



TEAMING UP FOR SAFETY

To achieve its mission, EUROCONTROL works closely with Member States, air navigation service providers (ANSPs), civil and military airspace users, airports, the aerospace industry, intergovernmental organisations, the European institutions, and last but not least with professional organisations. All these stakeholders come together to create a Single European Sky which meets the safety, capacity and performance challenges of European aviation in the 21st century. Partnership is the single word that best describes the Agency's way of operating. As front-end users and safety professionals, European pilots are a key pillar of this partnership and have enthusiastically embarked on this ambitious project to improve and develop new, more efficient and safer air traffic management (ATM) concepts and procedures.

The European voice of pilots is

the ECA – the European Cockpit Association, which was created in 1991 and today represents 38,000 pilots from national Pilot Associations in 37 European States. In 2006, ECA signed an agreement with the International Federation of Air Line Pilots' Associations (IFALPA) to take on the role of IFALPA's "regional body in Europe" – to carry out IFALPA's responsibilities in Europe when representing airline pilots at institutions, agencies and any other branches of the European Union. This agreement also empowers ECA to fully represent cockpit crews at intergovernmental organisations, including EUROCONTROL and the European Civil Aviation Conference (ECAC).

Today ECA is involved at every level of the corporate governance structure of the Agency. Not only is it an observer organisation to the Provisional Council – the key governing and supervising body of the Agency – but it also brings a great

deal of operational expertise and experience on many issues ranging from technical topics such as traffic collision avoidance systems (TCAS) or continuous descent operations (CDO) to more transverse subjects like ways of creating a stronger 'Just Culture' environment for aviation professionals.

ECA experts very actively participate in the work of the Network Operations team, the Airport Operation team and the activities of many other working groups or ad-hoc task forces. The pilots' presence and active involvement helps to foster ideas about how to improve aviation safety and to implement efficient ATM procedures. Even more importantly, it provides a 'reality check' by channeling valuable and sound inputs from people being confronted – in their daily work – by the new developments and functionalities attached to a given operational scenario.

The ECA community also con-



Loïc Michel, ECA Technical Policy Advisor

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tributes to the Safety Improvement Sub-Group (SISG), which aims to help front-end operators involved in ATM-related safety events to share experiences with each other. In this way, the aviation safety professionals have an opportunity to broaden their experience of the problems that may be encountered, to be aware of available solutions and therefore be better prepared should they meet similar occurrences themselves.

Two very concrete and tangible recent initiatives demonstrate how fruitful such a partnership between EUROCONTROL and the pilot community can be.

A significant achievement for pilots was the release of the European Action Plan for the Prevention of Runway Excursions (EAP-PRE) in early 2013. With at least two runway excursions per week worldwide, there was an urgent need to scale up action against this kind of safety event. All along the elaboration process of the action plan, ECA experts very closely and actively cooperated with EUROCONTROL and many other aviation stakeholders and organisations to come up with an ambitious action plan, consistent with the operational reality.

The action plan provides a comprehensive set of stakeholder specific guidelines and recommendations on how to reduce the number of runway excursions. It recognises that the Local Runway Safety Teams (LRST), which aim at monitoring closely the local aerodrome, identifying potential runway safety issues and working on means to mitigate runway safety deficiencies at local level, are a crucial tool to successfully implement the plan and produce safety benefits. It

is the expertise and day-to-day experience of pilots from local pilot associations that will be instrumental in making the best possible use of LRST.

Another major project in which ECA's members are playing a central role is the Prosecutor Expert Course set up by IFATCA and EUROCONTROL. The need for proper administration of justice and – at the same time – continued availability of aviation safety information brought this course to life. The fear of prosecution or reprisals at company level after reporting an occurrence is still very much present today. The resulting lack of incident reporting breaks the experience feed-back loop and reduces the ability to achieve safety improvements by learning pro-actively from the past.

This initiative tries to smooth the path for independent aviation experts to provide high-quality information and expertise to judicial authorities and to increase mutual understanding. Available upon request, these experts will support – with specialist knowledge – the work of prosecutors especially before, but also during, a (criminal) investigation related to an incident and/or accident, and where appropriate, support the Court. The aim is not only to provide expertise but also to create confidence and trust which are two key ingredients to any robust and mature safety-management system.

Expanding on this positive experience of cooperation, the pilot community is committed to continue its active involvement to support the Agency's future work and initiatives. A number of activities are already on ECA's radar screen, such as the upcoming Airborne Conflict Safety Forum

jointly organised with the Flight Safety Foundation.

More than ever, it remains essential to take human factors and operational first-hand experience into account in dealing with upcoming challenges. In particular, it needs to be clear that the future ATM system will only work if wholeheartedly endorsed by those responsible for operating it.

A very good test case in that respect is the shared objective of safely integrating the Remotely Piloted Aircraft System (RPAS) into non-segregated airspace. In the near future, RPAS will significantly change the look of Europe's skies. Indeed, the smaller RPAS offer such clear business opportunities that there will soon be greater willingness to progressively accommodate them. It is therefore EUROCONTROL's intention to help establish clear, harmonised and appropriate rules to operate RPAS. These provisions are required so RPAS can evolve into a recognised and legitimate category of airspace user that, from an ATM perspective, is able to operate transparently with other aircraft. This raises a wide range of challenging, safety-critical issues, such as the management of RPAS collision avoidance and separation or the design of human systems interface, which cannot be successfully addressed without controllers and pilots' operational input.

Close cooperation and mutual understanding with professional staff organisations, therefore, remains at the core of EUROCONTROL's work. ECA has played its part in the past and will continue to do so in the future – in building a more-efficient and safer European ATM system. ■



Álvaro Gammicchia,
ECA Board Director for
Technical Affairs