

PRESS RELEASE

EIGHT HOURS OF SILENCE:

ATCEUC Deeply Concerned by Unprecedented Air Traffic Communications Collapse in Greece

Brussels, 05 January 2026 – The Air Traffic Controllers European Unions Coordination (ATCEUC) expresses its profound concern over yesterday's unprecedented failure of both primary and backup communication systems at the Athens Area Control Center (ACC), which forced a temporary closure of Greek airspace and disrupted thousands of flights during one of the busiest travel periods of the year. For eight hours, the Athens FIR remained closed, while for two critical hours, Greek colleagues worked tirelessly to safely clear the remaining aircraft from the airspace.

This extensive and prolonged loss of radio communications serves as a stark and alarming warning of the critical importance of robust resilience and the uncompromising safety of Air Traffic Management (ATM) systems in Greece and across Europe.

Panagiotis Psarros, member of the ATCEUC Executive Board and Chair of the Association of Greek Air Traffic Controllers (GATCA) stated:

"For several hours, air traffic controllers were unable to communicate with aircraft in Greek airspace. Controllers responded with professionalism, calm, and unwavering dedication, using every available contingency to preserve safety. This incident once again exposes the critical weaknesses of outdated and underfunded ATM infrastructure. Safety was maintained thanks to human expertise — but this cannot continue to compensate for systemic deficiencies."

Urgent Calls for Action

ATCEUC stresses that such a situation is completely unacceptable in a modern European aviation system and calls on:

- **The Government of Greece and Members of the Greek Parliament** to urgently engage in meaningful structural reforms and to ensure the immediate allocation of sufficient financial resources to safeguard the safety, resilience, and future of Greek ATM/ANS.

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- **HASP management** to fully engage in the implementation of these immediate actions and now collaborate closely with an appropriate level of trust with GATCA and Greek air traffic controllers.
- **The European Transport Commissioner Mr Apostolos TZITZIKOSTAS** to continue strong personal engagement in building the future of ATM in Greece and across Europe.
- **DG MOVE, EUROCONTROL, the Network Manager, and EASA** to continue their unwavering commitment, providing the operational, technical, and regulatory expertise necessary to support a safe, resilient, and modern ATM system in Greece.

ATCEUC reiterates its deep concern over the critically low revenue levels of HASP, which are fundamentally incompatible with the safety and performance requirements placed on Greek ATM/ANS and remain far below the European average. Years of chronic underinvestment have severely weakened the system and cannot be corrected without sustained and substantial additional funding.

The current RP4 planning clearly fails to provide the resources required. An urgent and significant increase in the unit rate in Greece is indispensable to guarantee long-term safety, operational continuity, and system resilience. With the RP4 plan currently under discussion, it must be reinforced — this is the time to invest more, not less.

Solidarity with Colleagues

ATCEUC extends its heartfelt thanks and full solidarity to air traffic controllers and aviation professionals in **Greece, Italy, Cyprus, Malta, Türkiye, Bulgaria, Romania, North Macedonia, Albania, Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and possibly others** for their unwavering cooperation and support during this unprecedented crisis. We pay tribute to our colleagues' professionalism and dedication under extraordinary pressure, which ensured that safety remained paramount at all times.

ATCEUC stands firmly with air traffic controllers in Greece and across Europe and will continue to advocate for the investment and reforms required to protect the safety of European aviation.

Air Traffic Controllers European Unions Coordination (ATCEUC) was created in 1989 and is currently composed of 34 professional and autonomous trade unions representing more than 16000 Air Traffic Controllers (ATCOs) and Air Traffic Safety Electronics Personnel (ATSEPs) throughout Europe. ATCEUC is part of the "European Union Sectoral Social Dialogue - Civil Aviation" in the air traffic management field and it is recognised as a full member of the ICB. ATCEUC with its experts participates in every work group where the voice of its Members can and have to be expressed: SESAR JU, TSG, CEGHD, EASA ATM/ANS CSTG, EASC, ASPReT, JCTF, ATM Partners and other workshops or programmes within the framework of EASA, EUROCONTROL and the European Commission.