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ETF views on ATCO licensing Opinion publication

ETF welcomes the publication by EASA of the opinion on air traffic control officers (ATCO) licensing. It is the result of a long process to review the requirements first introduced after the initial legislation about Single European Sky (SES).

ETF has offered the Commission and EASA its contribution at every step of the process.

Whilst the modifications to the current regulation do not constitute a revolution, several changes will affect the day-to-day practice of thousands of workers around Europe.

In particular, ETF has been strongly in favour of introducing the concept of provisional inability in this implementing rule since proposing this provision in the first draft. Provisional inability is a new status for the licence holder when an ATCO is temporarily incapable of safely providing air traffic control. However, we noticed that there were major changes introduced by EASA in the Notice of Proposed Amendment after the last meeting of the rulemaking group. This version could introduce discrimination depending on how the regulation is interpreted.

Provisional inability is designed to complement and enhance a just culture environment, and strengthens safety by allowing the ATCO in question to declare, without prejudice, that he is not fit to work. This is based upon a culture of mutual trust between licence holder and ANSP. **Riccardo Rubini**, chairman of the ETF-ATM committee, says : 'We, as ETF, consider it of the utmost importance to have a common, clear objective in implementing provisional inability; a satisfactory result for air traffic controllers in drafting the European regulation has been reached, and we will now monitor its implementation at national level. This new concept provides ATCOs and ANSPs with a tool which is able to deliver safer and better managed solution to some of the problems they are facing today.'

ETF is also satisfied with the new requirements for language training for air traffic controllers to be provided by their employers. Maintaining a high standard in the aeronautical languages used is paramount to ensure that flight safety as high as it should be.

ETF has also expressed, at every step of the public consultation, concerns about the issues linked to the medical certificate requirement of the licence. ETF has tried throughout the process to prevent punishments of what is done in good faith by air traffic controllers related to their medical fitness. For example, an air traffic controller must notify the competent authority upon becoming pregnant and is at risk of sanctions if such a notification is not done in due time but the awareness of pregnancy is not as obvious as EASA officers seem to consider. The same kind of dispute is still on going about taking medication. ETF is of the opinion that an ATCO could risk sanctions for trying to heal themselves without knowing that side-effects might affect their abilities to safely provide air traffic services.

In addition, it is also crucial that the revision of the Regulation 805/2011 makes binding the Recital 9, which must prevent the circumvention of the existing national provisions governing the rights and obligations applicable to the employment contracts.



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