



PRESS RELEASE

Brussels, 13 March, 2008

ECA Supports BA Pilots' Fight for Job Security and Career Opportunities with the new BA OpenSkies Airline

British Airways (BA) Pilots have overwhelmingly voted (86%) in favour of strike action, with a massive 90% taking part in the ballot. ECA supports these professionals in protecting their job security.

The threat of disruption has arisen because BA plans to start a new service flying passengers from mainland European capitals to the USA. The service, called OpenSkies, is using BA money, will use BA planes with BA support and is being overseen by senior BA managers. However BA is refusing to use BA pilots.

Despite the willingness of the British Airline Pilots' Association's (BALPA) to accept the cost base proposed by BA for OpenSkies, the company has not been prepared to provide the employment security and career development opportunities which are at the heart of the dispute.

British Airways is now claiming that BA pilots are not legally allowed to defend their job security concerns through a strike because of European legislation. ECA supports BALPA's view that British Airways should be at the negotiating table and not using European legislation – initially designed to ensure free competition between companies - to restrict the freedoms of Trade Unions in industrial disputes.

BA Pilots are meeting to march on the BA Headquarters this Saturday to demonstrate their strength of feeling to BA Management. ECA has coordinated a response from Professional Pilot Unions and Associations all over Europe in support of the BA pilots' dispute.

"Like BALPA, ECA supports BA taking advantage of the great opportunities provided by the European Union's single aviation market. At the same time we are very concerned that BA Management seeks to deny its employees the right to take action when their jobs and working conditions are under threat. We will support BALPA in their dispute and will certainly resist attempts to abuse EU rules to undermine trade union rights in the UK, or anywhere else in Europe" said Philip von Schöppenthau, Secretary General of ECA.

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