

Ryanair pilots in Spain file a lawsuit against the company before the Audiencia Nacional (Spanish National High Court)

- SEPLA sues the Irish company to regularize the pilots' contracts in Spain and to make them comply with Spanish labour law.

The Spanish Airline Pilots' Union, SEPLA, has filed a lawsuit against Ryanair before the Audiencia Nacional alleging irregularities in the contracts of pilots based in Spain. After a year of negotiations, Ryanair's refusal to recognise SEPLA and to apply the Spanish labour legislation to its pilots operating in Spain forces the union to use the judicial route to achieve this objective.

With this lawsuit, SEPLA expects that all Ryanair pilots in Spain will be subject to the labour legislation of our country. *"The only thing we want is for our pilots to have the same rights and obligations as those established by Spanish regulations, as well as the negotiation of a statutory collective bargaining agreement as other competing airlines in the same sector"*. A complicated lawsuit but with a basic objective: to obtain labour rights that do not imply *"legal uncertainty"* in cases such as the death of a relative, the birth of a child, sick leave, or base transfers and the conciliation of family life with respect to matters such as legal guardianship for the care of minors.

The recognition of trade unions and the regularisation of the situation of pilots are not incompatible with efficient management in a low-cost company. We have examples such as Norwegian or easyjet, companies that hire their pilots based in Spain under the legislation of the country. *"The other competing companies, which are both viable and successful, have their workers perfectly regularized while Ryanair is playing to the limit of legality by exercising unfair competition in relation to its competitors. In addition, Ryanair is threatening with base transfers and dismissals to its workers in Ireland, as well as to the collective of Cabin Crew members in Spain, for exercising fundamental rights"-they have stated from the Company Council.*

A thwarted negotiation

The company tried to resolve the crisis, which has been going on for a year, by means of a salary increase for its pilots, but this increase implied the renunciation of free trade union representation. The system of representation, which the company has been imposing for years in Spain, consists of the unilateral designation by the company of a representative of the pilots in each of the Ryanair bases in Spain. That is to say, it is a pilot chosen by the company who negotiates the conditions of his colleagues. SEPLA considers that this formula is a violation of the freedom of association, since the negotiator has not been elected by the workers he or she supposedly represents. Therefore, SEPLA refused to accept this system as a condition for the salary increase of its pilots. *"We are not asking for higher wages or less work, but for humane treatment and an understanding that people are an important asset in the company. It seems that the airline has forgotten about the working relationship with its workers."*

The conflict spreads to other groups and Europe

In addition to the events we are experiencing in our country, the airline is also facing conflicts with the pilot unions in the other European countries where Ryanair has its pilots based. Thus, the pilot strikes in Italy, Portugal and Ireland are now joined by Belgium, Sweden and the Netherlands, and other countries are expected to announce their industrial actions.

In Spain, Ryanair's flight attendants have also carried out strikes to demand recognition of Spanish labour regulations. SEPLA has shown its solidarity and support for these actions, both of the Flight Attendants and of the European pilots, given that the motives they allege coincide with our demands in the Audiencia Nacional.