



Headoffice of AEI

Hoofdweg 616 OZ
2132 MJ Hoofddorp
The Netherlands

Tel: +31 655 930 175

+31 10 2799801

Fax: +31 172 436959

Email: Sg@airengineers.org or
fredbruggeman@cs.com

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EU Incompetence Threatens Air Safety

With air accidents on the increase, European air safety will continue to be compromised due to the European Transport Commissions failure to de-politicise the enforcement of its own regulations. This was the message delivered to delegates attending the 37th AEI Annual Congress. Despite the recent FAA revelations admitting regulatory oversight lapses in the United States, the arrogance of European politicians unwilling to take on board vital lessons, will continue to pose a serious threat.

AEI remains seriously concerned about EASA (European Aviation Safety Agency) lacking the legal power necessary to enforce its own regulations and the consequences that has on safety. Although EASA emphasized that they had increased standardisation inspection activities, they failed to respond when questioned directly about the large number of long standing open issues. AEI firmly believes that in order to prevent further regulatory abuse, EASA must have powers of enforcement independent of any political influence and most certainly independent of industry itself.

Furthermore despite continuous calls from many aviation professionals for a truly independent occurrence reporting system which promotes a safety culture whilst protecting reporters, EASA continue to ignore the situation by claiming it's not within their remit. Paragraph 16 of EC Regulation 216/2008 regarding common rules in the field of civil aviation and the establishing of a European Aviation Safety Agency suggests otherwise.

The reporting of incidents in order to learn from mistakes is a valuable if not critical element of flight safety and must be fully supported. It is more than disappointing to witness continued unchallenged attempts by industry to silence reporters of safety issues. Many reports are ignored and not properly investigated.

Additional concerns relating to engineer training issues were also discussed as AEI are concerned that EASA will be unable to withstand industry pressure to reduce training time and quality. The aviation industry is pushing hard for acceptance of distance learning for engineers in order to reduce training times and therefore increase engineer numbers quickly. Quantity before quality cannot be considered as acceptable in the aviation industry and AEI fundamentally oppose this overly commercial approach.

Engineer training must be of the highest standard in order to maintain safety levels. EASA's own investigations have highlighted issues with engineer training schools which are already considered to be within a controlled environment. Therefore until these issues are eliminated distance learning should not form the part of any discussions.

AEI values the continued cooperative atmosphere with EASA but remain extremely concerned that their efforts are being undermined by both nationalistic airworthiness authorities and ineffective political resolutions from Brussels.

AEI would also emphasize that it will continue to offer its full support to any initiative that enhances safety yet reserves the right to take any action deemed necessary in order to vigorously oppose uncontrolled commercialism which ultimately increases profit at the expense of safety.

For more information Contact AEI pr@airengineers.org or sg@airengineers.org
or Tel +31 655 930 175 or check out the website www.airengineers.org