



"[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 66th ATCEUC Committee Meeting

The 66th ATCEUC Committee Meeting in Lisbon, from 14 to 17 April 2026, marks the end of an era for our organization. Our President, Volker Dick, is stepping down after 22 years of unwavering service to thousands of ATCOs around Europe. Jean-Denis Larrère of the French Union SNCTA was elected as the new President to guide ATCEUC through the challenging times ahead.

The meeting was hosted by SINCTA, whose excellent organisation and warm hospitality were highly appreciated. ATCEUC extends its sincere gratitude to NAV Portugal, and the Portuguese aviation authorities for their valuable contributions to the success of the meeting.

The ongoing war in Ukraine, now compounded by the war in Iran, is placing unprecedented strain on the European ATM network. Large sections of European airspace, especially along the southeastern corridor, are now underused due to major shifts in traffic patterns. This has led to significant revenue losses, with some states experiencing declines of up to 20%. Meanwhile, other regions, particularly Greece, are dealing with intense congestion and heavily overloaded airspace. Disruptions could further be exacerbated by emerging jet fuel supply concerns, adding pressure on the aviation system.

ATCEUC warns against the already resurgent short-term cost-reduction measures, such as the postponement of ab initio training, which are well-known to undermine long-term capacity and resilience.

ATCEUC calls on the European Commission and Member States to take immediate, decisive action by embedding robust, sustainable solutions within targeted performance plan revisions to correct these geopolitical imbalances. Short- and long-term performance must be upheld, and safety must remain non-negotiable.

Presentations by EUROCONTROL Network Manager, Mr. Iacopo Prissinotti and Mr. Steven Moore, Head of ATM Network Operations at EUROCONTROL, added a comprehensive overview of the current and future network situation. The discussions highlighted a critical reality: ATM/ANS is once again operating under high vulnerability.

The audience strongly echoes the NM key message: "We must act now to secure stability for the network and our ATM/ANS industry, ensuring immediate results and a stable future." For ATCEUC, this principle must guide not only operational decisions but also political, social, and strategic actions across the European aviation.

The Committee engaged in in-depth discussions on the challenges experienced under Reference Period 4 (RP4) and the implications for RP5. Constructive discussions were held with Mr. Koen Milis, PRB Chairman, as well as representatives from NAV Portugal and the Portuguese authorities. For ATCEUC, a shared understanding emerged:

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adequate and stable financing is more than ever a necessity to build a resilient ATM system.

The RP4 lessons learned also clearly demonstrate that the current performance framework does not sufficiently deliver the resilience required. Across large parts of the network, urgent and substantial financial investment in both human resources and new systems is needed. In some areas, funding is simply critically insufficient; in others, available resources should be fully deployed, with staffing and infrastructure investment pursued to the greatest extent. Inadequate staffing levels of ATCOs, ATSEP and other operational staff are not an option.

The current and previous RP focuses on unit cost reduction has directly contributed to the operational difficulties we face today. For RP5, ATCEUC calls for a clear break: EU unit cost policy should raise, not reduce, unit rates.

The meeting reaffirmed that effective social dialogue is a key solution to many of the challenges faced by the sector. Where social dialogue is weakened, the consequences are clear: loss of staff, reduced attractiveness of the profession, and declining system performance. Social dialogue is an EU obligation. Strengthening it across Europe and beyond is essential to retain and attract qualified professionals, as well as to support the efficiency and sustainability of performance.

ATCEUC proudly elected Mr Volker Dick, its long-standing President, as the first Honorary President of the organisation. This distinction reflects his exceptional contribution and dedication. ATCEUC is honoured to continue benefiting from his wisdom and experience.

A new Board has been elected, entrusted with continuing the work with the same energy and commitment. While challenges remain at the core of our daily work, ATCEUC will continue to meet them united in purpose and determined to succeed together.

The next ATCEUC Committee Meeting, hosted by our colleagues from ATCU, is scheduled for 6–9 October 2026 in Belgrade. We look forward to gathering in this vibrant city at the heart of one of Europe's key traffic growth areas. We would like to thank our hosts for welcoming the ATCEUC community, and we are confident that this meeting will be just as exceptional as the one in Lisbon.

Lisbon, Portugal – 17 April 2026

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 14000 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.