



*"[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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PRESS RELEASE

Belgian Air Traffic Control Dispute: Don't Question the Red Alarm Button! Ask Why It Was Pressed.

Brussels, 9th of June

The recent disruption affecting Belgian air traffic control services has had a significant impact on passengers, airlines and the wider aviation community. Nobody underestimates these consequences.

However, the current situation cannot be understood solely through the events of the last few days. It is the result of years of deteriorating labour relations, unresolved social issues and growing frustration among operational staff.

For more than a decade, concerns regarding working conditions, rostering arrangements, career development and social dialogue have accumulated without being adequately resolved. The recent negotiations linked to the Digital Tower project acted as a catalyst for frustrations that had been building for many years.

The spontaneous nature of the action should itself be understood as a warning signal. It reflects a level of dissatisfaction and loss of confidence that can no longer be ignored.

Belgian law provides employees with a legal framework for collective action. The recent actions took place within that framework. The debate should not focus on the existence of that mechanism.

When a large part of an organisation presses the red alarm button simultaneously, the problem is not the button. The problem is what pushed so many people to use it. Ignoring the causes and focusing only on the reaction guarantees that the same crisis will happen again.

The immediate priority must now be to restore dialogue and create the conditions for a sustainable solution. Focusing exclusively on the consequences of the disruption without addressing the underlying causes would be a serious mistake.

Equally concerning would be any attempt to use the current situation as a justification for further restricting the right to strike. Such measures would not resolve the underlying

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problems. On the contrary, they would risk deepening mistrust and further damaging labour relations.

The Belgian aviation sector requires long-term solutions. Sustainable operational performance can only be achieved through adequate staffing, modern working conditions, mutual trust and meaningful social dialogue.

The objective should not be to identify a party to blame. The objective should be to ensure that the same situation does not occur again in the future.

Only through dialogue and mutual respect can a lasting solution be achieved.

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