

**Question for written answer E-4135/2010
to the Commission**
Rule 117
Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert (ALDE)

Subject: Maximum age for balloon pilots

On 9 April 2010 EASA published its Comment Response Document (CRD) to Notice of Proposed Amendment (NPA) 2008-17b. EASA states that in commercial aviation the privileges of pilot licence holders aged over 60 should be restricted. In spite of serious objections from balloon pilots all over Europe, EASA considers that this age restriction should also apply to balloon pilots, given that age-related risks are not tied to one specific aircraft type. This fails to take into account the levels of safety appropriate to the characteristics of specific types of aircraft.

A balloon has a simple design, it has no pneumatics and no complex electronic systems, and its instruments are easy to read. Balloon flights take place in the lowest levels of the atmosphere and are of short duration; the distance normally covered is not comparable with the distance covered by any other aircraft in the same time.

The skills required of a balloon pilot are on a totally different level from those needed during – for example – flights using multi-engine aircraft. That being so, the proposal to impose the same age restrictions on balloon pilots cannot be justified. It is harder to draw a clear dividing line between ‘safe’ and ‘unsafe’ ages when considering balloon flight.

1. Does the Commission agree that the age restriction proposed by EASA should not apply to balloon pilots?
2. If not, why not?
3. If so, when and how will the Commission take action on this matter?
4. Does the Commission agree that an age awareness policy (to be incorporated into the medical test requirements so as to arrive at regulations tailored to the individual case) is the obvious solution for balloon pilots, rather than an across-the-board age restriction? If not, why not?