



# ECA

European Cockpit Association

# PEER SUPPORT PROGRAMMES

Addressing so much more than 4U 9525

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# The pilot profession:



# The pilot profession:

- **Requires a defined psychological (characterial?) profile:**
  - Independent thinker, usually strong character but still dedicated team players
  - Decision friendly
  - Mentally balanced & stable characters
  - Strong professional links between individual pilots due to shared values, lifestyles and experiences.
  - Highly skilled & trained (usually highly motivated)
- **However, just like others, pilots are not immune & vulnerable to many outside influences:**
  - Multiple job stresses (safety / managerial / economic)
  - Additional burdens: costs / new business & employment types / operating to the limits of legal provisions more and more.
  - “common” life stresses (financial, health, family ...)

# Why Peer Support ?



- Pilots usually approach assessments (medical / psych) with a solid portion of mistrust
- Pilots are much more open with their issues towards peers than to outsiders (shared values, lifestyles, experiences)
- If we want to avoid people with issues to be driven 'underground' but come forward to seek help, we need to:
  - Offer a safe zone where they can be open without fear of either retribution or jeopardising their livelihood
  - De-stigmatise mental health issues
  - Approach them with respect & gain their trust

# Why Peer Support ?

## AND IT WORKS:

HIMS (Human Factor Intervention & Motivation)  
From Inception 1975 to 2014:

- 5,000 pilots were identified, treated & returned to flying under close supervision. This is based on a US airline population of about 200.000 pilots.
- Most HIMS cases involve alcohol but not all.



# Why Peer Support ?

## AND IT WORKS:

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- cases involve alcohol but not all.

**The long term success rate  
in this PSP is 88-90%**



# Success factors for a Peer Support Programme

- Self-contained structure
- Full involvement of all relevant stakeholders including crew representation bodies
- Autonomous & independent
- Not directly accessible by outside stakeholders (regulator / management / media) – but their support is a must !



# The mentality challenge

## ➤ Need to involve ALL stakeholders:

- Pilots / crews
- Operators
- Pilot Associations
- Legislator/oversight/licensing Authority



## ➤ WE ALL need to take a leap of faith towards each other:

- Trust
- Respect
- Mutual understanding away from stakeholder “dogmas”
- Open & Just Culture
- Did I mention....

... **TRUST!!**

**For pilots, most often the crew rep. association is representative of their trust...**



# The Regulatory Challenge

- How to put the requirements of trust and respect in a legal text?
- How to make legislation effective if we require a 'mentality shift' for it to be successful?
- Legislation must not endanger current programmes, but help promote them



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# Peer Support & SMS

- PSP should become mandatory for each operator & be available in each EU country
- The operator needs to manage the risks of mental health / substance abuse
- PSP should be the default / standard tool to manage that risk. – **HOWEVER:**
- **The day-to-day running of the PSP must be independent from the operator's SMS and be hermetically closed ('Safe/Trust Zone')**



# Peer Support vs. alternatives

## Recurrent full Psychological Assessment



- Unreliable if not done correctly (high number of False positives)
- Inefficient (time required during recurrent for meaningful results)
- Low acceptance by crew (is it really solid science?)
- Undermines trust in the system
- Additional stressor (fear of unjust assessment, abuse, ...)

# Peer Support vs. alternatives

## Random Drug & Alcohol testing



- Potentially expensive
- Low acceptance by crew
- Quite ineffective (e.g.: CASA Australia)
- 56.595 random tests => 12 positives (CASA)
- Last 30 years:
  - 0,02% incidents / Accidents D&A related
  - **NONE IN PUBLIC AIR TRANSPORT !**

# Peer Support Programmes:



- Enable early identification of problem cases through the intervention of 'peers', i.e. colleagues / fellow-pilots
- Allow the pilots to be guided towards help, i.e. counseling and, if needed, treatment & rehabilitation
- Allow the airline to maintain crews if and after they successfully went through treatment, rather than losing staff and having to hire & train new ones

# Peer Support Programmes:

- Enable early identification of

Its all about  
**PREVENTION & FINDING  
SOLUTIONS !**

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# What's Needed to achieve this

- A REAL & effective solution to detect & prevent substance abuse & mental issues, is accepted by the crews, helps to mitigate the risks & supports continued medical fitness
- Legislation that mandates PSP, strengthens existing programs & supports current good practices
- Full Involvement of all relevant stakeholders, incl. regulatory bodies to positively support Peer Support
- **Acceptance of Pilot Representation Bodies as Key players & enablers of Peer Support.**



# Thank you!



Peer  
Support

[www.eurocockpit.be](http://www.eurocockpit.be)