



*"[air navigation control, [...]] is a task involving the exercise of public authority and is not of an economic nature, since that activity constitutes a service in the public interest which is intended to protect both the users of air transport and the populations affected by aircraft flying over them".  
(Extract of decision C.364/92 of the European Court of Justice).*

## **ROADMAP FOR FUTURE ATM - BRUSSELS, 6<sup>TH</sup> JULY 2006**

*Discussion paper submitted by ATCEUC*

*This paper complements the discussion paper presented by ETF and IFATCA. It aims at focusing more precisely on three key issues: Human factors and trust in the system, will be addressed in a first part. The second part addresses the requirements for efficient and rapid enhancement of ATM. The third part could be seen as a milestone of current SES and FAB implementation.*

### **PART I: HUMAN FACTORS: THE HUMAN SIDE OF CHANGE AND ENHANCEMENTS.**

#### ***The current level***

The human factor dimension is generally used when one wants to address the human dimension of a system. More specifically, in ATM, it is often used to express in a very diplomatic way the idea that air traffic controllers should think about change and new working methods. Some sort of a diplomatic warning aiming at ensuring a better buy in, and further acceptance of new systems, new architectures or new working methods.

Basically, taking into account the HF dimension allows the controllers to develop trust and confidence in the system. The aim and the underlying logic is simple. When one trusts a system, one works better. When an atco trusts his systems, he will increase his own safety level, be able to treat more traffic, and provide better service at optimum cost.

In times of change, implication of atcos and other personnel from the safety chain usually makes the difference between successful implementation or no implementation at all.

#### ***The next level: the future ATM***

Times are changing. We are building tomorrow's ATM. The SES regulations, SESAR, the implementation of the FAB concept are shaping our skies, and the organisation of ATM as a whole. The controllers know it. And because they have seen change coming they have gotten ready for it. And they have prepared themselves to work, just like any time they have to use a new radar system, for example. They have developed guidelines, defined their needs, and thought about the way to better integrate the new components into the existing array of systems.

Secretariat : ATCEUC/CRNA SUD-EST - 1, rue Vincent Auriol - 13617 Aix-en-Provence Cedex 1 (France)

Tel : (33) 442 33 77 66 - Fax : (33) 442 33 78 95 - Email : [head@atceuc.org](mailto:head@atceuc.org)

[www.atceuc.org](http://www.atceuc.org)

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As with any other evolution in ATM, successful implementation of atco will make the difference in that phase. The controllers are ready. They have ideas. Practical, pragmatic ideas, to implement rapidly the SES regulations, and to allow the European system to cope with its obligations towards all its users. They are ready to build: work with them.

## **PART II FAST AND EFFICIENT CHANGES: *GIVE COOPERATION A CHANCE.***

The SES regulations aim at getting rid of any notion of frontier or border in the air. They supposedly provide tools to rationalise, reorganise the airspace and redesign the whole structure. It is clear now that there are two paths opening up: massive, unbiased cooperation, or open competition between air navigation service providers. Cooperation has the potential to change rapidly and yield results of unexpected dimension. The problem is that there can be no half measure between those two options. Competition in ATM excludes *de facto* any efficient cooperation. One cannot cooperate to the necessary extent with its opponents. ATM is extremely specific, and does not obey the same rules as other industries.

### **COMPETITION IN ATM? A WORST CASE SCENARIO**

Some are now more than ready for competition. All they need is a signal of weak resistance from the Member States, and they will attack the market, reap the benefits and fight to death to control. Should this happen, as in any other industry, within thirty years, Europe will be split between three or four major ANSP, working by themselves, providing rational and efficient service *within their own frontiers*. That sounds a long way from the objectives of the SES regulations

National frontiers will no longer exist: they will have been replaced by binding walls of anti cooperation. As for the enhancement of Safety... it will be long forgotten. How can one expect it to fit nicely into the business plan of a fully privatised provider competing for its own survival?

### **Who will pay the bill? The final price of competition?**

- Passengers and companies will ultimately pay the bill of competition. This will be costly, both in terms of safety level, but also in term of user charges. The inevitable system fragmentation will increase the costs, as systems will be developed in parallel, by rival air navigation service providers and will then have to be taught how to communicate with each other. That last step is usually the most expensive.
- The personnel from the safety chain: competition brings economical pressure where it does not belong: in the operational world. And it will always be the controllers who, in the end take the risks and are then left alone and confronted to judges and juries, bearing all the responsibilities for the failures of a system they have not chosen.
- And last, the political authorities. They will have shown, once again, their complete inability to build Europe as the citizens would expect. They will have failed in their mission to ensure the highest level of safety possible for passengers and populations affected by aircrafts flying over them.

That bill is far too heavy to be accepted by the controllers. ATCEUC cannot accept it. And all the more so as there is a viable alternate, a valid counter proposal.

### **A BEST CASE SCENARIO? WORK TOGETHER, USE EXISTING STRUCTURES, BE PRAGMATIC**

One the other hand, some are ready to use the SES regulations to provide the ATM Europe needs. We rely on a faster, more efficient, and pragmatic approach, making best use of existing structures, based on common design of working methods, and dissemination of best practice with common performance indicators.

The resource, the tools and the deliverable of this industry are so intricate that it requires unprecedented harmonisation and extensive collaboration to deliver; and the higher the demand, the greater the need for harmonisation and rationalisation. There is but one-way to achieve that level of integration: reinforced cooperation. There are different paths to reach that goal. But to let it happen, the Member States along with the commission must take a clear stand: they must decide to delay (at minima) or even to stall any further attempt at introducing competition.

### **Give cooperation a chance**

Adopted two years ago, we are now half way through what could be called the trial period established by the commission and the European parliament, when they promised to evaluate the situation within five years of the adoption of the SES regulations. ATCEUC calls upon the Member States and the Commission to give Europe a chance: use the end of the trial period to foster cooperation. The context is special, the tools are here, and the people are ready. The results will speak for themselves.

All Europe needs is the support from national and European authorities.

## **PART III PRACTICAL TERMS.**

### **PAN EUROPEAN COORDINATION FUNCTIONS.**

In times of evolution, it is natural for some to "reinvent the wheel". Because traffic is increasing, the entire ATM chain must be improved. However, to improve, it is not compulsory to start by tearing down to pieces a system that works and has gained the trust of controllers.

### **CFMU: TECHNICAL ENHANCEMENTS ONLY.**

CFMU is a key system in the ATM industry. It has, over the years, gained some level of trust and confidence from controllers. As its main role is to protect the sectors from overloads, it is vitally important for the controllers to be able to rely on CFMU.

Its current position, and its inclusion in Eurocontrol ensure a fair, just and equal treatment of all ANSP as far as ATFCM is concerned. It is absolutely essential that this unit retains complete independence from the ANSP, and remains under the full responsibility of Member States. ATCEUC is formally opposed to any attempts at changing the institutional set up of CFMU.

Which does not mean that improvements are not necessary: ATCEUC had published in 2001, a leaflet containing a set of recommendations to enhance ATFCM; some of our recommendations were implemented, some are still pending, and would provide for a rapid "return on investment" for all parties involved (mainly users and atcos).

### **MUAC: OPERATIONS IN DANGER**

MUAC is the only international centre currently in operation in Europe. It is, whether one likes it or not, the first example of what a FAB could be. Some providers have now openly expressed their desire to take it away from Eurocontrol, or to find a set up ensuring the airspace returns under their own control. Needless to say, fierce opposition from the Maastricht Centre controllers would meet any such attempt. And at a time where Europe tries to get rid of its national frontiers, we will not accept that Maastricht be the victim of a perverted use of the FAB concept.

### **ONGOING FAB INITIATIVES**

ATCEUC provides support and assistance to those of its members who are involved into the setting of FAB. When debating the future of ATM, it is useful to examine ongoing initiatives

### **CEATS: some kind of FAB?**

Although it is not strictly speaking an "ongoing initiative", CEATS will remain forever the illustration of what happens when controllers are kept out of proceedings, and when the institutional problems linked with the establishment of a FAB are not properly addressed. It is also the best example of what happens when consolidation of air traffic control centre is presented as the sole answer to the FAB concept. That simplistic answer is not the adequate answer: in any case, it is an answer that is doomed. The de-fragmentation issue must be addressed globally, and the work should focus on the structure rather than on the number of centres or providers. That was made especially clear during the workshops organised in 2006 by the PRC on the issue of de-fragmentation.

### **SEEFABA**

SEEFABA is a project aiming at creating a FAB over the airspace of different states in central Europe among which are Kosovo, Bulgaria and Romania. Led by the European commission SEEFABA seems to be walking the same road than CEATS. Despite repeated assurances from the commission that the setting would be different, atco are out of the loop. Their questions remain, as of today, unanswered. Adding to the confusion, the operational aspect seems to be blurred by other considerations: Romania and Bulgaria had started 6 months before the birth of this project, discussions on the possible setting of a FAB between their two countries, involving their own controllers and personnel in the process. These discussion were in a quite advanced stage but the only answer the European Commission was able to give them is that their conclusions had to find a place in the yet-to-be-launched definition phase.

### **Franco Swiss FAB**

The ongoing feasibility study is concluded, and has paved the way for further developments. The whole process aims at rationalising the methods and the route network in one of the densest part of Europe, and will eventually enhance the situation. It is striking however, how financial considerations get in the way of technical and operational improvements, and limit the benefits that could be expected from the FAB.

## **MOSAIC**

It is a regional initiative, launched by our members from France, Maastricht UAC, Belgium, the Netherlands, Luxembourg, Swiss, Italy, Germany. It aims at creating a single provider of air traffic control over their airspace through a evolutionary and phased construction process. It will be built using best practices identified in each and every provider. Taking due account of the new regulatory framework, the needs of airlines, military users and ATM personnel, it will maximise the potential benefits of the FAB concept through a rational and efficient approach, based on extensive cooperation between Air navigation service providers.

It is one example of what personnel are capable of, when they set their mind to it. They think, they work, they build and propose viable alternatives. It is now up to the member states to face their own responsibilities.

## **PART IV: CONCLUSION**

The future ATM will be operational, or will simply not be.

It will have to cope with higher safety standards, better quality of service for all users. Operational enhancements will be built and implemented with the personnel or will not see the day. Cost reduction will be achieved through savings on the structure, rather than on ATM personnel.

Air traffic control has a cost. Safety, however, is priceless.