European Union Aviation Safety Agency

FAQ n.142097

FAQs:

English Language Proficiency, Aerodromes (ADR), Regulations

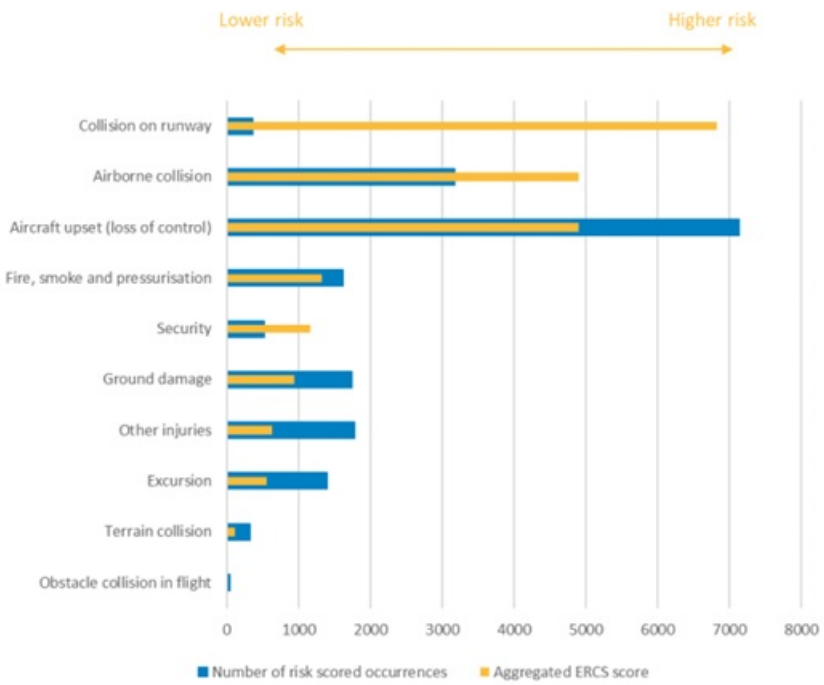
Question:

Why did the European Union decide to require (English) language proficiency? What are the safety issues?

Answer:

Runway incursions are one of the high-risk accident occurrence categories identified by the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO). Runway-safety-related accidents account for the majority of all accidents at global level. According to the EASA Annual Safety Review 2024 (see graph below), collision on the runway represents the higher-risk category for commercial air transport (CAT) and non-commercial operations with complex aeroplanes (NCC).

See Annual Safety Review 2024:



Appendix 2 Figure 1 KRAs by aggregated ERCS score and number of risk-scored occurrences involving CAT complex aeroplanes and NCC aeroplanes

EASA's Notice of Proposed Amendment NPA 2018-14, published on 17 December 2018, contains references to several occurrences and accidents where insufficient communications, misunderstandings or lack of understanding between the air traffic services (ATS), the aircraft taking off or landing, and the driver, contributed to the occurrence/accident. Examples of safety recommendations that were found to be relevant to the regulatory proposal in 2018 were included in NPA 2018-14.

In addition, the Global Action Plan for the Prevention of Runway Incursions (GAPPRI), endorsed by all major aviation industry stakeholders, recommends developing a 'phased plan for all communications in the English language'.

Based upon safety recommendations and feedback from Member States and stakeholders, EASA and the European Commission identified a need to enhance the situational awareness between pilots, air traffic controllers (ATCOs), and vehicle drivers when operating on the manoeuvring area, as a measure to prevent runway and taxiway incursions. Therefore, Commission Regulation (EU) No 139/2014 (the 'Aerodromes Regulation'), as updated through Regulation (EU) 2020/2148, requires that vehicle drivers intending to operate on the manoeuvring area must demonstrate language proficiency at least at an operational level (level 4) in the English language and any other language or languages used at the aerodrome for purposes of radio communication with the ATS unit at the aerodrome. The assessment criteria to assess the English language of an operational level are included in AMC1 ADR.OPS.B.029(b).

The Aerodromes Regulation allows Member States to derogate from the requirement to demonstrate English language proficiency, based on a safety assessment that can cover one or several aerodromes (for example low traffic, only national traffic, etc.). This derogation, which applies only to English language proficiency, is included in point (g) of ADR.OPS.B.029.

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