



# Aircraft Engineers International

We keep them flying safely

## Aviation Safety threatened by lack off enough Licensed and Qualified Certifying Maintenance Engineers and Technicians

### AEI's 51<sup>st</sup> Annual Congress

This year's AEI Congress was hosted by AEI's Norwegian affiliates, NHF and NFO, near Stavanger, Norway. NHF represents staff in the helicopter sector, while NFO represents staff in the fixed wing sector, of aviation maintenance. Licensed aircraft technicians / engineers from 5 continents gathered with these 2 affiliates from 20 -22 September to discuss the state of aviation maintenance throughout the world.

Whether via the congress's agenda, during informal discussions, and through the guest speakers, common themes quickly emerged. A lack of licensed technicians / engineers to acquit the scheduled work; low numbers of new entrants to the industry; a rise in levels of stress/fatigue/mental health, are all adding to lower levels of safety in the industry. This is a major concern for AEI, whose motto has been 'Safety for all who fly' for the past 52 years (since inauguration).

During the covid shutdowns, a large pool of highly trained licensed personnel left the industry. Many retired but a larger portion were poached by other industries looking for similar skill sets. Many former colleagues found better paying jobs, less stressful jobs, or jobs that gave a better work / life balance – the oil industry, wind energy generation, railways, the developing 'green' tech sector. The aviation industry has shown that it is not willing to improve working conditions / increase remuneration to attract back the highly trained, experienced staff who left. No aircraft maintenance means no flights and the whole aviation industry will suffer. Several delegates reported an approx. 20% decrease in engineering staff while flight numbers are starting to approach pre covid levels. EASA was aware of this shortfall and encouraged industry to address the situation. AEI affiliates have raised this issue with employers, but little is being done to address the problem. More is required to retain the men and women "who keep them flying safely".

Stress/fatigue/mental health issues, resulting from the above, are becoming more prominent. ICAO has identified this issue and has formed a committee to investigate the contributing factors. Several of AEI's affiliates who are most affected are initiating their own programs to help their members. Many engineering maintenance organisations have responded but there is concern among AEI's affiliates regarding the true independence of these company sponsored initiatives.

It is pleasing that in several countries around the world, AEI affiliates have reported that training for new entrants is increasing. There is still a large gap between numbers being trained compared to the industry's requirements, though. On top of supplying today's aviation industry with competent personnel, AEI is also looking at the emergence of developing technologies such as drones and new propulsion systems. These emerging parts of the industry will also have a demand for competent staff.

It is these issues, along with others raised at the Congress, that AEI's newly elected board will be focusing their efforts on this year.

Fred Bruggeman  
AEI Secretary General  
+31 655930175