

## **Just Culture failing in cash-strapped Europe**

Europe's air traffic control agencies are failing to heed the safety concerns of their employees at a time when they are imposing stringent cutbacks in personnel, recruitment and investment.

"We are appalled at the extreme measures taken by several European ANSPs against aviation safety professionals throughout the region who have had the courage to speak out about safety related problems associated with staffing, training, and other serious conditions of employment," said Zeljko Oreski, the International Federation of Air Traffic Controllers Associations' executive vice-president for the European region.

He was speaking at IFATCA's European summit held 19-21 October in Belgrade, Serbia, which was attended by 36 of the 42 member associations representing most European states with more than 150 participants.

IFATCA insists that 'Just Culture' and the protection of air traffic controllers in the execution of their profession require more attention than ever before and that legal protection for controllers must remain a top priority.

IFATCA said it strongly supports the Norwegian Air Traffic Controllers Association (NATCA) in its struggle to secure appropriate controller staffing levels to ensure the safety of the flying public. "AVINOR, the Norwegian ANSP has sued NATCA when it refused to remove one of their representatives who sounded the alarm for safety. A trial has convened and a ruling from the court is forthcoming," it said.

"In Greece, the Government's unwillingness to invest in the aviation system and its professional work force is beginning to have a negative impact on safety," it added.

IFATCA strongly believes that controller working conditions have a direct impact on the safety of the operation and that revenue generated solely from system users should be distributed to reward the quality of service and the achievement of performance targets.

"The Government is disregarding its legal obligation to reinvest user fees back into the aviation system and continues to compromise the safety of the traveling public by using money for other purposes," it said.

IFATCA also raised its concerns over the liberalisation process in

Spain. "In an effort to save money, the Government and AENA are collaborating to completely replace the existing staff with new controllers, whose selection and training standards have been significantly degraded, introducing what could become the de facto low-cost (low-safety) air navigation service. Safety is apparently not the main priority for either AENA or the Spanish authorities."

"Pragmatic and sustainable change is only possible in Europe with true collaboration among all stakeholders, including air traffic controllers," said IFATCA. "Granting air traffic control associations a voice at the decision-making level would demonstrate true commitment on the part of European governments in providing the public with the standard of air travel they deserve," said Oreski.

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