



"[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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57th ATCEUC Committee Meeting Final Communiqué

After a two-year hiatus due to COVID-19, ATCEUC was able to organize its 57th General Assembly in Málaga, Spain, on 24-26 November 2021.

During those two years, the communication remained lively between the Executive Board and member unions and more especially with the ones facing literally existential problems like Albania, Poland and Croatia. The pandemic put to the test the already declining democratic practices in the ANSPs of these states, but also proved too much to handle for management in countries such as Denmark.

In Albania, ATCOs leading the union were jailed and prosecuted on false charges. In Poland and Croatia, they were persecuted and dismissed. In Denmark several ATCOs were forced to retire early, causing a foreseeable lack of staff to manage the rapidly increasing air traffic.

When most needed to provide assistance in these cases, European Union institutions like the Commission and EASA were either unwilling or unable to act. They are more attentive to airspace users' lobbying than to ATCOs crying for help. This institutional ineffectiveness in times of need undoubtedly jeopardizes flight safety in the affected ANSPs.

However, it is precisely in times of crisis that mutual respect and cooperation among stakeholders is even more essential in order to reach and implement optimum solutions and avoid destructive conflict. Managers are made or broken down during such circumstances. Their performance in the aforementioned cases was disappointing.

The pandemic has exposed even more the need for leadership, medical expertise and cooperation of all stakeholders down to individuals in order to succeed, locally and globally. The same applies globally, as a matter of

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fact, to ATM. ATCEUC is always available and willing to work together, but mere participation in consultation bodies is not enough. Time and again we see that our expert suggestions are ignored by EASA, the European Commission and the multitude of groups we are a part of.

Leaderships and politicians around the world form their decisions on COVID-19 based on the expert opinion of epidemiologists and many other specialists. ATM leaderships in Europe must also plan their own strategies taking into account the voice of ATCOs, ATSEPs and ATM professionals. Air traffic will recover eventually in Europe, reaching 50,000 flights daily by 2030. The new ATCEUC Executive Board elected in Malaga is ready to work with everyone involved to be ready in time. We cannot do it alone, and neither can you.

Málaga, 26 November 2021