



*"[air navigation control, [í] 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).*

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ATCEUC COMMITTEE MEETING SPRING 2017 FINAL COMMUNIQUE

During discussions with EUROCONTROL and European Commission officials at the 51st ATCEUC General Assembly that took place in Warsaw on 3-5 May 2017, a sad realization emerged: many ANSPs are facing a serious staffing problem regarding air traffic controllers, due to the cost reduction targets set by RP1 and RP2. This has a continuous impact on capacity and, despite the best efforts by ATCOs, ATM delays around Europe are not expected to fall within the ambitious performance targets.

To ATCEUC the emerging understaffing problem was no surprise. We had warned all stakeholders well in advance that setting unreasonable and unachievable cost reduction targets for ANSPs would inevitably affect performance. At one point each ANSP had to make a decision between two options, maintaining safety vs achieving required capacity at any cost. Of course they chose safety, but the lack of ATCOs will continue to negatively affect performance in some cases for the next ten years.

This is a valuable lesson to keep in mind while drafting the details for RP3. The time has come for airspace users to seriously rethink their strategy of attacking and blaming ATCOs as a means to reduce ATM cost. Airlines management would benefit by following the example of trust and cooperation between ATCOs and pilots. Together we manage to deliver quality services to millions of passengers every year, with safety and efficiency.

It is also time for the EC to pursue a more balanced approach between the demands of airspace users and the realities facing ANSPs around Europe. RP3 must dare to steer away from past mistakes and define the future based on what is possible, safe and realistic.

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