

Information

07 October 2009

EUROPEAN PILOT HOURS NOT A SAFETY ISSUE, AIRLINES TELL THEIR PASSENGERS Pilot unions' 'fatigue' claims are pure self-interest, says AEA

The Association of European Airlines, representing Europe's most important network carriers, has rejected claims by pilot unions that the rules governing flight duty and rest time which currently apply in Europe are unsafe.

At present, Flight Time Limitation rules are covered by EU legislation. The provisions are clear and reflect the specificities of individual States, as well as the different types of operation. As such, they have delivered a level of safety of which Europe can be justifiably proud. This approach has been challenged by the pilot unions who claim that passengers' safety is at risk because of potential pilot fatigue.

"The unions refer to a study to justify a reduction of daily and weekly working time. The study's methodology has been questioned, and in fact it flies in the face of empirical experience. European airlines are extremely safe. It is simply untrue to claim they are not", said AEA Secretary General Ulrich Schulte-Strathaus. *"The unions are raising a safety issue as a means of promoting their own interests. Unions want pilots that are flying safely today, to fly less tomorrow, so that more pilots would be needed to do the same amount of flying, promotion from First Officer to Captain would be accelerated, and the unions would end up with more members, and more membership fees".*

The argument is not about safety, said Mr Schulte-Strathaus; *"It is a social affairs issue. To imply that EASA, the European Safety Agency, is inactive, is absurd. EASA is of course involved in an evaluation of the current provisions. But EASA is not, and should not, be involved in social matters".* European airline passengers should be reassured that they fly under flight time rules which are demonstrably safe, he said.

For further information, please contact:

David Henderson

Manager Information

Phone : +32(0) 2 639 89 72

Email: david.henderson@aea.be

www.aea.be

Note to the Editor: The Association of European Airlines (AEA) brings together 33 European established scheduled network carriers. These collectively carry 366 million passengers and 7 million tonnes of cargo each year, operating 2,617 aircraft serving 662 destinations in 162 countries with 11,585 flights a day. They provide around 394,200 jobs directly, and generate a total turnover of €79 billion