



## PRESS RELEASE

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### **Spanair Accident Investigation**

### **European Pilots Alarmed about Continuous Leaking of Confidential Information – EU Action Needed !**

**The European Cockpit Association (ECA), representing over 38.000 pilots from 34 European countries, shares the Spanish Pilot Association's (SEPLA) concerns about the continuous – and apparently coordinated – leaking of sensitive safety information to the media. Such leaking does not only violate international and European standards for Accident Investigations, but also compromises the independence and integrity of the Spanair investigation. ECA and SEPLA call upon the Spanish and EU Authorities to ensure that such leaking stops, that the people responsible are identified, and that measures are taken to prevent this from happening in future investigations.**

ECA representatives have expressed their concerns to the EU bodies about the apparent strategic leaking of confidential information and its use by the Spanish Authorities. The need to comply with the provisions of Annex 13 of ICAO (setting standards e.g. about the confidentiality and independence of accident investigations) is an absolute must for any State that claims to follow international requirements.

The protection of confidential safety information must be the top priority of any Authority which is serious about aviation safety. National Authorities must adhere to concepts like "just culture" (ensuring that individuals can freely report and testify without having to fear becoming the target of the press or prosecutors keen to find a culprit rather than to learn from errors in order to prevent future accidents) and create a framework in which the required "Safety Management Systems" (based on the supply of information by persons involved in the operations) can properly function. Leaking confidential safety information will inevitably undermine the safety target of any such investigation.

To prevent such practices, the EU Institutions have to play an important role. The Spanair case is the first time that the European Aviation Safety Agency (EASA) has been involved in an accident investigation. In its role as an observer to the investigation, EASA's expert must insist that international and EU regulations are complied with.

ECA supports EU Transport Commissioner Tajani, who promised last week (at the European Parliament's Transport Committee) to speed up the Revision of the EU Accident Investigation and Occurrence Reporting Directives. The Spanair experience demonstrates how urgent this revision is. It must result in better legal guarantees that the source of safety information is protected and used exclusively for the purpose of improving aviation safety. Without such protection, safety reports from professionals involved in air operations risk drying up, with detrimental consequences for Europe's aviation safety.

For further information, please contact:

Philip von Schöppenthau, ECA Secretary General, Tel: +32-2-705.32.93 or visit:

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