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Position Paper

Volotea's ruling: a historic victory for European aircrews

EurECCA, the largest independent European Cabin Crew Association, welcomes the ruling of the French Supreme Court (Cour de Cassation), which rejected Volotea's appeal against its conviction for systematically violating working time (duty time) rules for aircrews based in France.

Executive summary

On 16 September 2025, the [French Supreme Court \(Cour de Cassation, Criminal Chamber\)](#) delivered [a landmark judgment](#) in the case against Volotea, confirming the Rennes Court of Appeal's condemnation of the airline for systematic breaches of working time limits imposed on cabin crew. By rejecting Volotea's appeal, the Court has not only reaffirmed the fundamental right of aircrews based in France to regulated working hours but has also sent a strong signal across Europe: **airlines cannot bypass national labour protections in the name of commercial competitiveness.**

For EurECCA, this decision represents a **decisive victory for all European aircrews**. It underscores the principle that cabin crew are not exempt from basic labour rights, and that safeguarding their working conditions is essential for both **health and safety** in aviation and for the **sustainability of the sector**.

The case against Volotea

In February 2024, the Rennes Court of Appeal found Volotea and one of its managers guilty of having consistently exceeded French legal working time limits for their cabin crew.

- The airline was condemned to **165 fines of €1,500 each**.
- The manager received **165 fines of €400 each**.

The Court established that these practices represented **systematic violations of French labour law**.

Volotea challenged the ruling, but the French Supreme Court (Cour de Cassation, Criminal Chamber) rejected its appeal in September 2025, confirming that the rules governing working time for aircrews remain fully binding under French law, regardless of procedural changes in their legislative framework.



Why this judgment matters?

This case resonates far beyond France. It addresses a central issue in European aviation: the persistent attempts by some airlines to **erode or bypass labour standards and requirements** through legal loopholes, cross-border practices, or by exploiting regulatory complexity.

1. Protection of Aircrew rights

The ruling confirms that **cabin crew must benefit from legal safeguards** on working time as other categories of workers. Fatigue is not merely a health issue but also a **safety-critical concern** in aviation.

2. Accountability of airlines

By upholding criminal sanctions, the Court has reinforced the principle that **employers cannot outsource responsibility**. The liability rests with the airline and its leadership, not with individual crew members forced to work beyond legal limits.

3. A European signal

This judgment comes at a crucial time for European aviation, where **social dumping practices** are undermining fair competition and labour rights. By affirming national jurisdiction and protections, the French Court contributes to building a **legal shield for aircrews across Europe**.

The European dimension

EurECCA has consistently denounced the growth of unfair employment practices in aviation, including the rise of **atypical forms of employment** (bogus self-employment, pay-to-fly schemes, excessive wet leasing, temporary agencies).

The Volotea case is emblematic of a wider European challenge:

- Airlines exploiting **fragmented national regulations** to cut costs at the expense of crew rights.
- A lack of **effective enforcement mechanisms** at EU level to ensure compliance with working time directives.
- Increasing risks to **health, safety, and social standards** when airlines put commercial interests ahead of crew welfare.

This ruling demonstrates that **national courts can and must act** to protect aircrews. Yet, it also highlights the urgent need for **harmonised European enforcement** to prevent forum shopping and regulatory avoidance.



EurECCA's call to action

The French Supreme Court's judgment is a victory, but it cannot remain an isolated case. EurECCA calls on:

1. **European institutions**

- To strengthen the **EU Working Time Directive** for aircrew (Council Directive 2000/79/EC) and ensure consistent application across Member States.
- To recognise **aircraft as a workplace**, thereby aligning cabin crew protections with broader occupational health and safety rules.

2. **National governments and regulators**

- To rigorously enforce labour law against airlines engaging in abusive practices.
- To ensure that cabin crew have effective **access to justice** without fear of retaliation.

3. **Airlines**

- To respect not only the letter but the spirit of labour protections.
- To acknowledge that **fair working conditions are integral to flight safety**, passenger trust, and long-term sustainability.

The French Supreme Court's rejection of Volotea's appeal marks a **historic legal victory for cabin crew** and a significant step forward in the fight against social dumping in aviation. It confirms that cabin crew rights are not optional, and that airlines that disregard them will be held accountable.

This is not just a legal case. It is a milestone – a resounding victory for Europe's aircrews.

EurECCA will continue to champion the cause of cabin crew across Europe, ensuring that this victory serves as a foundation for stronger, more harmonised protections for all European cabin crew.

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.

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