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Approval for Malta's first Flight Training Organisation

by David Kelleher

The European Pilot Academy, based in Luqa, has been approved as Malta's first Flight Training Organisation (FTO) and as such has been authorised to conduct formal training courses for professional pilots up to Airline Transport Pilot License (ATPL) level.

The certificate as an approved FTO, issued by the Department of Civil Aviation, was presented to the director of the EPA, Captain Ray Zarb, by Competitiveness and Communications Minister Censu Galea yesterday morning.

Capt. Zarb said this is an important achievement for the academy and for the local aviation sector. He said his dream to set up a flight training school has become a reality.

"It has not been an easy task and it has not been a solo effort. With this certification, Malta will stand out among other countries," Capt. Zarb said.

The application was filed in 2006 and the academy had to complete a rigorous compliance and certification process before the approval was granted.

The FTO certificate complements the existing training courses offered by the EPA to take career-oriented students to the highest professional qualification and airline pilot standard – the ATPL.

Capt. Zarb said the academy currently has an application pending with the Department of Civil Aviation to add the Instrument Rating (IR) and Commercial Pilot's License (CPL) to the FTO certificate.

This will give the EPA a comprehensive portfolio of training courses from ab initio to ATPL. The application is expected to be approved within the coming weeks. The EPA will also be taking delivery of a Zlin Z142 aircraft which will be used for aerobatics training and is also fully equipped up to 2007 European Air Safety Agency (which supersedes the Joint Aviation Administration) and certified for instrument (IR) training.

In a brief address, Minister Galea thanked the academy for providing the opportunity to a number of local and foreign students to train as pilots and air cadets.



“The academy has served as the launch pad for these individuals to develop such a challenging skill as flying. I have visited the academy on several occasions and every time there was always something exciting on the horizon, towards which all the academy staff seemed to be very dedicated,” Minister Galea said.

He added that he was pleased to note that the participation of international students in the International Airline Transport Pilot License training programme is expected to increase from 35 per cent to 55 per cent by the end of the year.



The EPA was set up 15 years ago and in 1996 it was granted a permit by the DCA to open Malta’s first flying academy offering flight instruction to Private Pilot’s License level, including all the theoretical subjects and flight training required for one to be able to take the PPL examinations. That year the academy acquired its first aircraft, a Cessna 152.

In 2004, the DCA established the Maltese JAA Private Pilot License which allowed Maltese students to obtain a Maltese license recognised in JAA member countries. In 2004, the academy moved to its present premises after it converted a building at the airport that previously used to host the offices of the Meteorological Office.

To date, the EPA has trained hundreds of students, many of whom are now professional pilots with international carriers.

The academy owns and operates a fleet of training aircraft ranging from light singles to twin-engine types.

Details about the courses offered can be found at www.falconalliance.com.

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