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EASA'S OPINION ON AVIATION SAFETY: AN IMPROVEMENT BUT NOT QUITE THERE YET

The European Aviation Safety Agency (EASA) has published an Opinion on aviation safety and a possible revision of the Basic Regulation (EC) 216/2008. Despite some positive elements, such as EASA's approach on ground handling, security and cabin air quality, the ETF believes that this Opinion is incomplete and does not respond to key outstanding issues.

The ETF has been advocating a coherent approach to the whole aviation safety chain and in this respect, we welcome that EASA has proposed to include ground handling activities into the scope of the Basic Regulation. However, EASA should not only rely on industry standards that have deteriorated in the last years due to cost considerations but also develop own certification requirements. Along those lines, the ETF is happy that EASA is willing to tackle the issues of airworthiness security and cabin air quality, which are long overdue.

On the other hand, the ETF is also disappointed that the Regulatory Impact assessment process has not been improved by including social implications of safety-related rules developed by EASA. Aviation workers should not be deprived of an equivalent level of protection as any other employee. In addition, the Opinion does not answer a number of questions regarding the so-called 'new business models' exploiting loopholes in legislation and safety oversight.

The ETF does not share EASA's approach on its future financing either. The ETF is of the opinion that the Agency should not be financed by additional fees imposed on passengers or operators – this will not only disadvantage aviation compared to other modes of transport but may also endanger the independence of EASA. With respect to training, the ETF would have welcomed a much more coherent approach including the development of qualification standards for safety-related aviation professions.

The ETF believes that a sufficient compromise has been reached on a number of other topics, such as a possible 'opt-in' for state services, revision of excluded aircraft, common repository of certificates and licenses or EASA's role in research and on international level.

However, the lack of transparency in the consultation procedure has been a concern of the ETF for a long time.

Europe must preserve its prominent position in terms of aviation safety. At the same time, the ETF calls upon the European Commission to adopt a holistic approach and establish a link between aviation safety and the wellbeing of workers who are the biggest capital of European aviation. In the future, EASA must become a strong, independent and transparent regulator. The ETF will do the utmost to achieve that goal!



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