ECA
Piloting Safety

"Pay to Fly" (P2F) in Pilots' Training
– ECA Position –

The European Cockpit Association (ECA) is concerned by the growing trend among airlines to outsource pilots' initial training and to charge exorbitant fees for the in-house training courses they provide. ECA firmly rejects "Pay to Fly" schemes and considers that a pilot in line training should not be forced to pay for performing commercial operations on revenue-earning flights.

Before flying on a certain type of aircraft (e.g. B737), pilots need to obtain a specific qualification, called a type-rating, in addition to the pilot license. Type-rating training includes 3 major steps: the ground course, the simulator sessions and the 'line-training'. While acknowledging that during the first two phases the trainee pilot is not yet 'productive', these phases represent an inescapable investment companies would have to make in order to qualify pilots on their own aircraft types. This investment is being progressively transferred to individual pilots and away from airlines, representing the first steps in a pay to fly model.

During line training the pilot operates as a regular pilot together with a line training captain on a normal revenue-earning flight. He/she is now a fully productive crew member. When the airline demands the pilot to pay for this line-training (up to € 50.000)[1] instead of earning a salary this is referred to as "Pay to Fly" (P2F)[2] or "self sponsored line training".

Flight Safety

P2F schemes may negatively impact flight safety, by creating 'perverse' incentives for the individual pilot to fly at any cost (even if not physically or mentally fit), and for an airline to use 'cheap' P2F pilots to lower its costs. Individual pilots may be tempted to perform a flight even if they are ill or fatigued, in order not to compromise their training or fall out of favour with their employer. Equally, a pilot paying to work may prioritise the commercial considerations of the employer, when accepting or challenging operational decisions made by the Commander (i.e. decisions where safety considerations need to be balanced against the financial consequences for the airline).

Exploitation

In order to fulfil the minimum requirements to be recruited by an airline, pilots need a substantial number of flying hours certified on their log book. An increasing number of training schools and airlines sell these flight hours through P2F contracts. The cost of these hours is deducted from the pilot's salary, and often it equals or even exceeds the

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1 In addition to the initial pilot license cost of € 70.000 - € 130.000.
2 For a definition of P2F schemes, see at the end of this paper.

salary (as usually only a very low basic salary is paid, mainly for insurance reasons, or even no salary at all). This leads to the paradox that on certain flights the pilot may be paying by far the highest fare for his/her seat. This means that mostly young, recently graduated pilots are being financially exploited.

ECA's opinion is that pilots should not bear the cost of their type-rating training in a disproportionate manner. The company should, as a general rule, pay for the ground training, simulator sessions and line training.

What should be the standard

A pilot should <u>not</u> be required to pay for the initial type-rating or for the qualification for a different type of aircraft (type-rating course). Training a pilot for a new aircraft type is an investment for the airline to allow for an optimal use of the different types in its fleet. Therefore it is the airline that should bear entirely the related costs.

What's acceptable

An airline providing the training wants to get a 'return on investment' by asking the pilot to agree on staying with the company for a number of years by means of a reasonable and fair 'bond'.

Such bonding agreements foresee that the employee repays the cost of the training if he/she leaves the company before a certain reasonable time period.

Any bond must be justified and be proportionate to the pilot's salary and productivity, and leave a reasonable income, proportionate to his/her skills.

What's unacceptable

The employee shall <u>never</u> pay for the required line training, as the pilot is already productive when operating as a regular pilot on revenue-earning flights.

It is <u>not</u> acceptable that a pilot has to pay for the flying hours he/she performs on line training – thereby replacing a fully qualified pilot in the cockpit. ECA also opposes the practice whereby training organisations and/or airlines propose pilots to 'buy' packages of extra hours to increase their experience on a specific type of aircraft.

Pilots who are offered a conversion of aircraft within their company should <u>not</u> have to pay the cost of the related type rating training as it increases the airlines' flexibility.

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<u>Pay to Fly (P2F) definition</u>:

'Pay to fly' schemes are an aviation industry practice whereby a professional pilot, whether in training or not, operates an aircraft in commercial service, i.e. on a regular revenue-earning flight – as any other qualified crewmember – but instead of receiving a salary he/she pays for the cost of gaining flight experience. Such schemes also extend to pilots who do not have much flying experience (usually under 1500h) and want to gain experience on a specific aircraft type to increase their employability.

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