Schöppenthau, ECA Secretary General. I am Francis Nardy, Vice-President of ECA.

We are here on behalf of Europe's thousands of professional pilots and cabin crew, because all of us have a duty to make our passengers' safety – your safety – our first priority. Before you hear from Francois, let me tell you the reason why pilots and cabin crew are demonstrating in this moment all over Europe:

- A tired pilot is a dangerous pilot.
- A tired cabin crew will endanger our passengers in any emergency.

Regrettably, this is what the EU's decision-makers have not yet understood. Why else would they put passengers at risk with such a fundamentally flawed anti-fatigue proposal? The proposal, from the European Aviation Safety Agency – EASA – should have sought to combat aircrew fatigue and to reduce the risk of fatigue-related accidents.

But what EASA proposes:

- is far from – and often contradicts – what scientific advice considers necessary to enable safe airline operations;
- is far from the legal mandate EASA and the Commission received from the European Parliament, back in 2006, when they were tasked to revise European rules in line with scientific evidence; and, bottom line, it allows flight schedules that are outright dangerous.

FB: As professionals, we take our passengers' safety very seriously. But does this proposal from EASA do so as well? Since its publication on 1st Oct, there are few signs that EASA and the EU Commission are ready to question it or examine its effects. Both allege the proposal to be a 'good and balanced package'. If they are not pressed by EU Member States or the European Parliament, they will not carry out any changes to it. And: they are desperate to avoid a discussion on the lack of scientific basis to the proposal.

This is not acceptable for responsible safety regulators.

And this is why today, pilots and cabin crew across Europe 'walk out' for safety, demonstrating at airports and other locations, informing the public, and expressing their serious safety concerns about this EASA proposal. In this moment, in Spain, Germany, the Netherlands, France and at least 12 other European countries our colleagues are demonstrating at the airports. We receive pictures with hundreds of air crews who have joined the 'Walkout' to defend the safety of European passengers. These images are speaking for themselves. Pilots and Cabin crew are calling

They call on their national governments and politicians to say 'NO' and to ensure that the EASA proposal is changed in line with scientific evidence. Here in Brussels, we will hand over a copy of the many signatures to our Safety Petition. We will hand it to EU Transport Commissioner Siim Kallas, who apparently has other important tasks to attend to. But his Cabinet advisor will receive us at 11:30 – and there will be a photo opportunity at the Berlaymont building.

We will also hand it over to the Chair of the EP Transport Committee, Brian Simpson, and express our concerns personally to him and his colleagues. We trust that Europe's elected representatives will protect the first and most important right their citizens have when travelling aboard a European aircraft:

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The right to a safe flight, protected by genuinely effective EU rules.

We do all this to say 'enough is enough'!

Because when a Safety Agency deviates from its safety mandate, and when policy-makers do not want to listen to professional, or scientific, advice, more unusual means are required.

This 'Walkout for Safety' is such an unusual step.

It is a 'warning shot' to our legislators and regulators.

It is a wake-up call to the general public that their safety is at stake.

And it is a wake-up call to national and EU decision-makers - THEY can now make the difference between safe and unsafe rules.

They must make passenger safety their Number One Priority too! Thank you.

FNy: Another unusual means is our Safety Petition. This online petition has been signed by over 100.000 citizens, and more signatures come in every day.

100.000 signatures - that is 100.000 citizens who want the EASA proposal changed into a safe package!

Before we come to the Questions & Answers, let me say a few direct words about EASA's statements over the past few months:

EASA claims that its proposal benefitted from "unprecedented scientific input" and states that "more than 50 scientific studies were analysed".

Yes, indeed, many studies were analysed. But their findings - including the recommendations from 3 scientific reports commissioned by EASA itself - have been largely ignored.

Why? Because Europe's airlines lobbied hard against the uptake of these findings. They did so because they want to drive down their own costs.

EASA says that its rules are based on 'best practice'. This is simply not true. If best regulatory practice from countries like the UK, Spain or Scandinavia had been the benchmark, the result would look very different. It seems EASA believes 'best practice' means the lowest cost, most permissive, practice that could be found somewhere in Europe, no matter how isolated or extreme.

Finally, EASA claims its proposal proves its "commitment to make no compromise with the safety of air passengers" Then why follow airline demands to require pilots and cabin crew to land an airplane full of passengers after 22 hours or more on duty? Or to fly through the night for up to 12 and a half hours - when scientists believe going beyond 10 hrs at night is unsafe?

As professional pilots and cabin crew, we will not wait for a fatal accident before these questions will be answered. We want to prevent such accidents through adequate, science-based flight time rules.

This is why we recommend EU-decision-makers reject the text unless it is changed and made safe. And this is why we 'walk out' for safety all across Europe. - Thank you.