



*"[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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Final Communiqué of the 67th ATCEUC Committee Meeting

Belgrade, Serbia, 9 October 2026

The 67th ATCEUC Committee Meeting, held in Belgrade from 6 to 9 October 2026, brought together representatives of air traffic controllers and ATSEP trade unions from across Europe to address some of the most pressing challenges facing Air Traffic Management and Air Navigation Services (ATM/ANS). Hosted by the Serbian trade union SKL, the meeting focused on two fundamental issues for the future of the sector: the recruitment and training of the next generation of air traffic controllers, and the consequences of an ageing workforce.

The Committee extends its sincere gratitude to SKL for its hospitality and the excellent organisation of the meeting.

Growing traffic, growing challenges

The Committee had the pleasure of welcoming Mr. Iacopo Prissinotti, Director of the EUROCONTROL Network Manager, who provided an overview of the European ATM network. His presentation confirmed the continuing growth in air traffic and the expectation that this trend will continue despite the challenging and uneven economic outlook across Europe.

Recruitment and training: URGENT investment

Ms. Kerstin SJOBECK, representing the European Commission, presented the initial findings of its study on the next generation of Air Traffic Controller (ATCO) licensing rules. The study provides an important evidence base for understanding current workforce challenges and anticipated developments through to 2035.

Its findings confirm a reality that ATCEUC has repeatedly highlighted: the gap between the demand for qualified air traffic controllers and the available workforce is already a serious concern and is expected to widen further in the coming years. ATCEUC calls on the European Commission, Member States and ANSPs to take immediate and decisive action. Concrete measures must be implemented.

Europe needs more controllers.

This is particularly concerning in light of recent decisions under the Reference Period 4 (RP4) performance plans, which continue to move in the wrong direction. Some Air Navigation Service Providers are being required to implement complex cost-reduction programmes at a time when the sector urgently needs to recruit, train and retain qualified personnel. The potential consequences of RP4 imposed cost reductions in Switzerland remain a major concern, particularly as critical knowledge

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and expertise are being lost from ANSPs. The effects of these decisions will become increasingly visible in the short and medium term, creating tomorrow's operational problems.

Training is not a cost; it is an investment in the future of European aviation.

The quality of training is equally important. High-quality training improves competence, supports better training outcomes and pass rates, and makes the overall training process more effective. Efficiency must be pursued through the quality and effectiveness of training, not through reductions in the resources needed to deliver it.

These principles were valid in the past, but the approaching generational change makes them more urgent than ever.

An ageing workforce requires sustainable solutions

The ageing air traffic controller workforce is another major concern for the future of ATM/ANS.

Air traffic control requires sustained concentration, sound judgement, the ability to manage stress and the capacity to perform under pressure. Controllers work shifts, often at demanding hours, and must maintain high levels of competence and performance in a safety-critical environment.

Simply postponing retirement or encouraging controllers to remain in operational service for longer cannot be considered a sustainable substitute for adequate recruitment and training.

The sector should not repeat the mistake of disregarding warnings: Extending working lives without addressing the specific demands of the profession risks creating problems of significant magnitude. ATCEUC therefore insists on the urgent adoption of a comprehensive, coherent and balanced workforce strategy.

CP2

The presentation of CP2 raised significant concerns among the audience. In light of the regulatory and operational challenges currently being encountered with CP1, ATCEUC members questioned the rationale for extending an even more far-reaching and legally binding approach.

CP2, particularly through SDO8, goes well beyond CP1 and the PCP, potentially reshaping the entire service delivery model rather than simply setting technological targets. The sector's operational and organisational readiness, and the need to demonstrate that the expected benefits justify the associated costs and risks remain key concerns. Regulation should not be used to force the sector towards a predefined model without sufficient evidence of its feasibility. Safety, system resilience, and the preservation of adequate control through a sound Functional System approach, supported by the necessary operational expertise, must remain paramount.

Trade union rights and social dialogue must be protected

The Committee also addressed deeply concerning situations in which trade unions and their representatives face pressure, threats or other forms of repression. The situation in Serbia, where three air traffic controllers had their security clearances withdrawn and subsequently lost their jobs, was discussed in detail.

ATCEUC expresses its strong concern and unequivocal disapproval of any conduct that undermines the legitimate activities of trade unions or the protection of their representatives.



ATCEUC stands in full solidarity with the affected colleagues and their trade union. The situations in Serbia and in North Macedonia are not isolated cases, but part of a broader concern regarding the protection of trade union rights and representatives. The right to organise and the freedom to represent workers without intimidation are fundamental pillars of a democratic European society.

These rights must be respected and effectively protected in practice. In response, ATCEUC members discussed possible coordinate joint initiatives, combining high-level European engagement with concrete action to defend trade union rights.

Trade unions and their representatives are indispensable partners in building a safe, efficient and sustainable aviation system.

Aviation is a strategic priority for Europe

Aviation is essential to Europe, and connectivity is a strategic priority. When territories are not adequately connected, their opportunities for economic development, cooperation and growth are reduced.

ATM/ANS is a vital component of this connectivity. Its performance relies not only on technology, infrastructure and regulatory frameworks, but also on sustainable working conditions and an adequately staffed workforce with the necessary skills and experience.

The next ATCEUC Committee Meeting will take place in Vilnius, Lithuania, from 26 to 29 April 2027. Lithuania stands at the heart of Europe's geopolitical concerns and aviation challenges, which are shaping the resilience of the European aviation system. ATCEUC looks forward to continuing its work there, united in its commitment to a safe, sustainable and socially responsible European ATM/ANS system.

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 (ATSEP) 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.