

# THE CONTROLLER

SEPTEMBER 2025

JOURNAL OF AIR TRAFFIC CONTROL



## ALSO IN THIS ISSUE:

- LOTS OF FEDERATION NEWS, INCLUDING IFATCA ON MOUNT EVEREST
- CONTROLLER SHORTAGES: THE PERFECT STORM
- SLEEP RECOVERY AFTER NIGHTSHIFTS
- AND.... UNICORNS!







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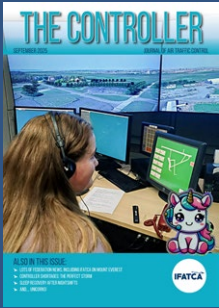
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**Cover Photo:** AirNav Ireland organises an outreach programme for transition year students each year. The aim is to attract young people to the air traffic control profession. Featured in the photo is Siún Moore, potentially a third generation air traffic controller!

Credit: AirNav Ireland

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### EXECUTIVE BOARD OF IFATCA



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[www.ifatca.org](http://www.ifatca.org)

\* ex-officio members

# FROM THE EXECUTIVE BOARD

➤ BY JEAN-FRANÇOIS LEPAGE, IFATCA DEPUTY PRESIDENT



**As I write this editorial, summer is slowly drawing to a close. I am well aware that most of you who are in the northern hemisphere spent the summer working long hours, through thunderstorms and diversions, often with staffing levels below what is required. I still hope that you were able to enjoy some time off to spend quality time with your loved ones and families.**

In the field of air traffic control, summer often means chronic staff shortages and a marked increase in traffic volume. The theme we have chosen for the Federation this year reminds us, on the one hand, of the importance of training more controllers, but also of the need to train smarter those who will take over our profession in the future. On the other hand, the theme chosen is also closely linked to the conditions I mentioned earlier, since the recruitment, training, and retention of all professionals in the civil aviation sector is the only solution that will allow us to get through the crisis we are currently experiencing.

In the leadup to September, your Executive Board is working diligently on all fronts to prepare for the activities scheduled for this fall. Preparations for the first Executive Board meeting of 2025-2026 are well underway, as are our preparations for the 42nd ICAO Assembly, which will be held immediately after this meeting. Preparations for regional meetings are in hand, with the first of these to be held in late September for the Americas region. Our four standing committees will also be holding their meetings this fall, from October to December. And while the summer provided a much-needed break for those responsible for organising our next conference in Bucharest, Romania in 2026, work on this front will intensify throughout the fall.

Other initiatives are also progressing, although they are not immediately visible to our members. I am thinking in particular of the revitalisation of the Training Task Force (TTF), the creation of our new website, the in-depth update of our IAM, the upgrading of the framework surrounding the Speak English Programme (SEP), the strategic planning work of the Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) task force and communications committee, and so on. In short, your Executive Board and all the volunteers who orbit around it are working hard to move our work forward in the direction expressed by our president, Helena, and thus progress towards achieving our common strategic objectives, which can be summed up as: "Make IFATCA the Gold Standard of ATC."

As I mentioned earlier, fall means regional meetings. I will personally have the chance to meet you at the ASP and AMA meetings, while Helena will have the opportunity to spend time with you at the EUR and AFM meetings. We're all very much looking forward to seeing you again and having the pleasure of talking with you, and I'm very eager to see, with our Executive Board, the progress we've each made on the multitude of issues currently before us.

Until then, I wish you a wonderful end to the summer, enjoy reading this magazine, and I'll see you very soon this fall.

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## MISSION STATEMENT

**To enhance air traffic safety, to promote the air traffic control profession, and to shape the future of air traffic management.**

## VISION STATEMENT

**IFATCA is the global voice of Air Traffic Controllers. It furthers air traffic safety, influences the sustainable evolution of aviation, and embraces all members of its community. The apolitical federation provides guidance, representation, training, and other services to advance the status and professionalism of air traffic control. It collaborates with other international organizations to achieve mutual goals.**



# FROM THE EDITORIAL TEAM



➤ **BY NICOLA NI RIADA, IFATCA COMMUNICATIONS COORDINATOR**

Hello and welcome to the Autumn (fall) edition of the Controller Magazine. Thank you for taking the time to read it!

As you probably know, the theme for IFATCA this year is recruitment and training. With that in mind we have articles from two professors working in the aviation fields of academia, one from Dublin City University (Ireland), and one from Embry Riddle university (USA), looking at how academia might support ATC recruitment going forward. Outreach and getting visibility for our profession is an IFATCA goal- see the pieces from North Macedonia and Ireland on what they are doing in this area. My personal favourite outreach article is about unicorns!

Make sure you read how one ATCO is inspiring young children to get interested in our profession!

As well as inspiring the younger ones, we are also conscious of our existing and aging workforce. From the human perspective, mental wellbeing task force has a piece on sleep recovery and from the Equity Diversity and Inclusion Task force the DEI toolkit is explained, as well as information from the andropause/menopause working group. These work groups are in their infancy, but they are growing in coverage and support globally. PCX Helena has written on collaboration, and this concept is mirrored in the industry Partner articles too.

In IFATCA news there are updates for each of the upcoming regional meetings as well as an update from Uganda 2027. New member associations Chad and Suriname tell us why gaining IFATCA membership is important to them. TOC and PLC updates on their work .

No edition of the magazine would be complete without an asexual element - see the OshKosh article complete with amazing pictures. And of course, Charlie's column to make you smile!

And so much more- thank you sincerely to all our contributors. It was great to see controllers sending in articles from all over the world! Remember if you plan to submit articles or ideas, contact us via [editor@ifatca.org](mailto:editor@ifatca.org)!

A special thanks goes to the comms team, and to the editorial team. Philip Marien (EGATS) and Oliva May (GATCO UK) get a special mention.

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Dont forget to follow the IFATCA Facebook and Instagram accounts.

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**MONTHLY UPDATES ON IFATCA ACTIVITIES?**

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# COLLABORATION

FOR THE FUTURE OF AIR TRAFFIC CONTROL



➤ BY HELENA SJÖSTRÖM-FALK, PRESIDENT AND CEO OF IFATCA

**No organisation is an island. We, as IFATCA, do not have the strength to stand alone while the future of air traffic control is being shaped. To make a real impact, we must find common ground with other organisations and, through cooperation, influence developments in ways that benefit air traffic controllers and our profession. The best way to attract the attention of organisations, authorities, and the media is by doing valuable work and, critically, by ensuring that IFATCA and our work are visible.**

In the fall of 2024, the Executive Board decided that one of our key goals was to strengthen and expand cooperation with other international organisations, such as the International Transport Workers' Federation (ITF), the International Labour Organisation (ILO) and the Civil Air Navigation Services Organisation (CANSO).

At our annual conference in Abu Dhabi, the newly elected EVPP, Trish Gilbert, and I discussed our cooperation with the ILO. Trish is now actively working with them and is developing a new strategy to build stronger connections between the ILO and IFATCA, focusing on areas of shared interest and collaboration.

We are also deepening our relationship with the ITF, which also falls under the remit of the EVPP. Fortunately, Trish already has strong ties with ITF, which is a great advantage as we move forward in strengthening this partnership.

In the past year, we have also advanced our engagement with CANSO. While there will always be areas where IFATCA and CANSO disagree, there are also important issues where cooperation is possible and productive. A few years ago, the NATCA (USA) Southern Region gave me a T-shirt that reads on the back: "If you don't have a seat at the table, you're on the menu."

For us, having that seat at the table is not just important - it is essential.

We signed a cooperation agreement between IFATCA and CANSO at our annual conference in Abu Dhabi, and our efforts have already shown results. CANSO is involving us more in their work, and although we are not (and do not wish to be at this moment) members of the CATS (Complete Air Traffic System) Global Council, we are invited to their meetings and we attend as much as possible. In doing this, we are the voice of controllers, and we can highlight any concerns we have with, for example, the CATS CONOPS (Concept of Operations).

The CATS CONOPS is a comprehensive vision document for the future of ATC. While IFATCA cannot endorse the CONOPS since we strongly disagree with parts of it, we do recognise essential opportunities to contribute. For air traffic controllers, change is not an abstract concept - it is part of our daily reality. We are at the forefront of the shift to new procedures, systems, and technologies. IFATCA supports our controller members by providing guidance, information, and education on emerging tools, increased automation, and the ongoing digital transformation of air traffic management. To strengthen this support, IFATCA created the Joint Cognitive Human Machine Systems (JCHMS) working group, which has produced a 63-page scientific paper addressing the widening gap between system designers and operational users. The paper, authored in part by



CANSO CEO Simon Hocquard and IFATCA President & CEO Helena Sjöström Falk signing the agreement of cooperation at the IFATCA 2025 Annual Conference in Abu Dhabi.

credit: IFATCA Archive





Impressions from the IATA 2025 Annual General Meeting, held in New Delhi, India.

credit: H.S.Jöström Falk

Dr. Anthony Smoker, Dr. Stathis Malakis and former PCX Marc Baumgartner, also explores the profound implications of integrating artificial intelligence into future ATM systems. In short, this is a field we are familiar with, and we want stakeholders to leverage our expertise.

There are several areas where IFATCA's input is especially valuable:

➔ **Human-Centric Design**

AI and machine learning hold transformative promise, but the human operator must remain central to airspace management. Technology should enhance - not replace - human decision-making.

➔ **End-User Involvement**

Air traffic controllers and pilots bring essential, practical insights. Engaging them early in the design process helps ensure solutions are workable and sustainable.

➔ **Realistic Timelines**

While ambition drives innovation, overly aggressive timelines risk undermining credibility and stakeholder confidence. A pragmatic pace will build stronger, long-term support.

➔ **Acceptance Through Inclusion**

Successful transformation depends on the buy-in of those most affected. A collaborative, inclusive approach fosters trust and shared ownership.

We have also established a connection with the International Air Transport Association (IATA). For the first

time, or at least for the first time in a very long while, IFATCA PCX was invited to the IATA annual conference, which I attended in New Delhi in June. The IATA AGM 2025 gathered approximately 1,700 participants and more than 350 member airlines. Key topics included safety, affordability, and sustainability. IATA Director General Willie Walsh highlighted safety gaps, supply chain issues, aircraft backlog, conflicts, navigation interference, and what he referred to as Europe's mismanagement. The AGM itself was brief, tightly controlled, and largely

symbolic, with the real networking occurring in panels and side events.

Cooperation with CANSO and IATA is valuable because it enhances our visibility, credibility, and influence in the global aviation sector. Although the benefits are long-term, regular participation builds recognition, strengthens our voice in policy discussions, and opens doors to partnerships and collaborations that will enhance our role in the industry. <

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64<sup>TH</sup>  
IFATCA  
ANNUAL  
CONFERENCE  
28<sup>TH</sup> APRIL - 2<sup>ND</sup> MAY 2025  
ABU DHABI





# UGANDA TO HOST IFATCA 2027

A MOMENT OF PRIDE AND PURPOSE

➤ BY TONNY KEPLER SSNENKUBU, IFATCA RVP EASTERN AFRICA



The Uganda Air Traffic Controllers' Association (UGATCA) is delighted to have successfully bid to host the 2027 IFATCA Annual Conference. This momentous announcement was received with great joy and excitement during the 2025 IFATCA Conference in Abu Dhabi, where the Ugandan delegation passionately presented its case and vision to the global Air Traffic Control community. The news sparked immediate celebration among UGATCA members and stakeholders within Uganda's aviation sector.

The successful bid is not only a source of national pride but also a major milestone for East Africa, marking the return of the IFATCA conference to the region after more than a decade.

## A Charged Atmosphere and Renewed Commitment

The atmosphere back home was electric. Messages of congratulations poured in from aviation enthusiasts, professionals and officials, regional associations, and the broader public. The Uganda Civil Aviation Authority (UCAA), a key partner in the bid, reaffirmed its unwavering support towards a world-class hosting experience. This victory has re-energised the UGATCA community. Members are inspired and ready to dedicate their time, expertise, and creativity towards ensuring that the 2027 Conference becomes one of the most memorable in IFATCA's history.

## Readiness and Institutional Support

Speke Resort Munyonyo, the proposed venue, has already been earmarked for early assessments and planning visits. The luxurious lakeside resort boasts modern conference facilities, serene accommodations, and a history of hosting high-level international events – including the Commonwealth Heads Of Government Meeting (CHOGM), among many others. Its proximity to Entebbe International Airport and Kampala city positions it as a strategic and accessible choice for global delegates.

In coordination with UCAA, the Ministry of Works and Transport, the Uganda Tourism Board, and other key institutions, UGATCA is assembling a multi-stakeholder Local Organising Committee (LOC) to lead the preparation efforts. Preliminary meetings have already been held to map out operational roles, resource mobilisation strategies, and stakeholder engagement frameworks.

## Roadmap to 2027: Our Journey Begins

The initial roadmap includes the following strategic phases:

**Phase 1** commenced in 2025 and is the Planning and Coordination phase, involving the formation of the Local Organising Committee (LOC) and finalisation of venue arrangements. The launch of a conference branding and publicity campaign, as well as the initiation of stakeholder mobilisation (aviation, tourism, government, private sector).

**Phase 2** will start in 2026 and is the Promotion and Resource Mobilisation: with active promotion at regional and global forums. Partner engagement and sponsorship drives, and the launch of the official conference website and delegate information packages.

**Phase 3** will begin in 2027 with the Execution and Hospitality phase as we launch into full-scale logistics and



View of the Speke Resort Munyonyo

delegate services, development of the technical program in liaison with IFATCA, and planning the hosting of pre-conference tours and cultural showcases, thus ensuring a seamless and enriching conference experience.

## Looking Ahead with Hope and Purpose

UGATCA is committed to delivering a conference that celebrates the spirit of collaboration, professionalism, and global fellowship that defines IFATCA. The 2027 conference will not only highlight Uganda's warm hospitality and natural beauty, but also showcase the growth, resilience, and future potential of African aviation.

We extend a warm and heartfelt karibu – welcome – to all our colleagues across the globe. Let us walk this exciting journey together, as we prepare to meet in Kampala in 2027.

Together, let's make history in the Pearl of Africa! For further Inquiries, please contact the UGATCA Secretariat via

**e-mail: [info@ugatca.org](mailto:info@ugatca.org)**  
**Website: [www.ugatca.org](http://www.ugatca.org)**  
**Phone: +256 782570270**



# TECHNICAL AND OPERATIONS COMMITTEE UPDATE



➤ **BY JAYMI STEINBERG, CHAIR IFATCA TOC**

The Technical and Operations Committee (TOC) will continue in its endeavors to review and update the policies in the Technical Professional Manual (TPM), research topics of interest to the Federation, share input with the ICAO Panel representatives, and more. The working programme for this year, until the conference in Bucharest, covers these tasks of the committee. Because several topics deserve investigation beyond merely the technical and operational aspects, they will be looked at in conjunction with the Professional And Legal Committee (PLC)

The working programme features:

- Handling of MEDEVAC/HOSP Flights
- Ambient Workplace Recording
- IFR in Uncontrolled Airspace
- A Study into Vertiports
- High Altitude Operations
- Impacts of Space Debris
- ATFM Policy Review
- Autonomous Aircraft Functions

- Policy Review: ADME 2.6
- An overhaul of the ATS section of the TPM

The majority of the work of the committee has traditionally been done via working papers presented at our annual conference. However, this year TOC is also working on GNSS RFI phraseology and will provide interim feedback to the panel representatives in need of it. The team has held several virtual meetings but looks forward to their first in person meeting October 27-29 in Amsterdam. The team will meet alongside PLC. Many thanks to Vereniging het Nederlands Luchtverkeersleiders Gilde (VNLG) for their generosity and assistance in hosting the committee and to Luchtverkeersleiding Nederland (LVNL) for facilitating the meeting spaces.

TOC has retained a diverse membership with excellent geographic representation. There has been an unprecedented number

of corresponding members that have signed up and are dipping their toes into the TOC pond. Thank you for all that have stepped up and participated in the committee. The committee has also kept a strong working relationship with several of the panel representatives that serve the Federation at large and would like to extend thanks for their going above and beyond, including Eugenio Diotalevi, Rick Taylor, and Philippe Domogala. The group has also continued to foster their relationship with IFALPA and would like to thank Kolja Bollhorst and Kimmo Koivula for consistently providing the bridge between the communities.

TOC looks forward to sharing the work of their findings with the directors during IFATCA Conference 2026 in Bucharest, Romania. ◀

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# PROFESSIONAL AND LEGAL COMMITTEE UPDATE

➤ BY DONNA FIELD, IFATCA PROFESSIONAL & LEGAL CHAIR

The 2025–2026 work program is now underway! Over the next seven months, working papers will be developed for presentation and discussion at the 2026 Conference in Bucharest, Romania.

Topics on the table include:

- Deskillling of ATCOs
- Outsourcing of training
- Protection of ATCOs in conflict areas
- CO<sub>2</sub> trajectories
- "What is a break?"
- Return to operational duty after simulator training
- Ambient workplace recording
- Autonomous aircraft functions
- ATFM policy review
- Space Debris

Alongside these, three dedicated projects are moving forward:

- Workplace intoxicants and testing
- Accident investigations
- GNSS spoofing

Around two dozen ATCOs from across the globe are contributing to this important work, with many of the ideas submitted directly via job cards from controllers worldwide.

We have held two virtual meetings with the team and will hold our first in-person meeting 28-30 October in Amsterdam. Two of those days will overlap with the Technical and Operations Committee (TOC). Thanks to the Dutch Guild for hosting the event and to Dutch ANSP LVNL (Luchtverkeersleiding Nederland) for providing meeting facilities. ◀

## THE AGEING ATCO

ADDRESSING ANDROPAUSE AND MENOPAUSE



➤ BY BETSY BEAUMONT (NATCA, USA) & MARC BAUMGARTNER (HELVETICA, SWITZERLAND)

During the European Regional Meeting in 2024, Marc Baumgartner, coordinator of SESAR and EASA (Helvetica, Switzerland), presented on Andropause and Menopause. Due to a surge of interest from the ATCOs that attended, the IFATCA Executive Board has created the IFATCA Andropause and Menopause Working Group (IAMWG), under the leadership of Betsy Beaumont (NATCA, USA) and Marc Baumgartner.

Betsy Beaumont gave presentations at each of the four Regional Meetings at the IFATCA Annual Conference in Abu Dhabi on this topic. Since then, the IAMWG has started to meet regularly to establish rules of engagement and an action plan. Currently, learning from others is the primary objective.

In parallel, guidance material will be drafted for submission at the IFATCA 2026 Conference in Romania. Further actions are planned for 2026, including establishing toolkits, educational courses, and encouraging awareness creation on the critical topic of ageing in ATM. In particular, the IAMWG would like to research and address whether

there is an impact of Andropause and/ or Menopause on ATCOs that operate in a H24/7 working environment.

Engagement with other International Aviation Organisations on this topic will also be pursued and coordinated. Gleaning information that is already accessible is always a bonus.

During the 2025 Regional Meetings, a quick update on the ongoing activities will be provided. We look forward to seeing you there and are interested in any questions you might have for the team. In the meantime, you can help us by completing a very short survey: <https://forms.gle/XaUA7V8J1gTP2Zjj8>

For this work to be truly successful and to encompass all ATCOs, the IAMWG is seeking volunteers from various regions. As each person is different, so too do the effects of andropause and menopause vary for each individual. And that is why we desire everyone to be a part of this groundbreaking committee, whether through our surveys or volunteering their time with the team.

If this sparks your interest, please contact your Regional EVP or Betsy at [betsy.beaumont@ifatca.org](mailto:betsy.beaumont@ifatca.org) so we can get this team rolling! ◀



# 36<sup>TH</sup> AFRICA & MIDDLE EAST REGIONAL MEETING

3-7 NOVEMBER 2025, VICTORIA FALLS, ZIMBABWE

➤ BY KUDZAI SIBANDA AND ALLAN MANEMA, ATCA ZIMBABWE

The beautiful and vibrant city of Victoria Falls is currently abuzz with preparatory activities for the much-anticipated 36th IFATCA - AFM Regional Meeting in November 2025. This conference brings together delegates from across the Africa and Middle East region under the theme, "Securing the skies: Strengthening ATM Capacity through strategic recruitment, training and retention".

The esteemed regional meeting, underscoring the critical role of air traffic controllers in ensuring safe and efficient skies, will be proudly hosted by the Air Traffic Controllers Association of Zimbabwe (ATCAZ), ably supported by the association's parent ANSP and line ministry, Civil Aviation Authority of Zimbabwe (CAAZ) and the Ministry of Transport and Infrastructural Development.

The five-day event, taking place at the Peniel Retreat Centre from 3<sup>rd</sup> to 7<sup>th</sup> November 2025, draws participation from countries in the Africa and Middle East region with keynote

addresses, panel discussions, working papers and strategy-focused sessions looking at recruitment, efficient training and retention of air traffic controllers. The meeting will run for the traditional 3 days (3<sup>rd</sup>-5<sup>th</sup> November), followed by a two-day training workshop on the 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> of November. As part of the IFATCA AFM's Strategic Plan, our regional meetings will now include two days of training in various useful areas to foster growth and development among professional ATCOs. The 36<sup>th</sup> Regional Meeting will be the first to have this structure.

### Victoria Falls: A Natural Wonder and Strategic Venue

Apart from the breakaway rooms and discussions lies a rare opportunity to experience the magnificence of Victoria Falls, one of the Seven Natural Wonders of the World and a UNESCO World Heritage Site. Commonly known as Mosi-oa-Tunya or "The Smoke that Thunders," Victoria Falls present a breathtaking spectacle where the mighty Zambezi River plunges over a 100-meter cliff, creating a thundering curtain of mist and rainbows. Victoria Falls is not just a tourist attraction, but a symbol of

Zimbabwe's resilience and character. The town offers luxurious lodges, rich wildlife, sunset cruises, and cultural excursions that reflect the warmth and diversity of Zimbabwean heritage.

### What to expect...

As discussions progress on recruitment, training and retention, the goal of strengthening air traffic management in the Africa-Middle East region will be focused and worked on until strategies are devised for implementation. A high-level panel discussion involving three or four ministers, as well as the IFATCA President & CEO, is being planned as the main highlight of the opening day. The outcomes from the Victoria Falls regional meeting will be consolidated into the AFM's Strategic Plan, along with related goals, targets, and tasks, to ensure maximum benefit.

Victoria Falls, a recent host city for the ICAO Africa and Indian Ocean (AFI) Aviation Week (26<sup>th</sup> to 31<sup>st</sup> May 2025), will once again prove that it is not only an epitome of natural beauty but also a capable host for strategic and high-impact events as delegates depart with more profound knowledge coupled with memories of a city that blends professionalism with unforgettable scenery.

More information can be found on the website: <https://afmrm2025.org> ◀





# 41<sup>ST</sup> ASIA / PACIFIC REGIONAL MEETING

20–22 OCTOBER 2025, MACAU SAR

➤ BY THE MACAU RM 2025 ORGANISING COMMITTEE



Regional Meeting Theme:  
All Weather Operations in Aerodrome

**Founded in 1995, the Macau Air Traffic Controllers Association (MATCA) proudly presents APRM 2025. Celebrating its 30th anniversary alongside Macau International Airport, MATCA previously hosted the 32nd APRM in 2015, establishing Macau's global standing as a top-tier conference destination.**

Experience the captivating blend of Chinese and Portuguese heritage in a compact, highly accessible events precinct – perfect for productive, seamless convening.

This year's event will be more than just a conference: it will be an immersive experience packed with insights, innovation, and inspiration. From the very first day, you'll be part of conversations that matter. The opening panel, "Operations under All Weather Conditions", will bring together industry leaders including Chris Allan, Key Account Director at NATS – Hong Kong, and Este Ehara Rosli, Head of Strategic & Ecosystem Partnerships at AIR Lab, joined by experts from the Hong Kong Observatory and Air Macau. With John Wagstaff moderating, expect a lively exchange of ideas and real-world expertise.

Innovation comes alive through dynamic showcases. Don't miss the live demonstration of MET-ATM collaboration in action on Day 1 at 13:00, featuring the Hong Kong Observatory and HKCAD. AIR Lab will also unveil its cutting-edge Regional Collaboration Platform, proving how partnerships can push aviation forward in bold, new ways.

The program is designed to keep you engaged and inspired. The first day will conclude with an interactive ATC-Pilot session that offers a rare, first-hand look at operational perspectives from both sides.

Day 2 will kick off with a keynote address by Blair Cowles, Chief of International Collaboration at ICAI, revealing the organization's latest priorities, followed by an in-depth ICAO APAC capacity assessment workshop with IFATCA experts.

Beyond the sessions, the event aims to be a hub for meaningful networking and leadership opportunities.

Day 2 features Member Associations' Reports, providing critical regional updates and strategies for the future.

On Day 3, the spotlight will shift to leadership with IFATCA ASP executive team elections, previews of APRM2026–2027, and a celebratory closing ceremony. And to wrap it all up, a cultural tour at 13:00 will offer the perfect chance to connect, reflect, and experience the host city in a memorable way.

For more information, please visit our website <https://aprm2025.org> or contact us via [info@aprm2025.org](mailto:info@aprm2025.org). ◀





# 41<sup>ST</sup> EUROPEAN REGIONAL MEETING

14-16 OCTOBER 2025, BOLOGNA, ITALY



➤ **BY ROBERTA MASCHEROTTI, ANACNA, ITALY**

**The enchanting and vibrant city of Bologna will soon be the setting of the much-anticipated IFATCA European Regional Meeting, from the 14th to the 16th of October 2025, proudly hosted by the Air Traffic Controllers Association of Italy (ANACNA) under the recently appointed President, Alessandra Cola, ATCO at Rome ACC.**

The three-day event will take place at the Royal Carlton Hotel, a four-star hotel situated in the city centre, a stone's throw from the railway station. It will delve into the latest innovations and trends in air traffic control. The ERM aims to emphasise the key role of air traffic controllers in the European aviation industry, ensuring safe and efficient skies in compliance with the latest state-of-the-art, environmentally friendly policies and recommendations.

Over the three days, different stakeholders and guests will have the chance to present and discuss their studies, activities and challenges through panel discussions, keynote addresses and strategy-focused sessions. Important subjects of discussion for ATCOs in Europe will be: equity and diversity policies, wellbeing and fatigue, summer 2025 results, meno- and andropause, the European Support Fund, environmentally friendly procedures in ATM, and recruitment policies among younger generations throughout Europe.

IFATCA President & CEO Helena Sjöström Falk will deliver the keynote address. Also attending will be a number of distinguished guests, including Eurocontrol operational managers, the CEO of the Italian ATM provider Enav, a representative from the EU Commission, the Operations Director of Ryanair, and many others. A high-level panel will showcase state-of-the-art air traffic management in Europe.

Apart from the discussions and contributions lies the opportunity to discover Bologna, the city of tortellini and tagliatelle, in the evenings. This gem of history, situated in the centre of Italy, boasts the first university ever established in Europe: Alma Mater Studiorum, founded in 1088. Students from Italy and all over the world gather in libraries, small corners, and bars, forming a multifaceted young community that enriches the city.

Every corner of Bologna is steeped in history and culture; a walk through its medieval historic centre – one of the world's best preserved – is like wandering through the rooms of an open-air museum. There are numerous sights to see, such as Piazza Maggiore, the Asinelli Tower, Fontana del Nettuno, the clock tower, and the Porticoes, among others.

Inscribed as a UNESCO World Heritage site in 2021, the Porticoes of Bologna, almost 62 km long (of which 40 km are in the city itself), make the city of Bologna truly unique. Ever since 1100, when the growth of the University led to the need for new urban spaces, the porticoes have become private and public locations where people can socialise and trade, an open-air symbol of Bologna's hospitality.

We look forward to seeing you there! For further information, see the website <https://erm2025.com> ◀







## EXPRESSIONS OF INTEREST

IFATCA seeks expressions of interest from suitably qualified and interested members to join the IFATCA Training Task Force (TTF). This will be the primary group responsible for matters related to developing and delivering IFATCA training courses.

Your MA should have an email with a copy of the complete terms of reference. Please forward applications to [office@ifatca.org](mailto:office@ifatca.org) no later than **1 October 2025**.





# 41<sup>ST</sup> AMERICAS REGIONAL MEETING

30 SEPTEMBER - 2 OCTOBER 2025, ARUBA

➤ **BY ARUBA AIR TRAFFIC CONTROLLERS ASSOCIATION**

From September 30 to October 2, 2025, Aruba will host IFATCA's 41st Americas Regional Meeting, bringing together professionals, industry leaders, and stakeholders from across the hemisphere. The meeting will provide a platform for knowledge sharing, professional development, and international collaboration, all set against the backdrop of one of the Caribbean's most beautiful islands.



Nestled in the southern Caribbean Sea, just 29 kilometres off the coast of Venezuela, Aruba is the smallest of the three "ABC Islands" — Aruba, Bonaire, and Curaçao — forming part of the Kingdom of the Netherlands. Known worldwide for its pristine white sand beaches, turquoise waters, and warm hospitality, Aruba enjoys a reputation as one of the region's most sought-after tourist destinations. Beneath its postcard-perfect scenery lies a rich history that has shaped the island's unique identity, including a century-long relationship with aviation.

Long before the first aircraft landed, Aruba was home to the Arawak Indians, who migrated from South America more than a thousand years ago. Their culture, traditions, and artistry still influence the island today.

Aruba's arid climate, with year-round sunshine and minimal rainfall, has made it a reliable destination for visitors seeking warm weather regardless of the season. Beyond its beaches, Aruba is famous for its aloe vera — once the island's largest export and still a globally recognised product.

Aruba's aviation story began on August 18, 1923, when two U.S. Navy Curtiss H-16 flying boats touched down in Paardenbaai harbour, Oranjestad, during a journey from Coco Solo in the Panama Canal Zone to Curaçao. This marked the first recorded arrival of an aircraft in Aruba, an event that would forever change the island's connection to the wider world. A century later, this milestone was commemorated with the unveiling of a striking 10-meter public art installation in Oranjestad, featuring a stylised Curtiss H-16 in tribute to the pioneers of Aruba's skies.





Commercial aviation took root in the 1930s. In 1934, Aruba saw its first locally operated commercial flight – a Loening Air Yacht linking the island to Curaçao. The following year, in January 1935, KLM Royal Dutch Airlines introduced a scheduled air service, establishing the first regular passenger connection between Aruba and the Netherlands Antilles. Over the decades, air travel would expand alongside Aruba's growing tourism industry, transforming the island from a quiet outpost into an internationally recognised vacation hub.

At the heart of this transformation has been Queen Beatrix International Airport. Strategically located near Oranjestad, the airport has grown into one of the busiest and most advanced aviation gateways in the Caribbean. Today, it connects Aruba directly to

major cities across North and South America, Europe, and beyond. The airport handles more than 2.5 million travellers annually, with the United States and Canada accounting for the largest share of visitors, followed by Latin American and European markets.

Tourism is the lifeblood of Aruba's economy, contributing significantly to employment and development. The island's reputation as a safe, well-connected, and high-quality destination is reinforced by its aviation network, which allows travellers from across the globe to arrive with ease. Air traffic management plays a vital role in sustaining this success, ensuring safe and efficient operations despite the seasonal surges in passenger demand.

Looking ahead, Aruba is preparing for the next chapter in its aviation journey through the Aruba Gateway 2030 project – a long-term airport modernisation and expansion program designed to enhance passenger experience, improve operational efficiency, and accommodate future growth. This initiative underscores the island's commitment to maintaining its position as a premier air transport hub in the region, ready to meet the demands of the next generation of travellers. ◀

[actaa.aruba@gmail.com](mailto:actaa.aruba@gmail.com)

# NEW IFATCA MEMBER: PAATC CHAD

➤ BY MAHAMAT MOUSSA OUSMANE, CHAD

**Occupying a strategic position in the Heart of Africa, air traffic controllers in Chad are ready to share and learn to build a safer and more modern aviation**

The Professional Association of Air Traffic Controllers of Chad applied to be a member because IFATCA is an international federation that represents air traffic controllers around the world, and we, air traffic controllers from Chad, want to be a part of that. We wanted to be part of a large, professional family that shares the same values: safety, excellence and cooperation. Being a member allows us to benefit from an exchange platform and training and experience sharing that contribute to strengthening the skills of our air traffic controllers and improving our professional standards.

## Why was it important for us?

It was important for us because Chad, in the heart of Africa, occupies a

strategic position in the air corridors of the region. Joining IFATCA is an opportunity to give a voice to our professionals, defend their interests, and actively participate in shaping a safer and more efficient aviation. Hence, it was essential to give a voice to our air traffic controllers, connect them to the rest of the world and show that Chad wants to play its role in international aviation fully.

## How does it feel to be a full member now?

It is a source of pride and great satisfaction. This marks an essential step in the professionalisation of our air traffic controller corps and strengthens our credibility with international partners. This motivates us even more



Deputy President JF Lepage presents the membership scroll to Sincho Moise of the Chad Association during the 2025 IFATCA Annual Conference.

credit: IFATCA Archive

to make progress and contribute to the global air traffic control community.

## How do we see ourselves both within our region and globally?

Within the region, we are an active partner who wants to strengthen cooperation. And at the global level, as a voice of Central Africa, we are ready to share and learn to build together a safer and more modern aviation. ◀



# NEW IFATCA MEMBER: SURINAME ATCA

➤ BY QUINCY CYRUS, SURINAME ATCA

**Suriname believes in the power of global cooperation and shared expertise to advance our mission and elevate standards**

The Suriname Air Traffic Controllers Association (SATCA) proudly represents the dedicated professionals responsible for the safe and efficient management of air traffic in Suriname. Founded on December 12th, 1965, our association celebrates 60 years of service in 2025, marking six decades of commitment to aviation safety and operational excellence.

SATCA currently consists of 49 members, of whom approximately 22% are women and 78% are men, reflecting a growing and diverse professional community.

Our Executive Board is comprised of committed individuals who guide SATCA's mission:

- Chairman/ President: Shaktipersad Goerdat
- Vice Chairman/ President: Lorenzo Soepar
- Treasurer: Quinn Tilburg & Clintridge Sordjo
- Secretaries: Jered Top & Arshad Soebhan
- Commissioners: Siefajed Jagga & Quincy Cyrus



Like many associations around the world, we face challenges—ranging from staffing and training needs to modernizing systems and improving working conditions. However, we are confident that meaningful solutions are within reach. As a proud new member of the International Federation of Air Traffic Controllers' Associations (IFATCA), we believe in the power of global cooperation and shared expertise to advance our mission and elevate standards in Suriname's air navigation services.

### Why did Suriname apply to become IFATCA members?

Suriname had long aspired to become a member of IFATCA, but due to internal challenges that we first needed to resolve, the process was repeatedly delayed. When we were invited to attend AMA RM 2025 by TTATCA in Trinidad and Tobago, we seized the opportunity without hesitation. We fully committed ourselves to the membership process — driven not only by our professional ambitions but also by the growing challenges within our air traffic services sector, which urgently requires international support, visibility, and collaboration. Applying for IFATCA membership was both a strategic and necessary step. As a small yet strategically located country in South America, situated between Guyana and French Guiana, it is crucial for us to align with international standards and ensure our professionals are connected to



a recognized global network. IFATCA offers exactly that — a platform that promotes safety, professionalism, solidarity, and the cross-border exchange of knowledge and best practices.

### Why was it important?

Membership was especially important to us because we believe Surinamese air traffic controllers deserve the representation and respect that reflect their dedication and critical role in aviation safety. It allows us to advocate more effectively for improved working conditions, regulatory reforms, and access to quality training. Being part of IFATCA means that our concerns are now heard and our progress acknowledged within a respected international forum. More importantly, it helps foster a culture of accountability, excellence, and continuous improvement within our own environment.

### How does it feel to be full members now?

Becoming full members feels incredibly empowering and rewarding. We're especially proud to have achieved this ahead of SATCA's 60th anniversary on 12 December 2025 — a symbolic milestone that marks both our legacy and our future. Standing shoulder to shoulder with colleagues from around





The Executive Board of the Suriname Air Traffic Controllers' Association

credit: SATCA

the world, we feel part of something greater: a global movement committed to the highest standards in air traffic services.

**How do you see yourself in your region and globally?**

Within the region, we aim to strengthen cooperation, learn from our peers, and contribute with our own insights. As the only Dutch-speaking country in South America, Suriname is uniquely positioned to serve as a bridge between South America and the Caribbean, promoting regional collaboration and mutual support.

Globally, we see ourselves as active and responsible contributors to aviation safety. Despite facing serious staffing shortages and operational challenges across our units, we remain committed. No matter our size, every voice matters – and we are determined to make ours one that adds value, uplifts others, and supports IFATCA’s shared mission. ◀



# IFATCA ON TOP OF THE WORLD

FLYING THE IFATCA FLAG ON TOP OF MOUNT EVEREST IN 2025

➤ **BY BIPIN BAJRACHARYA, PRESIDENT NEPAL ATCA**

**On duty with ATC Narayan Shrestha, NATCA Nepal Executive Committee member, we discussed the increasing flight (fixed wing and rotor) movements towards Tenzing Hilary Airport, commonly known as LUKLA AIRPORT, the gateway to Mount Everest (8848m), Everest Base Camp and Khumbu Region.**

During the talk, he told me that his younger brother was planning to reach the top of the world for the second time. So, we came up with a plan to send our Association's flag with him, as it would be a proud moment for us. We discussed it in our committee, and everyone agreed. Thanks to the members of our committee for all the positive support.

Further, we thought it would be a glorious moment for all Air Traffic Controllers throughout the world if we sent the IFATCA flag along with him.

On March 16, 2025, I shared the idea with EVP, Asia Pacific, Ms. Cheryl Chen, seeking coordination and permission from the IFATCA Executive Board to take the IFATCA flag to the top of the world.

On March 17, I got confirmation to proceed with the plan. Thanks to our EVP for this positive coordination.

We met Bikash Gurung, the man planning to summit Everest, and discussed the plan with him. He was more than happy to take our NATCA Nepal & IFATCA flags with him. He was born in Bhotekhola-4, Sankhuwasabha, Nepal and has been a Mountain Trekking Guide for seven years. He first summited the top on 28 May 2022 with climbers from England.

The summit of Mount Everest, or Sagarmatha as it is locally known, is a subject of dreams and glory for adventure tourism lovers. Climbing Everest is one of the toughest adventures. Many have lost their lives, were left permanently impaired, or

have had their dreams shatter as they have to quit along the way.

Our flag's journey to the top of the world started on March 21, as Mr. Bikash Gurung left for Lukla on that day. We, the committee members, were unsure whether our Flag would reach the top of Everest. We got excited the day Mr. Gurung sent photographs from Camp II (6400m) on 25th April 2025, 3 days before the 64th IFATCA Annual Conference.

NATCA Nepal proudly shared the information in our MA presentation.

And now we can proudly share that 18 May, 2025 is the confirmed date of Everest Summit, when the IFATCA & NATCA Nepal flags gloriously fluttered at the Top Of The World, MOUNT EVEREST, a proud and memorable moment for Nepalese Air Traffic Controllers and all the Air Traffic Controllers throughout the world.

Now, NATCA is planning to honour Mr. Bikash Gurung at its Annual General Meeting in the probable presence of the Minister, State Minister and Secretary from the Ministry of Culture, Tourism and Civil Aviation, high-level delegates from Civil Aviation Authority of Nepal, along with a high number of Air Traffic Controllers of Nepal. ◀



Bikash Gurung holds an IFATCA flag on top of Mt. Everest on May 18<sup>th</sup> 2025.  
photo via Nepal ATCA





**20-24 APRIL 2026**

**[WWW.IFATCA2026.COM](http://WWW.IFATCA2026.COM)**

# AFRICA & MIDDLE EAST WOMEN SUPPORT GROUP

EMPOWERING ATC WOMEN THROUGH SUPPORT GROUPS: A JOURNEY OF GROWTH AND SOLIDARITY

➤ BY EVELYN OYE LAMPTEY, GHANA, AND JULIET WANJIRU, KENYA

In today's fast-paced world, women juggle multiple roles and face unique challenges that can sometimes feel overwhelming. Whether it's balancing a career and family, dealing with societal expectations, or striving for personal growth, the journey can be daunting. And the Aviation Industry is no exception; it has traditionally been a male-dominated realm, particularly in roles such as Air Traffic Control (ATC).

However, the winds of change are sweeping through this critical sector, as women are steadily breaking through barriers and making significant contributions to this field: demonstrating exceptional skills and resilience in high-pressure environments. Their presence is not just a testament to their capabilities but also an essential evolution for a more diverse and effective aviation industry. Despite these advancements, the journey for women in ATC is fraught with unique challenges, such as:

- **Gender Stereotypes:** where it is believed that technical and high-stress jobs are more suited for men, discouraging women from pursuing careers in ATC.
- **Work-Life Balance:** The demanding nature of ATC, with its irregular hours and high-stress environment, can make it challenging for women, most especially those with family responsibilities.
- **Lack of Representation:** With fewer women in ATC, there is a scarcity of role models and mentors, making it difficult for aspiring female controllers to envision their career path and seek guidance.
- **Workplace Culture:** Issues such as unconscious bias, gender discrimination, and harassment can create a less inclusive and supportive work environment for women, among others.

This is where women's support groups play a pivotal role in addressing these unique challenges faced by women. From navigating workplace dynamics to managing mental health, these groups offer a safe haven for women to discuss their concerns and seek guidance - offering a platform to connect, share experiences, and support each other. It extends beyond individual career advancement by promoting a more inclusive and diverse workforce, mentorship, and professional growth.

These groups help address the isolation that women may feel in a predominantly male industry, fostering a sense of community and belonging. In this article, we will explore the transformative power of women's support groups and how they can be a beacon of hope and strength.

- **Increased Retention:** Support groups help retain female talent in ATC by providing the necessary resources and encouragement to overcome challenges and allow women to thrive in their careers.
- **Enhanced Workplace Culture:** By advocating for inclusive policies and practices, these groups help create a more welcoming and respectful workplace culture, benefiting all employees.
- **Role Models and Inspiration:** Highlighting the achievements of women in ATC through these

groups provides role models for the next generation, inspiring young women to pursue careers in air traffic control.

From the above emerges the birth of Women Support Group - IFATCA AFM. Women Support Group IFATCA AFM team was an idea that came about in December 2023 during the IFATCA AFM Regional meeting in Abuja, in line with gender mainstreaming and to foster diversion and inclusion.

The group is co-chaired by Lumbiwe Hara from Zambia who is a member of the IFATCA Equity, Diversity and inclusion Taskforce, and Hamida Baragoita from Djibouti. The two got the ball rolling, conceptualized the idea and managed to get together a dynamic and diverse team of ten members representing all the subregions of the AFM. The other members are;

**North Africa**

Loukkaci Annisa (Algeria)  
Ghada Mohamed Salah (Egypt)

**West Africa**

Kate Ibemgbo (Nigeria)  
Evelyn Oye Lamptey (Ghana)

**East Africa**

Juliet Wanjiru (Kenya)  
Esther Nanyongo (Uganda)

**Southern Africa**

Nadine Cristovao (Angola)  
Francesca Wadzanayi Demawatema (Zimbabwe)





IFATCA EVP Africa & Middle East Ahmad Abba flanked by members of the AFM Women Support Group during last year's AFM Regional Meeting.

credit: IFATCA Archives

This team brings on board diversity that is united in a common goal and creates a platform to address challenges facing women in the region and champion inclusion in all areas of the profession. The open sharing during meetings has highlighted common challenges in the region that act as barriers to career progression for most women. The group focuses on the following key points, among others:

- Gender bias in recruitment and promotion practices
- Inclusion of women in leadership through equal and fair opportunities
- Mentorship and Support programmes
- Improved support to mothers during maternity and afterwards
- Implementation of training and workshops that develop and advance the skills that prepare women for more opportunities

Support groups for women in Air Traffic Control (ATC) are vital in fostering inclusivity, solidarity, and collective growth. These groups offer essential mentorship, practical advice, and personal and professional development opportunities that empower women to excel in their roles. Overcoming the

challenges in this field opens doors to a brighter future for women in ATC, cultivating a more diverse workforce enriched by a range of perspectives.

The impact of these support networks extends beyond individual growth; they build empowerment and confidence across genders, encouraging women to seek higher opportunities, including leadership roles. This, in turn, leads to more innovative solutions, better decision-making, and a more dynamic work environment. A successful woman advocating for inclusion serves as a beacon of inspiration for the younger generation, motivating them to pursue their goals and challenge the status quo.

As Ruth Bader Ginsburg wisely said, "Women belong in all places where decisions are made...it shouldn't be that women are the exception." In an evolving aviation industry, the contributions of these support groups will be crucial in helping women in ATC break barriers and set new standards of excellence.

By continuing to nurture and expand these groups, we can pave the way

for a more diverse and dynamic ATC workforce, which benefits the entire aviation sector and ensures a brighter, more inclusive future.

In our journey toward creating a more just and equitable world, the power of unity is undeniable. By working together, we can build stronger, more resilient communities where everyone is empowered to reach their full potential. As we focus on uplifting women in aviation, particularly in ATC, we recognise that this mission is a collective responsibility. It requires the support, commitment, and action of both men and women.

We, therefore, call on everyone to become champions of this cause. Let us unite our efforts, combine our strengths, and work side by side in the pursuit of a more equitable world. Together, we can ensure that every woman in ATC has the support she needs to thrive. By doing so, we create a brighter, stronger, and more inclusive future. As Helen Keller aptly stated, "Alone we can do so little; together we can do so much." Indeed, we are stronger together. ◀



# THE HUMAN FACTOR DURING A CRISIS

WHAT AIRSPACE CLOSURES CAN TEACH US ABOUT HUMAN RESILIENCE

► BY HAITHAM BAKR, SENIOR ATC SUPERVISOR & AVIATION SAFETY CONSULTANT, EGYPT

When the Iran–Israel conflict triggered the sudden closure of multiple FIRs across the Middle East in June 2025, the aviation system was tested in ways that no simulation could fully prepare us for. But while contingency routes and coordination protocols were essential, it was something less tangible – and far more powerful – that carried us through: the human factor.

At Cairo ACC, we didn't just manage a surge in traffic. We managed uncertainty, fatigue, and the invisible weight of responsibility that every controller feels when the skies grow tense.

## Cognitive Load Under Pressure

In the span of just a few hours, our traffic volume spiked, routes changed, coordination points shifted. And yet, every decision still had to be made in real time, with zero margin for error.

Controllers had to maintain situational awareness across unfamiliar traffic flows as well as adapt to new sector configurations on the fly and communicate clearly under heightened

stress. This wasn't just a technical challenge—it was a cognitive one. And it demanded mental flexibility, emotional regulation, and trust in the team.

## Team Dynamics and Trust

What stood out most during those intense hours wasn't just individual performance – it was collective resilience. Supervisors anticipated overload and redistributed tasks before fatigue set in. Controllers supported one another with quiet cues, backup coordination, and shared focus. Briefings became more than procedural – they became moments of psychological reset.

In Human Factors terms, this was **non-technical skill at its finest**: communication, leadership, teamwork, and decision-making under pressure.

## Recognition Beyond Procedures

The international appreciation Cairo ACC received – from ICAO, IATA, and regional ANSPs – wasn't just for procedural excellence. It was for the human performance that made those procedures work under stress.

It was for the **controllers who stayed sharp**, the **supervisors who stayed calm**, and the **teams who stayed connected** when the skies got crowded and the stakes got high.

## What We Must Carry Forward?

This crisis reminded us that **resilience isn't just about systems – it's about people**. And if we want to build safer skies, we must invest not only in technology and procedures, but in the human beings who bring them to life. That means embedding Human Factors deeper into training. Designing shift patterns that respect cognitive limits, and creating cultures where speaking up is a strength, not a risk.

## To My Colleagues

You didn't just keep aircraft safe. You kept each other steady. And that's the kind of professionalism that deserves to be studied, celebrated, and remembered. ◀



Traffic between Europe and Asia was squeezed to the north and south of the conflict area. credit: flightradar24.com

haithambakr@hotmail.com



# SUSTAINABLE SKIES OF ASIA PACIFIC

60<sup>TH</sup> CONFERENCE OF DIRECTORS GENERAL OF CIVIL AVIATION ASIA AND PACIFIC REGIONS

➤ **BY MARNIE POMEROY, DEPUTY TEAM LEADER, AUCKLAND OCEANIC, NEW ZEALAND**

**Ms Cheryl Chen, EVP Asia Pacific, and 5 delegates from New Zealand and Japan, Ms. Marnie Pomeroy, Mr. Naoto Ishii, Mr. Hiroki Sato, Mr. Yasutaka Hashimoto, and Mr. Kazuya Yagishita, represented IFATCA at the 60th APAC DGCA Conference. Their participation ensured the voice of air traffic controllers was present at this high-level regional forum.**



The conference was represented by 35 countries and 12 industry partners. Opening remarks and formalities were carried out by ICAO with an update and presentation on the Strategic and Business Plans. With a predictive outlook of a 300% increase in air traffic in the region over the next 25 years, the theme of the meeting was: 'The sustainable skies of the Asia Pacific region towards increased economic prosperity and social well-being by air transportation of people and goods in the region'. The agenda was full, covering Aviation Safety, Air Navigation, Aviation Security and Facilitation, Economic Development of Air Transport, Aviation and Environment, and Capacity Development and Implementation

IFATCA submitted three discussion papers addressing critical operational and safety concerns:

➤ **Supporting Air Traffic Controllers' Incident Reporting and Investigation within a Just Culture Environment** (DP03/05), presented by Marnie Pomeroy: IFATCA highlighted the need for a robust Just Culture environment to encourage voluntary and non-punitive incident reporting. Survey data showed that a significant number of controllers in the region refrained from reporting incidents due to concerns over fairness, transparency, and consequences. The paper urged States and ANSPs to embed Just Culture in their safety frameworks along with links

to environmental impact and data collection/sharing. In addition to forming a regional Positive Safety Culture working group, and ensuring harmonised, fair application of just culture principles across all levels.

➤ **Upholding the Safety of Civil Aviation Amidst Geopolitical Conflicts** (DP 03/26), presented by Cheryl Chen: The Federation underscored the vulnerability of civil aviation infrastructure in conflict zones and reaffirmed the neutral, non-combatant role of air traffic controllers. The paper called for adherence to ICAO provisions and humanitarian law, urging States, ICAO, and international bodies to strengthen protections and uphold the operational neutrality of ATCOs.

➤ **Air Traffic Controller Staff Shortage in the Asia Pacific Region** (DP 08/08), presented by Cheryl Chen: IFATCA survey results from 19 Asia-Pacific member associations confirmed that ATCO understaffing is constraining operations and posing safety and environmental risks. Controllers routinely work overtime, forgo breaks, and face curtailed training and leave. Root causes include lengthy qualification timelines, an ageing workforce, rapid traffic growth, and mental-health pressures. The paper called for strategic workforce planning, investment in enabling technologies, improved



employment conditions, and prioritised mental wellbeing support to safeguard ATM resilience.

All three papers were well received although the Just Culture paper felt somewhat watered down in Friday's action items from the conference as it was collectively summarized with three other JC papers. The summary was challenged through rebuttal from IFATCA and IFALPA and an addition made that specifically mentions regular engagement with representative organisations, operators and manufacturers. This encompassed a paper from IFALPA and showcased successful collaboration of our two organisations along with supportive input from Australia and industry partners.

Other papers of interest to IFATCA were:

- DP/3/15 Acknowledging that runway incursions is one of the global and regional High-risk Categories.
- The importance of timely dissemination of critical safety information through newly established RASG-APAC Safety

Advisory mechanism for APAC region.

- DP/3/29 Acknowledging the obligations of establishing an independent accident investigation authority and complying with the ICAO Annex 13 provisions.
- DP/4/01 Acknowledging the increasing demands on airspace and the importance of operational resilience through enhanced separations, emergency response procedures in the event of datalink failure and a call for active participation in the GNSS & Datalink disruption ad hoc working group.
- DPs /4/05 & 18 calling on States and Administrations to collaborate and participate in SWIM & joint regional and global information and interoperability frameworks along with recognizing the risk of satellite navigation systems radio interference and the formulation of various strategies and initiatives, which include an inventory of ground based navigation aids in the region.
- DP/7/07 on the role of Air Navigation Services in emissions reduction and efficiency, and acknowledging

the environmental gains from implementing PBN, UPR,ATFM and A-DDM.

Thursday contained a cultural tour program, which had to be amended due to the tsunami warning the previous day (no infrastructure damage reported), with visits to a mausoleum, sake factory, food making of a famed local fishcake delicacy and short scenic walk with the reward of a beautiful view.

The conference concluded with the confirmation of Malaysia to host the 61st APAC DGCA conference in 2026 with the theme of "Smart Skies: Emerging Technologies for Safe, Secure, Sustainable and Efficient Aviation".

Engagement at this level reinforces IFATCA's role as the professional advocate for ATCOs worldwide and strengthens our ability to influence policy and decision-making on matters that affect our members' safety and working conditions. IFATCA will continue to represent and defend the interests of air traffic controllers around the globe whilst building collaborative industry relationships elevating the vital role air traffic control plays in aviation, now and in the future. ◀

# SKOPJE AIR FAIR 2025

➤ **BY NATASHA MIJAT KRSTEVSKA, IFATCA EDI & COMMS TEAMS, TWR/APS CONTROLLER AT SKOPJE INTL., NORTH MACEDONIA.**



**The Skopje Air Fair is not an acrobatic flight show but an educational event aimed at showcasing the wide variety of professions within the aviation industry, this is aviation outreach in practice!**

In 2020, a group of aviation professionals in Skopje, North Macedonia, saw an opportunity to inspire the country's youth by promoting aeronautical sciences and introducing them to careers in aviation.

This idea brought together an A320 commercial pilot, an air traffic controller (ATCO), an aircraft engineer, an aeronautical meteorology forecaster, and a military pilot. Together, they

founded AVICON – an association dedicated to advancing aviation ([www.avicon.mk](http://www.avicon.mk))

By 2021, AVICON launched the first SKOPJE AIR FAIR, an educational event aimed at showcasing the wide variety of professions within the aviation industry. The debut was a resounding success, achieving its main goal: sparking interest among young people in aviation careers.

The event's concept was simple yet effective—set up an open-air fair in Skopje City Park, invite aviation organizations from across North Macedonia and neighboring countries, and, most importantly, actively promote it to high schools and universities. AVICON's focus on student engagement quickly became its biggest strength.



They didn't just set up booths – they designed interactive displays, prepared engaging promotional materials, and organized hands-on workshops. Over the years, the SKOPJE AIR FAIR has grown in both size and scope, attracting thousands of visitors and inspiring countless young minds.

From its first edition, MATCA – the Macedonian Air Traffic Controllers Association – has played a key role at the fair. Their booth has become a hub for showcasing the Air Traffic Control profession, complete with enthusiastic volunteers wearing "Hi, I am an Air Traffic Controller, ask me a question" badges. Last year, MATCA's standout displays included the model air traffic control tower (the one from the ERM 2024 Gala Dinner) and EUROCONTROL handouts, which drew significant interest from students considering a career in ATC.

The fair has been held annually since, expanding in 2022, 2023, and 2024, and now preparing for a milestone: the 5th edition, scheduled for October 25, 2025.

Regular participants include the Civil Aviation Agency of North Macedonia, TAV (airport operator), M-NAV (air navigation service provider), Aero Club Skopje, the Military Academy, the Aviation Department of the Ministry of Internal Affairs, the European Aviation Institute (Romania), Aviation Academy Belgrade, TAE Flight Academy (Greece), Wizz Air Pilot Cadet Program, DroneBuzz (North Macedonia's first certified drone pilot center), the Model Scaling Club, the Macedonian Aviation Federation, and many others.

Each year brings new participants, fostering networking, idea-sharing, and collaboration among aviation enthusiasts and professionals.

For MATCA, this is more than just an event – it's a chance to connect directly with the next generation of potential air traffic controllers at the perfect age for recruitment.

The success stories of young people who discovered their career path through the fair over the past five years are living proof that AVICON's mission is working.

We are grateful for this event and opportunity and once again, MATCA is proud to be part of this inspiring journey, helping shape the future of aviation in North Macedonia.

See you at the SKOPJE AIR FAIR 2025! ◀

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Impressions from previous editions of the Skopje Air Fair, including volunteers of the North Macedonian Association MATCA

credit: MATCA

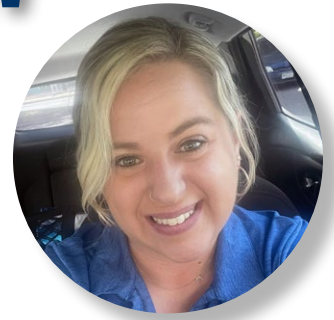




# THE LARGEST AIRSHOW IN THE WORLD

NATCA AT THE EAA AIRVENTURE OSHKOSH 2025

➤ BY BRITTNEY ARMBRUST, TOWER & TRACON CONTROLLER,  
COLORADO SPRINGS, USA



This year was my first opportunity to attend the largest airshow in the world. Since becoming a controller, I had always wanted to attend “Oshkosh,” officially known as the EAA (Experimental Aircraft Association) AirVenture Oshkosh. I’m grateful to have been selected to participate in this year as a NATCA, National Air Traffic Controllers Association (USA) booth member. This is our number one forum for connecting with pilots and aviation professionals from around the world, not only in the United States, but also globally.

As booth members, we did it all, everything from setting up and tearing down the NATCA booth to cleaning, presenting, mic holding, daily EAA radio spots, joint briefings with other booths in different locations throughout the week, and inspiring the next generation of air traffic controllers at KidVenture. We were a well-oiled machine, making sure every day ran smoothly.

Each day at the booth began with a “Stuck Mic” session from 0800 to 0915, which aimed to bring pilots and controllers together in an open question-and-answer forum. No questions were off limits. Truly designed to curate a safe space for open discussion where we could answer any questions pilots had about anything they encountered in the real world or had always wondered about regarding air traffic control. The controllers shared their experiences as well and were able to generate more back and forth based on their stories. As pilot outreach and education were the main goals during Oshkosh, this

was a great way to start each day and lead into the daily briefing agenda.

Between 0800 and 1400, there were four briefings every day covering a variety of topics. Starting with “Stuck Mic”, which I’ve already explained, and then followed by some combination of the briefing topics below:

- **Rock Your Wings - Flying into KOSH:** an essential briefing for pilots who want to fly into the world’s busiest airport. From flying the FISK arrival to wing rock, we covered everything you need to know from real-world experience.
- **Clear and Confident Communication:** Explore effective techniques for clear and confident communication. Showed how strong communication contributes to improved safety and operational efficiency.

- **Lessons from the Real World:** Review real-life emergency scenarios, offering an inside look at the decision-making process and coordination for ATC in these high-pressure moments.

- **IFR from Clearance to Cancellation:** A review on how to pick up an IFR clearance both on the ground and in the air at a satellite airport, and some more in-depth information on airborne reroutes: what, when and why they might happen.

- **The Art of Negotiating with ATC:** Effective strategies pilots and controllers use to build a better working relationship. Topics like how to respectfully but clearly express intentions, tips for better service in congested airspace - pilots will learn how to navigate complex situations smoothly and improve safety and efficiency while fostering cooperation with ATC.





- **Teaming Up When Trouble Hits:** Discussion on handling in-flight emergencies and how ATC can help. Learn how to work with ATC so we can help you stay calm, safe, focused, and make sound decisions to help you navigate the situation successfully.
- **From Delta Towers to Danger Zones:** A clear and practical overview of Class D special use airspace to help attendees gain confidence in flying through controlled and restricted areas while avoiding common mistakes.
- **Beyond VFR Basics:** Explores ATC services that can enhance safety, such as how to use flight following, request practice approaches, understand radar services, request special VFR, and submit a PIREP. Learn how to communicate clearly and ask for what you need.
- **Navigate Weather Together:** Examining challenges of navigating weather as a pilot and the vital role ATC plays in helping ensure safety. Topics covered include risks of VFR into IMC, PIREPs, responding to icing and thunderstorms and how ATC can assist. Discuss basic threat mitigation strategies to help pilots make more informed and

safer decisions when faced with weather.

- **High Terrain, Higher Stakes:** A discussion focused on the unique challenges associated with mountain flying, including proper route planning and weather considerations.
- **SIDs & STARs:** Whether you're an experienced pilot in a high-performance jet or flight training in a single engine, learn how to choose the correct procedure, interpret key elements, handle changes from ATC, and avoid common mistakes.
- **Navigating Complex Airspace with Ease:** Exploring the intricacies of Class B and C airspace. Breaks down structure, communication requirements, and operational expectations. Provides practical tips and controller insights to help pilots navigate high-density airspace smoothly and safely.

Every day, we had a packed house for most of the briefings, filled with engaging questions and discussion. Additionally, we always had controllers available throughout the day to interact with visitors and answer any questions they had, whether directly related to the briefings or on some other aspect of aviation or air traffic control.

While the briefings were the main agenda and focus at the NATCA booth, we also participated in the KidVenture experience, influencing the aviation youth of tomorrow. KidVenture is a youth experience at Oshkosh, allowing kids to participate in many hands-on activities such as riveting, building radios, virtual reality simulations and much more. Our booth, at KidVenture, was a STEM (Science, technology,

engineering and mathematics) programme developed by NASA, that teaches kids how to sequence aircraft onto one of the approaches into San Francisco (KSFO) using speed and vectoring. There were six "scopes" set up, each with an instructor, to demonstrate the simulation and give them tips and tricks to make the sequence safe and expeditious. When all the scopes were occupied, a "holding pattern" was established for those waiting: each child in the holding pattern would receive a flight strip representing their position in the queue. Our KidVenture booth is well-known, and we have many kids who return year after year to see how they have improved in their sequencing. We even have one NATCA volunteer who came to KidVenture as a kid and is now in training as a controller at Oakland Air Route Traffic Control Centre (ZOA). It is a rewarding experience to see the kids excited about air traffic control, especially if they walked up to the booth with little to no knowledge of what ATC was.

I was thrilled to participate as a volunteer representing NATCA at Oshkosh this year. It was truly amazing to be immersed in all things aviation and interact with aviation professionals from around the world for the week; I cannot express how much I look forward to returning. I hope to see many of you there next year! 20 - 26 July 2026. ◀

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# INTRODUCING THE DIVERSITY, EQUITY AND INCLUSION TOOLKIT

A PRACTICAL GUIDE DEVELOPED TO HELP AVIATION FACE ITS TOUGHEST WORKFORCE CHALLENGES

➤ BY KATARINA ANŽEL KRUH, GRADUATE PSYCHOLOGIST & SLOVENIA CONTROL ATCO



Aviation has always been about connecting people – linking continents, cultures, and communities. But the industry itself has often lagged in reflecting the diversity of the world it serves. That’s where the diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) toolkit steps in – a practical guide shaped by real challenges and real solutions.

The idea took root in late 2018, not in a boardroom, but among individuals working in the ATM sector who saw a clear gap: gender equality programs alone weren’t enough. What began as an informal network soon grew into something much larger.

The COVID-19 crisis made the issue impossible to ignore. With 4.8 million aviation jobs lost worldwide, the industry realised that recovery required a more inclusive approach. Through online meetings and global cooperation, the aviation community began to view DEI as essential to “building back better.” The work culminated in workshops in Amsterdam (2022), Dublin (2024) and Brussels (2024), where the toolkit finally took shape.

## More Than Theory

Unlike many reports that gather dust, this 52-page toolkit is designed for action; offering practical steps to tackle real workplace challenges while taking a broad view of diversity. Beyond gender, it considers age, disability, religion, nationality, ethnicity, education, family situations, cognitive differences, etc.

## Five Pillars for Change

The Toolkit is built around five interconnected pillars:

- Diversity – bringing together people with different backgrounds and experiences
- Inclusion – ensuring everyone feels welcomed and valued
- Equity – providing fair opportunities tailored to individual needs
- Purpose – recognising the unique contribution each person makes
- Leadership – preparing leaders to set the example for inclusive behaviour

Together, these pillars move beyond box-ticking exercises toward meaningful cultural change.

## The Communication Hurdle

One of the biggest pitfalls for DEI initiatives is communication. Research indicates that 62% of employees find DEI programs ineffective, and nearly half feel that these efforts have personally failed them.

The toolkit tackles this challenge head-on. It emphasises the importance of understanding your audience – whether they prefer emails, webinars, or open forums – and creating safe spaces for honest dialogue. True DEI communication, it argues, is not just about inclusive language but about building trust and encouraging open conversations, even on sensitive topics.

## Six Chapters of Guidance

The toolkit is structured into six chapters, which can be used individually or as a complete guide:

- Engagement – linking DEI to strategy
- Learning Initiatives – moving beyond one-off training to lasting change
- HR Best Practices – embedding DEI into every stage of the employee journey
- Partnerships – tapping external expertise
- Metrics – measuring progress to ensure accountability
- Communication – shaping internal and external messaging

## Why It Matters for Business

The case for DEI is not just moral – it’s economic. Companies with above-average diversity report 19% higher innovation revenues. Those in the top quartile for ethnic diversity are 35% more likely to outperform peers. Gender-diverse organisations generate around 15% more than industry standards.

For the aviation industry, struggling with talent shortages and competition from tech companies, DEI is no longer optional. A diverse workforce fuels



innovation, sharpens problem-solving and strengthens performance.

**A Living Document**

This first edition is presented as a living document, open to feedback and evolution. Rather than serving as a regulation, the toolkit is intended as a flexible resource that organisations can adapt to their own realities.

**Free and Open Access**

The DEI Toolkit is available free of charge on EUROCONTROL's website (<https://www.eurocontrol.int/publication/diversity-equity-inclusion-toolkit>).

This open-access model mirrors the collaborative spirit behind its creation – knowledge shared is knowledge multiplied.

The aviation industry now faces a choice: stick with traditional approaches that have led to talent shortages, or embrace the full spectrum of human potential. The DEI Toolkit provides a clear roadmap for the latter.

Aviation has always been about breaking barriers and reaching new

heights. Now it's time to bring that same spirit of innovation to the way we build our teams, nurture talent, and create workplaces where everyone can thrive and soar.

The Toolkit is more than a document – it's an invitation to transform aviation's future, one organisation at a time.

For more information, contact the IFATCA Equity, Diversity and Inclusion task force. ◀

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# SLEEP RECOVERY AFTER NIGHT SHIFTS

A SCIENCE-BASED APPROACH FOR AIR TRAFFIC CONTROLLERS

➤ BY MARIJA SAVIKJ, MENTAL WELLBEING TASK FORCE AND ATCO, NORTH MACEDONIA

Working as an air traffic controller is considered one of the most stressful jobs in the world. And on top of that, we get to work irregular hours and night shifts for many, many years. Sleep deprivation, particularly after night shifts, is a major concern, as it reduces alertness and impairs cognitive performance, both of which are critical for our work. Chronic sleep debt also increases risks for heart disease, metabolic issues and disrupts mental wellbeing. This article follows a series of Instagram posts by the Mental Wellbeing Task Force, focusing on stress management during the busy summer and providing practical advice on relaxation and recovery after night shifts. Here, we delve deeper into the science of sleep and ways to restore our natural circadian rhythm.



## Why do night shifts disrupt sleep?

Night shifts throw your body's internal clock out of sync and reduce the quality of your rest.

Instead of sleeping during your biological "night"—when the body is naturally programmed to rest — you are awake and working. When you finally go to bed, your sleep will be lighter and

shorter, affected by noise and natural light.

To improve your sleep routine, consider the following tips: Provide a restful sleep environment. In real terms, this means going to sleep in a dark and cool room; using blackout curtains or eye masks helps. Use earplugs to reduce noise. And importantly, minimize electronics in the room and silence your phone. Plan your sleep in advance. This means wearing sunglasses on your way home in the morning to limit the light exposure and signal the body to wind down. Try to go to sleep immediately after returning home from work. Aim for one longer uninterrupted sleep, followed by a shorter nap afterwards, if needed. After you wake up go outside and get some light; it will help you reset your body clock. And avoid taking late afternoon naps, as they can disrupt nighttime sleep. Additional tips: avoid caffeine and heavy meals several hours before planned sleep. Before going to bed, engage in brief, light activities like reading or stretching. And stay consistent in your sleep routine on rest days; avoid changing sleep schedules, it confuses your body's internal clock.

## Sleep smart



**Dark, cool, quiet room (blackout curtains, eye mask, earplugs)**

**Go to bed as soon as possible after your shift**

**7-9 hours of main sleep if you can, plus a short nap if needed**

Recovery scenarios: Studies indicate that most shift workers need about 2 days to fully recover their circadian rhythm and improve sleep quality and mood after night shifts.



A good strategy for recovery is on Day one: Aim for one long undisturbed sleep; if needed, add a short nap in the afternoon (not too late). Try to go to sleep at your usual bedtime hour. Then on Day two: Reinforce your daily habits – get morning daylight exposure, eat at your regular hours, avoid naps, and go to sleep at your usual bedtime.

If, however, you only have one day off after a night shift, full recovery is unlikely. Aim for 7-9 hours of solid sleep immediately after work in a dark, quiet room and avoid naps to protect the next night's sleep.

Where you have two night shifts in a row, research suggests that full recovery takes three days off work and two normal sleep periods for the body to readjust. To successfully restore your biological clock, use daylight and avoid late afternoon naps and late coffee sips. Shift back to regular sleep-wake routine the night after the second shift, and don't delay returning to daytime patterns. But, if you only have two days off, try to get up early in the morning on the second day to try and return back to normal as soon as possible.

Where you have Three or more night shifts in a row, this increases the risk of errors, accidents, and various health problems. If you must work three or more night shifts in a row, prioritize the following: A long main sleep period after each shift (as long as possible). Try to avoid commitments and social events until full recovery. After the final shift, go to sleep immediately after work, then get up and expose yourself to bright daylight. The next night, try to go to bed early to restore your circadian rhythm.

How about sleep before a night shift? If possible, aim for a 1-2 hour nap in the late afternoon or evening before the shift starts. Taking a nap will help you partially repay your sleep debt and boost your alertness during the upcoming

## Have you heard of a coffee nap?



**A coffee nap is a smart trick that combines caffeine and a short nap to boost your alertness faster. For sleepy drivers and night shift workers, caffeine combined with a nap can enhance cognitive and physical performance, problem solving, and mental clarity.**

**Here's how it works: Drink a cup of coffee and immediately take a 15-20 minute nap. While you sleep, your brain clears a chemical called adenosine that makes you feel tired. The caffeine will start to kick in after 20 minutes, and you will wake up refreshed and more alert.**

### Notes:

**Keep the nap short to avoid sleep inertia.**

**You need to take about 200mg of caffeine, which is equivalent to one big cup of coffee or double shot of espresso.**

**Don't sip the coffee slowly; you need to drink it fast and get to bed; otherwise, it might not work.**

shift. Studies suggest that both short (45 min) and long (2-hour) naps before the shift will improve your performance and reduce sleepiness.

### Science of naps during shifts

Scientific research strongly supports naps at work. Short naps during night shifts can significantly reduce sleepiness and improve alertness and performance in all shift workers, including air traffic controllers. For example, taking one 20-minute nap around 2.00 am can help in maintaining vigilance for about 3 hours after waking up. Naps lasting between 30 and 50 minutes can also improve cognitive performance and reduce sleepiness, although mild inertia can occur for about 10-15 minutes immediately after waking up.

There are studies that support the so-called 2-nap strategy (a 90-minute nap followed by a 30-minute nap) during extended night shifts as being more effective in reducing fatigue and maintaining reaction time. Finally, a

2-hour nap opportunity during a 12-hour shift improves post-shift performance, alertness, mood and reduces fatigue better than shorter naps or no nap.

A study done by the FAA aimed at air traffic controllers specifically<sup>1</sup> suggests that naps anywhere between 45 minutes up to 2 hours during midnight shifts improve vigilance and reduce sleepiness compared to no naps, with longer naps providing somewhat better results.

To conclude, recovery after night shifts isn't just about sleeping more – it's about sleeping smarter. Plan ahead, protect your rest environment, and use tools like strategic naps and daytime exposure. You will protect your health, restore alertness and make the best of your rest days. Make recovery part of your routine – it's an essential skill for every controller ◀.

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<sup>1</sup> [https://www.faa.gov/sites/faa.gov/files/data\\_research/research/med\\_humanfacs/oamtechreports/00\\_10.pdf](https://www.faa.gov/sites/faa.gov/files/data_research/research/med_humanfacs/oamtechreports/00_10.pdf)

# CONTROLLER SHORTAGES: THE PERFECT STORM

AIR TRAFFIC CONTROL IS DRIFTING INTO A SYSTEMIC CRISIS

➤ BY MARC BAUMGARTNER, IFATCA SES AND EASA COORDINATOR



The Oxford English Dictionary has published references going back to 1718 for “perfect storm”. Wikipedia describes a perfect storm as a meteorological event aggravated by a rare combination of circumstances.

Current numbers of Air Traffic Controllers around the globe have the potential of a perfect storm from a staffing point of view. IFATCA has created a heat map (IFATCA 2023) with a subjective assessment of the shortage of Air Traffic Controllers and has alerted (Deleau 2023) the European institutions that a staffing crisis is looming on the horizon.

In Europe, en-route air traffic flow management delays in 2024 reached their highest level in decades, averaging 2.13 minutes per flight. The delays were driven by a limited number of capacity-constrained Area Control Centres and an increase in weather-related disruptions – a trend that could worsen in 2025. (Performance Review Report 2024 PRR2024).

In the USA, the graph shown below from the NAS Safety Review Team report (National Airspace System Safety Team Review, November 2023) highlights a significant number of ATCOs are currently missing in the FAA Air Traffic Organisation. The need to hire more ATCOs is elaborated on in this report.

### Can the shortage of ATCOs be managed efficiently?

Demographics in the current workforce and an increase in traffic contribute to really challenging situations both in Europe and the USA. Other factors, like working contracts or retirement age add an additional layer of complication to the equation. Several mitigations to the current situation are explored.

### ➤ Cross border operations

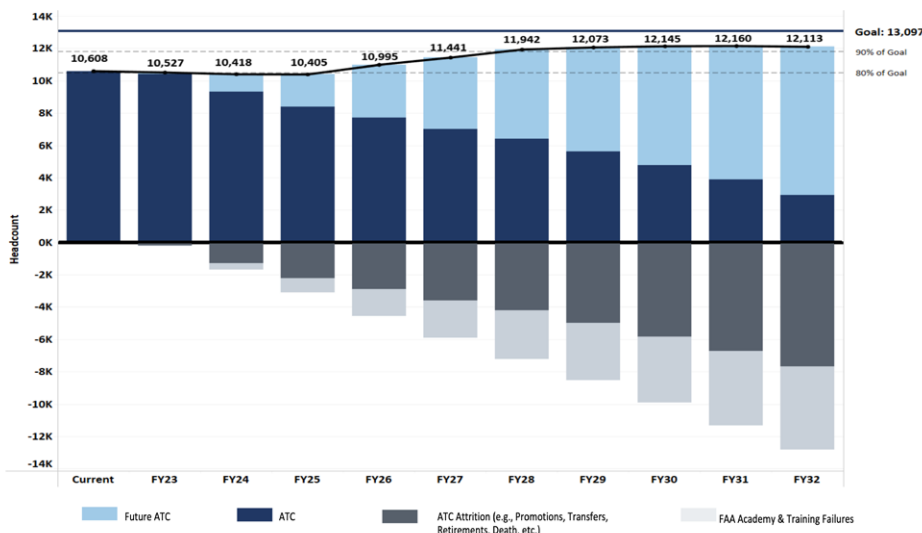
Significant changes to current operations could be achieved by using cross border operations, without necessarily moving staff from one ATC unit to another. A long-term measure with significant planning and re-organisation could alleviate some of the current bottlenecks. This would, however, require states to rethink the way Air Traffic is organised in their country.

### ➤ Mobility of ATCOs

Mobility of ATCOs (Eurocontrol 2022) has been assessed as a possibility. Intra-centre and intra-EU mobility are possible, but due to the regulatory requirements and the complexity of “detraining” and “retraining”, the ATCOS are limited only to a short-term measure.

### ➤ Overtime

Is being used by many Air Navigation Service Providers (ANSP) in mandatory or voluntary forms to overcome the current situation, but it is limited. Although this might alleviate a shortage of capacity for a certain limited amount of time, it is not an infinite measure and all the States are challenged to train more Air Traffic Controllers.





➤ **Increasing retirement age**

Retirement for ATCOs varies throughout the world and different changes in national pension age, or age discrimination laws, have led some of the states to increase the pension age for ATCOs. A recent study (Baumgartner et al. , 2024) co-financed by the Swiss Member Association of IFATCA, Helvetica and Skyguide (Swiss ANSP), motivated by the government increase of the pension age of ATCOs from 56 to 60, has come to the conclusion that a psycho-cognitive decline due to age can be measured and poses significant challenges to be managed.

**The economic costs of the shortage**

The Eurocontrol Performance Review Commission calculates the cost for en-route delays in the ECAC Area (22,4 million minutes) to 2.1 Billion Euros for 2024<sup>1</sup>. The shortage of ATCOs has been estimated at 800 Million Euros for users in 2022 ( **EUROCONTROL Think Paper #19 – ATC Mobility and Capacity Shortfalls | EUROCONTROL** )

Under the Single European Sky Performance Scheme, States have to indicate the reason for delays when imposing delays on users. According to the PRR 2024, 38,8% of delays were due to missing capacity and 13.8% due to staff shortage. Structurally speaking, the missing ATC Capacity can be associated to a missing number of ATCO to staff the ideal number of sectors, but it is not only dependant on the number of ATCOs, but also a lack of frequencies, hardware and software limiting the number of sectors that can be opened.

Missing capacity is not evenly spread throughout Europe and the US: some ATC units are sufficiently staffed or have spare capacity due to changing traffic patterns. In Europe, for the base-line scenario, of traffic growth 700-800 ATCOs are currently missing in the core area. At an estimated cost of €600K, the investment in sufficient ATCOs for the overall system would cost approximately €50-200 Million as a one-off investment compared to

the yearly €800M the missing capacity costs the airlines.

Other components of the perfect storm are the **geo-political situation** blocking large chunks of airspace in the Eastern part of Europe and the Middle East. This has had some dramatic impact on the management of the traffic flows. In Europe, the SES performance schemes limit long-term investments and put pressure on the cost basis, including hiring and training new ATCOs despite the identified shortages.

In the US, one of the reasons listed for the understaffed FAA ATO system over the years is illustrated by several events which significantly impacted the successful hiring, training and certification of ATCOs. Sequestrations and government shutdowns as well as COVID further reduced the number of staff in the operations. And more recently, the Trump administration also announced incentives to reduce the number of federal employees, including those of the FAA.

The expansion plans of some of the airlines (Ryanair and Turkish Airlines have both ordered 300 aircraft, which are to be delivered into the system in less than a decade) are not incorporated into the equation.

**Is there a way out?**

If air traffic continues to increase as in 2024 no real solution is available in the short term. The aviation sector will have to make a combined effort to attract the next generation of aviation professionals. Lesser numbers of talent are available and the selection as well as the training successes have not changed in the last 20 years. In Europe, to train one successful ATCO you need 400 young people entering the selection process. Compared to Pilot Training the ATM sector is unable to bring the ATCO to an operational maturity in a simulator environment. The duration of training an ATCO is on average 30-43 months, both in the US and Europe. Maybe simulator manufacturers should encourage greater investment into ATM simulators? New Large Language Model could maybe help to better simulate the operational reality in a simulator environment?

Certainly, for Europe the European Commission could de-couple the recruitment and training costs from the cost-efficiency target of the regulated entities in order to give some economical breathing space to train enough controllers, just to manage the demographic challenges that are looming.

Further, there seems to be a bottleneck of training places for new entrants in Europe as well as in the US. This could be addressed by common training alliances where the training facilities would assist each other by providing a maximum of training spaces. ALWAYS guaranteeing the highest level of quality to deliver the safety standards in the training processes and not only putting "bodies on seats"

But from a conceptual point of view, we will also have to engage in a real debate on how traffic is managed. To create capacity the sectors have been reduced and split into smaller pieces to allow the ATCO to handle the traffic from a psycho-cognitive point of view. A more network centric approach is needed, with the assistance of new technology: network operations will have to be favoured. Airlines could be asked to stick to one flight plan and not game the network with multiple flight plans, the predictability could be increased, and all the ATC units could be invited to focus on the first wave of traffic in the morning.

These are all small and homeopathic measures which will provide some small capacity gains in the longer term, however, this cannot continue and therefore a fundamental overhaul of the management of traffic is required. Defragmentation needs to be seriously addressed and a new Airspace Management system has to be introduced to face the future challenges and support the development and the successful growth of the European Aviation Industry.◀

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<sup>1</sup> The delay has been monetarised using the results of the University of Westminster Study. The system wide average of 127 Euro (adjusted for inflation) per 1 minute of en-route ATFM delay has been used.



# A DEGREE IN AIR TRAFFIC CONTROL?

THE ROLE OF THIRD-LEVEL INSTITUTIONS IN AIR TRAFFIC MANAGEMENT RECRUITMENT AND TRAINING

➤ BY PROFESSOR MARINA EFTHYMIU,  
DUBLIN CITY UNIVERSITY (DCU)



**Air Traffic Control Officers (ATCOs) are the backbone of the aviation system, ensuring the safe, orderly, and expeditious flow of aircraft in increasingly congested airspace. Despite their crucial role, ATCOs remain one of the least recognised professions in aviation. This lack of visibility means that many 18-year-olds do not even consider it as a potential career pathway. With rising air traffic volumes and persistent talent shortages, the demand for controllers has never been higher. Addressing these challenges requires a strategic and proactive approach to recruitment and training, and third-level institutions can play a key role in expanding the talent pipeline and preparing candidates for the rigorous training process.**

Historically, ATCO recruitment has relied on direct selection by ANSPs, often with limited engagement from academic institutions. However, there is a growing recognition that universities can serve as an essential feeder system, attracting a wider and more diverse pool of candidates. Moreover, in some countries (such as Greece and Spain) where an academic qualification is required for ATCO candidates, potential applicants may hesitate to pursue an ATC career if their degree is not directly related to aviation. This presents a recruitment bottleneck, making university engagement even more critical.

The feasibility of incorporating ATC-specific modules within university programmes depends on several factors, including the size of the institution, the student cohort, and the recruitment volumes from the industry. Universities with established aviation programmes may offer dedicated ATC modules or incorporate ATC-related content within broader aviation degrees. For example, Dublin City University (DCU) offers an undergraduate degree in Aviation Management with ATC studies, providing a unique advantage to students. Those selected by AirNav Ireland after completing their ATCO training earn both a BSc degree

and an ATC qualification. This dual achievement enhances their career prospects, equipping them with not only the technical skills required for ATC but also a broader understanding of aviation management, making them well-rounded professionals. Regardless of the format, even in cases where specific ATC modules are not available, universities can still foster interest and develop relevant competencies by integrating ATC elements into existing coursework. Partnerships between universities and ANSPs can facilitate guest lectures, mentorship schemes, and internship opportunities that provide students with practical insights into ATM careers.

Air traffic control requires a unique blend of cognitive and interpersonal skills, including spatial awareness, decision-making, stress management,

and communication. While ANSPs conduct rigorous selection processes to assess these attributes, third-level institutions can contribute by embedding competency development into their curricula. Simulation-based training, problem-solving exercises, and team-based projects in aviation-focused degrees can help students develop the skills necessary for ATCO training.

ANSPs and universities can work together to design preparatory courses or pre-selection programmes that equip students with the knowledge and skills required for ATCO assessments. ANSPs can even take a more active role by supporting or financing ATC-related modules and training seminars, ensuring that students have access to high-quality education and industry insights. Mentorship, coaching, outreach activities and

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industry-sponsored training can make ATC pathways more accessible to a broader range of students, further strengthening recruitment efforts.

Another significant advantage of university involvement in ATCO recruitment is the potential to enhance equity, diversity, and inclusion (EDI) within the workforce. Traditional recruitment channels may unintentionally limit opportunities for candidates from underrepresented backgrounds. University outreach programmes, targeted scholarships, and strategic partnerships with ANSPs can encourage a more diverse

demographic to consider ATC as a viable career path.

Encouraging women and individuals from various socio-economic and cultural backgrounds to explore ATC careers is essential for fostering a workforce that reflects the global aviation industry. Additionally, incorporating flexible learning options and alternative pathways into ATCO training programmes can attract non-traditional candidates, such as career changers or individuals with disabilities, thereby fostering a more inclusive workforce.

As the aviation industry evolves, so too must its approach to recruitment and training. Third-level institutions have an important role to play in strengthening the ATCO pipeline by providing foundational education, fostering essential competencies, and collaborating with ANSPs to streamline the transition from academia to practical training and meet the demands of aviation growth. ◀

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# TRAINING THE NEXT GENERATION

## CAN ACADEMIA HELP SOLVE THE GLOBAL AIR TRAFFIC CONTROLLER SHORTAGE?

➤ **BY ROMULO A. GALLEGOS, ASSISTANT PROFESSOR,  
APPLIED AVIATION SCIENCES/AIR TRAFFIC MANAGEMENT, EMBRY RIDDLE  
AERONAUTICAL UNIVERSITY, DAYTONA BEACH, FLORIDA**

**The air traffic control systems have for decades been under the proverbial microscope. Daily media coverage worldwide is replete with articles on aircraft accidents and potential near misses involving air traffic control. As air traffic control is a relatively specialised area, the media speculation can be uninformed, even incendiary, and can portray the global aviation industry as under pressure. It is no secret that the world's Civil Aviation Authorities (CAAs) and Air Navigation Service Providers (ANSPs) face a critical shortage of air traffic controllers (ATCOs). As the world air passenger market is forecast to grow by 3.9% per annum until 2034<sup>1</sup>, the ability to safely manage crowded skies, from both the technological and human resource perspective, is under significant strain, with continuing delays, cancellations, and increased risk of mid-air incidents underscoring the urgency. As government and industry stakeholders continually drag their respective feet on how to deal with the crisis, they only need to look in their respective backyards: for it is my view that academia holds untapped potential to contribute meaningfully to sustainable, long-term solutions.**



### **The ATC Shortage: How Did We Get Here?**

The ATC shortage issue is multi-layered – outdated government policies, aging workforces, lengthy training pipelines, high stress and burnout rates, and post-pandemic backlogs all play a role. According to a recent FAA study, fewer than half of new controller candidates finish training successfully, and it can take up to five years for a trainee to become fully certified<sup>2</sup>.

Globally, the problem is exacerbated by lack of standardised training and

limited capability, as well as regional disparities in air traffic growth. For example, the statistics provided by the International Air Transport Association (IATA) cited indicate that in Asia and Africa, booming aviation sectors are outpacing the infrastructure and talent pipelines necessary to support them. From my own experience with the FAA's Office of International Affairs, many countries we assisted under bilateral training agreements lacked qualified candidates, adequate training facilities equipped with the appropriate technology, and the resources to

support them. One only needs to look at overall implementation scores under the International Civil Aviation Organization's (ICAO) Universal Safety Oversight Audit Programme (USOAP) to validate that claim.

### **Academia's Role: A Multi-Pronged Approach**

My byline states I am an Air Traffic Management professor at a major aviation university in the United States, so some may conclude my reasoning as slightly biased. On the contrary:

<sup>1</sup> International Air Transport Association (IATA) – 20-year Passenger Forecast, 2014-2034

<sup>2</sup> "FAA Faces Controller Staffing Challenges as Air Traffic Operations Return to Pre-Pandemic Levels at Critical Facilities." U.S. Department of Transportation, Office of the Inspector General, Report No. AV2023035, June 2023



Professor Romulo “Romy” Gallegos joined Embry Riddle Aeronautical University’s Daytona Beach campus in 2024 after serving three years at the Prescott, Arizona campus in the College of Aviation’s Department of Aeronautical Science, teaching both Air Traffic Management and Applied Research Methods courses. He earned his Master of Arts in Law and Diplomacy from the Fletcher School, Tufts University, Medford, Massachusetts, and a Bachelor of Arts in International Studies from DePaul University, Chicago, Illinois. He brings a wealth of experience having served as an air traffic controller in the U.S. Air Force, a diplomat with the U.S. Department of State, and an international air navigation/aviation safety expert with the Federal Aviation Administration and the International Civil Aviation Organization. His research focuses on capacity building efforts in the air transportation sector of third-world countries in Africa and the Middle East. He has a keen interest in global conflict zones and their effects on air navigation, and the aviation sector’s role in disaster relief/recovery operations. Professor Gallegos teaches Air Traffic Control Basics, Terminal Radar Operations, Air Traffic Control Tower Operations and Global Harmonization in Air Traffic Management and he hopes to complete his private pilot training and complete certification in instrument and multi-engine operations.

from my 25-year career with the FAA, I have seen outdated and poorly designed hiring policies that precluded universities, research institutions, and technical colleges, who have offered ATC courses and aviation degree programs for years, from providing an alternative, direct-hire controller pipeline. After graduation, all students, irrespective of earning their degrees, had to follow a lengthy and onerous application process, and upon satisfying all medical and security requirements, repeated ATC academic and technical training at the FAA’s ATC Academy in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma. A waste?

Not anymore.

Academic institutions such as Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University (ERAU) are now uniquely positioned to support the FAA by leveraging state-of-the-art simulation technology, along with a team of highly experienced faculty, and a proven record of excellence to help bridge the ATC hiring gap.

**The Enhanced Collegiate Training Initiative (E-CTI)**

The FAA’s website<sup>3</sup> describes the CTI program as a “...partnership between selected colleges and universities and the FAA. The program is a valuable source of applicants for ATC positions. Although there is no guarantee of

employment, collegiate aviation is considered a critical hiring source to meet the FAA’s need for air traffic controllers now and in the future.”

Under the Enhanced CTI (E-CTI) programme, students who graduate from CTI schools such as ERAU are eligible to bypass the FAA Academy and upon meeting all hiring requirements, proceed directly to their facility to begin operational training, as students are now seen as graduating with “equivalent FAA Academy air traffic control training.”

For this model to succeed nationally as well as globally, it is important for governments, ANSPs and interested parties to:

- Implement new policies and regulations to expand and standardise training pipelines: Academic institutions can partner with national CAAs and ANSPs to scale and replicate ATC-specific degree and certification programmes like the FAA’s CTI.
- Develop accredited curricula: Universities can offer accredited coursework aligned with national and international regulatory standards, such as the ICAO Annex 11 standards and recommended practices for ATC training (known as ICAO 051 to 055 - ATC Training).

- Invest in state-of-the-art simulation labs: Academic institutions must, to be successful, invest in advanced ATC simulation labs, reducing the burden on government-run training centres. For example, ERAU recently invested in a multimillion USD simulation lab that mirrors FAA ATC Academy training.

**Leveraging Institutional Research**

Research in the areas of Behavioral Sciences Integration, where insights from cognitive psychology, neuroscience, and ergonomics can work with the aviation community to inform new best practices. With financial investments made by CAAs and ANSPs to partner with academia, this may lead to direct government policy implications as research findings can shape regulations regarding working hours, staffing ratios, and health interventions<sup>4</sup>.

Many institutions of higher learning in the United States and around the world spend a significant number of resources on academic/institutional research programmes. The aviation system can influence research coming from academia to implement new technologies such as digital platforms and virtual reality, which can make training more accessible and scalable. The aviation community can also investigate work being done on improving retention through research on Human Factors. Academia is strongly suited for and can lead interdisciplinary research into the psychological and physiological challenges of air traffic control. By examining stress, fatigue, decision-making, and cognitive load, universities can help redesign training, schedules, and work environments to boost retention and performance.

Other specialties within academia can also engage in this process: Engineering and computer science departments can develop tools to augment human controllers, allowing them to manage more traffic safely through the development of Artificial Intelligence (AI) and other automated solutions. At the recent Civil Air Navigation Services Organization

<sup>3</sup> [https://www.faa.gov/air\\_traffic/air-traffic-collegiate-training-initiatives-cti](https://www.faa.gov/air_traffic/air-traffic-collegiate-training-initiatives-cti)

<sup>4</sup> There are numerous studies and programs currently ongoing that, in the interest of space, cannot be listed here. However, a quick online search will show active studies in these research areas being undertaken by universities as well as government and industry partnerships.



(CANSO) Airspace World 2025 Conference held in Lisbon, Portugal in May, we have seen that many companies are hard at work alongside academia to develop Decision Support Systems and other AI-driven tools that can assist with conflict detection, weather rerouting, and dynamic spacing.

Should I go on? Universities and research centres, such as Embry Riddle's Boeing Center for Aviation and Aerospace Safety, located on the ERAU campus in Daytona Beach, Florida, conducts Policy Advocacy and Thought Leadership by informing public policy through white papers, expert panels, and collaborations with aviation agencies. Another area in which academia is working with the aviation community is in Human-AI Collaboration Studies, where universities test and refine how controllers interact with automation to prevent over-reliance or mistrust. Academic institutions are also well placed to conduct long-range demand modeling and forecast studies as well as data-driven insights to inform recruitment, infrastructure investment and support legislative initiatives to

expand funding for ATC training and support.

**Developing the Next Generation of Global Talent**

I commend the International Federation of Air Traffic Controllers' Associations' (IFATCA) attempt to address the issue of developing and attracting new talent in their recent paper entitled "Attracting New Air Traffic Controllers"<sup>5</sup> that looks at chronic staffing shortages and ways to overcome them. Where I feel the paper fell short is that it did not adequately address the possibilities of engaging academia in the recruitment and training process. For example, in regions facing acute talent shortages, universities and other non-governmental training institutions can play a role in building local training capacity, thus reducing the "brain drain" often seen by many countries that cannot adequately pay or train the next generation. Education, particularly technical education, should be considered "Cross-Border." Working alongside the the Air Traffic Control Association (ATCA), ICAO, IFATCA and other major air traffic control stakeholders, academia can create and develop ATC-focused partnerships (e.g., joint programmes between

institutions, scholarships, and online learning programmes) in developed and developing countries to recruit and train the next generation, while investing in people and technologies to elevate global standards and reach underserved populations.

**Conclusion**

The global air traffic controller shortage is a real systemic issue with major safety implications. As Winston Churchill famously stated: "A pessimist sees the difficulty in every opportunity; an optimist sees the opportunity in every difficulty." Academia, with its capacity for innovation, workforce development, and interdisciplinary collaboration, can be a powerful partner alongside government and industry in addressing this crisis. By aligning educational pathways with operational needs, investing in research and technology, and advocating for smart policy, universities can help ensure that the skies remain safe and efficient for the generations to come. ◀

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<sup>5</sup> International Federation of Air Traffic Controllers Associations (IFATCA), "Attracting New Air Traffic Controllers," Information Paper WP NO:154, May 2025



# RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION CHALLENGES IN JORDAN

## SEEKING A SUSTAINED AND COORDINATED APPROACH

### ➤ BY YAZEED BASSAM ALMOMANI, AIR TRAFFIC CONTROLLER, JORDAN

**Air traffic control (ATC) is a profession that demands exceptional skill, concentration, and resilience. In Jordan, this vital sector faces growing challenges in both the recruitment of new talent and the retention of experienced professionals. These challenges not only affect operational efficiency but also have long-term implications for the safety and stability of the country's aviation system.**



A key factor impacting workforce stability is the mandatory retirement law, which requires air traffic controllers to retire at a predetermined age. While such regulations aim to maintain high safety standards and ensure a steady inflow of new professionals, they often result in the premature loss of seasoned controllers whose expertise and institutional knowledge remain invaluable. This loss creates a skills gap that requires significant time and resources to fill.

Recruitment efforts are further hindered by government hiring restrictions. Employment in the ATC sector is subject to quotas and approvals from the relevant authorities, which limits the number of new hires and slows the replacement process when vacancies arise. This restriction can exacerbate staffing shortages, increasing the workload and stress on existing controllers.

Another challenge lies in the limited public awareness and promotion of the ATC profession. Many prospective candidates are unfamiliar with the career path, its significance, and its opportunities. Moreover, when compared to other professions, entry-level salaries for air traffic controllers in Jordan may appear less competitive. This financial disparity can dissuade

potential applicants and reduce interest in pursuing a career in the field.

In addition to these factors, the sector experiences a notable trend of voluntary departures. Some controllers opt for early retirement or resign from their positions, while others seek employment abroad — particularly in Gulf states — where salaries are significantly higher. This phenomenon, often referred to as "talent migration" or "brain drain", leads to the loss of highly trained personnel and places further strain on recruitment and training systems.

Recognizing these challenges, Jordanian Air Navigation Services - (JANS), has undertaken several initiatives to mitigate their impact. These efforts include the provision of financial incentives and performance-based bonuses to enhance job satisfaction and reward dedication. JANS has also invested in promoting the ATC profession through targeted awareness campaigns aimed at attracting more applicants and highlighting the strategic importance of the role. Furthermore, to accelerate the integration of new talent, the Commission has streamlined training procedures, including the introduction of a fast-track program for radar air traffic controllers, which shortens the

time required for qualified candidates to assume operational duties.

Addressing recruitment and retention challenges requires a sustained and coordinated approach. While JANS initiatives mark significant progress, further measures — such as reviewing retirement policies, easing recruitment constraints, and enhancing career development pathways — will be essential to secure a strong and stable ATC workforce.

Ensuring a sustainable and skilled ATC workforce is critical for safeguarding Jordan's aviation sector. By combining strategic reforms with targeted incentives and streamlined training, the country can maintain operational excellence and continue to meet the highest standards of air traffic safety.

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# FROM CLASSROOMS TO CONTROL POSITIONS

## AIRNAV IRELAND'S OUTREACH JOURNEY

### ➤ BY DEIDRE FORREST, AIRNAV IRELAND

**Ever wondered how people discover careers they've never even seen? For air traffic control (ATC), outreach is the answer.**

Outreach can be as simple as a controller visiting a school, chatting with students about the job, or standing at a careers fair answering questions. Today, it also means reaching people online – through TikTok, Instagram, LinkedIn, or YouTube.

Why does this matter? Because ATC is often an “invisible” career. Unlike pilots or cabin crew, controllers aren't in the spotlight. Outreach shines a light on a profession that's vital, exciting, and full of opportunity.

#### **Busting the Myths**

Ask someone what an air traffic controller does, and you'll often get funny answers – like “parking planes.” Others imagine the “most stressful job in the world.” The truth? ATC is aptitude-based, equal opportunity, and incredibly rewarding.

#### **From One Idea to a Movement**

Over ten years ago, one controller suggested visiting schools to talk about ATC. That small idea grew into something big: 35 volunteers visiting over 70 schools in Ireland's Southwest. Feedback was so positive that university outreach and career fairs quickly followed.

The impact was clear – every event sparked more applications.

In 2019, Shannon En-Route launched a Transition Year (TY) Programme, giving students four days inside the world of ATC. They tried simulators,

met controllers, and discovered other aviation careers. Dublin soon joined in. Today, 80 students a year take part – and one of them is already training as a controller.

The programme is more than a taster. Students rotate through different areas of aviation, meet engineers, and even practice communication skills in mock tower scenarios. They leave with a much clearer picture of aviation and many describe it as “life-changing.” Parents and teachers have praised it too, saying it opens doors to careers students had never considered.

#### **Building Momentum Together**

Making outreach formal was a learning curve. Stands, banners, fliers, and even merchandise were designed from scratch by staff. It was a true collaboration between controllers, HR, and corporate teams – and the results were worth it.

Outreach also means meeting people where they are. That includes Irish-language interviews, or celebrating Irish Language Week to make air traffic control visible in every community.

And it means breaking barriers. From Girls in Aviation Day to Women in STEM events, AirNav Ireland works hard to show air traffic control can be for everyone.

#### **Outreach in Action**

AirNav Ireland doesn't stop at schools. Outreach teams appear at some of

the country's biggest public events, including the National Ploughing Championships, which attracts over 250,000 visitors every year. Here, an air traffic control stand offers young people a chance to try mini-simulators and meet real controllers face-to-face.

At career fairs like Aer Lingus's national event, AirNav Ireland engages directly with teachers and guidance counsellors, multiplying the impact of each conversation. And through Girls in Aviation Day and Women in STEM events, the organisation makes a clear statement: the tower is open to everyone.

“When people meet real controllers, they see the passion – and they start to imagine themselves in the role.”

#### **Why It Matters**

Outreach isn't a quick win. It's about planting seeds. Six years after the first TY Programme, one of those students is now on the path to becoming a fully qualified controller. More will follow.

Every school visit, every fair, every media interview is building a future talent pipeline – one that's more diverse, more engaged, and ready to take on the skies. ◀

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# MENTORING IN AIR TRAFFIC CONTROL

WHAT IS MENTORING, WHO BENEFITS AND HOW DOES IT WORK IN AIR TRAFFIC CONTROL?

➤ **BY MILENA BOWMAN, EXECUTIVE MANAGER,  
EUROCONTROL'S MAASTRICHT UPPER AREA CONTROL CENTRE**

Is it not enough to go through years of intense and stressful training, obtain your licence and be done? What more is there to learn? Why mentoring? The truth is that even if someone becomes an ATCO, there is no guarantee that they will be a happy and fulfilled person for the rest of their career. How does one maintain interest in the profession and explore the different pathways it offers? How can one maintain a balance between rosters, home demands, health, caring for aging parents, increasing responsibilities at work, personal relationships, community involvement, and self-improvement?



Mentoring is the process where a more experienced person supports or guides a less experienced individual in a specific area. It involves learning how to adapt, change behaviours, discover new ideas, contacts, and adjust to new situations. Mentoring typically has a defined duration, often around 7-9 months. Usually, a mentor is a trusted person within the environment, and the mentor-mentee relationship is personal and exclusive.

In contrast, coaching involves learning new skills or competencies to achieve specific objectives. Coaches are professional facilitators who guide this process. Workplace coaching usually involves not only the coach and trainee but also supervisors or line managers. Coaching tends to last until the identified goals are achieved

These questions allow the mentee to build an ability to deal with any situation, to look at it objectively, identify pressing points that need attention, look for support and act (or actively decide to not act). In essence, this process builds resilience.

A good mentor should avoid providing direct answers because doing so can impede the mentee's development of essential independent problem-solving skills. When mentors step in and give immediate solutions, they may unintentionally foster dependency, making the mentee less confident in their own judgment and abilities. Instead, the mentor's role is to guide the

mentee through the process of discovery, encouraging critical thinking and self-reflection. By doing so, they foster independence, confidence, and problem-solving abilities that will serve people well throughout their lives. A mentor's goal is to create a safe space for the mentee to explore ideas, reflect on outcomes, and learn from their mistakes, ultimately empowering them to become autonomous and confident professionals.

**.The three foundational questions mentors ask**

1. **What happened?** (identify the event, the feeling, the observation, the struggle the mentee would like to work on)
2. **So what?** (assess the consequences, who is affected, and the impact on individuals or team)
3. **Then what?** (explore actions the mentee can take or refrain from doing, seek information, reach out for support)

Milena Bowman is the Executive Manager at EUROCONTROL's Maastricht Upper Area Control Centre (MUAC), responsible for the day-to-day management of systems, airspace, procedures, and occurrence management. A seasoned aviation professional with experience in operations, project management, planning and people management, and international relations. Milena has been a member of the Just Culture Committee at EUROCONTROL since 2019. She holds a Master's Degree in Economics from Sofia University of Economics and a Global Executive MBA from INSEAD. A believer in the benefits of data-driven decisions, the power of diversity, networks, and behavioural science in her quest to raise awareness about bias, she founded a Diversity and Inclusion think tank at MUAC. She has been an EC Ambassador for Diversity since 2020. Milena is pursuing a PhD at Leiden University on the topic of "Team diversity and safety in Air Traffic Management Europe."

The Flight Safety Foundation awarded Milena with the prestigious Gloria Heath Trophy for 2025.



**Who benefits from mentoring in an ATC organisation?**

Primarily, it is the mentee who benefits. They receive open and caring feedback based on which they can adjust beliefs and behaviours. They have a prolonged and structured opportunity to consult a more experienced person on a specific goal they would like to achieve. The ATM industry spends the majority of its training resources on technical training, mainly before successful licensing. But once a trainee completes this process, there is almost no support for becoming a happy and fulfilled ATCO. Mentoring can be extremely helpful in the course of the first few years after validation so that checked-out trainees become resilient and balanced ATCOs.

Mentors also benefit significantly. They get to practice their feedback skills, listening skills, and they see the world through the eyes of a younger or less experienced generation. They can also practice coaching and mentoring skills that make them better managers or

supervisors. Being a mentor can be a fantastic opportunity for ATCOs to develop and practice people skills. As mentioned in the previous paragraph, from the Ab-Initio course to achieving the licence, there is a lot of care. As future leaders, ATCOs must develop inclusive leadership styles, connect with their teams, and effectively collaborate with higher management. Mentoring can nurture these competencies.

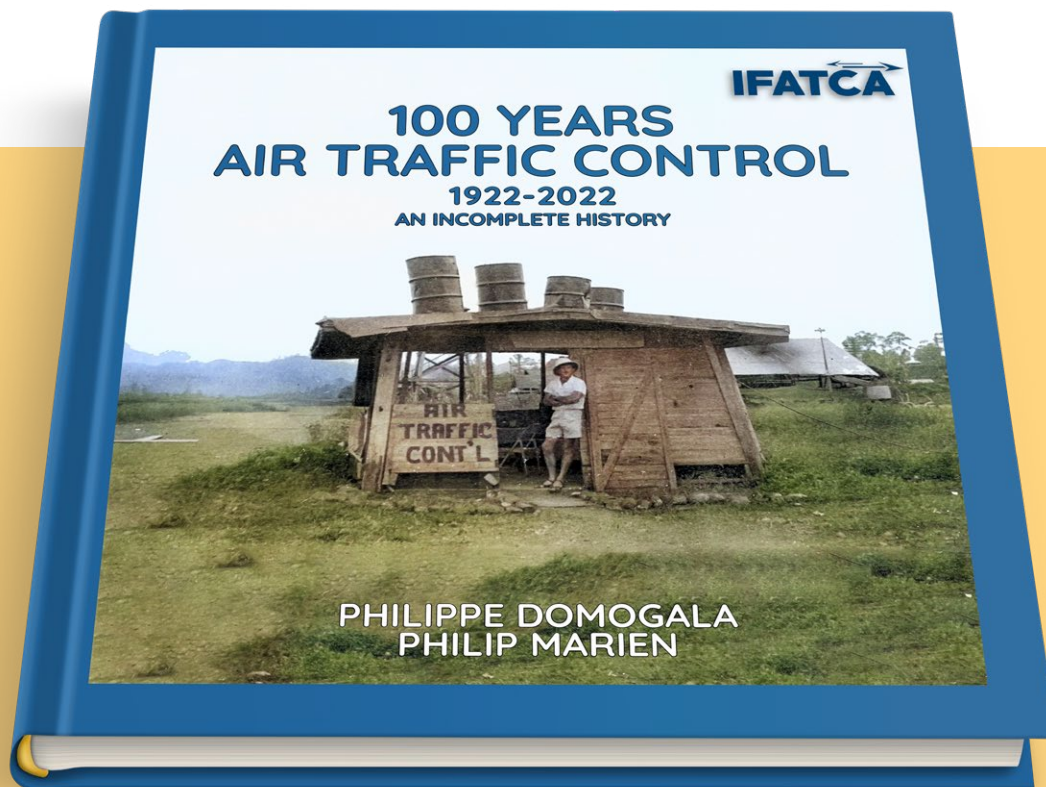
Finally, any organisation where people are trained and are experienced in listening to each other and giving and receiving feedback will benefit from a psychologically safe environment where inefficiencies and concerns are constructively discussed. This is even more important for high-risk organisations such as Air Traffic Management, where people stay for a lifelong career and unaddressed issues may turn into a safety-critical issue.

**Where can you learn about mentoring?**

The international aviation community has already recognised the power of mentoring. For example, in 2020, the FAA issued an Advisory AC 121-43 advising airlines to deploy mentoring training for Pilots in Command.

ICAO and EUROCONTROL have also recognised the power of mentoring, not only for improving the skills of their staff, but also to attract new talent, increase the retention of the next generation of aviation professionals, and dismantle bias and stereotypes. For this, the two international bodies created a course, Mentoring for Success, which is delivered free of charge at the EUROCONTROL Aviation Learning Centre in Luxembourg for EUROCONTROL stakeholders. For others, it is offered on demand by the ICAO TrainAir Plus programme. ◀

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[www.atc100years.org](http://www.atc100years.org)

# UNICORNS! IN AVIATION

AN INNOVATIVE WAY TO INSPIRE THE NEXT GENERATION OF AVIATION PROFESSIONALS - STARTING THEM FROM A YOUNG AGE AND LOOKING TO THE SKIES

➤ BY OLIVIA MAY, IFATCA COMMS TEAM, GATCO UK

**Unicorns! In Aviation, in their own words, is for those who find magic in aviation. It's a beautiful collection of colouring books and stickers filled with aviation-themed unicorns, showing different aviation careers from both sides of the radio. It's a way to encourage future generations to get involved in the aviation field, without feeling like they have to give up their personal sparkle and magic.**

IFATCA interviewed the creator, Ashley Lane, to talk to her about her path, her inspiration and her motivation for creating Unicorns! In Aviation.

Her website (<https://www.unicornsinaviation.com>) states that her mission is to inspire and empower girls to reach for the skies, both literally and figuratively. This is encouraged by breaking stereotypes, fostering education, and inspiring creativity and imagination.

Ashley is an air traffic controller in Austin, Texas. She majored in Air Traffic Control with a minor in visual arts at the University of North Dakota, graduating in 2010. Ashley worked as a pseudopilot at the academy in Oklahoma, while she waited for her ATC job offer. She started her ATC career in Atlantic City in 2012, before moving to the Austin Tower and TRACON facility in 2016, where she still works now. She is also the training representative in Austin and loves helping new controllers to learn and grow.

We asked her a few questions about her life, inspirations and goals and here is what she said.

## How did you get interested in aviation?

*I grew up flying back and forth cross-country to see my parents. I have always loved flying and aeroplanes. While I was in high school, I was trying to figure out my direction in life and knew it was going to be either aviation or art! My mom saw the*

*99s club (an international organisation of women pilots) The Ninety-Nines, Inc., International Organization of Women Pilots(R) on Oprah, and that allowed me to get in touch with them. Through their organisation, I met Mary Weather. She graciously took me flying out of Brandwine airport in her Mooney. She was also a controller at Philadelphia and took me on a tour of that ATC facility. As soon as I walked into that radar room, I knew it was what I wanted to do for the rest of my life.*

## Tell us more about your childhood

*I grew up with a mix of influences. My stepdad believed a woman's place was only in the home. My dad was the opposite; he loved me more than anything and taught me that I could do anything. No door was closed to me. I could be tough and pretty, have sparkles and skinned knees, wear dresses and climb trees and know that the mud and dirt would wash off of my pretty shoes. He was one of the best teachers I've ever had and he is the reason why I love training.*

*My dad worked in a male-dominated industry, as a carpenter. I would often go with him to his job sites. I loved learning all the things he did; the little girl in the pink hard hat sitting on his lap on a tractor. It didn't matter that it was a male-dominated industry, he encouraged me to get in, get*

*dirty, and that I could do anything the boys could do... and sometimes even better!*

## How did you get from there back into creative work?

*One day, one of the controllers brought her kids into work. They were so excited to be in the tower watching the planes and her daughter sat happily drawing pictures. I remembered, when I was little ...the feeling of excitement about learning a "boys job" and the encouragement I received.*





At that moment, I realised I wanted to share that feeling and my love for aviation with others. I figured, why not combine my two passions, show little girls what jobs exist in aviation and make them see that they can do them too, sparkle and all? Watching that little girl colouring in the tower, just like I used to do in the trailers on job sites, sparked an idea: a colouring book would be the perfect way to inspire them.

At first, it was just a fun thing to do on my breaks, a way to relax. I reached out to lady aviators for ideas, and they were so helpful. I loved the sense of community they had and how they encouraged one another.

Then my dad got sick. I spent a lot of time with him, just sitting and drawing while he watched. He always loved watching me work, and it was actually his idea to add stickers, he said I needed more colour! Not long after, he passed away. In his memory, I wanted to keep creating art and showing little girls that you don't have to 'be one of the boys' to succeed, you can be amazing in any field just as you are.

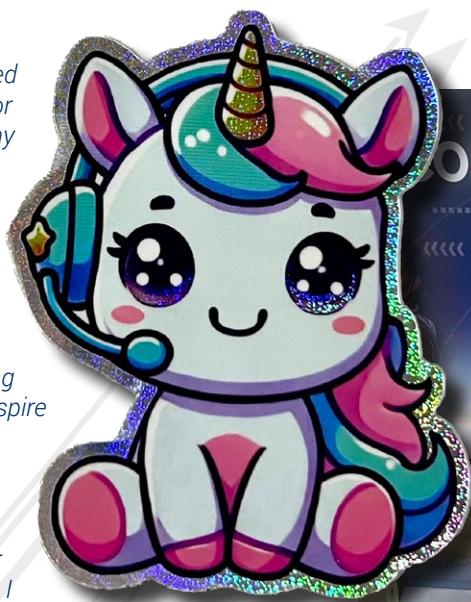
I will always be so grateful to my dad, to the 99s, and to every woman in this industry who has supported, encouraged or was just there for me. I wanted to give that back. To show little girls that just as I loved wearing my pink hard hat, they too can be pretty and sparkly, as well as having the strength, resilience and thick skin it takes to thrive in aviation.

**Why unicorns?**

I chose unicorns because they symbolise magic, uniqueness, and limitless potential – qualities I believe every kid should feel as they grow and explore new opportunities. By combining these magical creatures with aviation, I hope to create a world where the sky has no limit.

**Tell us about your Unicorn charity work**

I have recently paired up with "Women With Wings" and "Hovering With Harris", to create custom-made stickers and books for them to sell. A portion of each book sold goes to their Discovery Flight Scholarship fund. I also teamed up with "Aviation First Steps" to create



some custom colouring pages, for them to give to kids at events. I love collaborating with organisations that want to help kids learn about this industry. I would like to keep working with charities and different organisations, making custom items to help them stand out and succeed.

**So what's next?**

I'm currently working on two new colouring books. One is a remix of my current book but with dragons – not all children are into unicorns and sparkles and they should be included too! All of the coolest books have fierce dragons!

The next colouring book will show some of the different jobs pilots do: everything from helicopters, firefighters to animal rescue and even hot air balloons! That book is in its final review and will be released by the end of August.

I've also had requests for t-shirts with unicorns and patches, so those will be coming soon as well. As always, the products show my love for my number one passion – Air Traffic Control.

**What do you see in the future?**

My vision for this little company is to help women feel empowered and represented in our industry. I want to make things that aren't boring for women who are anything but that! I want to let women feel proud of a hard-fought battle to get where they are or to help girls getting

started; knowing they are represented and supported. I always felt like aviation, and especially air traffic controllers, are a kind of unconventional family composed of different backgrounds. I want to help all women in aviation to feel like a little family too. I'd love for all the parents in aviation to get their daughters involved in the industry and for those little girls to see they can be anything they want to be. They can be the mechanic, the tech ops, the air traffic controller, the pilot, the engineer or anything they dream of, without having to dull their sparkle to be taken seriously.

**And finally, where can we find you?**

My website! [www.unicornsinaivation.com](http://www.unicornsinaivation.com), and we ship internationally. I'm also on Instagram @unicorns\_in\_aviation and facebook @unicornsinaivation.

Ashley's work is absolutely beautiful and I can imagine plenty of children that would love to have more unicorns and sparkle in their daily lives! Thank you for sharing with us Ashley and we wish you all the best and lots of success in both sides of your career path. ◀

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# CONTROLLER RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION

ESSENTIAL TO MAINTAIN A SAFE AND EFFICIENT AIRSPACE

➤ **BY GODLOVE LONGOLE, CHIEF INSTRUCTOR ATM & PRINCIPAL ATM OFFICER, TANZANIA**

**An Air Traffic Controller (ATCO) is a highly specialised professional crucial for the safe, orderly, and efficient flow of aircraft within a designated airspace. The profession requires exceptional cognitive abilities, including rapid decision-making under pressure, sharp situational awareness, efficient communication skills, and an ability to multitask in a highly dynamic and safety-critical environment.**

Given these unique demands, recruiting suitable candidates is paramount. Equally important is retention, i.e. the ability for a company to retain valuable employees over time: encouraging staff to stay and remain productive, given the significant investment in training and the critical nature of the ATCO role.

Air Navigation Service Providers (ANSPs) meticulously set selection and hiring criteria. This approach aims to increase applicants' likelihood of passing all training phases and becoming certified controllers. Given the substantial costs involved with training, these criteria also seek to minimise the financial investment.

Once qualified, retaining ATCOs becomes crucial to avoid losing the significant investment of recruitment, onboarding, and training new personnel. A stable workforce of experienced controllers ensures the organisation preserves valuable institutional knowledge and specialised skills. Furthermore, a low turnover rate generally fosters higher employee morale, improves teamwork, and boosts overall productivity within the air traffic control environment.

### **The reasons and possibilities for ATCO career change within and outside ATC.**

ATCOs may change careers for several reasons. The demanding nature of the ATCO role, requiring constant high concentration and rapid, accurate decision-making under immense pressure, can lead to burnout and mental health challenges that necessitate change.

Also, due to often stringent mandatory retirement ages, ATCOs may need or desire to pursue a second career after concluding their active controlling duties.

Strict medical requirements mean that developing health issues can sometimes render an ATCO unable to continue in their role, necessitating a career transition. Or, ATCOs might develop new interests or a desire to pursue different types of work that align with their evolving personal goals. Air Traffic Controllers, with their highly specialised skills, often transition into various roles both within and outside direct air traffic control operations.

### **The Career Changes Within Air Traffic Control**

Many ATCOs leverage their operational knowledge to move into non-operational or specialised roles within the air traffic control system, including as supervisors and managers overseeing daily operations, managing staff, and ensuring regulatory compliance within the control position, or becoming a procedure and airspace design professional that contributes to developing and implementing new air traffic procedures, routes, and airspace structures.

They may change to Safety Management Systems roles and work in aviation safety departments, analysing incidents, developing risk mitigation strategies, and promoting a strong safety culture. Or become a Search and Rescue coordinator and apply their aviation and emergency response knowledge in SAR coordination.

And, of course, an ATCO may become an instructor and trainer and start sharing their expertise by training and mentoring new recruits.

### **Beyond Aviation**

Beyond the control positions, ATCOs possess skills that may open doors to other sectors of the aviation industry and beyond: they may opt to work in airport operations, management, or administration because their comprehensive understanding of air traffic systems and procedures makes them valuable assets in managing airport functions. Alternatively, they could also pursue an academic degree and seek new intellectual challenges or opportunities for higher earning potential.

These transitions allow ATCOs to continue contributing to aviation safety and efficiency in different capacities, utilising their unique operational experience, critical thinking, and communication skills.

### **The Impact of ATCO Recruitment and Retention on Safe and Efficient Airspace**

Adequate staffing levels, combined with a workforce of skilled and well-trained controllers, are crucial for the smooth flow of air traffic, effectively minimising delays and preventing potential safety hazards. A sufficient number of ATCOs leads to a more manageable workload, which reduces stress and enhances decision-making capabilities. When appropriately staffed, airspace can handle more air traffic, optimise capacity, and significantly reduce congestion. ◀



# IFATCA WELCOMES THREE NEW INDUSTRY PARTNERS



**Adacel** is a leading global architect of air traffic management and training solutions. ISO 9001:2015 certified and appraised at CMMI Level 3 capability, they support customers worldwide, from North and Latin America to Europe, Asia Pacific, Africa and Australia. Adacel has been serving military, defense and security customers, airport authorities and universities for over 35 years.

Adacel's REVAL digital remote tower system delivers a wide spectrum of digital tower operational solutions, from consulting services to system design, development, deployment and support for a successful transition to virtual tower operations. Adacel's Aurora ATM System integrates oceanic, approach and tower control capabilities and is used by ANSPs around the world to control more than 20% of global airspace. Adacel also provides ATC simulation and training systems including Maxsim, an all-in-one tower and radar ATC simulator and Intelligent Communications Environment (ICE), an aviation phraseology training tool for air traffic controllers and pilots.

**Deep Blue Srl**, based in Rome and founded by senior researchers from leading Italian universities, is a consultancy and research company specialising in Human Factors and Safety in air traffic management. For more than twenty years, Deep Blue has combined applied research, training and advisory services to help air navigation service providers and aviation stakeholders improve safety, efficiency, and sustainability. Recognised as the leading European SME in ATM research, with deep and proven expertise in Human Factors, Deep Blue brings research knowledge to the aviation industry, delivering innovative, human-centred solutions that enhance safety and performance across the sector. ◀



◀ Welcome ▶

New IFATCA Industry Partner

**deepblue**  
consulting & research

IFATCA



From drones and eVTOLs to supersonic jets, the skies are evolving fast. However, many airport towers are stuck in the past. Controllers still rely on paper strips and pens to manage millions of aircraft. The gap between the skies and the tower has never been wider. While policymakers are pushing for modernisation, current technology is designed for major airports. These expensive and rigid systems require complex implementation, leaving thousands of smaller airports with tools unfit for today's challenges.

Enter Skytower, the world's first Software-as-a-Service flight strip platform. With a simple philosophy that controllers come first, it amplifies expertise and operational efficiency rather than simply replacing paper. This cloud-based platform deploys in minutes, scales effortlessly with traffic demand, and can be implemented anywhere in the world.

Skytower brings affordable modernisation to any tower, putting control in your hands. Your team can configure the system to fit your operation. It's ATC without the nonsense, where change happens in minutes. Already UK CAA-approved and live across multiple sites, Skytower is transforming operations, delivering a superior experience that boosts safety and efficiency.

For the towers ATC technology has left behind, the future is here. See it for yourself at [www.skyverse.co.uk](http://www.skyverse.co.uk)



# IFATCA INDUSTRY PARTNERS AT CANSO AIRSPACE WORLD

➤ BY PHILIPPE DOMOGALA, IFATCA INDUSTRY PARTNER COORDINATOR, AND NICOLA NI RIADA, IFATCA COMMUNICATION COORDINATOR

**Airspace World is one of the most significant aviation events worldwide, bringing the global aviation community together in one place. This is always an excellent opportunity for IFATCA to touch base with our valued Industry Partners. This year was no exception, as well as interacting with our established Industry Partners, the team also continued conversations with other interested companies, such as Adacel, which joined us as partners! And, of course, opening conversations with new potential partners.**

One of IFATCA's stated goals is building on our relationships. The relationship with our industry partners is symbiotic. IFATCA sees it as an opportunity to ensure the ATCO remains visible; we like to be a reminder that having the input of operational controllers is invaluable to the industry. This applies if you design our radars or comms systems; it equally applies if you train us or if you manage the change projects that impact us. For their part, our Industry Partners are with us because they see the value in a relationship with the Air Traffic Control community, they value our perspective and inputs, and they know real innovation and real change come from collaboration with ATC as an important stakeholder.

Philippe Domogala has been the Industry Partner Coordinator (previously referred to as corporate members) for many years. He has built strong and respectful relationships on behalf of IFATCA in the community. As part of his succession planning (he does plan to retire!), the Industry Partner portfolio will be included in the communications remit. In real terms, this means handing over these important relationships to the world Comms Team. With this in mind, Philippe led the IFATCA team at CANSO ATM, mentoring Nicola into the handover of the industry partners' portfolio, which will happen in Romania 2026. The contact email address remains [ipc@ifatca.org](mailto:ipc@ifatca.org) IFATCA Industry Partners – IFATCA

How does this work in real time? We try to organise a slot with our existing partners, usually at their booth, in advance. This year we met with Premium Partners Aireon, EPN, Frequentis, INDRA, L3Harris, Thales, Skysoft and Vibe. EPN moved up from Standard to Premium partners this year, and we made sure to thank them for that! We were also able to touch base with Standard Partners CAE, FoxATM, GATE and SAAB. Global Airspace Radar, the media partner of CANSO Airspace World, is led by our Industry Partner FoxATM's Vincent Lambercy. We were delighted to meet up with him and discuss future collaboration too. The continued conversations with potential new partners are also usually by appointment, while new conversations are started organically, as we walk the booths. There are often interactions leading to new conversations too - with referrals, introductions and networking being key in this space.

In 2025, we welcomed seven new Industry Partners to the IFATCA family. Hopefully you have seen this on the social media posts! American Airlines, SAAB and CAE joined us early in 2025 and we were able to give SAAB and CAE their scrolls in Lisbon, which was a fantastic opportunity to talk about our mutual interests. American Airlines joined us at our annual conference in Abu Dhabi (both annual and regional conferences are also fantastic opportunities to interact with our partners and an amazing opportunity for them to speak to frontline

operational controllers from all over the world). Airspace world was also an opportunity to continue conversations with new partners Deepblue and Adacel. And Probotek and Skyverse ATM joined as referrals from IFATCA members, another great way to start those partner conversations.

Hopefully some of the conversations started this year will bring more partners to us in the future too! We look forward to Airspace World 2026 - CANSO 26 – 28 May 2026, held again in the Feira Internacional de Lisboa (FIL), in Lisbon, Portugal. And to the other opportunities that allow us to advocate for ATCOs within the industry side of our profession. ◀



Philippe Domogala (left) and Nicola Ni Riada (right)

credit: IFATCA Archive





L3HARRIS



photos credit: IFATCA Archive

# IFATCA @ CANSO AIRSPACE WORLD 2025

COOPERATION IN ACTION: IFATCA'S VISIBLE AND ACTIVE PRESENCE AT AIRSPACE WORLD

► BY NICOLA NI RIADA, IFATCA COMMUNICATIONS COORDINATOR/ IATCA IRELAND

**As part of our ongoing commitment to building strong industry relationships, IFATCA and CANSO signed a Declaration on Cooperation at the IFATCA annual conference in the UAE. This cooperation was visible at CANSO's Airspace World 2025 where PCX Helena Sjöström Falk and Communications Coordinator Nicola Ni Riada were invited to the CANSO Leadership Summit on Monday, 12 May. During the summit, CANSO unveiled its video celebrating air traffic control, Jobs Archive - CANSO Guardians of the Sky. The event provided a valuable opportunity for networking and building relationships.**

On Wednesday, 14 May, Helena took part in the CATS (Complete Air Traffic System) Global Council in-person meeting, where discussions focused on the publication of the CATS CONOPS (Concept of Operations), stakeholder feedback, and planning the CATS Work Programme 2026–2028.

The following morning, Thursday, 15 May, Helena attended the Chief Executives and Young Professionals Breakfast, part of the Tomorrow's Voices initiative, aimed at fostering collaboration and professional development within our industry. The breakfast brought together five senior executives and 50 young professionals for networking, mentorship, and knowledge-sharing. Helena was joined by aviation leaders Andrea Sack (Director of Safety, Security and Quality, Austrocontrol), Tim Arel (Former FAA ATO COO), Alex Bristol (CEO Skyguide), Victor Martinez Garcia (EVP ATM INDRA) and moderator Ben Stanley (Firstfruits).

Marc Baumgartner, IFATCA SESAR Coordinator, moderated the panel "The Role of AI in Supporting Air Traffic Control" featuring experts from the SESAR AWARE (Achieving Human-Machine Collaboration with Artificial Situational Awareness) project. The discussion explored how AI assistants can help air traffic controllers achieve operational goals, as well as the challenges of integrating AI into ATM systems. Panellists included Gunnar

Por Magnussson (Tern Systems), Anna Robin (LFV ATCC supervisor/ATFM expert), Ruth Ester Hausler Hermann (Centre for Aviation, Zurich University of Applied Sciences (ZHAW) Head of Human Factors Research Unit), and Tomislav Radisic (University of Zagreb Professor and AI Researcher) who talked about the challenges in keeping the human in the loop when AI becomes a prominent companion in the team. Marc also joined the EC – DG MOVE: "Single European Sky: Remaining Barriers" panel, alongside Filip Cornelis (DG MOVE Director for Aviation), Flor Diaz Pulido (European Commission Head of SES unit), Peggy

Devestel (DMUAC) and Victor Martinez (Indra EVP ATM).

Greg Okeroa (NZALPA/IFATCA EDI) spoke on two panels: One was "Navigating Change: People at the Heart of ATM Transformation" with Mike Reed (PROSPECT), Nick von Schoenberg (CATCA), Peter Turnbull (University of Bristol Business School) and Simon Hocquard (CANSO CEO). The second panel was "Building a More Inclusive Aviation Future Starts Now Next Wave of Talent: Embedding Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) from Day One". This was also part of the Tomorrow's Voices programme at Airspace World 2025, with Ana Mata (Chair of Portuguese CAA), Conor Mullen (MD Think Research), Eva Maria Bieda (Chief Communications Officer, Skyguide), Tatjana Bolic (Aviation for All) and moderated by Milena Bowman (Eurocontrol Executive Manager).



Marc Baumgartner moderating a panel and participating in a SES panel discussion.





photos: IFATCA/CANSO



Greg Okeroa (NZALPA/IFATCA EDI), second from the right, in a panel discussion on how to build a more inclusive future.

Agatino Cirvilleri (DEI officer, EUROCONTROL) started the panel with an update on what EUROCONTROL is currently doing in this space. As the aviation industry continues to evolve, attracting and retaining the next generation of professionals is more critical than ever. This panel, supported by EUROCONTROL, explored how DEI principles can be embedded into onboarding processes to create a more inclusive, empowered, and resilient workforce. It was a thoughtful discussion on how organisations can create environments where new talent feels welcomed, supported, and positioned to thrive from day one.

Frederic Deleau, IFATCA's EVP Europe, was a panellist for the session

organised by CANSO titled "Elevating Safety Together: A Collaborative Approach to Safety", on Thursday, 15 May, the other panellists were Akbar Sultan (NASA), Andrea Sack (Austrocontrol), Anthony MacKay (NAV Canada), Joyce Asante (Deputy DG Ghana Civil Aviation Authority), and Peter Kearney (AirNav Ireland CEO).

The Panel explored how collaboration across all facets of aviation is essential for the safe implementation of the CATS Global Vision. Operations and safety professionals must work in concert to ensure effective change management. The panel highlighted key initiatives such as the Human Performance Standard of Excellence, the CANSO Safety Dashboard, and the Safety Intelligence Working Group's work on GNSS jamming and spoofing.



Nicola ni Riada, IFATCA Communications Coordinator/ IATCA Ireland, in the panel on "Exploring Career Pathways in the Evolving Aerospace Industry"

They discussed how turning unknowns into knowns fosters a common frame of reference for controllers, customer operations centres, and airspace users, driving safety and efficiency as the CATS Global Vision is realised.

Nicola ni Riada, IFATCA's Communications Coordinator (IATCA Ireland), participated as a panellist to "Exploring Career Pathways in the Evolving Aerospace Industry", part of the Tomorrow's Voices programme on Thursday, 15 May. She shared the stage with George M.Vergara (RTX), Romulo Gallegos, (Embry-Riddle University), Sabina Zaharescu and Snezana Tomcic (Aviation4All), Sue Meeks (President, Infina Ltd.) and moderated by Michol Biscotto (Deepblue). The panel showcased aviation's diverse career opportunities from operations and engineering to digital innovation, sustainability, and airspace management.

IFATCA looks forward to continuing this strong collaboration at Airspace World 2026 - CANSO to be held from the 26 - 28 May 2026 in Lisbon, Portugal, at Feira Internacional de Lisboa (FIL). <



IFATCA EVP Europe Fred Deleau (right) in the CANSO panel discussion on a collaborative approach to safety.

# LINES IN THE SKY, FRIENDS ON THE GROUND

IS THE TRUE PRIVILEGE OF ATC NOT JUST MOVING AIRCRAFT SAFELY BUT BUILDING AN ATCO FAMILY ACROSS THE WORLD'S SKIES?

► **BY RENZ MARIONE BULSECO, SENIOR AIR TRAFFIC CONTROLLER, DAVAO SURVEILLANCE APPROACH, THE PHILIPPINES**



**The lines in the sky are invisible, but what we build between them is real. We may work in different towers and speak in different accents and languages, but we share the same frequency – and maybe that’s the real privilege of this job. I grew up wanting to see the world. Not in the sense of empire-building – just to experience it – to see it, taste it, hear it. I longed to get lost in cities where I didn’t speak the language, to sit in cafes where the conversations felt like music without words. Back then, the internet was barely a flicker, so my maps came from books, and my compass was a TV screen showing late-night travel shows. In our middle-class home in the Philippines, foreign travel wasn’t a priority—it was a postcard fantasy. But when I became an air traffic controller, the world suddenly felt closer, and the sky, our shared workplace, became my ticket.**

I wasn’t alone. A few colleagues-turned-friends shared the same craving for new places, swapping radar screens for hiking boots or boarding passes whenever they could. I’ve met strangers in bars, on hiking trails, or over coffee, exchanging stories. But one thing was missing: I’d never sat down with another controller in their own country to swap stories about life in their control facility. I wanted to know if we laughed at the same things, swore at the same things, and worried about the same things.

Getting involved in IFATCA opened that door. I’ll admit – at first, I was intimidated. Some came from regions with cutting-edge technology and spotless procedures, the kind of setup we could only admire from afar. I half-expected the professional version of high school cliques – groups sticking to their own, not bothering with outsiders. But I was wrong. Very wrong. The reception was warm, genuine. When they learned I was from the Philippines, there was curiosity, even excitement. “I’ve never met an ATCO from there,” they’d say, quickly followed by, “You should visit.” And I’d invite them right back.

In January 2023, I flew to Taipei with a suitcase filled with more than a hundred ROCATCA souvenir shirts. It was my first time meeting most of the members face-to-face. Over tea and stories, I realized that despite the miles and the accents, we faced the same challenges. Different facilities, same headaches. That trip sparked friendships that still thrive today, fueled by the instant connections of social media.

One of those friends was Evelyn Chen. We’d met briefly at the 38th Asia Pacific Regional Meeting in Cebu. At the time, she seemed quiet, reserved. But once we discovered our shared love for travel, the conversations started to flow. Like me, she wanted to see the world beyond her FIR, to meet people and absorb cultures different from her own.

In June 2025, ROCATCA Taiwan built on last year’s success and organized a visit to Japan’s busiest airports – Narita (RJAA) and Haneda (RJTT) – with the support of JFATC. Mr. Ishii Naoto, JFATC’s long-time liaison, and Mr. Nakajo Itsuro, who guided them through the towers and the Tokyo terminal control unit, made it happen.

Planning wasn’t buried in formal emails; it happened in quick, back-and-forth messages, the modern version of leaning over the fence to talk to your neighbor.

Narita welcomed them with detailed briefings on future expansion and operational procedures. Haneda gave them a simple but useful takeaway – a single sheet of paper with essential airport information. From the towers, they watched departures and arrivals unfold with near-ballet precision. At Tokyo Approach, the sheer complexity of the airspace was on full display, a sky filled with aircraft moving in so many precise patterns it felt almost musical.

For some in the delegation, this was their first look at the job through another country’s lens. Not everyone gets to attend an IFATCA conference, and visits like these offer the next best thing – seeing how the same job works under different rules, in different skies. ROCATCA Taiwan plans to keep that momentum going, with trips to Kansai and Itami later this year.



Work trips aren't the only bridges we build. In September 2024, after a meeting in Madrid, I went to Geneva. My friend Jules Ogilvie met me in St. Cergue, where we hiked, shared a table with cheese fondue, cold cuts, and wine, sailed on Lake Geneva, and explored the old town. Nearly a year later, I spent my 35th birthday in Zurich with another ATCO friend, Benny Fichtner. We toured Skyguide, sailed on Lake Zurich, and tracked down the city's best beers. I can proudly say that it was the best birthday gift I've ever given myself.

what we create between them is real, human, and lasting. We may stand in different towers, speak with different accents and languages, and follow different procedures, but in the air, we share the same frequency. And maybe that's the true privilege of our job—not just moving aircraft safely but building a family across the world's skies. ◀

[renz.bulseco@ifatca.org](mailto:renz.bulseco@ifatca.org)

Here's what I've learned: radar shows you traffic, not people. But step outside your own facility, and you see the real network — the one built of friendships, shared meals, and late-night stories. The lines in the sky are invisible, but





# CHARLIE'S COLUMN

▶ BY CHARLIE@THE-CONTROLLER.NET

## Something Fishy about this 737?

We've seen our share of imaginative aircraft decorations over the years: Tintin, Star Wars, Hello Kitty!, Pokémon and more.

But the prize for one of the weirder ones must go to Alaska Airlines for putting a wild salmon on one of their B737s. Is it a bird? Is it a plane? No, it's a... fish.



credit: @SAZ.O.Cubbie.n.Yegas via wikimedia

## OXO

According to wikipedia, tic-tac-toe (American English), noughts and crosses (Commonwealth English), or Xs and Os (Canadian or Irish English) is a paper-and-pencil game where two players take turns to try and get a row, column or diagonal of Os or Xs. Thanks to the internet, we now know that the paper-and-pencil part is not accurate: it can be played using airplanes as well! And in case you believe this is chatGPT generated fake news, there's actually a video that shows the gameplay <https://www.facebook.com/reel/775189755190943> - they even skywrite the score!



credit: /u/RyanP Goldberg via reddit.com



## Child's play?

Toys play an important part in education and building children's interests. For some, they can even help shape their interests and future career choices. Which is why we're concerned about some of the latest toys coming out China's vast manufacturing industry. While we cannot rule out the possibility that they have some insider information on what the next generation of aircraft will be called, but we are a little skeptical about the possibility that it will be a twin-engine double-decker wide-body called the PLANEBUS 720A.

## Finally, a real AIRplane!

If you have your own hangar, but cannot afford a real Boeing 787, why not get the inflatable version? We not entirely sure what the usage cases would be for something like this unless it comes with a healthy supply of helium!



## Chef's Kiss?

*"Ladies and gentlemen, this is your Captain speaking. Unfortunately, we'll be on the ground a little longer while our technicians are sorting out a minor glitch. And we also regret to inform you that due to unforeseen circumstances, we will not be able to offer you an in-flight meal service on this flight."*



credit: /u/Fedexpilot via reddit.com





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26-28 MAY 2026 | LISBON, PORTUGAL

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# IFATCA Industry Partners

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## STANDARD INDUSTRY PARTNERS

