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RP4: ATCEUC AND ETF CALL TO REJECT EUROPEAN COMMISSION PROPOSAL OF CUTTING INVESTMENTS IN THE HUMAN AND SYSTEMS OF THE ATM/ANS SECTOR.

The third reference period for managing performance of the ATM/ANS service provision (RP3) is now in its last year. This period has been marked by COVID-19 and the steep recovery of the aviation sector. After this challenging and chaotic period, the picture of our European Society is clear: environmental challenges cannot be avoided and connecting people is a key aspiration. EU citizens want to travel. The demand of air transport is stronger than ever, even with high inflation and economic growth below expectations.

The European society needs a qualitative, diverse and easy offer of transportation.

RP3 for ATM/ANS can be summarized in a few words: a high level of safety and resilience but also a lack of staff notably of air traffic control officers (ATCOs) and air traffic safety electronic personnel (ATSEPs), difficulties to recruit future talents and an ever-stronger need of investments in infrastructure and systems.

Facing this clear picture, the proposal of the European Commission for RP4 is at the same time full of surprises and disappointments. Cost reduction is still the only actual priority of policy makers.

Regarding the environment, only the efficiency of trajectory is looked at in the RP4 framework similarly to RP3, unfortunately with the same difficulties: how can ANSPs be the sole responsible of inefficiency of trajectories, when airspace users are the unique decision makers in terms of flight planning?

Furthermore, proper measurement of the impact of military activities on civil aircraft trajectory remains to be better understood at tactical but also at strategic level especially with conflicts in Ukraine and in the middle East.

Insufficient investment on new staff in previous reference periods will again result in notable lack in capacity during RP4 and beyond. Unrealistic targets for capacity have been the same for the last 15 years. Nothing new needs to be said on this matter. Long-term aspirational goals cannot be turned into operational targets associated with heavy financial penalties. An approach based on operations knowledge should be the basis of an appropriate target setting. This political exercise is counterproductive as it only prolongs the staff shortage we are experiencing.

ATCEUC and ETF call now for the member States to have a proper level of ambition for RP4 period. Challenges are clear and known: digitalisation is the corner stone, but it is a challenge to come for all the workers/employees of the sector. Investments in ATCOs, ATSEPs, Engineers and Technicians need to be increased to develop and implement the ATN/ANS of the future. For RP4, solutions will remain based on human and ATCOs centred. The capability of the ATM/ANS sector to attract new and retain existing talents will be key.

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