



INTERNATIONAL FEDERATION OF AIR TRAFFIC CONTROLLERS' ASSOCIATIONS

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NEWSLETTERS - EUROPEAN REGIONAL MEETING 2011, CAVTAT, CROATIA 28-30 October 2011

135 participants from 36 Member Associations from Europe met in Cavtat, near Dubrovnik, Croatia 28-30 October 2011.

Key speakers from the aviation industry also participated, they included, Milivoj Sever Cuglin, Executive Director ATM Croatia Control Ltd, and Joe Sultana COO, EUROCONTROL Network Management Directorate.

Subjects such as Fatigue and staff shortages were discussed as well an apparent new trend in Europe where States are divesting some Airport Tower Control services to private Air Navigation Service Providers, (e.g. Sweden and Spain) which could expose controllers to varied terms and conditions in the longer term.

The meeting expressed concern about the fact that EASA (the European Agency for Safety) has not yet issued clear directive as to the retirement age for air traffic controllers, leaving some States the freedom to rise retirement age for controllers. IFATCA as a federation recommends the retirement age to be between 50 and 55 years.

The meeting called on Cyprus and Turkey to address the issue of lack of communication between the ATC Centers at Ankara and Nicosia.

The situation in two Countries in Europe received particular attention during the meeting:

GREECE

The meeting was informed of the latest government measures being enforced in Greece in order to deal with their current economic, social and financial situation, and how this is affecting Air traffic control.

Some political decisions recently taken will aggravate the already acute air traffic controllers' shortage in the country, possibly beyond repair. These staff reductions will, if enforced, result in the reduction of air traffic capacity, closure of en route sectors and restriction to airport

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operations during certain periods, aggravating the current economic crisis. On the other hand, if government policies were in compliance with EU Commission regulations* regarding the provision of ATC, this would ensure both capacity and a high level of safety in Greece.

SPAIN

The meeting was also told of the still extremely worrying situation in Spain, where the Air Navigation legal environment has suffered more than 28 modifications in the past 15 months, without taking into account the consequences on ATC operations. As a result of this new environment, Spanish controllers must be permanently available, and can be forced to work with a few hours notice. This is enforced by strong penalties in the Spanish law, as well as facing loss of the ATC license in case of non-compliance. These threats also apply to other aspects of day-to-day ATC operations.

Spain has become one of the highest in aircraft delays in the last two years, (in fact only second to Greece!). When it comes to Safety, according EUROCONTROL independent figures, 2010 ended with 47 near-collisions (A-class incidents). This is a dramatic increase from previous years.

The meeting also learned of the recent creation by Spain of a new type of “low cost controller” being introduced at some airports. This has been done by “upgrading” AFIS operators** into Tower controllers after just a few weeks of training. Those “low cost” controllers are being issued the same European ATCO license as regular controllers, who need to go through two to four years of extensive and certified/regulated training.

Spanish Controllers also expressed concern that the current liberalization process of the ATC services in Spanish Control towers might not address key elements, such as training, with all the assurances required regarding Safety and compliance with the EU regulation framework.

Surprisingly, the Spanish National Safety Agency is apparently not taking any sufficient action to address and rectify the situation.

IFATCA will address this issue with the proper authorities in the EU framework as this is also a Safety issue.

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SINGLE EUROPEAN SKY (SES)

Finally the meeting expressed its concern to the apparent lack of visibility about the upcoming application of the Single European Sky project, especially regarding the introduction of the so called Functional Airspace Blocks, or FABs (reducing to 9 the current 27 Fragmented European airspaces). The meeting noted that many actions due for implementation in the coming months have not yet started in many FABs, and that, for example, none of the 9 FABs had yet completed a Safety Case.

(*): such as Nr 549/2004, 1191/2010. 691/2010)

(**) AFIS: Flight Information service, are radio operators trained to pass on essential information such as weather to pilots but do not issue air traffic control instructions or clearances.

For additional information please contact IFATCA EVP Europe Željko at: evpeur@ifatca.org

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