



## Back to business

by Nico Voorbach

September is the month when things start slowly moving again after the summer/institutional break. In Brussels, the newly elected Parliament convened to “grill” the future European Commissioners with questions about their agenda, policy priorities and knowledge. In this newsletter we have provided a short report of the confirmation hearings of the future Transport Commissioner – Maroš Šefčovič – and the future Employment Commissioner – Marianne Thyssen. Both candidates passed this first test successfully – they showed confident presence, knowledge, commitment and understanding of the issues.

A general impression is that many buzz words, such as “social”, “employment”, “fair competition”, made their way into the hearings. The acknowledgement of these problems is certainly positive news for our industry and its workers. The lack of coordination between the Member States on social security, taxation and air traffic rights is impeding the aviation industry’s ability to compete on a level playing field. We desperately need to see actions now. We are hopeful that new Commissioners will take up our struggle against unfair competition, social dumping, tax evasion and erosion of the aviation industry. Our industry needs the pilots’ operational experience as well as the political leadership of the EU. The new EU Commission could be the leader reversing the negative trend in our industry.

This edition of Cockpit News highlights one more important topic – the fast-growing Remotely Piloted Aircraft Systems (RPAS) industry and safety risks associated with these technologies. The prospect of unmanned flights and remotely piloted aircraft has been around for a while now but the civil application of RPAS has started growing at an exponential pace. Our regulators and legislative frameworks cannot follow this expansion. The aviation industry faces obvious challenge. There are many aspects which need to be looked at – is the technology safe, how do we integrate it in airspace, or who is liable in case of

accident? A practical example of the risks we underline is the use of drones by TV stations and private individuals in accident sites. These RPAS operate in the same airspace as police and rescue helicopters, making their operation more difficult and unsafe, putting at risk the lives of people on the site.

Many questions are still waiting for answers but our expert pilots have taken up the challenge to help integrate RPAS safely into civil airspace.

## Future EU Commissioners face tough questions by EU Parliament

**Commitment for a social Europe, including the fight against social dumping in transport, is one of the key take-aways from the confirmation hearings of the incoming European Commissioners. Taken place last week in Brussels, the 3-hour hearings allowed the Members of the European Parliament to evaluate the designate Commissioners’ knowledge, commitment and personalities.**

Maroš Šefčovič, Transport Commissioner-Designate – questioned by the Transport Committee – sent positive signals that he is committed to tackle some of the most pressing issues in EU transport, including unfair competition, social dumping and the implementation of the Single European Sky.

A Slovak social-democrat and outgoing Commissioner responsible for coordinating EU institutions, Mr. Šefčovič recognized that social dumping is a serious problem in the transport area and promised willingness to clarify the rules, simplify them and push for better enforcement by Member States. He even suggested that Social Partners could create a “Social code for mobile transport workers” to give back the stability of the sector. In addition, he pledged to deepen social dialogue.



A similar but more cautious line was taken by Marianne Thyssen, EU Commissioner-Designate for Employment and Social Affairs and Belgian EPP member of the European Parliament for 23 years. She was questioned by several MEPs on issues such as bogus self-employment of pilots, atypical work and zero-hours contracts. While avoiding to suggest new legislative steps, Mrs Thyssen emphasized the need for better enforcement of the existing rules against abuses at national level and pointed out that the issue will be addressed at European level where necessary, such as in the newly set up EU Platform on Undeclared Work.

One of the messages derived from both hearings is that social and employment aspects are important to both Commissioners-Designate. ECA will take this as an invitation to seek their commitment in working jointly to end social dumping and unfair competition, preventing bogus self-employment and degrading employment conditions. ECA looks forward to set up a dialogue with the new Commissioners and to develop proposals to address these issues.

## RPAS: a game-changer for aviation

**The media attention after Amazon's stunt with a drone delivering packages to customers, made it clear that Remotely Piloted Aircraft Systems (RPAS) are here to stay. What the popular video didn't say is that before we see any RPAS delivering packages, regulators and the aviation community must find a way to integrate them safely into airspace. And pilots operating in the cockpit of 'real' aircraft can contribute to this.**

Over the past decades, RPAS have been fielded in increasing numbers across many nations and military services. But today, anyone can buy a remote controlled aircraft and use it in civil airspace. From movie directors, journalists and hobbyists to farmers and disaster relief teams, popularity of the RPAS technology is growing by the day. But as any new technology, RPAS poses a number of challenges.

Warnings about the safety risks of civil use of small unmanned aircraft, or RPAS, have already come from many authoritative sources, incl. EASA, the European Commission and the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA). An EASA analysis of the accident rates warns that if the current RPAS accident rate were permitted to increase, we will ultimately be confronted with a 400 fold increase in RPAS and manned aircraft accidents. That would be an unacceptable development. While in the US the commercial use of drones is banned by the FAA, in Europe eight Member States have taken first steps to allow commercial RPAS activities.



Against this background, in early October, ECA pilot experts met to map out the RPAS-related 'red flags' raised by the aviation community. The group discussed the vulnerabilities of the technologies, the fragmented regulatory frameworks in Europe and across the world, licensing standards and – critically – the safety and security aspects of integrating RPAS into airspace. This 'brainstorming' session will serve as a basis for further analysis and an action plan on how to address the many challenges related to RPAS across the world and how to ensure this safe integration into airspace.



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Piloting Safety

ECA is the representative body of European pilot associations, representing over 38.000 pilots from across Europe

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