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The Rt Hon Grant Shapps MP
Secretary of State for Transport
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By email: transportsecretary@dft.gov.uk

21 July 2021

Dear Mr Shapps

Resolution of UK & EU commercial pilot licences inequality

Following the UK's exit from the EU and withdrawal from EASA, UK pilot licences have been seriously degraded in value and utility and are acting as blocker on securing new employment. I am writing today on behalf of the 3,500 UK pilots who have signed a letter to you asking for the UK to re-secure the swift and cost-free mutual recognition of European pilot licences.

As you are already aware, UK-issued Part-FCL licence holders are not valid to operate EU registered aircraft. This includes aircraft based at UK airports that support the UK economy. Licence validation from an EASA Competent Authority can be pursued, but this limits employment opportunities and is both unduly costly and time consuming.

We wrote to you about this on 10 May and know that you are aware of these issues and welcomed your reply on 4 June. Now, we need your help in raising this within Government and leading on discussions to secure further annexes to the Trade and Cooperation Agreement, along similar lines to the airworthiness and environment certification annex already agreed.

BALPA and the signatories of the letter now urge work to begin immediately towards agreeing a long-term mutual recognition of pilot licences, and we stand ready to engage with and support Government on this to swiftly regain control of our licences.

This inequality is a real blocker for those who have been made redundant to regaining their high-skilled jobs and we know this is not a position you wish to maintain. The UK pilot community stand alongside you in driving this challenge forward to the outcome the whole aviation industry wants.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Brian Strutton". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long, sweeping underline.

Brian Strutton
BALPA Acting General Secretary

cc: Lord Balfe, BALPA Honorary President
Lord Whitty, BALPA Honorary Vice-President



An open letter from BALPA

We the undersigned pilots demand that the UK Department for Transport and Civil Aviation Authority undertake urgent action to resolve the unfairness and imbalance in the arrangements for pilots' licences in the EU-UK Trade and Cooperation Agreement.

The effect of this one-sided agreement is, at this moment, having real-life impacts on pilots who are struggling to find employment in the current disastrous situation affecting the airline industry.

Our ability to operate aircraft registered with European Common Aviation Area (ECAA) nations, without additional administrative, medical, training and cost burdens, has been lost.

While the converse situation has been solved by the UK's recognition of EU licences for up to two years and the simplified process introduced from 1st April 2021 for acquiring a UK licence, there is no such reciprocal arrangements with the EU, yet as of 31st December 2020 holders of valid UK-issued licences were trained, licenced and valid to operate to exactly the same requirements as their EU counterparts.

Real life examples of how UK licenced pilots are tangibly being disadvantaged by this licensing imbalance include:

- A pilot made redundant because of the Covid-induced failure of Norwegian, subsequently being unable to take a job ferrying aircraft owing to the requirement for an EASA licence due to the predominance of EU-registered aircraft to be ferried.
- A pilot refused the opportunity to apply for a UK-based flying job with Ryanair owing to the prerequisite for an EASA licence.
- A Type-rated examiner (TRE) no longer able fulfil their contract with Wizz Air to examine EASA-licensed pilots in Budapest owing to their UK examiner's certificate ceasing to be recognised.

We join BALPA's demands that:

1. Work towards a formal agreement for the long-term mutual recognition of licences must begin immediately.
2. Arrangements are made with the European Commission for an urgent short-term reciprocal arrangement for the validation of UK-issued licences without the need for extensive checks and expensive unnecessary processes in the same way that the UK CAA provides for EU licence holders.

Our industry and the people who power it are struggling through the appalling downturn we are facing. This is one additional burden we don't need and should be urgently resolved. We demand action.

Signed by 3,544 UK pilots, including redundant and pilots in training