

PRESS RELEASE

Breakthrough for aviation safety: EU Parliament rejects flawed flight time rules

Brussels, 30 September 2013

European pilots and cabin crew welcome today's decision of the EU Parliament Transport Committee to reject the Commission proposal for new flight time rules in Europe. With a large majority of 21 to 13 votes, the EP Members voted for the rejection of the proposal which contains several significant safety loopholes. The vote sends a clear signal to the Commission to come up with an improved safe and science-based text that ensures passenger safety is safeguarded.

"Today, the EU Parliament voted to keep passenger safety as Europe's number one priority", says Nico Voorbach, President of the European Cockpit Association and a pilot himself. "We are pleased with this decision and congratulate the Parliamentarians for their strong stance on safety. This is what Europe's citizens expect from the EU and opposing this proposal was the only reasonable step. Flying for 11-12hrs30 through the night – as the Commission allows – while scientists set this limit at 10 hrs maximum is not acceptable. We now call upon the Commission to withdraw its proposal and come back with a truly safe package."

Elisabetta Chicca, Chair of the ETF Cabin Crew Committee adds: "Allowing air crew to be on standby and flight duty for 22 hours is simply not safe. If the Commission is serious about safety, this must be changed."

"Europe's citizens expect harmonization at the highest safety level, based on best practices and on scientific evidence," says Francois Ballestero, Political Secretary of ETF. "The Commission has now the opportunity to underpin their rules with existing scientific evidence. Deliberately dismissing such evidence and trying to push their proposal through the EP has not worked. We hope the Commission got the message and will act accordingly."

"The Commission stresses the safety improvements its proposal will bring" says Philip von Schöppenthau, ECA Secretary General. "What they fail to say is that their benchmark is very low, and that they chose some of the worst practices in Europe to compare their proposal against. The issue is that the text contains important safety loopholes which must be closed to ensure safe flights. A plane with brand-new engines and new cockpit windows is nice. But as long as there is a crack in the wing, the whole plane remains unsafe. And that's the problem with the Commission proposal. And this is why it must be withdrawn and changed."

With the rejection in the Transport Committee, the proposal will go to a vote by the EP Plenary, most likely in the week of 21 October, as the scrutiny period ends on 25 Oct. On that day, the scrutiny periods for the Council of Ministers ends as well, with national Ministers having the opportunity to follow the EP and reject the Commission proposal.

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The rejection of the FTL proposal opens the way for the EU Commission to reconsider bringing essential changes to the text before it goes to vote in Plenary. Limiting the night flights to a maximum of 10 hours flight duty – as scientists have repeatedly recommended as the safe limit – and putting a firm cap of 18 hrs on the combination of a standby followed by a flight duty must be a part of a revised, safe package. Also, Member States must be allowed to keep stricter, more protective flight time rules at national level – and be able to do so not only in specific exceptional cases – rather than having to harmonise their standards downwards to the EU rules.

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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

ETF represents 100,000 aircrews 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>