



# INTERNATIONAL FEDERATION OF AIR TRAFFIC CONTROLLERS' ASSOCIATIONS

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## Press Release

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### STAFF SHORTAGES STILL A MAJOR PROBLEM FOR AIR TRAFFIC CONTROL IN EUROPE

After several years of Air Traffic Control staff shortages, the situation is still the same.

When European Air Traffic Controllers convened in Lisbon on 25<sup>th</sup>-26<sup>th</sup> October for the 25<sup>th</sup> European Regional Meeting of IFATCA, the International Federation of Air Traffic Controllers' Associations, they reported that traffic levels have continued to increase and that for several new and very advanced air traffic control systems additional staff is required. This, in connection with a decision made by some states after the September 11 2001 events to decrease or even stop the recruitment of new Air Traffic Controllers, has contributed to a massive shortage of staff in Europe and the rest of the world.

Overtime is widely used to cover existing staff shortages, which may lead to higher stress levels and controller fatigue. In some European countries the air traffic has more than doubled in the last five years, but the number of air traffic controllers has remained the same.

We are now facing a potential worldwide economic recession and this will possibly lead to a reduction in traffic levels during 2009. This may negatively influence airlines and Air Navigation Service Providers. IFATCA and the Air Traffic Controllers in Europe recognise these financial constraints but now alert Air Navigation Service Providers to not fall into the same trap as in the recent past when traffic levels have gone down, to decrease the numbers of Air Traffic Controller trainees.

"Recruitment must be kept at a sufficient level to reach and maintain working conditions which will allow us to perform our job safely, at a reasonable cost and with flight delay results, which are acceptable to the airspace users" says Patrik Peters, IFATCA Executive Vice President Europe.

Wide ranging discussions involving both current and future air traffic control and management issues were conducted in committee and allowed all participants to engage in lively and constructive debate.

Key issues discussed included:

- Critical Incident Stress Management
- Just Culture
- Single European Sky, the harmonisation plan for European airspace.

In addition to over 170 Air Traffic Controllers representing 36 European countries, representatives from organisations such as Eurocontrol, IATA and IFALPA were also present and actively participated in the discussions, ensuring that an all-round industry view was ensured. Concepts such as flexible route airspace management and collaboration with airlines and airport operators are maturing in many European countries. Despite the current economic challenges facing the aviation industry, strategic measures such as these are essential to ensure that the overall increasing demand for air travel is managed safely and efficiently. In connection to the meeting a one-day seminar was held on October 24. Main topics were safety and crisis management.

Patrik Peters concluded that "the many challenges that continue to face the European air traffic community need to be addressed with the cooperation of all partners. It is only by ensuring that sufficient resources are available that a safe and efficient outcome for all can be reached".

**IFATCA is the worldwide organization representing more than fifty thousand air traffic controllers in 133 countries. Amongst its goals are the promotion of safety, efficiency and regularity in international air navigation and the protection and safeguarding of the interests of the air traffic control profession. [www.ifatca.org](http://www.ifatca.org)**