

Information

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EUROPEAN AIRLINES QUESTION PILOTS' FLIGHT TIME SCHEME EASA study 'flawed and unconvincing', says AEA

The Association of European Airlines, which counts amongst its members the most important airlines in Europe, has reacted with dismay to a report published by the European Aviation Safety Agency (EASA) on the safety aspects of pilots' rest and duty time – commonly referred-to as FTL.

The report fulfils a legal requirement for EASA to conduct a scientific and medical study into FTL as part of the process of harmonising European regulations on aircraft operation. However, in AEA's view, it employs a flawed methodology, is seriously lacking in substantive scientific and medical content, and arrives at conclusions which are oblivious to the evidence of decades of safe operation.

If implemented, it would require airlines to employ many more pilots to do the same amount of flying – AEA estimates an additional 15% to 20% – and would render impossible many flight routings which are operated today, and have been for years, in conditions of perfect safety. For example, it would no longer be possible for European airlines to fly non-stop from Japan to Europe, a route which they fly more than 20 times a day at present, and have flown for 30 years, without incident.

Said AEA Secretary General Ulrich Schulte-Strathaus: *"Pilot hours are already very closely regulated, in a system which has demonstrably delivered safe operation over many years and millions of flights. The current body of legislation has evolved in an empirical process at a national level involving airlines and pilot bodies. To try and take this diversity of schemes which are seen to work well and mould them into a 'one-size-fits-all' template will add nothing to safety"*.

If current practices carried safety implications, said Mr Schulte-Strathaus, a comprehensive scientific and medical analysis would be expected to yield solid evidence of pilots' inability to function effectively and a catalogue of accidents and incidents. *"The EASA report is wholly unconvincing in this respect"*, he said.

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