



"[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

A new European Commission, the same misleading speech

After the appointment of the new Commissioners, ATCEUC expected some fresh ideas, but it took only two weeks for the new European Commissioner of Transport, Violeta Bulc, to repeat the same old and misleading statement during the High Level Conference in Rome:

"... zig-zags making the average flight nearly 50 kilometres longer than it could be. With tens of millions of minutes of delay each year. All these add confusion and they add cost."

"Fragmentation costs 5 billion euros every year; 18 million tonnes of carbon dioxide every year; it's costing us growth and it's costing us jobs. This is what we could get back with a single European Sky."

Throughout her speech, the Commissioner blamed the Air Traffic Management (ATM) sector for being responsible for the aviation delays and longer routes. Shouldn't she know better?

ATM is responsible for less than 30 seconds of delay per flightⁱ and this is about 8% of the primary delay, while airlines are responsible for 54%!

The average horizontal en-route flight plan inefficiency is 3,14%ⁱⁱ, meaning 14,7 NM or 27,2 km per flightⁱⁱⁱ of which the main contributing factors are out of the air navigation service providers' (ANSPs) control, as they are a result of military areas circumnavigation, en-route winds and weather avoidance.

Nowadays, there is no gridlock in the skies, but the European Commission should stop putting additional pressure on the system. During the last 3 years, ANSPs have been under pressure to cut costs and they have stopped or drastically

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reduced recruitment and investments as a result. At the same time, Air Traffic Controllers are now facing traffic growth and the European Commission is demanding additional cuts. Is this really a growth-oriented system, where recruitment and investments are close to none?

Furthermore, the Single European Sky II package has not been fully implemented yet and the European Commission already wants to enforce a third one. ATCEUC believes that this new approach, only focused on centralisation and liberalisation, will only result in the destruction of the safety chain and put the principle of subsidiarity at risk. Moreover, ATCEUC strongly opposes to the European Commission's option to sacrifice 9'400 ANSP jobs^{iv}, which will for sure impact safety and service quality. This is just one more sign that the so-called fifth pillar is nothing more than empty words and does not match with the European Commission actions.

ATCEUC invites the new Commissioner to follow her own words and to start analysing the existing problems with a solution-oriented mindset. It is time for the European Commission to listen to those who work, on a daily basis, to keep European skies the safest ones! It is time for the new European Commissioner to stop repeating the same exact - and yet, inaccurate and misleading - words of Mr. Kallas, if she wants to succeed in bringing all stakeholders on board.

Is it possible for the Commissioner to understand the real issues? The European Air Traffic Controllers surely do hope so, because ATCEUC has always been ready to discuss ATM problems and propose solutions.

ATCEUC represents 28 unions and is the voice of 14'000 ATCOs across Europe.

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ⁱ <https://www.eurocontrol.int/sites/default/files/content/documents/official-documents/facts-and-figures/coda-reports/coda-digest-annual-2013.pdf>

ⁱⁱ <https://www.eurocontrol.int/sites/default/files/publication/files/prr-2013.pdf>

ⁱⁱⁱ <https://www.eurocontrol.int/sites/default/files/publication/files/2012-US-EUR-comparison-of-ATM-related-OPS-performance.pdf>

^{iv} <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52013SC0207&from=EN>