



Press release

Brussels, 23rd of June

Save your sky! - For a safe and resilient air traffic control system

Air traffic control across Europe is in danger. Unprecedented cuts in resources are underway, affecting the social and working conditions of workers in air traffic management, the safety of passengers and the overall capacity of air traffic control in the near future. To inform the EU citizens of the current situation of Air Traffic Services and potential consequences for the safety in the skies, Unions and Professional Associations representing ATM/ANS (Air Traffic Management/Air Navigation Services) staff (ATCEUC, ETF, IFAIMA, IFATCA, IFATSEA) have decided to launch a petition. We are seeking support for our appeal:

We call upon European institutions and member states to work with all aviation workers and find a plan for the European aviation sector that includes air traffic management systems!

The COVID-19 pandemic has had an enormous impact on European aviation, affecting Air Navigation Service Providers (ANSPs - companies or agencies providing air traffic control) as much as other sectors of the aviation industry. Due to the nature and complexity of the infrastructure and services provided, ANSPs have suffered greatly from the COVID-19 crisis. They will continue to suffer in the future if there is no Europe-wide solution in place. Air navigation services were maintained 24/7 during the crisis (ambulance flights, cargo flights carrying essential equipment and medicines, hospital and repatriation flights).

Volker DICK, ATCEUC President: *“The good functioning of Air Traffic Services was proven to be essential in this period of crisis. First necessity goods, doctors, sick people had to be transported with the highest level of safety for the benefit of the entire European society.”*

Since the beginning of February, ANSPs have faced a total absence of revenue. An agreement has been made to allow airspace users to defer charges which would normally be paid to ANSPs. This lack of funding has translated into severe difficulties for the ANSPs, and it is affecting the lives of workers in the air traffic management.

Frédéric DELEAU, IFATCA (Acting) Executive Vice-President Europe, explains: *“Without proper and sustainable funding of ANSPs, the quality of services given and performance in capacity and safety will be jeopardised for the coming years. The existence of such services in certain areas of the network is now clearly at stake. Air Traffic Controllers and other front-line staff have proven to take their responsibilities seriously in times of crisis. IFATCA expects other stakeholders to cooperate and guarantee stability while creating sustainability for the critical infrastructure of Air navigation Services (ANS).”*

Costas Christoforou, IFATSEA Director Europe, complements: *“Medium/long-term investments in technology and people can no longer be guaranteed. ANSPs have to focus simply on their survival and on maintaining the highest level of service possible.”*



Urgent help is needed to rebuild this sector and secure the recovery and the future of the entire aviation industry. Maximum effort has to be done to maintain stable air traffic management, a critical infrastructure to support Europe and its economy fully. EU citizens need to be aware of what is going on in the European sky. The high level of performance and the safety of European Sky could be put at risk if nothing is done.

Charles-André QUESNEL, ETF ATM Committee Chair, reflects on the significance of cooperation on the side of the European institutions: *“No help for ATM/ANS sector is planned at European level to face the harsh consequences of COVID-19 crisis. To the contrary, we can see disastrous political manoeuvres by the European Commission, hampering the difficult recovery of these general European’s interest services.”*

Lately, the European Commission has attacked air traffic control systems in multiple ways. Firstly, it proposed to change the regulation defining ANSPs revenues by abolishing or completely diminishing recovery mechanisms in case of low level of traffic (traffic risk-sharing mechanism). At the same time, its officials have put some inappropriate pressure on employers’ representatives around Europe to increase the numbers of ANSPs staff layoffs, to continue to reduce salaries drastically and to stop any recruitment. Employees and their families have already been badly hit, but this severe social damage seems not to be sufficient enough for the European Commission.

Fernando LOPES, IFAIMA President confirms: *“Attacks against ANSPs and their employees have increased to an unprecedented level and have to stop now.”*

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Air Traffic Controllers European Unions Coordination (ATCEUC) was created in 1989 and is currently composed of 34 professional and autonomous trade unions representing more than 14000 Air Traffic Controllers and Air Safety Engineering Personnel throughout Europe. ATCEUC is an EU recognised social partner in air traffic management.

The European Transport Workers’ Federation (ETF) represents more than 5 million transport workers, including approx. 370,000 aviation workers from more than 200 transport unions and 41 European countries. It is a recognised social partner and the only representative of aviation workers across all sub-sectors (air traffic management, aircrew, ground handling, maintenance, etc.).

The International Federation of Air Traffic Controllers’ Associations (IFATCA) is the recognised independent, non-political and non-industrial International organisation uniting air traffic controller associations for the last 60 years. IFATCA represents more than 50.000 air traffic control professionals in over 130 countries and holds an observer seat at the ICAO Air Navigation Commission. The main aims of the Federation are the promotion of safety, efficiency and regularity in international air navigation, along with safeguarding the professional interests of air traffic controllers.



International Federation of Aeronautical Information Management Associations (IFAIMA) is the Global Voice of AIM. It represents Professional Associations, Organisations, or guilds of Aeronautical Information Management (AIM), Aeronautical Communications (COM) and Flight Data Processing (FDP) personnel worldwide. The objects of IFAIMA are and shall be to operate as a non-partisan, non-profit-making to promote safety, efficiency and regularity in International Air Navigation. Officially srecognized by ICAO, EC and EASA. Your safety starts with us.