



STRIKE THREAT ON SAS NORDIC ROUTES

News / Airlines



A strike on some of SAS's Nordic services has been threatened from Feb. 22, following a breakdown of negotiations between pilots, cabin crew and the company that hires them.

The services, although operated in SAS colors, are operated by UK-based regional carrier Flybe, which won the contract to serve several Nordic destinations in 2015 under a “white label” arrangement.

The pilots and cabin crew on the aircraft are not directly employed by Flybe but via a recruitment agency, Global Employer Company (GEC). Swedish pilots' union SPF and cabin crew representative body Unionen say they have been trying to reach a collective labor agreement with GEC since last autumn, without success.

A statement from SAS Feb. 18 said it expected personnel hired by partner companies such as SAS to have a collective labor agreement. It said that GEC had initiated talks but, despite negotiations continuing, the two unions had given notice of industrial action, “which is unacceptable.”

In recent years as part of its cost-cutting efforts, SAS has outsourced much of its short-haul flying, particularly on thinner Scandinavian and northern European routes, to other carriers with smaller, more economic aircraft more suitable for the routes.

In its statement, SAS said that “it is conceivable that the conflict is really about the unions’

reluctance to allow new entrants to the Scandinavian market, not collective agreements.” Trade unions’ inability to adapt to changing market conditions was the real threat to jobs and the Scandinavian transport infrastructure, it added.

Routes likely to be affected by the dispute include several from Stockholm Arlanda to Swedish and Finnish destinations, including Visby, Turku and Vaasa.

In a statement on its website, SPF said it had been told by Flybe that it could not meet Swedish standards of salaries, working hours and vacations. SPF could not agree to lower standards for its members than currently existed, said its chief negotiator, Tommy Larsson. It described GEC as a “one-man company” established with the sole purpose of acting as an employer for Flybe pilots in Sweden.

Flybe replied to several detailed questions on the strike from ATW with a brief statement. “Flybe can confirm it is continuing to work closely with all relevant parties to effect a mutually agreed resolution in establishing collective bargaining agreements for the pilots and cabin crew working under its white label agreement with SAS.

“GEC is an independent company that provides pilot and cabin crew recruitment and management services to Flybe.”

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SOURCE: ATW

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