

Aviation priorities for Brexit negotiations: The Air League's view

Founded in 1909, The Air League's mission is to enhance national understanding of the importance to the UK of aviation and aerospace.

The Air League's vision is to ensure continued recognition by leaders in the UK that a strong aviation and aerospace sector is essential to the economic prosperity and security of the UK.

In addition, the Air League is the UK's largest provider of flying scholarships and bursaries. Over the past decade, Scholarships worth over £2 million have been allocated to young people across the UK. The League also acts to maintain Britain's position at the forefront of aviation and aerospace from driving debate and policy agendas to position papers outlining the future of the industry.

At the end of July the League published a second briefing paper on Aviation and Brexit.

This document seeks to contribute positively to the debate to help ensure the continued contribution the sector makes to the prosperity, employment, global connectivity, and economic development of the UK.

Working within an EU framework has helped the UK aerospace and air transport sectors to develop and prosper with a minimum of cross-border restrictions in Europe, operating to common standards, facilitating market access, free from customs and tariff restrictions.

Points of note are outlined below:

EASA (European Aviation Safety Agency)

There are two globally acknowledged and accepted aviation regulators in the world, the Federal Aviation Authority (FAA) and the European Aviation Safety Agency (EASA). Both have established standards that conform to and implement International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) regulatory and operational performance standards across all sectors of the aviation industry from manufacture, to operations, personnel licencing, Air Traffic Control, dangerous goods and so forth.

At present, EASA is the UK's Aviation regulator. The role, capability and influence of the CAA in the UK has been correspondingly reduced to cover

limited, largely specialist UK-only applicable General Aviation (GA) pilot licences – Light Aircraft Pilot Licence (LAPL) and National Private Pilot Licence (NPPL) – airspace policy, aircraft registration, Air Operator’s Certificate (AOC) and financial fitness award, consumer rights, economic regulation – including data statistical, collection and passenger surveys and advising the Department for Transport on key aviation policy issues.

Maintaining EASA standards should be seriously considered.

The UK needs to have a continuing strong dialogue with Europe post-Brexit in order to influence future regulations as well as ensuring that the UK is not disadvantaged.

Post-Brexit, all existing and future UK-issued aviation licences must continue to be accepted internationally.

Industry

The UK has over 20% of the DOAs (Design Organisation Approval) and POAs (Production Organisation Approval) of EASA.

In order to ensure frictionless production in the UK post-Brexit, it is essential for UK OEMs that all EASA-issued DOAs and POAs remain valid in the UK. Regarding DOAs, the issuing and supervisory authority in Europe today remains EASA.

In any future arrangement, EASA-granted DOAs should be recognised by the UK, not only for OEMs, but for their whole supply chains. As regards POAs, as national authorities act as the issuing and supervisory-agent (Airbus is the exception) it is essential that CAA-issued POAs obtain easy validation by EASA.

Any double or re-certification would impose serious extra costs, additional regulatory burden and delays. As such, the competitiveness of both the UK and its related aviation industry would be undermined.

British expertise and influence in EASA

For the EU at large, the sectoral interest lies in ensuring a close future relationship between the UK CAA and EASA. The UK is a core aerospace manufacturer accumulating manifold industry experience and expertise, which it currently uses to shape the work of EASA at all levels.

If UK presence and influence is diluted, it would be to the detriment of the sector at large. However, any expectations regarding the future level of UK influence should also be realistic: there is a direct correlation between the level of influence in EASA and a country's assimilation of Community law which may prove difficult if as part of its Brexit position, UK withdraws from the European Court of Justice.

R&D access

Maintaining the UK participation in EU funded research is of key importance to Britain as it allows UK to influence and align research projects in a wide ecosystem that brings together big manufacturers, SMEs and research centres across the big EU aerospace nations.

In addition, if the UK is no longer participating in the EU Research programmes the aerospace community will lose one of its strongest supporters. This will have implications on the overall accessible R&T funding for aerospace but also on the overall architecture (rules and governance).

The simplest way for maintaining UK participation in the remaining years of Horizon 2020 which covers 2014-2020 and its successor programmes (starting in 2021) will be via an "Associate Status" of UK to these programmes.

R&D for Space

The EU has three space flagship programmes – Galileo, EGNOS and Copernicus – in which the UK is actively participating and contributing high R&D value.

However, EU space contracts include clauses allowing their termination if the contractor no longer complies with the participating conditions of being from an EU Member State. Such clauses were originally introduced to prevent EU companies being taken over by non-EU companies while nevertheless continuing to participate in EU programmes.

However, this also means that UK companies may have some concerns about future involvement. The UK should ensure continued access to EU R&D funding streams.

Picture caption - 1 of 2

On 30 May at St James's Palace in London, members attended the Air League's Annual Reception in the presence of its Patron HRH the Prince Philip, Duke of Edinburgh, seen here with Chairman Christopher Walkinshaw.

Picture caption - 2 of 2

At the Annual Reception a number of individuals and organisations were recognised for their remarkable achievements. Certificates and badges were awarded to scholarship and bursary recipients in the presence of sponsors, family and friends. Here the Billy Deacon Search & Rescue Award was presented to Gary Robertson.

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