



*"[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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## Looking for Scapegoats in Spain: Air Traffic Controllers still pay the price

Tourism, real estate, public infrastructures, Spain's economy is booming in the early 2000's. But then it's the choc, the subprime crisis hits Spain very hard, the unemployment rate balloons and its economy collapses.

Under high scrutiny, politicians look for someone to blame. Why not, then, stigmatise a whole group of professionals? Our Spanish Air Traffic Control Officers (ATCOs) colleagues will pay that price! The Spanish government starts a media campaign aiming at misinforming the general public and blaming Spanish ATCOs.

In December 2010, the Spanish ANSP decides to close the Spanish airspace due to ATCOs supposedly leaving their working positions. This is then followed by a repression hard to imagine in 21<sup>st</sup> Century Europe: soldiers are deployed in the ACCs after the Spanish government declares a state of alert referring to a law last used by dictator Franco in 1975... The press goes crazy, the general public takes exception to the situation and no one concentrates on politicians and their numerous mistakes. AENA (now ENAIRE) starts to take its ATCOs to court, refusing to admit its accountability in this disaster.

In May 2015, the verdict is clear: at no point in time did the Spanish ATCOs leave their working positions and AENA is held solely accountable for the closing of the airspace of December 2010. Today, does ENAIRE accept responsibility? It doesn't seem so, as two months after the acquittal of the involved ATCOs, it decides to take disciplinary measures against 61 ATCOs of Barcelona ACC by suspending them without pay for one month. Also, our colleague Marco Antonio Enríquez (Santiago ACC) has still to be rehired, even though the judge has totally dismissed all charges against him.

As a result, USCA, member of ATCEUC, is now calling for strike on the 8<sup>th</sup>, 10<sup>th</sup>, 12<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> of June for two periods of two hours each day. The last ATCO strike in Spain takes us back almost 30 years to 1989... Today, it's just too much! Disciplinary measures against acquitted ATCOs are as unjustifiable as unacceptable!

All ATCOs in ATCEUC stand in solidarity to USCA and their Spanish colleagues. As everyone else, ATCOs deserve to have their rights and integrity respected, in Spain and everywhere.

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