



FÉLAG ÍSLENSKRA FLUGUMFERÐARSTJÓRA

ICEATCA



The Prime Minister of Belgium
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Your Excellency,

It is sad to read the news this week from Belgium. A prosperous, central-European nation who can afford to manage safe skies has opted to put cost cutting before safety in civil aviation. After months of news within our profession about excessive overtime of controllers in Belgocontrol, lack of investments resulting in serious technical outages, complete lack of vision and long-term outlook for the company and its staff, it is clear that it all comes down to poor management. 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.

In air traffic control, and in all aspects of aviation, safety should come first. No exceptions. When skilled professionals point out faults in their local systems, they should not be punished. That is the heart of Just culture, a safety culture implemented to increase safety in aviation by focusing on the things that can go wrong and fix them before they cause incidents or accidents. This has, among other things, helped in making air travel the safest way to travel. Not one of the safest, but the safest.

Belgian controllers have been striving for improvements in their working environment for years. Instead of doing their job and addressing the issues within Belgocontrol, the company's management forced a collective agreement for the Belgocontrol staff, leaving the controllers out in the cold. 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.

Air traffic controllers, like other safety critical personnel, are obliged to report unfit for duty if they deem they are physically and/or mentally unfit to perform their duties. A union or an 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, during the last days, we seem to have reached the breaking point.

We call upon all involved parties to resolve these issues once and for all. We hope that you will be able to reach a solution that would allow air traffic controllers to focus on service delivery and safety, rather than having to deal with political agendas.

On behalf of ICEATCA,



Sigurjon Jonasson, president



Sif Aradottir, secretary

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