



**INTERNATIONAL FEDERATION OF  
AIR TRAFFIC CONTROLLERS' ASSOCIATIONS**

**65<sup>th</sup> ANNUAL CONFERENCE**  
20-24 April 2026, Bucharest, Romania

**Agenda Item: P.4.9**

**INFORMATION PAPER**

**WP No: 10  
IFATCA'26**

**Report by the EVP EUR for the IFATCA Annual Conference 2026  
Bucharest, Romania – 20-24/04/2026**

Presented by EVPEUR

**SUMMARY**

In this report, please find some of the work delivered by the IFATCA EVP EUR since last Annual Conference in Abu Dhabi. This report goes to the essential of the activities undertaken, especially on topics: ATCO safety and wellbeing; Staffing shortages in European ATM; Technological transformation (SESAR, AI, digitalisation); Geopolitical disruptions affecting ATM; Cooperation with European aviation institutions

A specific part is attached for the 6 years of Frédéric Deleau as EVPEUR as historical reference and summary.

References are made to the reports of Marc Baumgartner (JCHMS/SESAR/EASA Coordinator), and Philippe Domogala (ICAO Paris Liaison, GNSS Rep.). These reports should be read separately as proposed by the authors.

**A- Introduction:**

This report reflects EVPEUR activities since the last IFATCA Annual Conference in Abu Dhabi and the discussions held during the IFATCA European Regional Meeting (ERM) organized in Bologna, Italy, in October 2025.

During ERM 2025, Member Associations addressed a number of strategic risks and priorities affecting European Air Traffic Control. Particular attention was given to safety, ATCO wellbeing, workforce sustainability, technological transformation and geopolitical developments.

Discussions highlighted increasing operational pressure on ATCOs due to staffing shortages, ageing workforce profiles, GNSS interference in conflict regions and rapid digitalization of ATM systems.

There was broad consensus that safety, human performance and professional expertise must remain central as regulatory, political and capacity pressures continue to intensify.

On a more personal note, this report will be the last one as IFATCA EVP EUR. I warmly welcome my successor, Benjamin Fichtner, and wish him strength, dedication and enjoyment in his new role from the end of the Annual Conference in Bucharest.

It has been an extraordinary journey to serve colleagues and friends not only in Europe but also globally. I did my best within the limits of my abilities, and none of this work would have been possible without the support of a committed team, the IFATCA representatives across Europe, the Member Associations, and the flexibility shown by the Executive Board.

We are a TEAM – working together. Thank you sincerely for your trust and support.

Aviation is a human enterprise – for the people, by the people.

As EVP EUR, I saw my role as encouraging change, improving relationships, strengthening understanding of ATCO responsibilities and motivating operational participation in research and innovation initiatives.

I have always opposed and will continue to oppose any form of segregation while defending inclusivity and equity. We are all Air Traffic Controllers – friends, colleagues and professionals who deserve safety and respect without reference to gender, race, sexual orientation, language, without activist ideological bias. We are first and foremost all HUMANS and AIR TRAFFIC CONTROLLERS.

I hope IFATCA will continue reflecting on how it communicates these principles in order to avoid misunderstandings and ensure that diversity and equity are understood in their broader humanistic sense. Not only towards one or the other group, opposing one “group” against or above another one, de-facto creating a segregation. Quotas do not work – Love and respect towards each other and our profession do.

The initiatives described in this report will ultimately be judged by you in the months to come. Thank you for the opportunity to serve.

**TOGETHER – FURTHER!**

Note: This report was reviewed for grammatical and spelling errors with A.I. The content was still generated by some sort of human...

## **B- Discussions:**

### 1. Strategic Themes for EVPEUR and the EUROPEAN REGION TEAM

#### 1.1 ATCO Wellbeing and Fatigue Risk

Fatigue management and mental wellbeing remain major strategic risks.

While EASA initiatives are expected to remain non-binding, there is concern that poorly implemented limits could be misused by management to degrade rosters.

On-going discussions at EASA level through our representative (Zeljko Oreski) who, together with an alliance of ATCEUC and ETF, pushes for IFATCA TPM values.

The IFATCA proposal is driven by the idea to provide an extension beyond the reactive CISM models to a proactive peer support framework, which exists already as a requirement for the aircrews in the European Regulatory landscape.

IFATCA is shifting from reactive CISM models to proactive peer-support frameworks.

## 1.2 Safety in Conflict-Affected Airspace

GNSS jamming and spoofing now represent a systemic safety threat affecting navigation, surveillance, and data-link systems.

Member Associations reported increased controller workload and liability concerns. IFATCA continues engagement with ICAO and the Safer Skies Consultative Committee.

Under the SESAR (SJU contract) the PSO are currently working under the co-ordination of IFATCA for a common position to be submitted to the SJU. Exchanges with TOC members and EVPT and SESAR coordinator took place. However, it is yet unclear whether this report will be endorsed by all PSOs – The European Cockpit Association (ECA) did not wish to be associated with the initiative on the basis that previous publications were already delivered.

## 1.3 Workforce Sustainability

Europe faces an aging ATCO workforce, recruitment bottlenecks, and divergent Retirement policies.

Financial incentives encouraging extended operational service raise concerns about cognitive performance and long-term safety margins.

EVPEUR will participate in a high-level EC organised meeting on 24/03/2026 to deliver the views of IFATCA: “Attract them – Value them – Keep them”

## 1.4 Technology and Human–AI Integration

Digitalisation and AI-supported tools are advancing rapidly. Consensus remains that technology must be human-centred, certified, and introduced gradually. Controllers must remain the final authority in operational decision-making. SESAR PSO are working on a joint legal liability paper on the use of AI in ATM.

For further information, please see SESAR Coordinator report.

### 1.5 Governance and Industrial Relations

Persistent governance challenges were reported, including inexperienced management and weak engagement with professional associations (MAs).

Best practices include formal agreements, early involvement, and structured dialogue with regulators.

EVPEUR and EVPEUR Elect held a visio meeting with the CANSO European Director, Enrico Parini in order to reaffirm the wish to improve communication and regular exchanges between CANSO and IFATCA.

### 1.6 ATC Job Promotion

As staff shortage is a major issue as well in Europe (see [ATCO SHORTAGE: The Perfect Storm – IFATCA](#) and IFATCA Heat Map - [IFATCA EVP Europe on the European Staff Shortage – IFATCA](#) ) discussions are happening about how to make the job more attractive to young people. Actions are assessed on how to assist MAs in promoting the job and/or help their ANSPs.

### 1.7 Future Research opportunities

IFATCA was accepted in 2 new SESAR consortia (Zenitha/EHRA). Work will start in September 2026. Yet again, thanks to the team led by Marc Baumgartner, our SESAR Coordinator, we managed to secure funding for months. (See report of SESAR coordinator)

### 1.8. Key Decisions and Endorsed Positions

- Maintain IFATCA focus on ATCO wellbeing and fatigue risk as a safety issue.
  - Continue advocacy on GNSS interference, transparency of information related to affected aircraft, getting liability protection and ICAO phraseology updates. Coordination with IFALPA is key.
  - Support development of policy on aging ATCOs and competency-based continuation.
  - Reinforce human-centred approach to AI and digitalisation.
- Produce joint position papers with IFALPA on various subjects.  
Accept invitation from ICAO to participate on the LRI task force (decision taken during EBM)  
Discussion on European Support Fund as a solidarity mechanism. Go/No GO

### 1.9. Action Items

- Monitor EASA fatigue guidance and assess national implementation risks.
- Advance data collection on GNSS jamming/spoofing operational impacts.
- Initiate policy review on aging workforce and retirement practices.
- Strengthen engagement with regulators on human–AI responsibility and liability.
- Encourage Member Associations to formalise governance frameworks with ANSPs.

## 2. Forward Look – Strategy

During the last months, EVPEUR reaffirmed IFATCA’s strategic role in protecting safety, professionalism, and solidarity in a rapidly changing operational and political environment.

Future priorities will require coordinated advocacy, evidence-based policy development, and sustained engagement with European and global stakeholders.

To this end, EVPEUR supports and initiated the development of closer coordination with top airlines management in order to seek their understanding and support for EUROCONTROL Network Manager (NM) empowering, deployment of more common systems, reduction of the European ATM fragmentation, introduction of an Infrastructure Manager.

6. Extra meetings/initiatives on-going (see SESAR Coordinator’s report for more information)

- ✓ Prosecutor Expert course (PEC)
- ✓ Joint Cognitive Human Machine System work (JCHMS)
- ✓ EUROCAE
- ✓ Environment Conference 01/10/2026, EUROCONTROL HQ, Brussels, Belgium
- ✓ A.I. Task Force following JCHMS
- ✓ EUROCONTROL Automation/ Projects like AUTOCOORD, AIDA, EPCP etc are being presented and discussed. There is not yet a clear idea where EUROCONTROL is heading to with this work.
- ✓ EUROCONTROL APOLO – The role of the Human in the future System
- ✓ European Commission – Transposition of SES2+ legislation
- ✓ Modulation of Route Charges

C- Legacy moments:

Summary and Legacy Report – IFATCA EVP Europe (2020–2026) - “TOGETHER – FURTHER!”

### 1. Introduction

Between 2020 and 2026 the European Region of the International Federation of Air Traffic Controllers’ Associations (IFATCA) went through one of the most complex periods in aviation history. The period included the COVID-19 traffic collapse and recovery, the war in Ukraine,

continuous geopolitical instability in the Middle East, the continuing transformation of the European Air Traffic Management (ATM) system through SESAR research and digitalization, and an historical staffing shortage.

During these years, the Executive Vice-President Europe (EVP EUR) coordinated activities across more than forty European Member Associations while representing IFATCA in numerous regional and international forums. The guiding motto used throughout the period was:

“TOGETHER – FURTHER!”

The phrase symbolized the strategic objective of strengthening cooperation within the European ATC community while ensuring that the profession actively contributes to the future development of ATM.

## **2. Strategic Context: Transformation of European ATM**

The period coincided with major reforms of European aviation. The Single European Sky (SES2+) initiative continued to drive discussions about performance, capacity and efficiency in European airspace. In parallel, SESAR research programs were accelerating the development of the Digital European Sky.

Controllers increasingly needed to engage with technological transformation including automation, trajectory-based operations, artificial intelligence tools and remote tower concepts. Participation of operational experts in research and development programs therefore became a strategic priority for IFATCA in Europe.

## **3. Regional Cooperation and the ‘TOGETHER – FURTHER!’ Philosophy**

The motto “TOGETHER – FURTHER!” represented two complementary ambitions.

“TOGETHER” referred to building stronger cooperation and friendly bonds with and among Member Associations, aviation institutions, research organizations and industry partners.

“FURTHER” referred to moving beyond reactive participation toward proactive leadership in shaping the future of ATM, including with the airlines.

This philosophy influenced the organization of European Regional Meetings (ERM), the development of research initiatives and the strengthening of IFATCA’s role in European policy discussions.

The root inspiration of all initiatives was delivered during an early speech referring to the “HOPES” project, “With the people, for the people”, as the corner stone. The Aviation industry is and shall remain a Human enterprise.

## **4. Support to Member Associations**

A core responsibility of the EVP EUR role was direct support to Member Associations. During the reporting period several major situations required coordinated interventions.

These included the legal case affecting controllers in Albania, the labor dispute affecting Polish ATCOs, and extensive humanitarian support initiatives following the war in Ukraine. European Member Associations coordinated financial and social support through the European Support Fund (ESF) and with a dedicated team.

Following the Russian invasion of Ukraine in February 2022, the immediate closure of Ukrainian airspace halted civil air traffic services and severely affected Ukrainian air traffic controllers and their families. The European ATC community mobilized rapidly under the guiding principle “TOGETHER – FURTHER!”, providing coordinated humanitarian and professional support.

Support actions included accommodation and relocation assistance for Ukrainian ATCO families, particularly in neighboring countries such as Poland and Romania, as well as financial assistance coordinated through the European Support Fund (ESF). In the initial phase, several Member Associations and individuals directly sponsored displaced families. As the situation evolved, these efforts were consolidated into a more structured support mechanism through the ESF, ensuring transparency and continuity of assistance.

Beyond financial support, the European ATC community also organized psychological and social support networks for affected families. The Ukrainian family support program became one of the most visible demonstrations of solidarity within the European ATCO community and remained a standing topic in regional discussions throughout the period.

The role also included regular communication meetings, visits to Member Associations, participation in national conferences and assistance with safety and professional issues.

## **5. European Regional Meetings**

European Regional Meetings remained the main forum for coordination among Member Associations.

Meetings were organized in Maastricht, The Netherlands/MUAC (2021), Brussels, Belgium (2022), Riga, Latvia (2023), Skopje, North Macedonia (2024), Bologna, Italy (2025) and preparation began for Cappadocia, Türkiye (2026).

The European Regional Meeting in Brussels in 2022 represented a particularly significant milestone. Hosted at EUROCONTROL Headquarters, the meeting coincided with the celebration of 100 years of Air Traffic Control, marking a century since the first organized air traffic control services were established in the early 1920s.

The extraordinary event therefore served both as a regional coordination meeting and as a historic celebration of the ATCO profession. Approximately forty European Member Associations participated alongside representatives from EUROCONTROL, aviation stakeholders and industry partners.

A high-level panel discussion reflected on the past, present and future of air traffic control, highlighting the evolution of the profession from early procedural control methods to today's complex digital ATM systems.

In addition to the commemorative aspect, the meeting addressed several strategic issues affecting European ATM, including post-COVID traffic recovery, the future of the Single European Sky, ATM digitalization, staffing challenges and human performance considerations.

ERM2022 was also notable for its successful organization and financial outcome. The event generated a financial surplus, which was subsequently allocated to the European Support Fund, and retained as a reserve for the organization of subsequent ERMs/events.

## **6. Research, Innovation and the HOPES Initiative**

During the period IFATCA strengthened its participation in research and innovation projects, particularly through SESAR. IFATCA managed to be relevant thanks to the visionary involvement and hard work of the SESAR Coordinator and his team.

Projects such as CODA and AWARE involved operational expertise in research consortia. A particularly significant initiative: the HOPES project, which aimed to connect academic and operational professionals was initiated early by EVPEUR and was followed by.

The ambition of HOPES was to bridge the gap between theoretical research and operational reality, bringing universities, research institutes and controllers together to jointly explore future ATM concepts. To understand each other, deliver practical results and pragmatic deployable tools are the main goals.

## **7. Human Performance, Fatigue and Mental Health**

Human performance topics gained increasing importance. Cooperation with EASA and other organizations focused on fatigue management, mental health awareness and the development of better support mechanisms for controllers.

Initiatives included research participation, surveys on fatigue management and discussions around psychological support structures for aviation professionals.

## **8. Geopolitical Instability and Traffic Re-routings**

The geopolitical situation during the period had a significant impact on European air traffic flows.

The war in Ukraine and disturbances in the Middle East caused major disruptions to traditional air routes between Europe and Asia. Closure of several airspaces resulted in significant re-routing of traffic flows.

These changes increased pressure on the South-East European axis, particularly through airspace managed by countries such as Türkiye, Greece, Romania, Bulgaria and the Balkan states. Controllers in these regions experienced sustained increases in workload and complexity as new routing structures were adopted to maintain safe operations.

## **9. Engagement with European Institutions**

The EVP EUR, together with the SESAR/EASA coordinator, maintained regular interaction with European aviation organizations including EUROCONTROL, EASA, ICAO EUR/NAT and the SESAR Joint Undertaking.

These engagements ensured that the operational perspective of controllers remained represented in discussions on ATM reform, research priorities and safety initiatives.

## **10. Media and Public Engagement**

During the reporting period, the ATCO profession increasingly appeared in international media discussions related to staffing shortages and ATM capacity.

Interviews and interactions occurred with outlets such as the Financial Times, Politico, Bloomberg, The Telegraph, BBC World and Skift. Media engagement helped raise awareness of operational challenges and the importance of maintaining adequate staffing and safety standards.

## **11. Conclusion**

The period 2020–2026 demonstrated the resilience and adaptability of the European ATC community.

From crisis management during the pandemic to active participation in research and policy debates, the EVP EUR mandate focused on strengthening cooperation and ensuring that controllers contribute directly to the evolution of ATM.

The guiding principle remained consistent throughout the period:

“TOGETHER – FURTHER!”.

## **12. Annex A – Meetings Attended the last 6 years (Selected – non-exhaustive)**

- ✓ European Regional Meeting – Maastricht (2021)
- ✓ European Regional Meeting – Brussels (2022)
- ✓ European Regional Meeting – Riga (2023)
- ✓ European Regional Meeting – Skopje (2024)
- ✓ European Regional Meeting – Bologna (2025)
- ✓ IFATCA Conferences (2021-2026)
- ✓ Executive Board meetings in Athens, Madrid, Montreal, Taipei, Abu Dhabi, Amsterdam, Panama City, Montreal, and Singapore
- ✓ EUROCONTROL Provisional Council meetings
- ✓ Network Management Board meetings
- ✓ EASA Safety Conference participation
- ✓ EASC meetings
- ✓ EC meetings
- ✓ SESAR Annual Conference
- ✓ Safer Skies Consultative Committee and Forum participation
- ✓ Nordic ATC meetings
- ✓ ATCEUC conferences

- ✓ IFATSEA conference
- ✓ IFISA conference
- ✓ Visits to Member Associations in EUR: Athens, Bratislava, Brussels, Bucharest, Copenhagen, Geneva, Gothenburg, Helsinki, Istanbul, Lisbon, London, Malta, Nicosia, Oslo, Reykjavik, Riga, Rome, Sarajevo, Skopje, Sofia, Warsaw, Zagreb, and (of course) MUAC.
- ✓ Official meetings attended outside of EUR, excluding EB Meetings/Annual Conferences: Bangkok (Thailand), Doha (Qatar), New Delhi (India), Paris (France), Victoria Falls (Zimbabwe).

## **Annex B – References**

- ✓ IFATCA EVP EUR Reports to Annual Conference 2022–2025
- ✓ European Commission – SESAR programme documentation
- ✓ EUROCONTROL publications on European ATM performance
- ✓ SESAR Joint Undertaking research programme
- ✓ International aviation press coverage relating to ATM capacity

### **D- Conclusion:**

EVP EUR responsibilities brought many personally rewarding moments.

I am extremely grateful for all the opportunities I had to serve and further develop the Federation in the European Region (EUR) and beyond. The positive and constructive feedback received from the EUR Member Associations was the greatest motivation for every endeavour.

None of the work achieved would have been possible without the support of a dedicated team. They have done (most of) the work and deserve once again to be thanked for their outstanding contributions.

“TOGETHER – FURTHER!” truly takes its meaning when one can look with confidence toward our common future, guided by trust and a humanist spirit.

We do have opportunities ahead, and we should not sit back and relax, hoping that others will bring or impose the positive developments we wish for our profession. As IFATCA, we must take the lead. We did. And I am confident that my successor, Benjamin Fichtner, will raise the bar even higher, as there remains significant potential to close certain gaps, adjust some directions, and explore further opportunities.

Healthy discussions will always be necessary to validate the direction we wish our EUR Region and the Federation to take. The implementation of these directions should always guide us toward a common future that is safe, peaceful, healthy, and confident.

I have only one regret: in recent years I was not able to convince you of the need to develop a European legal entity that could elevate our capabilities and help IFATCA achieve what it should aspire to become — the global gold standard for ATC/ATM. It most notably makes sense to initiate this movement in Europe due to the fragmentation but also centralisation of organisations under the EC in Brussels, Belgium.

Mark my words: one day you will revisit this idea, and when that moment comes, you will recognise the significant opportunities and benefits it can bring to the global ATCO (Aviation) community.

To conclude, I wish to thank my employer, EUROCONTROL and EUROCONTROL MUAC, and the successive directors who supported me in my role as EVP EUR and throughout my career. I also thank my home association EGATS, my colleagues at MUAC for compensating for my absences, and the members of the EVPEUR team for their patience when I asked too many questions or struggled with certain details. Above all, I thank my wife and family for their patience during my intellectual absence at home — and my physical absence when travelling.

There is always a beginning — and there is always an end. Six years went fast... and furious. Always with a smile.

Stay safe, healthy, happy, and confident.

“TOGETHER – FURTHER!”

Yours faithfully,  
Frederic Deleau, IFATCA EVP EUR.

**E- Recommendations:**

To accept this report as information.

-=END=-