



*"[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).*

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Open letter to the Members of the Single Sky Committee

Dear Members of the Single Sky Committee;

On the 8th of June 2020, Director-General for Mobility and Transport, Mr. Henrik Hololei, when speaking about the social impacts of the COVID-19 crisis on the ATM/ANS sector at the TRAN Committee meeting, said the following wise words:

"It is very important that we base ourselves in facts and the correct information and that has not, unfortunately, always been the case."

ATCEUC couldn't agree more with Mr. Hololei's words. Therefore, ATCEUC is committed to delivering you the facts and the correct information for the Single Sky Committee to make the best decisions.

In the aviation sector three main actors can be identified: Airspace users (airlines for passengers and cargo, private jets, general aviation, military, medical and evacuation flights, for example), Airports and Air Navigation Service Providers (ANSPs).

The current COVID-19 crisis is affecting all three actors at the same time but the European and National authorities have not distributed assisting measures equally to each one of them. Putting in place measures to financially aid just one of the three actors will leave the aviation sector hopelessly crippled.

So far, ATCEUC has observed European and National measures being implemented particularly towards Airspace users.

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At national level, three measures have been extensively used during this crisis: implementation of job retention scheme, zero rate loans and state guarantees. Some airlines benefited of this precious and welcome aid.

At European level, Airspace users at the early stage of the crisis informed of their inability to pay for the air navigation services that had still been provided 24 hours a day, 7 days a week before and during the current pandemic. The Member States decided to help further more airspace users by postponing the recovery of those fees from February to May.

ATM/ANS services were provided during the COVID-19 outbreak dangerously exposing the frontline staff to the risks of the corona virus. ATCEUC believes this should be enough to finally make all the European decision makers and citizens understand that ATM/ANS is an essential public service which maintains an essential infrastructure.

A service focused on safety and essential for the future growth of Europe's economy and essential for the citizens especially when a virus can put their lives at stake.

But what has been done to protect the ATM/ANS sector?

ATCEUC finds it urgent for the European Commission to answer these questions:

1. How many European Air Navigation Service Providers have benefited from a national job retention scheme?
2. How many European Air Navigation Service Providers have benefited from national zero rate loans?
3. How many measures have been implemented at European level to mitigate the financial impact of the COVID-19 crisis in the ATM/ANS sector?
4. When the traffic recovers substantially, what will be the operational consequences of ATCO layoffs, ATCOs leaving ANSPs because of salary cuts, dismissal of ab-initio training Air Traffic Controllers and worsening ANSPs employees' working conditions?
5. On the medium/long-term what will be the consequences of future ANSP's cuts in investment and staff?



With the DG Move proposals of reviewing the Traffic Risk Sharing and creating potential loss of One Billion Euros, ATCEUC believes that the ATM/ANS sector will not only be at risk for the rest of Reference Period 3 (RP3) but also for the entire period of the upcoming RP4. By not assisting ANSPs in this critical moment, the European Commission is regrettably repeating the same mistakes it made after 9/11 and the 2008 financial crisis.

ATCEUC is sure that the Single Sky Committee Members and European Citizens share the same doubts on the DG Move intentions for the RP3 re-design. ATCEUC urges the Single Sky Committee Members to take these facts into consideration when discussing the future of the Performance and Charging Scheme for RP3. ATCEUC is looking forward to know the answers from the European Commission to these five fundamental questions.

ATCEUC remains at your disposal for any clarification and/or additional information regarding the social impacts of the COVID-19 crisis along with the DG Move proposals consequences towards the ATM/ANS sector, and fully available to cooperate in designing measures that mitigate the impact of the current crisis in the ATM/ANS sector.

Volker Dick
ATCEUC President