



Brussels, 07.02.2025

# Position Paper

## Ensuring Fair Competition and High Social Standards for European Cabin Crew

The European Cabin Crew Association (EurECCA) represents the voice of tens of thousands of European cabin crew members, advocating for fair competition, equitable working conditions, and high social standards in the aviation sector. As the Single Market Strategy progresses into 2025, it is essential to address the increasing challenges posed by unfair competition and fragmented labour laws within the European aviation industry. This position paper outlines EurECCA's concerns and recommendations to foster a competitive and a socially just aviation market.

### Challenges in the European Aviation Sector

- 1. Fragmented Regulatory Framework:** The absence of harmonized social and labour mobility legislation in aviation across EU Member States creates significant disparities. National regulations vary widely, and enforcement remains inconsistent, undermining the principles of the Single Market.
- 2. Circumvention of Labour and Social Laws:** New business models and operational strategies employed by some airlines exploiting gaps in the current regulatory framework. Examples include:
  - Establishment of fake or fictitious home bases,
  - Misuse of social security certificates,
  - The use of interoperability,
  - Adoption of bogus self-employment practices,
  - Exploitation of the posting of workers framework,
  - Transnational operations with minimal oversight of social law compliance,
  - Increase of the use of wet leasing as a business model.
- 3. Insufficient Enforcement Mechanisms:** National authorities often lack the capacity, resources, or coordination to effectively enforce EU labour mobility rules. This lack of enforcement enables airlines to circumvent stricter national legislation, creating a “race to the bottom” in labour standards.

### Social and Economic Impacts of Unfair Competition and the Consequences for European Cabin Crew:

- 1. Social Impacts:**
  - Increased job insecurity and reliance on precarious employment contracts,
  - Reduced access to social protections, including healthcare, pensions, and unemployment benefits,
  - Higher levels of stress and mental health challenges among cabin crew,
  - Increased reliance on atypical forms of employment such as self-employment, temporary contracts and wet leasing.
- 2. Economic Impacts:**
  - Distortion of competition, leading to market imbalances and reduced profitability for fair operators with the consequences to adopt similar exploitative practices to remain competitive,
  - Erosion of consumer confidence due to declining service quality,
  - Potential “brain drain” as skilled workers leave the sector for more stable industries.



### 3. Long-Term Consequences:

- Decline in safety standards due to reduced investment in training and staff well-being,
- Weakening of the European aviation industry's global competitiveness,
- Deterioration of working conditions across the sector, setting a negative precedent for other industries.

### EurECCA's Recommendations

1. **Harmonize Social and Labour Legislation:** The EU must establish a unified legal framework for labour mobility in aviation. This includes revising and strengthening Regulation (EC) No 1008/2008 to address social issues comprehensively.
2. **Strengthen Enforcement Mechanisms:** Member States must be equipped with the resources and training necessary to enforce labour mobility rules effectively. Enhanced coordination among national authorities is essential to close regulatory loopholes with a clear mandate to ELA, the European Labour Authority, concerning aviation sector.
3. **Introduce Sanctions for Non-Compliance:** The EU should implement robust sanctions against airlines and operators that exploit gaps in labour and social laws. This will ensure accountability and deter unfair practices.
4. **Support Social Dialogue:** EurECCA calls for stronger engagement between employers, unions, and policymakers to develop sustainable solutions that prioritize fair competition and social justice in the aviation sector.

**Conclusion** EurECCA firmly believes that the future of European aviation depends on fair competition and high social standards. Addressing the challenges outlined in this paper is not only vital for cabin crew but also for the long-term sustainability of the aviation sector. Harmonized regulations, effective enforcement, and social dialogue are the cornerstones of a socially just and competitive Single Market.

EurECCA stands ready to collaborate with EU institutions, Member States, and industry stakeholders to ensure a fair and competitive future for European aviation.

**EurECCA represents, protects and develops the rights and needs of all cabin crew all over Europe.**

### FLYING TOGETHER – PROTECTING EACH OTHER

About EurECCA: established in Brussels in 2014, the European Cabin Crew Association, EurECCA, represents, protects and develops the rights and needs of cabin crew all over Europe. It is composed of cabin crew unions from European Union Member States as well as accession and bordering states and represents some 23,000 cabin crew accounting for 60% of all organized cabin crew in Europe. EurECCA has no political connections. EurECCA's work is around Cabin Crew working conditions, wages, social protection and health and safety at work.