

EASA Highlights

EASA-FAA Safety Conference - 13 June 2023

Thank you, David for that overview of the FAA's activities in the last year.

When I think back to last year's conference, with its theme of "Uniting efforts to overcome aviation safety challenges" – and recall that it was held against the backdrop of the ongoing COVID pandemic – it is quite amazing to see how our operating environment has changed over these short 12 months. Travel is now easy again, and face-to-face meetings like this, are once again normal.

It is not surprising that many of EASA's achievements in the last months are going in a similar direction as those of the FAA, with themes such as drones, advanced air mobility and sustainability high on our agenda as well. Some other activities in the last year have had a clearly European perspective – such as our work to deal with the situation created by the Russian invasion of Ukraine.

Rule-making

Rising to the challenge of summarizing a year's activities in a few minutes, I would like to look first at some of the key rule-making tasks that have been a major focus since we last met.

Significant regulations that have been issued since mid-2022 include:

- SMS requirements for Part 145 (maintenance) and Part 21 (design and production) organisations, which have now been adopted into EU law, transposed from the SARPS of ICAO-Annex 19

- One CAMO – providing for Continuing Airworthiness Development in a single air carrier business grouping. This was agreed in March last year and we followed up in September with the related AMC and GM.
- The AMC/GM for all-weather operations – allowing more efficient usage of regional airports – was published in July 2022, completing the rule-making work for this task.
- And finally, the TCO regulation was updated. The objective here was to foster a risk-based approach in the authorisation process of third-country operators and improve the efficiency of EASA in this area.

We have also published two opinions in the domain of ATM, and the European Commission is currently preparing to adopt these into Regulations:

- The first streamlines qualifications for Air Traffic Controllers, creating harmonisation and therefore mobility opportunities for ATCOs within Europe.
- The second is on ATM/ANS ground equipment, a technological evolution which will enable a functioning EU market for this equipment and so ensure the safe, secure, interoperable, and efficient operation of the European ATM network for all phases of flight.

A major piece of work due for release later this year is on Ground Handling – an area of aviation which is so far unregulated at European level. This is particularly timely, as attention was thrown on to this area last summer, when tight resourcing and other problems caused delays and bottlenecks at many airports – a situation incidentally which we hope will not be repeated this year.

In the third quarter, we will publish a big package on FCL, including requirements for relief pilots; Med requirements; pilot training, testing and checking; simpler, lighter and better FC licensing requirements. And finally, we will publish a further opinion in the area of drones/eVTOL, related to high-risk specific category (SAL V/VI) and manned VTOL operations.

I am sure you will agree with me that these are quite some significant achievements over a wide variety of domains.

Speed of Rulemaking

In parallel to this, we have been working hard to become more agile and move faster in rule-making activities. Major new regulations such as the framework for UAS operations in Europe, have been adopted in a record time of 18 months. To the satisfaction of all stakeholders.

While we are now moving more quickly, we also recognize that engagement and consultation of affected stakeholders is an important part of this process. As rule-making tasks vary in scope and impact, it is key to efficiency to consider for each proposed new rule the most suitable timing for engagement and consultation, the most suitable means and tools to achieve the widest and most relevant participation, and to adjust the length of the periods of this participation.

It is important that we maintain an open and transparent dialogue between regulators throughout our rulemaking process. So we are striving for harmonization along the way.

This speed of response is particularly important in current times, where innovation in aviation is coming at a breathtaking speed.

On the one hand this is driven by the compelling need for the industry to become more sustainable. In parallel, there are innovations in the way we work – I think here in particular of artificial intelligence. And finally, with drones and eVTOL, we are seeing the emergence of completely new forms of aircraft – at a speed which only 10 years ago would have seemed unthinkable.

As safety authorities, we need to understand fully how innovation can be progressed in a way that not only matches current safety requirements but even exceeds them. To achieve this, EASA is working closely with innovation providers, to ensure we are involved early in the development process. One method is through Innovation Partnership contracts, through which the industry would seek our advice on a new approach to operations or a new technology. This is a very successful initiative: we have signed about 50 of those contracts so far. And we have negotiated and received a mandate from the European Commission to execute some research on their behalf, which is beneficial for all of us. And finally, we are more and more involved in large research efforts, thereby bringing our safety expertise to the industry and identifying at an early stage what can be certifiable or not.

We know also that on innovation, the sooner we work together with the FAA, the better it is. But we also need to be realistic in our expectations: the two authorities have not been able to be 100% harmonized on conventional products, on which we have accumulated decades of experience and exchange. Certain disharmonized requirements also stem from different public interest or expectations and different operating environments, and we have to accept that.

What really matters is to enable the “transferability” of a product from one market to the other, and of course eliminate any differences that would create incompatibility.

Sustainability and RefuelEU

On the sustainability side, EASA’s actions are driven both by industry and by EU legislation. The underlying motivation is to meet the expectation of citizens in Europe – and indeed I think one can say, globally – to sharply cut back on climate-damaging emissions.

On April 25, the Council and the European Parliament reached a provisional political agreement on the ReFuelEU Aviation proposal, which is aimed at decarbonising the aviation sector and creating a level playing field for sustainable air transport. An important element of the proposal is to boost the supply and demand for SAF in the EU, through a blending obligation on suppliers of fuel to EU airports. The obligation would commence from 2025 at 2% SAF, gradually increasing to 70% in 2050.

The provisional political agreement (or trilogue) needs yet to receive formal approval, which is expected in the months to come.

More details on the RefuelEU Aviation agreement will therefore become available soon. However I can already inform you that EASA will gain new responsibilities out of this legislation, reflecting our role as a neutral, trusted party which has a full overview of the aviation sector and has safety, as well as environmental evolution, as a cornerstone of its remit.

EASA's tasks in RefuelEU are related to SAF monitoring, reporting and analysis to be captured in a yearly report. This will include monitoring of the availability and uptake of SAF in the EU and where possible also in third countries.

It will look at the state of the market, price information, and trends in SAF as well as production and consumption in EU. It will collate data on the origin and composition of SAF used in Europe and finally measure the compliance status of aircraft operators and fuel suppliers

In addition, the RefuelEU agreement also includes the creation of a voluntary labelling scheme about environmental performance for aircraft operators using SAF which will help consumers make informed choices and will promote greener flights. This builds on the

work done by EASA on its aviation labelling project, intended to create greater transparency for passengers at the point of sale, so they can make informed decisions about their flight and related carbon footprint.

While we are aware of the challenges with SAF, as demand is high and supply is currently scarce, these actions are all important steps in changing the overall image of aviation, by creating transparency and establishing a measurable reduction in emissions.

We have just announced that EASA and Google have joined forces to work on a flight labelling pilot project, with Lufthansa Group as the pilot partner. The Lufthansa Group has provided data for this initiative for calibration and assessment. Sebnem Erzan from Google will offer some more insights on this project tomorrow.

Summer 2023

In the context of our rulemaking on Ground-Handling, I touched earlier in my remarks on the operational issues of last summer and the desire to avert a repeat of this in 2023.

Travel demands and traffic levels for summer 2023 in Europe are forecast to be significantly higher than in 2022. Air operators, aerodromes, ATM/ANS service providers, maintenance organisations, and training organisations continue to face significant challenges in having sufficient qualified personnel, availability of aircraft, spare parts, and traffic slots to cope with the increased demand. Precursors of possible disruptions have already been evident in April and May 2023 with some time to go until the peak of the summer operational season.

EASA has been monitoring the situation by collecting and analysing relevant data and information, as well as developing a risk portfolio taking into account information coming from different sources. Among the identified risks: ineffective management of change, shortage of staff, cyberattacks, loss of knowledge and expertise, training programmes disruption, supply chain issues, disruptive passengers and capacity issues. To address this, we have just published last week a Safety Information Bulletin (or SIB) to raise awareness and call for mitigation of the risks identified so as to avoid large-scale, enduring disruptions to flight schedules. The bulletin provides precise and actionable recommendations to all stakeholders: authorities, air operators, ground handling service providers, ATM/ANS service providers, maintenance organisations, CAMO and ATO.

Two other points – on ATCO fatigue and AI

Finally for this run-through of EASA achievements, there are two other recent developments I would like to mention.

Recently, we launched a study on ATCO occupational fatigue. We will look at the assessment, prevention and management of the occupational fatigue risks, as well as related work environment and operational factors, of Air Traffic Controllers in the EU, in order to support future decision-making related to regulations. The project will be conducted in a scientific, neutral and objective manner, and so will provide a strong basis for the assessment of regulatory needs.

And in May, we published both an update of our roadmap on Artificial Intelligence, and the first public deliverable for the Machine Learning Application Approval (or MLEAP) research project. This report highlights a set of anticipated concepts for the evaluation and certification of AI-based systems supporting the EASA roadmap deliverables, and will help industry stakeholders in planning new strategies for deploying AI in their human and technical organisations.

Achievements in our relationship/cooperation with the US

Turning now to our bilateral relationship and cooperation with the US.

The easing of international travel after the pandemic has made it easier to meet in person again, with all the benefits that brings for close cooperation.

One key achievement that I want to mention, because it is dear to my heart since the first day I discussed this with my friend Ali Bahrami, who was at that time the associate administrator for aviation safety at the FAA, is the publication of the white paper on future connectivity for aviation, last November.

We have worked together in an excellent team spirit, also with Airbus and Boeing, to deliver a paper that outlines a jointly proposed vision for the future aviation connectivity landscape which is based on the combination of aviation specific solutions (VDL Mode 2 and SATCOM Performance Class B) – that will offer safety and performance – and commercial, broadband solutions. Together, these will allow for high capacity and efficiency at a manageable cost.

For the first time, we have a common vision from all four organisations in the task force, to establish modern air-ground

communications that will meet tomorrow's requirements. This is the first step toward achieving this, and a major one.

I want also to reassure you that the outcomes of the conference last year were followed up. In particular, we heard loud and clear the expectation that the FAA and EASA work more and better together on rules harmonization and this is happening, as I mentioned earlier.

Regarding the cornerstone of our cooperation, the EU-US aviation safety agreement (or BASA): I am glad to report that we have renewed in February our commitment to implement it to its fullest extent by signing a new roadmap, the Bilateral Enhancement Roadmap.

The new vision is to optimize the overall implementation of the agreement by enhancing not only the acceptance of certifying authority approvals and findings of compliance by the validating authority, but also in other areas where we see the need to effectively meet the challenges ahead.

In addition to continuing the application of the risk-based validation principles to ensure a commensurate certification resource expenditure during validation activities, while assuring a high degree of safety, this roadmap aims to expand to the full scope of the bilateral engagement, including for example global data sharing, safety management systems, collaboration in innovation, and cooperation in oversight activities.

Close, departure, 20 years of EASA

Before I close I want to touch on two milestones. As most of you will be aware, this is my 10th year at the Agency and, in accordance with EU convention, it is time for me to move on. This will therefore be my last EASA-FAA conference.

More importantly, EASA as an agency is now 20 years old. This may sound very young to those of you from the FAA – which is around 45 years older, I believe – but it is a significant milestone for us and a moment of coming of age for the European system.

We are proud that we have weathered many storms over those 20 years, and grown in stature as we did so. The EU aviation system emerged from the pandemic without having lowered its high safety record, which was a major test for aviation systems all over the world.

It is clear that this strong record has been built with the input and cooperation of many parties within Europe – at regional and State level and with industry – and that these relationships will form an important basis for the next 20 years as well.

On the international stage, the relationship with the FAA will remain one of the most important in the years to come. I hope that this conference will give you even more reassurance that we are committed to cooperate, and that we value our relationship.

Thank you.