

Afternoon everybody,

First of all I'd like to introduce myself my name is kris major and I'm current chair of the European transport workers federation joint aircrew committee.

I stand here in front of you today representing all European cabin crew and a great many pilots.

Why do we need to enforce National labour laws and relevant EU legislation for aircrew?  
The truth is we shouldn't need to enforce labour laws or any legislation for that matter.

However, the aviation industry is a Savage arena. Savage, competition is fierce, the equipment we all use is largely identical, therefore many of the costs are broadly similar. This means that airlines need to be inventive, creative and ruthless to stay alive.

We get that, we really do get that - honestly.

But the airlines have circled the wagons and left us on the outside.

We are not trying to shackle our operators to Unreasonable or outdated methods of dealing with their employees.

We've seen some seismic changes to our industry, the sector has changed beyond recognition. Traditional nationally based airlines have made way for multi -based pan European operations. Increasingly we see Aviation as a global Business, familiar Home focussed brands have evolved into airlines without a national identity, names that have little geographical meaning or drive to attract customer loyalty based on national patriotism.

Cost and what's on offer ---- or not ---are king.

Managing a Business with employees in multiple countries with multiple differences isn't easy and Business likes SIMPLE. But I'm sorry to say, it really isn't that simple  
We need to catch up, by we I mean the overseers, those charged with levelling the moral compass.

Let's be clear;

We're not opposed to change  
We're not opposed to profits  
We're not opposed to job security  
We're not opposed to sharing in the success too.

One of the fundamental problems in managing thousands of people that are essentially an absent workforce, with no factory floor, no office block where your employees work, no direct vision and control of what's going on is that you have to trust. Trust that the people that have been employed are singularly focused on the business goals only. Or you can use fear.

So, operators are using more creative ways to avoid meaningful industrial relations. In doing so they risk being at odds with the EUs core pillar of maintaining and promoting high social standards.

We must act.

There are other unique factors that aircrew face. If a pilot isn't a pilot what are they? An operator can and do hold the unique skill of flying aeroplanes to a pilot's head. They can't just leave. Not in an industry where if you're lucky there's jobs available. Not when you have to start at the bottom in terms of pay and conditions.

Similarly with cabin crew over the past few years it's become fashionable to liken the role to a barista in a coffee shop. Not because there's anything wrong with being barista, there isn't.

The reason is more subtle and subliminal. It's because the job of a barista is seen as an in-between job, something to do before you get a real job. An entry-level job into the workplace. Creating an expectation of lower skill and lower pay.

I'm not sorry to say that cabin crew are not sales agents, and it is only a matter of time before I'm proved right.

I remember an old boss saying to me after September 11th when this business changed forever. We only want cabin crew for four years, two years as crew and if they don't get promoted we don't want them. Then two years as an in-charge crewmember and only 10% of those we will want them for management roles. But other than that, we want them to leave.

The Commission reports that better enforcement is primarily a matter for the member states, their relevant authorities in their national courts.

To a point we agree.

The EU Commission, the guardians of the Treaty, cannot though wash its hands and walk away.

Austerity has seen human resources cut and Labour inspection is reduced.

It's difficult for inspectors to gain access to airside areas of airports.

It's difficult to detect infringements due to the complexity and transnational nature of the operations and a lack of resources for aviation authorities.

We need to explore the potential of stakeholders in supporting the compliance and enforcement. Inspections can't be everywhere and they can't address everything. There are many other ways to achieve regulatory objectives.

Today's stakeholders do not have the possibility of reinforcement and the ETF and ECA claim of its members have remained mostly unheard. Finding mechanisms for trade unions to push authorities to initiate investigations and similar procedures could enhance the situation.

The main focus is on safety regulation compliance, not labour laws.

And when we talk about safety I think that the Commission's report is flawed. Suggesting that safety is somehow not affected by an employee's contractual status, because they are trained as safety critical personnel might be convenient, but when their employment is deliberately fragile and insecure, is utterly wrong.

Of course they will consider their job security over rocking the boat or highlighting a potential safety issue. – and they do. And I don't say that lightly, I say that because I know it's fact, I say that because those aircrew tell me so.

I really do believe that the report is not taking seriously our genuine concerns on employing aircrew through agencies - which in all honesty are designed only to be a firewall between the real employer and employee. It is without doubt an issue not just for social concern or about a moral compass, but safety too.

We feel that for too long aircrew has been ignored.

Perhaps some of you think we're a privileged few, permanent tourists or detached from the reality of a real day's work. Well, I've worked in kitchens, offices and restaurants, - I've worked 100 hour weeks in those jobs and what I can tell you is all that's missing of my face as cabin crew right now is soot.

The principle of the Temporary Agency Workers Directive must be enforced.

The posting of workers - legal clarity is missing, many questions concerning posting in aviation. Is the directive applicable? If so, when and where? What about wet leasing? These crucial questions cannot be answered by each Member State alone. European coherence is needed.

Bogus self-employment is just another trick to get around forming any meaningful industrial relationship with your employees or take on the additional extra costs and responsibilities of an employer.

Of course, it's about reducing or eliminating costs from the business but at what cost to society?

Is this how we're all supposed to live? What would Europe look like if the most creative of our airlines were a model for our society?

We wouldn't accept it.

So just because this problem is largely hidden doesn't make it any less important to face.

The report says,

Aviation is an important source of employment. In 2016, it was estimated that the aviation sector in the Union had directly generated 2 million jobs, out of which 18.8% were jobs in airlines, overall it supported 9.4 million jobs. It is expected that aviation will continue to generate more jobs. There are no figures available regarding specifically aircrew.

Airports are businesses, the more aeroplanes flying in, then there's more shops, more ground staff, more engineers, more everything. So, no one cares about the small number of aircrew bringing those aeroplanes in and out.

We're hiding behind an image that aviation had in the 50s and 60s when flying an aeroplane was special. We still think of aircrew as privileged, having an easy life and this isn't true.

Remember aircrew are exempt from caveats in the working time directive surrounding rest, breaks and time off. The limitations surrounding aircrew's working conditions are based largely on predicted fatigue levels.

Both pilots and cabin crew have unique careers that cannot just be replaced with another job. Therefore, the natural opposing force of being able to leave and withdraw your labour taking it elsewhere isn't a credible influence as it is in many other industries.

We would support the establishment of a database or a labour ID for aircrews, institutions national authorities and where people can check different aspects related to the employment situation for example habitual place of work, affiliation to Social Security.

This could be a great tool for better enforcement of the rules coupled with the observatory of aircrew labour relations providing data on employment and infringements.

And we understand that the transparent and predictable working conditions directive comes into force in two years' time. This will ensure that basic information on the employment relationship is provided to an employee. The directive improves the enforceable possibilities for example trade union representatives and their protective reverse treatment if they organise some defence of the rights of this directive.

Whether or not you agree with me or not, on how we move forward, what cannot be ignored, is that we, the stakeholders, need a regulatory environment, a compliance environment and an enforcement environment that is up-to-date and fit for purpose. Today is the beginning of that process.

Thank you