

The AsMA Global Connection Story with EASA

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Dear readers, members, and friends of AsMA,

In this edition I interview my long-standing friends now working for EASA in Cologne, Germany. EASA, as the European Union's Agency for Aviation Safety, was created in 2003 and has the very important role of regulating, harmonizing, and standardizing rules in all aspects of aviation in all EU Member States and some affiliated countries, including medical regulations concerning medical certification for pilots and ATCOs. It followed on from the JAA (Joint Aviation Authorities of Europe), which was a non-binding collaboration.

Dear Virgilijus, Janis, and Cristian, please introduce yourselves and tell us a bit about what your Agency is doing.

The European Aviation Safety Agency (EASA) was established in 2003. Its mission as the single regulatory and certification Agency among EU Member States is to ensure the highest common level of safety protection and environmental protection for EU citizens, as well as to facilitate the internal aviation single market and create a level playing field by working with other international aviation organizations.

EASA has the following tasks:

- Draft implementing rules in all fields pertinent to its mission;
- Certify & approve products and organizations in fields where it has exclusive competence (e.g., airworthiness);
- Provide oversight and support to Member States in fields where it has shared competence (e.g., Air Operations, Air Traffic Management, Aviation Medicine);
- Promote the use of European and worldwide standards; and
- Cooperate with international actors in order to achieve the highest safety level for EU citizens globally (e.g., EU safety list, third country operator authorizations).



Virgilijus Valentukevicius

EASA has in its structure, as part of the Aircrew and Medical Section, three medical doctors. We are Dr. Virgilijus Valentukevicius, Dr. Janis Vegers, and Dr. Cristian Ionut Panait.

Dr. Valentukevicius: I am a Lithuanian citizen and worked as a vascular surgeon in the

past. Between 1995 and 2008 I was Chief Medical Officer in the Lithuanian Civil Aviation Administration, where my main task, among others, was implementation of the European Joint Aviation Requirements in the aero-medical domain. Between 2002 and 2008 I was also a member of the Medical Sub-sectorial Team of Joint Aviation Authorities. I joined EASA in 2008 as a rulemaking officer and took part in drafting aircrew medical requirements. Since 2010 I have been EASA's standardization team leader in the aero-medical domain. I have been an AsMA Member since 2002 and am currently also an Associate Fellow.

Dr. Janis Vegers: My nationality is Latvian and I come from Riga. In my heart I am still a general surgeon as after graduation from the Medical Academy of Latvia I specialized post-graduation in surgery. In 2004, I had an opportunity to join and successfully finish Advance Aviation and Diving medical military courses in Denmark. Afterwards, I helped successfully implement the JAR-FCL 3 Aviation Medical



Janis Vegers

certification system in Latvia and in 2006 Latvia joined the Joint Aviation Authorities. At the same time, I was appointed as Chief Medical officer of the Civil Aviation Agency of Latvia. For many years I was an active ASMA member and nearly every year I attended the ASMA Annual Scientific Meeting, as I think that it is one of the most important events in Aviation Medicine. From 2012 I have still been an active FAA-authorized AME. In EASA I am the Air Crew Medical Standardisation Team Leader, having joined in 2013.

Dr. Cristian Panait: My name is Cristian Panait and I'm from Romania. I'm specialized in family medicine and have some general surgery experience. I worked as an AME from 2008 and, later on, as medical assessor of the Romanian Civil Aeronautical Authority. In October 2015 I joined EASA's medical team to become the



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Cristian Panait

Medical Regulations Officer. Since 2012 I have occupied various positions in the Executive Committee of the European Society of Aerospace Medicine (ESAM).

What is your and their relationship with AsMA and for how long?

We appreciate AsMA's scientific activities and their participation in other international aviation medicine

events which are not restricted to the territory of the United States. In particular, we have welcomed AsMA's contribution in regard to the implementation of the Germanwings Task Force recommendations.

We value AsMA's position papers on important contemporary topics (e.g., cabin air quality and crew mental health assessments). Furthermore, AsMA's publications, such as *Aerospace Medicine and Human Performance* ("the Blue Journal") and position papers, play an important role in continuous medical education of European AMEs, thus enhancing their professional competencies.

EASA's rulemaking activities are evidence-based. When drafting the regulatory material we also take into account the scientific material published in the Blue Journal.

What already works well in this relationship and what could be improved in our collaboration?

We welcome AsMA's efforts to establish a closer cooperation with ESAM, which resulted in a joint European Conference of Aerospace Medicine (ECAM) hosted by our Norwegian colleagues in 2016. We appreciate the scientific importance and

quality of the lectures delivered during the ECAM by our colleagues from AsMA. This was a very good opportunity for European AMEs to considerably improve their proficiency in aviation medicine and is regarded as valuable input to their recurrent training. We would like to encourage this kind of collaboration in the future.

Do you have ideas for AsMA? For our support to your association, and/or for spreading information from your Agency to us? Do you have an interest in participating in the work or leadership of our Association?

We are starting to have a more active contribution to AsMA annual meetings by presenting EASA's views and position on different issues in aviation medicine. In 2017 and 2018 EASA delivered presentations at AsMA annual meetings and took part in the panel discussions.

We are always encouraging AMEs and the medical assessors of competent authorities of the EU Member States to attend and actively support annual AsMA scientific meetings. We see it as a good opportunity to share our experience and aero-medical best practice with colleagues from other parts of the world. For the above-mentioned reasons we have included AsMA annual meetings in the list of aviation medicine events to be credited as refresher training for AMEs.

We would like to maintain close relations with AsMA; unfortunately, due to the high workload (we are 3 medical doctors for all 32 EASA Member States), we cannot actively participate in AsMA activities. Nevertheless, we could increase our support to AsMA by using virtual meeting possibilities and other means of communication.

Dear Virgilijus, Janis, and Cristian, many thanks for your contributions and we will continue to work closely together!

Your friend Roland