



*"[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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Aix-en-Provence, 15<sup>th</sup> of April 2016

Your Excellencies,

ATCEUC (Air Traffic Controllers European Unions Coordination) is a confederation created in 1989 and it is currently composed of 30 professional and autonomous Trade Unions representing more than 14.000 Air Traffic Controllers (ATCOs).

Since the Belgian and International media continue to grossly misrepresent what is really happening within Belgocontrol, ATCEUC needs to clarify a number of things concerning the situation in the Belgian airspace.

- Belgian Air Traffic Controllers DID NOT GO ON STRIKE. Neither the Belgian Guild of Air Traffic Controllers (BGATC), nor the Unions representing the Air Traffic Controllers have called for an action, strike or anything else. A circulating letter which stated that BGATC called for actions is purely false information and misleading the media and the general public.
- Belgocontrol management appears to have deliberately chosen the moment to force a collective agreement for the Belgocontrol staff. Given the sensitivity of these unilateral measures and the impact they would have on the individual Air Traffic Controllers at Belgocontrol, the detrimental impact this would have on their ability to provide a safe and efficient service was entirely predictable.
- As such, we clearly place the full responsibility for the chaos of the past days with the management of Belgocontrol and the Belgian political system. It is shocking to have to note that, yet again, a lack of understanding and specific competence could have had direct consequences for the Safety of the travelling public.
- To those who are droning on about the effects this situation has on the image of Belgocontrol, Brussels Airport and Belgium: maybe they should try to imagine what effect an accident would have on that image, especially if it was the result of an Air Traffic Controller unable to perform properly due to the impact of this political decision on his/her work environment, career and personal life.
- The issues at Belgocontrol are many, and by far exceed the problems of retirement age and career: lack of investments resulting in serious technical outages, structural staff shortages resulting in people working up to 12 consecutive shifts or more, complete lack of vision and long-term outlook for the company and its staff, and we could go on.
- Air Traffic Controllers, like other safety critical personnel, are OBLIGED to report unfit for duty if they judge they are physically and/or mentally unfit to perform their duties. A Union or Association advising their members not to adhere to this would be breaking the law and endangering the general public! With all these issues hanging over their heads, it is almost a miracle Air Traffic Controllers have been able to keep Belgocontrol afloat over the past years. However, today, we seem to have reached the breaking point.
- We call upon all involved parties to resolve these issues once and for all. In that respect, we would like to point out that ATCEUC has advocated for an integrated, cross-border approach to Air Traffic Control. As aviation is by definition international, it makes no sense to sustain a segregated, national approach, with all ramifications involved. A European public service for  
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Air Traffic Control would allow Air Traffic Controllers to focus on service delivery and Safety, rather than having to deal with political agendas.

Volker Dick  
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