

Mental health & Support programmes



**Second Aviation Medical Examiner
Refresher Workshop - ICAO APAC**

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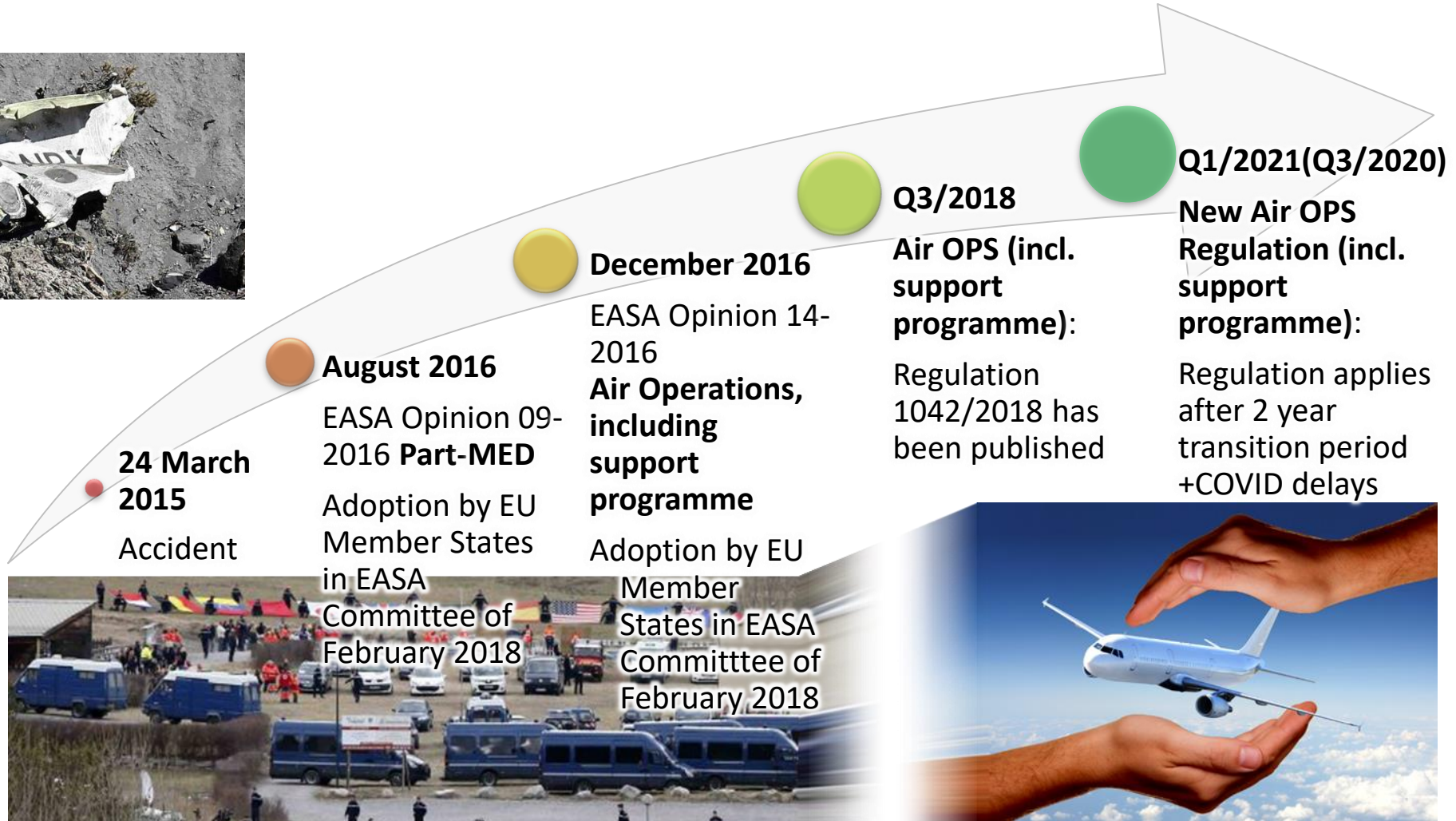
Presentation Overview

Support programmes

Mental health research activities

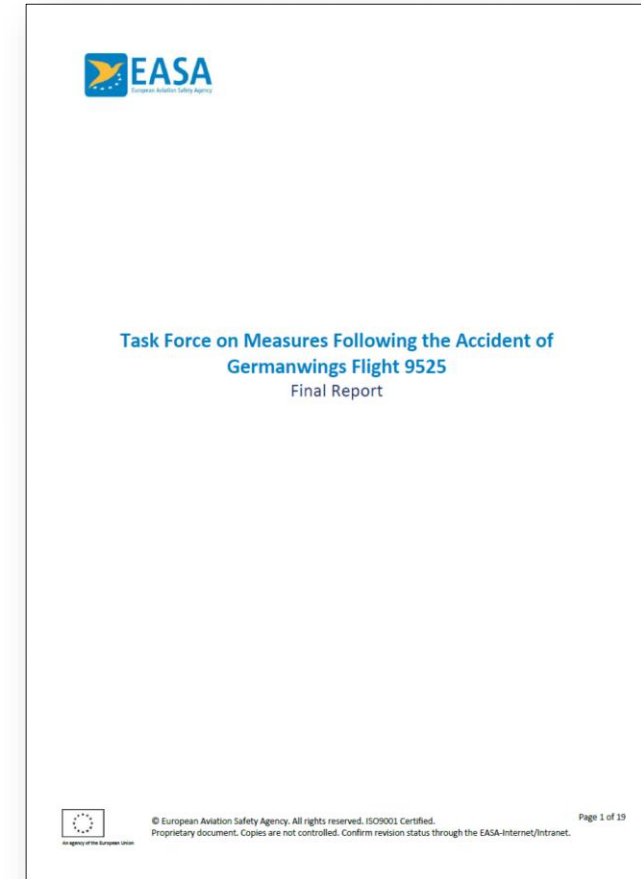
Support programmes

Timeline



GW Task Force recommendations

1. Maintaining the principle of “2-persons in the cockpit at all time”
2. Mandatory **psychological evaluation of commercial pilots before entering service** and strengthening of the psychological part of the pilots’ recurrent medical assessment
3. Introduction of **drugs and alcohol testing** for aircrew
4. Strengthening of the **AME oversight and creation of networks for peer support**
5. National regulations ensuring an appropriate **balance between patient confidentiality and the protection of public safety**. Creation of a **European aeromedical data repository** to facilitate the sharing of information between Member States
6. Implementation of **pilot support reporting systems** within the airlines and strengthening of



Regulatory challenge



EU airlines to ensure access to a **support programme** for all pilots

- How to create an **environment** that encourages and is **supportive of voluntary self-reporting**?
- How to include **trust** and **respect** into **legal text**?
- How to reflect **cultural** and **language differences**?
- How to draft **performance-based rules** applying to **existing & new support programmes**.
- **Implementation support for stakeholders.**



New high level Implementing rule (IR): CAT.GEN.MPA.215

- (a) The operator shall **enable, facilitate and ensure access** to a **proactive and non-punitive support programme** that will **assist and support flight crew** in **recognising, coping with, and overcoming** any problem which might negatively affect their ability to safely exercise the privileges of their licence. Such access shall be made **available to all flight crew**.
- (b) Without prejudice to applicable national legislation on the protection of individuals with regard to the processing of personal data and on the free movement of such data, the protection of the **confidentiality of data** shall be a precondition for an effective support programme as it encourages the use of such a programme and ensures its integrity.

Acceptable Means of Compliance (AMCs) on functioning of the support programme:

- EASA issued 4 AMCs addressing the following points:
 - **Education & training** and professional assistance
 - Enable **self-declaration** & relief from duty
 - **Confidentiality** and protection of data & link to airline SMS
 - Essential elements of a support programme
 - Address risks relating to fear of **loss of licence** (→ BEA report recommendation)

GM on functioning of support programme

- Cooperation between management, peers and representative organisations = **multi-stakeholder platform**
- Main **training elements**
- How to **facilitate trust**
- Involvement of trained **mental health professionals**
- Content of training
- Possibility to sub-contract running of the programme to a third party
- Possibility to **extend** the support programs to other **safety-sensitive categories personnel**, e.g. cabin crew or maintenance

Impact of COVID-19

- Regulation 1048/2018 implementation date delayed by 6 months to February 2021
- Isolation required adaptation – stress factor for pilots and ATCOs
- Return to OPS – required adaptation
 - Additional stress factor
 - Building resilience to operational stressors
 - CRM
- Higher incidence of mental health illness in general population
 - What about aviation personnel???



Implementation

- ➔ Support Programmes Regulation 1048/2018:
 - ➔ Use Regulation as **starting point** to develop tailored support programme.
 - ➔ Consider access to **peer support** as **essential element of risk mitigation strategy**.
 - ➔ Feed data into the **continuous improvement** cycle and SMS in general
 - ➔ Possibility to **extend** concept **to other personnel**.



Reasons for not seeking help

- ✈ Failure to recognize the crisis
- ✈ Vulnerability
- ✈ Mistrust
- ✈ Fear of repercussions
- ✈ Consequences for medical certification
- ✈ Stigmatization — only mentioning mental health illness in connection to PSP could create a fear of stigmatisation

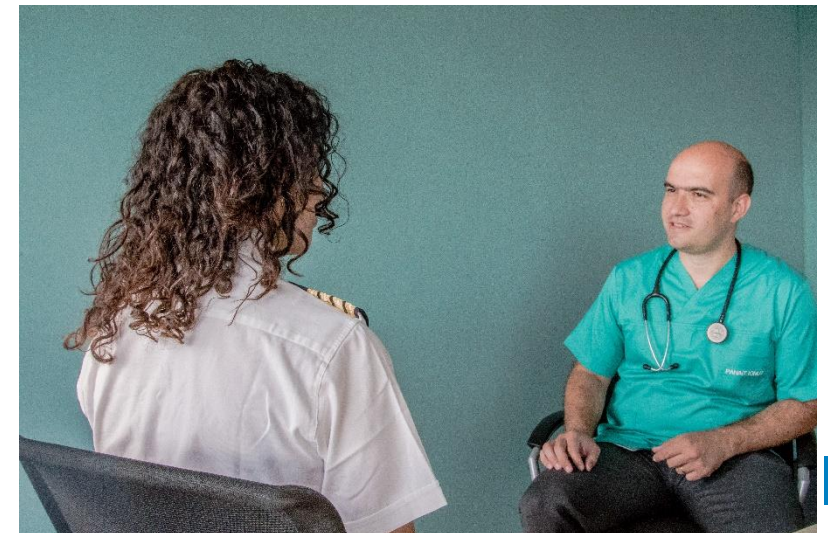
Benefits of PSPs – prevention

- ➔ Helping the pilot to define their issue(s) – often wellbeing and mental health issues don't come 'alone'
- ➔ Helping the pilot come to a solution or solutions through conversation with peer(s)
- ➔ PSPs should aim to manage most/all stressors:
 - ➔ CISM (critical incident stress management)
 - ➔ Professional standards
 - ➔ Pilot training assistance
 - ➔ Psychoactive substance use/misuse
 - ➔ Aero-medical issues
 - ➔ Pilot assistance network
 - ➔ Management of private/family affairs
 - ➔ Working conditions/agreements or changes in them
 - ➔ Own overall wellbeing/recovery



Benefits of PSPs - therapy

- ➔ **Referring** crew members towards appropriate pathways **to help** – AME/Medical assessor of the CAA/ Specialist
- ➔ Provide **objective reports** that the crew members could use in their interaction with the medical professionals or to demonstrate compliance with therapy requirements
- ➔ PSPs as **part of the therapy** and **monitoring** of established conditions
- ➔ **Advice** regarding the steps needed to regain a valid licence or medical certification



EASA expectations

- ✈ **Multi-stakeholder approach**= all parties are involved
- ✈ Linked to Airline **SMS** via anonymised data
- ✈ Appropriate **expertise & training** of personnel involved
- ✈ Maintain **confidentiality**
- ✈ Cultivate **trust** and **just culture**
- ✈ Facilitate exchange of **best practice**
- ✈ Promote early **specialised intervention** in the interest of **flight safety**

Potential risks - examples

- ✈ Improper implementation
 - ✈ Box checking exercise
 - ✈ Insufficient peer training
 - ✈ Breach of confidentiality
- ✈ Unreliable providers – business first – Av Safety low priority
- ✈ Abuse
 - ✈ Umbrella for unfit

Links to European Regulation on Support Programmes

- [EASA website news: EASA welcomes new rules on mental fitness of air crew](#)
- [Commission Regulation 2018/1042](#)
- [EASA Decision 2018/012/R](#) (AMC & Guidance Material)

- [EASA Air Operations Regulation](#) & [Easy Access Air OPS Rules](#)
 - Annex IV Part CAT (Commercial Air Transport)
 - Implementing Rule CAT.GEN.MPA.215 Support Programme
 - AMC 1-4 CAT.GEN.MPA.215
 - GM 1-8 CAT.GEN.MPA.215

Mental health research activities

Research - ongoing

- EASA is a key part of the European Union's strategy to establish and maintain a high uniform level of safety in civil aviation at European level.
- A priority list of research topics in the fields of safety, security, environment and **health** has been proposed, which will serve to update the EASA research programme.
- Participation in this updating procedure is by means of a **tendering procedure** which is initiating.
- Financed under European research funds delegated to EASA as the researched actions to be listed in the EPAS

Research - ongoing

- Mental health
- Pilot and ACTOs aeromedical fitness research
 - Cardiovascular
 - Insulin treated diabetes mellitus



4th European Conference in Aerospace Medicine



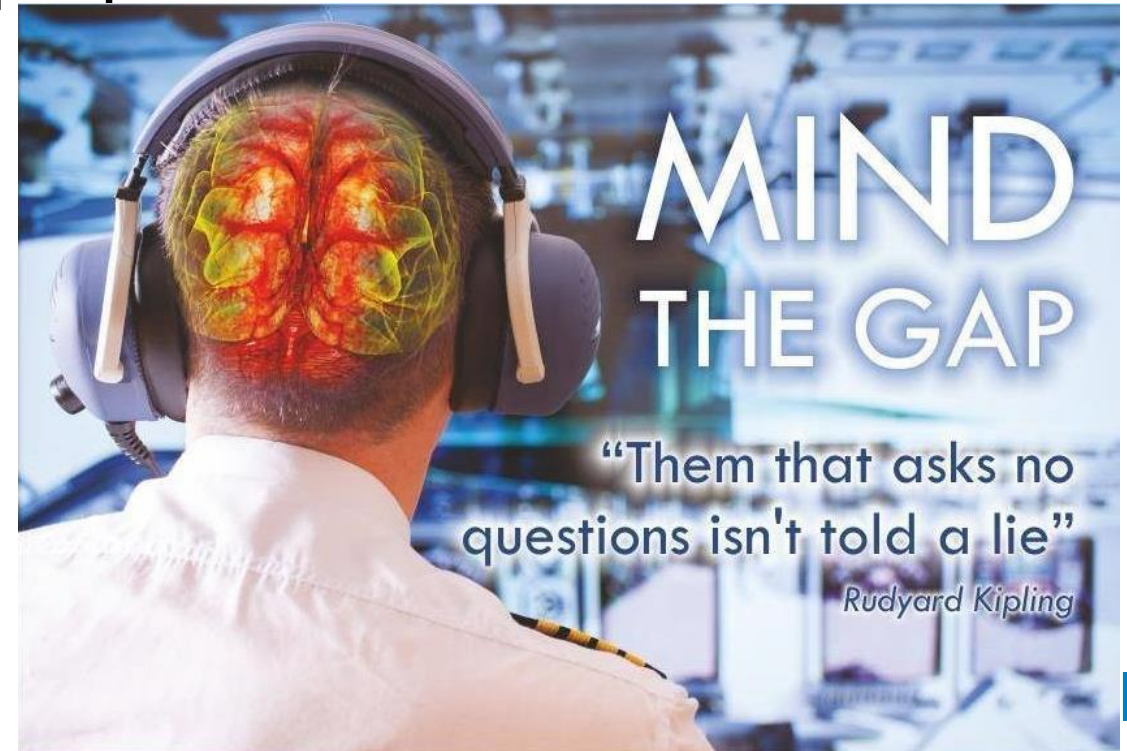
How we screen for and prevent health problems in aviation

Date: 05 - 07 September 2014

Location: Bucharest, Romania
Novotel Bucarest City Centre
Paris Room

Research - ongoing

- The MESAFE research project assesses **new medical developments** for the **early diagnosis** as well as **treatment** of **mental health conditions** which could pose a safety risk for aviation and would consequently lead to **pilot** and **ATCO** unfitness or the limitation of their medical certificate for safety purposes.
- Timeline:
 - KoM – May 2022
 - Final report – May 2024



Mental health research - MESAFE

- Mind is the most difficult system to assess for a pilot or an ATCO to discharge their tasks safely.
- In most mental health pathologies, including addictions, constant symptoms are denial and dissimulation making them very difficult to identify.
- Currently there are no specific validated mental health assessment methods for aviation use, incorporating the operational needs, to address the issues identified.
- Research is needed to further detail the specific needs and to develop and validate assessment methods or to assess the applicability of existing methods for the use in aviation.



MESAFE
Mental health for aviation SAFETY

Mental health research - MESAFE

- ➔ Mental health assessment may have more than one goal
 - ➔ some are intended to evaluate the overall fitness to perform,
 - ➔ others are intended to evaluate the synergy between the pilot/ATCO profile and a specific type of operations,
 - ➔ others are intended to identify certain sequelae after special circumstances (involvement in an accident/serious incident, loss of a family member, etc) which may affect their performance.



Deliverables

- D-1.1 REPORT ON THE REVIEW OF DIAGNOSTIC MEASURES
- Review of the state-of-the-art mental disorders' diagnostic methods
- Review of the state-of-the-art diagnostic options available in the current aeromedical certification process to assess the incapacitation risk associated with mental health conditions



Deliverables

✈ D-1.2 REPORT ON THE REVIEW OF TREATMENT OPTIONS

Review of the state-of-the-art treatment options for the most frequent mental disorders and their potential incompatibility with the different classes of aeromedical certification



Thank you for your attention!



Questions

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Your health is also our mission.