

Air safety: third-country aircrafts using Community airports, SAFA programme

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In accordance with the requirements of Directive 2004/36/EC, the Commission presents its fifth annual report on the EU Safety Assessment of Foreign Aircraft (SAFA) programme. This programme requires participating States to conduct ramp inspections on third country aircraft to verify compliance of aircraft, crew and operations with international safety requirements. The report covers the period 1 January to 31 December 2010.

Progress of the programme during 2010: a new development during 2010 was the **agreement for the introduction (as of 2011) of a number of inspection points** to be reached on a voluntary basis by each SAFA state. These national inspection points are calculated taking into account the diversity and volume of foreign traffic. Inspections are also valued differently pursuant to the compliance of various criteria which are directly linked to the enhancement of safety (prioritised inspection, distance from the head office, time of the inspection).

A number of initiatives started in 2007 also continued in 2010. These are the preparation by EASA of a database quality review of the reports of the participating States. Conducted on a four-monthly basis this EASA analysis attempts to identify as early as possible potentially negative safety concerns and trends in order that they may be addressed in a timely manner before becoming a threat to international aviation safety. During 2010, the Commission continued to use the conclusions of these reports to prepare its decisions on the inclusion of air carriers in the European safety list under Regulation (EC) No 2111/2005.

In addition, during the year 2010 and pursuant to the request of the Commission, EASA continued its negotiations with various aviation authorities of countries around the world with the view of enlarging the participation in the EU SAFA system.

Given the collective nature of the EU SAFA Programme, it is therefore extremely important that all SAFA inspections are done in a standardised manner in all SAFA Participating States. In 2010 EASA has pursued its Standardisation Programme in line with Commission Regulation (EC) No 736/2006. In particular, 24 audits were performed in: Albania, Austria, Belgium, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Cyprus, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, FYROM, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Norway, Poland, Romania, Serbia, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Turkey, Ukraine and the United Kingdom.

Lastly, as tasked under Commission Directive 2008/49/EC6, EASA continued with the review of the second set of detailed Guidance Material on Ramp Inspection Procedures which were published in 2009.

Prioritisation of inspections: Commission Regulation (EC) No 351/20087 introduces the concept of prioritisation of SAFA inspection from a pan-European perspective. Participating States are required to prioritise a portion of their ramp inspections on certain operators. During 2010, out of a total 11,703 SAFA inspections, 2,215 (18.9%) were conducted on operators indicated in the prioritisation list.

Inspections: out of 11,703 inspections, 9,798 (83.4%) were performed by EU Member States 48.8% (5,713) were performed on operators licensed in third countries while the remainder 51.2% (5,990) were conducted on EU operators. These figures highlight in particular the wide coverage of the EU SAFA programme and its non-discriminatory application on EU and non-EU operators.

Inspection findings: the average findings/inspection ratio increased by 13% in 2010. This increase appears to be a direct consequence of the legislative instruments adopted in 2008 (namely the Commission Regulation 351/2008/EC on the prioritisation of ramp inspections and Commission Directive 2008/49/EC introducing more detailed procedural elements), the publication by EASA of a very comprehensive Guidance Material and its application by the participating states as well as the launching by EASA of a SAFA Standardisation programme. All these measures have contributed to better inspections being carried out in the 42 SAFA Participating States.

The report also shows that although the average number of findings (per inspection) increased in 2010, the five-year trend is decreasing for all geographic regions. It notes that:

- operators from States in the EU, ECAC and Oceania have fewer findings per inspection than average.
- although in 2009 the average for African operators showed the greatest improvement this trend was reversed in 2010 when figures show the greatest increase for the average ratio of African operators.

Action taken pursuant to ramp inspections: the report shows that the following actions were taken:

- information to the authority & the operator: 4,108
- restriction on aircraft operation: 120
- corrective actions before flight authorisation: 1,922
- 12 aircraft were grounded, and there were no immediate operating bans, not including bans /operational restrictions imposed by the EC pursuant to Regulation (EC) No 2111/2005 EC.

The report also shows the **wide coverage of the EU SAFA programme and its non- discriminatory application on EU and non-EU operators**. As a result of these improvements, the programme has become a better tool to identify potential negative safety trends worldwide, contributing as well as in real-time to the safe operation of the inspected aircraft.

The results of EASA regular analysis on the reports showing serious safety deficiencies or persistent failure by the carrier to address deficiencies identified by ramp inspections performed under the SAFA programme continued to be used by the Commission for the preparation during 2010 of the Community list of air carriers subject to an operating ban within the Community as provided for under Regulation (EC) No 2111/2005.