

## Report from the EPPSI FRA Workshop 21-22<sup>nd</sup> June 2018

This was an extremely successful event, with much knowledge being shared and understanding of both the theory of Peer Support Programmes and how they operate in practice discussed and dissected. 24 different countries were represented, from South Korea to Canada, with 85 delegates from 24 different organisations. Keynote speakers were from major peer support programmes (PSPs) already operating in Europe, along with airline management, regulators and key personnel involved in the day to day running of PSPs.

After an introduction by the EPPSI Chair Captain Paul Reuter, who outlined what EPPSI is and what the overall political situation surrounding PSPs is, the event was structured around three workshops:

### **Workshop I : Which PSP is right for my Organisation?**

The bulk of this workshop revolved around presentations from four leading PSPs which have been running for varying lengths of time. The idea was to give delegates chance to see the different ways in which the same basic principles of peer support can be tailored according to the requirements of the organisation.

First up was **Captain Dr Gerhard Fahnenbruck**, Clinical Director and member of the Board of Stiftung Mayday (Mayday Foundation) in Germany. This programme has been in operation for well over 20 years and has grown to cover the whole country as well as cabin crew and all sectors of flying including sky divers! It is based around critical incidents, pilot wellbeing including mental health issues but excluding substance abuse as a special topic, which is covered by the Germany based Anti-Skid Group. A large and extremely well organised and run programme, suitable for a scheme which is designed to cover a whole country or collection of multiple airlines. It is large enough to have its own medical and psychological professionals within the program.

Next was **Captain Dave Fielding** from British Airways and BALPA. Dave talked the event through the PAN programme, a joint initiative between BA and BALPA which has been running for about 18 months. As such, it is the first of the 'new generation' of PSPs post Germanwings and takes advantage of technology to make it more efficient and the task of collecting data easier. The core of the programme is a website, and contact is made with the PAN via this rather than a telephone service. It is a stand-alone programme for BA, run by an independent healthcare organisation who train and mentor the peers. Anonymous data is fed back to a Steering Group made up of all the major stakeholders.

**Hervé Fournérat** from SNPL then described the 'evolutionary' PSP model covering the Air France group. This programme has been in place for a number of years, primarily around critical incidents, and covers not only a large airline but also smaller subsidiaries within the group. This in itself offers challenges to running a PSP, which Hervé described. Post Germanwings, the programme has been working on how to integrate mental health support

into the existing structure, again addressing the challenges of differing levels of company and medical support in the different airlines.

Finally, **Captain Stein Arne Lien** from the Norwegian Group described a very different form of PSP, one based on a purely voluntary basis with minimal support from the companies involved. A new programme, again based heavily around a website, it uses a small number (8) of peers to help a growing number of pilots in the Norwegian Group, spread across a number of different airlines. Stein illustrated the challenges they face with the fact that he himself is moving on to a new job and is handing over the reins of the programme to another pilot, who was unable to attend the workshop because his employer would not release him from the roster.

After a coffee break, **Captain Charlie Maunder**, Head of Resources in British Airways Flight Operations, gave a fascinating presentation on how management view the benefits of peer support programmes. The BA PAN has been an excellent example of collaborative working with the member association BALPA, and Charlie described how the 'halo effect' of joint working on a non-political issue has transcended the normal industrial relations transactions between management and unions. BA are delighted with the programme and continue to give it their full support.

## **Workshop 2: The Relationship between PSPs and Key Stakeholders**

Before the workshop started there was an extremely powerful testimony from a British Airways captain who had gone through their PAN programme and received support and assistance to enable him to return to flying when probably the only other option was leaving the company. Amidst a lot of theoretical discussion surrounding PSPs, this was a timely reminder that at the end of the day the purpose of any support programme is to help fellow pilots when they really need it and probably have nowhere else to go to.

The purpose of the second workshop was to examine how key stakeholders to PSPs other than pilots engage with the programmes, as will be required by the forthcoming EASA regulations. Appropriately, the keynote speaker for this workshop was **Julia Egerer** from EASA, who wrote the regulation that has been passed by the European Council and is currently finishing off the Acceptable Means of Compliance and Guidance Material for the regulation. Highlights from a very informative presentation were:

- Scrutiny by the European parliament ends on the 23<sup>rd</sup> June and the regulation will be published a couple of weeks after that. She is not anticipating any changes and passage through the process has encountered less opposition than she had anticipated;
- PSPs are “highly efficient and super cost-efficient” as well as “a very important tool in de-stigmatising mental health issues”;
- Julia sees the regulation as a starting point to develop tailored PSPs and not as a cut and paste into company manuals. Nothing prevents a PSP going beyond the basic compliance. She believes that the 24 month transition period should be used wisely, and that the process of setting up and establishing a PSP is an organic one;

- She singled out the issue of contract pilots, highlighting that it remains the responsibility of the contracting airline to ensure that those pilots have access to a PSP. They cannot abrogate this responsibility to the contracting agent;
- EASA are working on an easy-action rulebook.

In terms of **Acceptable Means of Compliance (AMCs)**, Julia listed five areas EASA are looking at:

1. Education, training and professional assistance
2. Enabling self-referral and removal from duty
3. Confidentiality
4. The essential elements of a PSP
5. Addressing the fear of loss of licence;

For **Guidance Material (GMs)** she indicated that they will cover:

1. Multi-stakeholder platforms
2. Main training elements
3. How to facilitate trust (an easy little topic!)
4. the involvement of Mental Health Professionals
5. the content of training materials
6. how to sub-contract a PSP to the required standard
7. how to seek aero-medical advice in the case of decrease in medical fitness;

Finally, Julia detailed what EASA will expect of a PSP. They want it to include:

- multi-stakeholders
- a link with the airline's SMS (though this will need to be phrased carefully)
- appropriate expertise and training
- a viable 3<sup>rd</sup> party option for smaller operators
- a step-by step approach to implementation.

The unenviable job of following that fell to **Dssa. Francesca Bartoccini** and **F/O Enrico Piazza** from Air Dolomiti and the Stiftung Italia Foundation. Under the title of "New Scenarios for Peer Support", they went into detail of how an effective PSP can have further benefits in creating better wellbeing and improving the culture of an airline by building trust between the workforce and management. This was very much the 'advanced PSP' presentation, as the benefits they described come from established PSPs, which was not the case with the majority of delegates, but it nevertheless gave much food for thought. In particular, the concept that pilots who are better informed about stress and its effects are better able to cope with stress.

Next was **Dr Ries Simons** from ESAM, giving a medical perspective on the benefits of PSPs. Ries detailed some sobering statistics on mental health in the general population, particularly amongst the young (20-30yr olds). There is no reason to believe that this is not mirrored amongst the pilot population, which highlights the medical need for PSPs going forwards. Ries also stated his belief that confidential medical information from a PSP should not be made available to the judiciary. Even in the case of a sub-poena, the PSP volunteer or professional expert should be aware of the right of refusal to testify, which is based on obligation of professional trust, and is intended to avoid conflicts of interest.

Finally, **Aedrian Bekker** from the Centre for Aviation Psychology gave the viewpoint from an independent health care provider with expertise in PSPs engaging with a wide range of Air Operator Certificate (AOCs) holders and their reaction and approach to the forthcoming regulation. "Risk" is a key element: most Executive Boards now have a director responsible for risk to the company, and if there is a known risk then it is the legal responsibility of that company to do something about it. Waiting until regulation requires it *is not sufficient*. Aedrian concluded that there is a clear moral, safety and economic case for PSPs, and the challenge is getting that message through to top management.

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Day 2 began with a testimony from **Capt Caesar Holzem**, Senior Manager Flight Operations at Tuifly Germany as to the value of PSPs from the perspective of TUI management. Trust is a difficult concept to create and sustain, and Caesar was clear that he valued what the Stiftung Mayday programme brings to the wellbeing of his pilots. The trust is there, so that if they say that a pilot has to be removed from the roster for treatment, he is confident that there is a robust process behind that decision and will support it.

### **Workshop 3: Recruitment, Training and how PSPs work in Practice**

The main part of this workshop was a joint presentation by **Professor Robert Bor**, the clinical psychologist from the BA PAN programme and **Captain Dr Gerhard Fahrenbruck** from Stiftung Mayday, both members of the EPPSI Executive Board. They spent an hour detailing the various dos and don'ts of selecting and training up peer support volunteers. Feedback suggests that this was one of the most informative presentations of the event, full of practical suggestions and advice. The Round Table discussion at the end of this workshop was dominated by questions surrounding this topic. The biggest take-away point was the list of seven questions to ask when choosing your peers, which are published elsewhere on the EPPSI website.

To follow on and support Rob and Gerhard, **Captain Ian Long**, one of the BA PAN peers, gave a very powerful "view from the coal face" as to the training he received to do the job, and what sort of cases he has dealt with over the past 18 months. Again, a reminder amidst all the theory, that however a programme is structured, it is all about delivering real and effective help to real people.

Finally, **Gunnar Steinhardt**, Human Resources Manager at Cargolux, detailed how they have gone about selecting and recruiting the peers for their forthcoming programme which is due to be launched later this year as part of the Stiftung Mayday Foundation. Cargolux have approached this subject in a novel way, by surveying the membership in the first instance to ask them whom they would like as peers. This led to a shortlist which was then interviewed.

The EPPSI Chair Paul Reuter closed proceedings in time for lunch. Overall, the feedback gathered from delegates, along with the questions that were asked during the round table discussions after every workshop, indicated that the event was a success and gave the delegates what they wanted at this stage. Going forwards, it is clear that delegates get the

theory of peer support and why it is necessary, but they are very keen on detailed practical measures as to how to set up and run a PSP.

To this end, the EPPSI Board will consider another event in 2019 which will focus on a detailed step by step guide on how to do this, gathering on all the experience to date. In the meantime, we will be working on publishing some interim guidance material on such matters as template terms of reference between all stakeholders, guidance material for recruiting peers etc. Please keep an eye on the EPPSI website for this [www.eppsi.eu](http://www.eppsi.eu).