

Trade unions across Europe sound alarm over EasyJet's approach to workers' rights and aviation safety

The European Transport Workers' Federation condemns EasyJet's despicable attacks on workers' rights and questions carriers' attitude towards safety.

The ETF fully supports its affiliates in their fight against despicable actions by EasyJet. The company's way of treating its workforce while handling the impact of the COVID-19 crisis represents a race to the bottom with a potential disastrous consequences for employees and passengers alike.

It was with a great concern that the ETF and its affiliates organising easyJet, including BALPA, Unite the Union, and ver.di learned earlier this month the company has decided to let go a large part of its workforce, including hundreds of its pilots. Moreover, it became clear that in the UK, the company intends to use pilots' absenteeism, sickness records and duty history to decide layoffs of individual employees. Some of the trade unions concerned have also called for a vote of no confidence in the airline's key management personnel.

While the COVID-19 pandemic has had severe consequences for aviation industry and its workforce, some players have decided to further deepen the crisis in the sector and use the COVID-19 as an excuse for massive restructuring and changes in employees' terms and conditions.

Sadly, EasyJet is one of those companies. Indeed, with large-scale redundancies impacting thousands of employees and a restructuring plan that includes closing some of its bases, EasyJet showed a lack of respect towards its workforce when it announced plans to use sickness record against its own staff, deciding on the company's future unilaterally before negotiations with trade unions started.

Putting in place such an "innovative" dismissal procedure is absolutely unprecedented and alarming. Moreover, it raises huge concerns about the company's approach to aviation safety. The threat of using sickness records as part of the job cuts selection criteria may lead to unwell employees reporting for work in a desperate attempt to keep their jobs. This may have a disastrous impact on both workers' and passengers' safety. Besides, such unilateral decision on arrangement of foreseen redundancies provides evidence of the poor state of social dialogue EasyJet pursues.

The ETF urges all companies active in the aviation sector - including EasyJet - to avoid using COVID-19 as a pretext to lower existing standards and employment conditions and to comply with contractual and legal obligations as employers.

Trade unions that are always willing to negotiate. The ETF calls on the company to engage in a respectful, unbiased social dialogue with trade unions organising EasyJet where this has not happened to date. Especially in the time of an unprecedented crises, it is through a joint effort and collaboration between management and workers that the aviation ecosystem can be rebuilt and restart again.

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