IFATCA CIRCULAR

January 2026

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FROM THE EXECUTIVE BOARD

Dear sisters, brothers, colleagues and friends,

As the new year dawns, we have the opportunity to look forward and seek, with hopeful aspiration, the continued growth and development of our Associations, our profession, and our Federation. Air traffic controllers across the world faced a broad spectrum of challenges during 2025. Yet with their typical deftness, skill, and aplomb, our membership helped to ensure that the global aviation system remained safe and those who traversed it arrived at their destinations without worry.

The challenges of 2025 will not magically abate during this upcoming year. Our members will continue to see staffing crises and political conflict, face equipment issues and training needs, and experience stress and personal wellbeing moments that tax their resolve – but together, we will continue to work to overcome these hurdles by sharing knowledge and expertise and standing together to ensure that no one is left to fend for themselves.

2026
HAPPY NEW YEAR!
IFATCA

We have the ability in these upcoming months to hone our skills, develop our messages, and provide the tools for all member associations to advocate effectively on behalf of our profession. During our annual Conference in Bucharest, Romania this April we will come together to set the Federation's direction, to update our policies and to determine our collective priorities. But the work neither begins nor ends at the Conference – our work continues every day. So we encourage each of you to recommit to moving forward and working locally, regionally, and globally. There is no dearth of work to do and it's your energies and your volunteerism which has always been the cornerstone of IFATCA's successes.

Each region of the Federation has a parallel course and each region has constructed paths to accomplish similar goals. I am proud to be a member of a vibrant Executive Board which constantly and unflinchingly seeks to support every air traffic controller regardless of location or background. IFATCA has great aspirations and 2026 will be a year to see those coalesce.

I wish you and all your families a happy and safe new year.

With warmest regards,

Andrew LeBovidge
IFATCA EVP Americas Region

Regional News & Activities

Asia Pacific Region

Dear colleagues,

Representing IFATCA at Airspace World Asia and the APAC ANSP Committee

December 2025 was a particularly meaningful and intensive period for regional engagement, as I had the opportunity to represent IFATCA in Hong Kong at Airspace World Asia and the Asia-Pacific ANSP Committee (AAC) Meeting (9-10 Dec)These events once again demonstrated the pace at which our region is evolving—and the importance of ensuring that the professional voice of air traffic controllers remains firmly embedded in that evolution.

The APAC ANSP Committee meeting provided a comprehensive update on the progress of its four Work Streams (WS), each addressing critical elements of future air navigation services in the region.

Work Stream 1 (WS1) reported that several surveys were conducted throughout 2025, with outcomes to be shared with the AAC in the near future. These surveys are expected to provide valuable insights to support evidence-based regional planning.

Work Stream 2 (WS2) reported substantial progress across three focus areas: the Asia-Pacific TBO Pathfinder Project, ATFM, and Performance Management.
Under the TBO Pathfinder Project, key deliverables included the first edition of TBO communications material, an executive engagement event held in July 2025 in Hanoi, an FF-ICE/R1 laboratory demonstration involving eight ANSPs, and the development of a TBO Roadmap. This Roadmap was agreed at ATM/SG/13 and will be incorporated into the next edition of the APAC Seamless ANS Plan.

In the ATFM domain, updates were provided on the recently established Collaborative Operational Mechanism among China, Hong Kong China, and Singapore, discussions on next-generation ATFM, and a proposal for a Regional Collaborative Operational Mechanism. For Performance Management, WS2 advanced work on the Regional Data Management Framework and launched a survey to identify current data-sharing use cases and challenges. The Gate-to-Gate Efficiency Study was also presented, aiming to assess city-pair route performance and propose targeted improvement measures.

Work Stream 3 (WS3) informed the Committee that ICAO Headquarters is developing a Global Contingency Framework, with a dedicated ICAO workshop planned for the second week of July 2026. IFATCA has been actively involved in WS3 and will continue contributing to this important regional and global framework, particularly from an operational and human-centric perspective.

Work Stream 4 (WS4) advised that work is underway on Free Route Operations guidance material, with availability expected around the second quarter of 2026.

The meeting also discussed governance and coordination matters, including how new tasks should be introduced across Work Streams. The Chair invited WS Leads to present new tasks at the full Committee level to ensure transparency and cross-stream coordination, while the Secretariat encouraged all participants to review the AAC Procedural Handbook to ensure clarity and consistency going forward. All WS Leads were tasked with updating their respective task lists accordingly.

Beyond the Committee meeting, I was honoured to be invited to speak on two panels on 11 December during Airspace World Asia (9-11 Dec) One panel focused on attracting the next generation of aviation professionals, where I shared sociological and demographic perspectives drawn from migration and labour studies. These academic lenses help explain why younger generations make career choices the way they do—and why aviation must adapt if it is to remain attractive, purposeful, and sustainable as a profession.

The second panel addressed how to better integrate and utilise training resources within the regional framework. I spoke about the persistent training-resource constraints raised by IFATCA Member Associations across the region, recent collaborative CBTA workshops between IFATCA and the Hong Kong International Aviation Academy, and the strengths and limitations of the one-to-one on-the-job training model that still dominates ATCO training in many States.

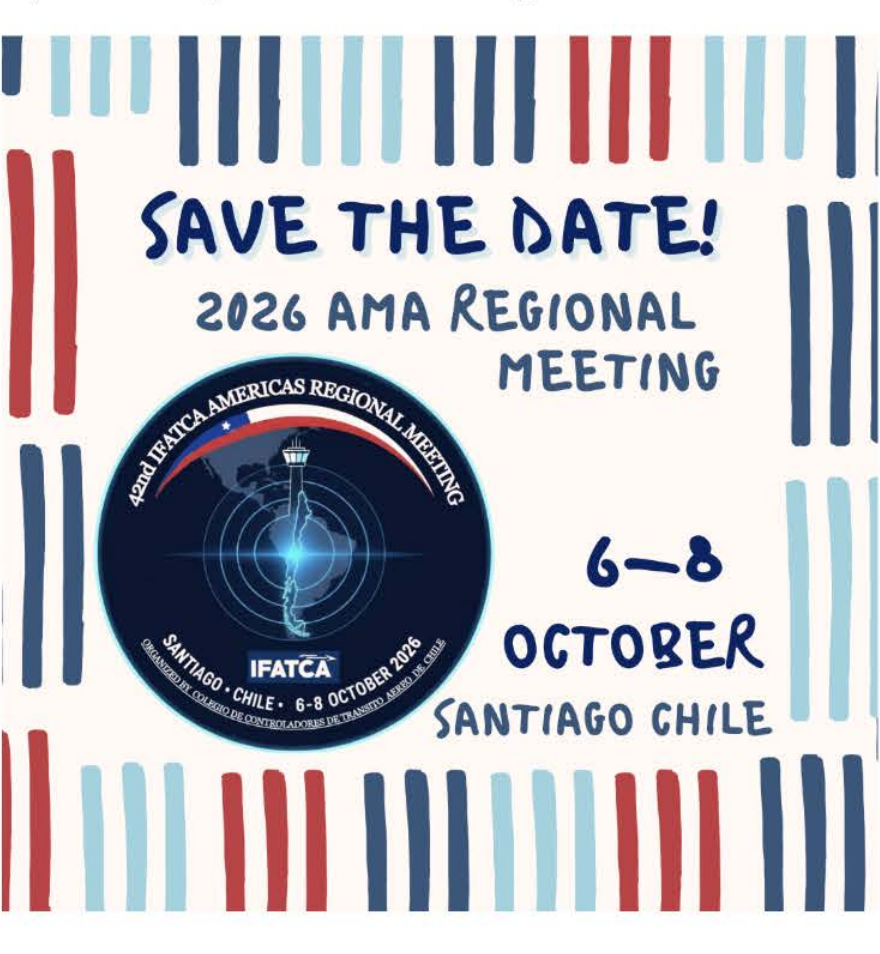
IFATCA's active engagement in events such as these is deliberate and essential. By being present at regional platforms where policy, strategy, and implementation are discussed, we ensure that the operational realities, professional standards, and long-term sustainability of our members are properly represented and understood. The Asia-Pacific region continues to move fast—and IFATCA will continue to be there, constructively contributing, challenging where necessary, and advocating for the people at the heart of air traffic management.

Cheryl Chen
IFATCA EVP Asia Pacific

Americas

As 2026 begins, the Americas Region will be confronting many of the same issues which plagued the end of 2025. But these challenges will not deter the advocates within the region from doing the hard work that is necessary. Indeed, the region continues to see an explosion in activism and involvement which bring new ideas and energies to the fore and with this we will accomplish the changes that are required to elevate our profession and secure gains on behalf of air traffic controllers through the hemisphere.

Planning is already underway to broaden and deepen the regional Critical Incident Stress Management teams, provide Just Culture training in conjunction with regional ICAO offices, and continue to offer Competency Based Training and Assessment courses. Our leadership team continues to identify those areas where we can best assist our MA's and the upcoming regional meeting, to be held in Santiago, Chile, will be yet another platform by which our regional advocates can support one another.


SAVE THE DATE!
2026 AMA REGIONAL MEETING
42nd IFATCA AMERICAS REGIONAL MEETING
IFATCA
SANTIAGO · CHILE · 6-8 OCTOBER 2026
6–8 OCTOBER
SANTIAGO CHILE

2026 looks to be an exciting year in the Americas region and I am certain that, through the talents of the membership, we will be able make great strides forwards.

Andrew LeBovidge
IFATCA EVP Americas

Europe

Dear friends & colleagues,

Greek FIR Closure: A Wake-Up Call
for Systemic Action

The year had barely begun when the Greek Flight Information Region (FIR) was temporarily closed on Sunday, 4 January 2026, following a system failure that affected the entire European network, particularly the South-East Axis.

Within 24 hours, IFATCA Europe issued a communication acknowledging the disruption while commending the professionalism of air traffic controllers in Greece and neighbouring countries. Despite extreme and unforeseen circumstances, ATCOs ensured that all aircraft already airborne were handled safely, with diversions and ground delays applied as necessary to maintain safety.

IFATCA thanked all controllers involved for their service and acknowledged the impact on passengers and crews, reaffirming its continued and unwavering commitment to aviation safety.

Attention must now turn to understanding what happened. A transparent investigation, conducted under the principles of Just Culture, is required to determine the causes of the failure. Any evidence of deliberate criminal acts should, if identified, be addressed through appropriate legal channels.

This event also highlights long-standing concerns raised repeatedly by IFATCA over many years. While efforts are underway to recruit new ATCOs and modernise the system, bureaucratic constraints and political considerations continue to slow meaningful progress. Chronic underinvestment and inadequate system management have created an operational environment that is far from optimal across much of Greece.

The sustained reliance on overtime—particularly during peak traffic periods—to compensate for shortcomings in staffing, organisation, procedures, and system modernisation is not a viable long-term solution. Route charges paid by airlines are intended to support a safe, efficient, and fully compliant air traffic control system, in line with international standards.

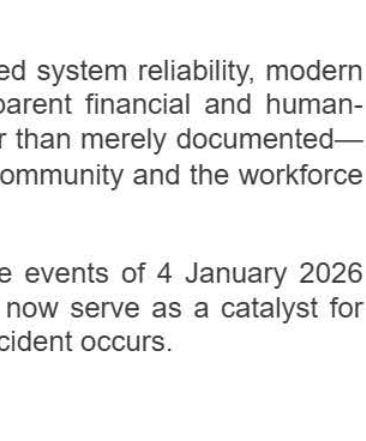
Safety must remain the highest priority. Without improved system reliability, modern technology, sustainable working conditions, and transparent financial and human-resources management—implemented in practice rather than merely documented—it cannot be assured that all obligations to the aviation community and the workforce are being met.

The warning signs have been clear for some time. The events of 4 January 2026 carry a significant cost for all stakeholders. They must now serve as a catalyst for concrete, lasting solutions—before a far more serious incident occurs.

TOGETHER-FURTHER!

Frédéric Deleau
IFATCA EVP Europe

Africa & Middle East



The year 2025 concluded on a high note in the region with the Kenya Air Traffic Controllers Association hosting the inaugural KATCA Gala Awards 2025. Held on 19th December at the Argyle Grand Hotel in Nairobi, this vibrant and colourful celebration was created by the KATCA Executive Board to recognize, celebrate, and honour excellence within Kenya's aviation sector, with a special focus on air traffic controllers—the often-unsung heroes of the skies.

The gala drew distinguished guests, including representatives from the Kenya Civil Aviation Authority (KCAA), the East African School of Aviation, Kenya Airways, and the Accident and Incident Investigation Department. IFATCA's presence was strongly felt, with the Regional Vice President for the Eastern Region, Mr. Tonny Keppler, in attendance, alongside Maureen Isika, Communications Chairperson for AFM, representing the EVP-AFM. In their remarks, IFATCA representatives applauded KATCA for organizing such a thoughtful event, commending the Association for recognizing air traffic controllers. They noted that the Gala Awards not only celebrated excellence in Kenya's aviation sector but also set an important example for the region by valuing and honoring the dedication of controllers.

CONGRATULATIONS TO ALL AWARDEES!

As we step into this new year-2026, and reflect on the journey we have taken together across the Africa and Middle East region. The past year was not without its challenges, yet it was marked by resilience, collaboration, and progress. I am deeply grateful for the unwavering support I have received from the IFATCA Executive Board, the Executive Council, and our Member Associations. Your encouragement has been a source of strength, and it has reminded me that leadership is never a solitary endeavor but a shared responsibility carried forward by many hands.

As we begin this new year, I am excited that the upcoming Annual Conference in April in Romania will provide us with the opportunity to address one of the most pressing issues facing our profession: **the attraction and retention of air traffic controllers.** This gathering will be more than just a meeting; it will be a moment to share experiences, exchange ideas, and chart a course that secures the future of air traffic control.

Attracting the right professionals into our industry is essential. Air traffic control demands not only technical skill but also resilience, discipline, and a deep sense of responsibility. We must ensure that our recruitment strategies highlight the unique rewards of this career, while also making clear the challenges and the high standards required. Equally important is the question of retention. It is not enough to bring new professionals into the field; we must also create an environment that allows them to thrive and remain committed.Safe skies depend on the dedication of air traffic controllers, and that dedication must be nurtured. By focusing on attraction and retention, we are not only safeguarding the present but also building a resilient future for our profession.

I therefore strongly encourage all our members to register and attend the Annual Conference in Romania. Your presence and participation will be vital as we engage in these important discussions. I look forward to the conversations we will have, confident that together we will find innovative solutions and reaffirm our shared commitment to the highest standards of safety and professionalism.

Ahmad Abba
IFATCA EVP Africa & Middle East

Global Mental Health Summit

PROGRAM | 11 NOVEMBER
7th GLOBAL SUMMIT

The global mental health summit organized by the movement for Global Health took place from the 10th to the 12th of November 2025 in Cape Town, South Africa.

This year's theme was Mental Health and Wellbeing -What has changed, what needs to change? Presentations covered various areas of mental health, made by scientists, psychologists, psychiatrists, and, most importantly and worthy of note, the inclusion of people with lived experiences. IFATCA was represented by Olubunmi Balogun , the AFM representative on IFATCA Mental Wellbeing Task force.

READ MORE HERE

CEGHD

The Commission Expert Group on Human Dimension of the Single European Sky (CEGHD) was held 8-9 December 2025 (Quarterly meeting #7). IFATCA was represented by Eugenio Diotalevi, Nora Berzina, and Zeljko Oreski.

The group provides expert advice to the European Commission on the implementation of the Single European Sky, with particular focus on measures that have significant human dimension implications. It aims to facilitate cooperation and coordination between the Commission and relevant stakeholders on questions relating to the implementation of Union legislation, programmes and policies on the Single European Sky, notably its human dimension. In addition, the Group promotes the exchange of expertise, experience and good practice among members on human dimension issues.

The Future of ATM

sesar Innovation Days
#SIDS2025

At the end of 2025, IFATCA provided me with the opportunity to publicly discuss different facets of the future of our profession. This motivated me to create an overview of what could be carved out, although we might just be at the start of a fundamental change which will also (and some might say 'eventually'), impact Air Traffic Management (ATM).

By Marc Baumgartner

READ MORE HERE

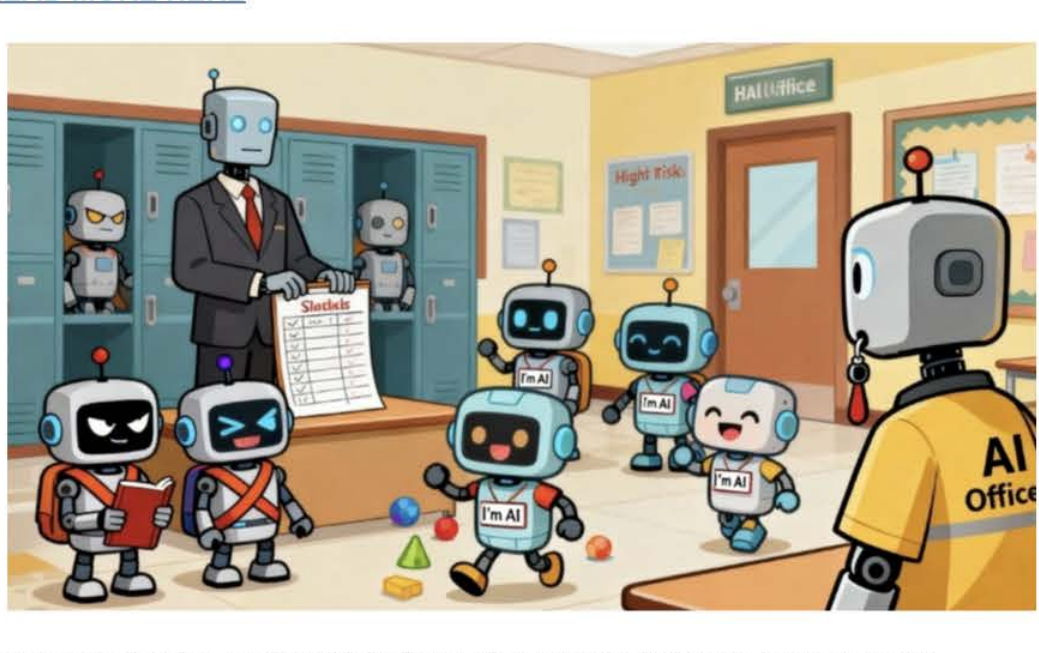


Illustration used to explain the EU AI Act during the JC conference in Spain (27-29.11.2025)

Mental Wellbeing Task Force

IPAAC
Welcome
IPPAC
Welcome IPPAC 2025 Attendees

IFATCA Mental Wellbeing Task Force – Change of Chair

Dr Jaco van der Westhuizen (GATCSA – South Africa) has stepped down from his role as Chair of the IFATCA Mental Wellbeing Task Force. IFATCA would like to sincerely thank Jaco for his dedication, leadership, and valuable contributions to advancing mental wellbeing initiatives within the Federation.

Marija Savikj (North Macedonia) will assume the role of Chair of the Mental Wellbeing Task Force.

Marija is a tower and approach air traffic controller with over 20 years of experience at Skopje International Airport in North Macedonia. She has been a member of her company's Critical Incident Stress Management (CISM) team since the program's inception.

In July 2024, Marija joined IFATCA's Mental Wellbeing Task Force, where she most recently led the workstream focused on raising awareness and promoting mental wellbeing across the profession.

Marija's objective is to help air traffic controllers better understand the importance of prioritizing wellbeing in a high-pressure operational environment and to support Member Associations in establishing effective peer support programs for their members.

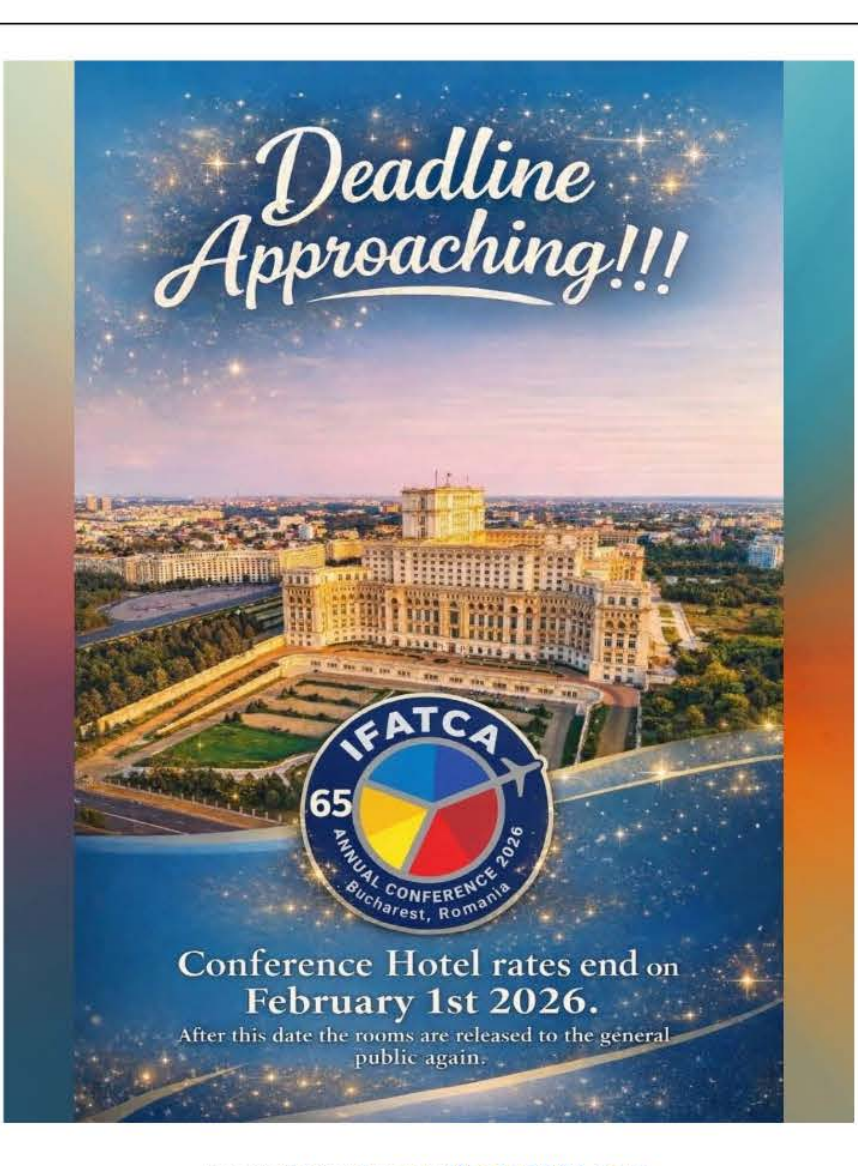
ATC Pilot Symposium

Taipei Approach Control Tower
EVA AIR

From the control room to the cockpit—Taipei delivered. The recently concluded ATC–Pilot Symposium in Taipei, Taiwan, graciously hosted by ROCATCA, brought together air traffic controllers and pilots for candid, forward-looking discussions anchored on safety, efficiency, and shared operational realities. The exchange was further enriched by the participation of David Perks, IFATCA's Air Navigation Commission Liaison Officer to ICAO, who provided valuable insights during discussions on RNP phraseology and procedures in Australia, as well as on Hazard Identification and Risk Assessment.

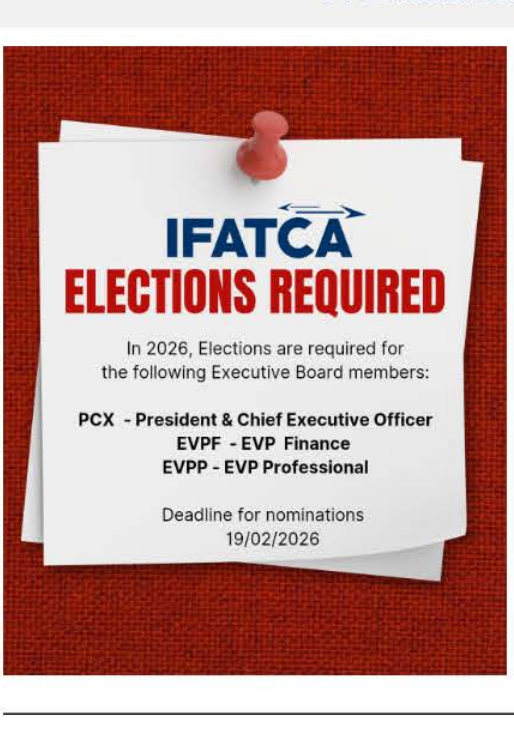
The experience was made even more meaningful by the ATC tours at Taipei Approach and Area Control Center, alongside the visit to EVA Air. Seeing operations from multiple vantage points reinforced how critical collaboration is—beyond procedures and manuals—toward understanding constraints, aligning expectations, and managing risk in real-world operations. A truly enriching exchange that strengthened the ATC–pilot partnership and reaffirmed the value of continuous dialogue across the aviation community.

65th Annual IFATCA Conference Bucharest, Romania


Deadline Approaching!!!
IFATCA
65
ANNUAL CONFERENCE 2026
Bucharest, Romania
Conference Hotel rates end on February 1st 2026.
After this date the rooms are released to the general public again.

Book Today! www.ifacta2026.com

Nominations Deadline

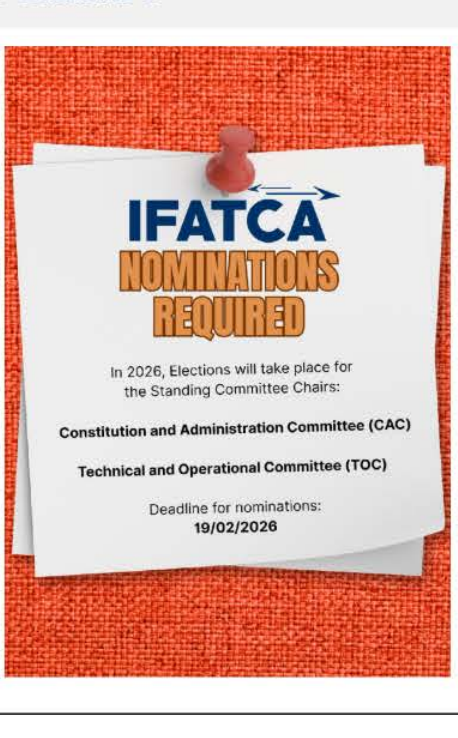


IFATCA
ELECTIONS REQUIRED

In 2026, Elections are required for the following Executive Board members:

PCX - President & Chief Executive Officer
EVPF - EVP Finance
EVPP - EVP Professional

Deadline for nominations
19/02/2026



IFATCA
NOMINATIONS REQUIRED

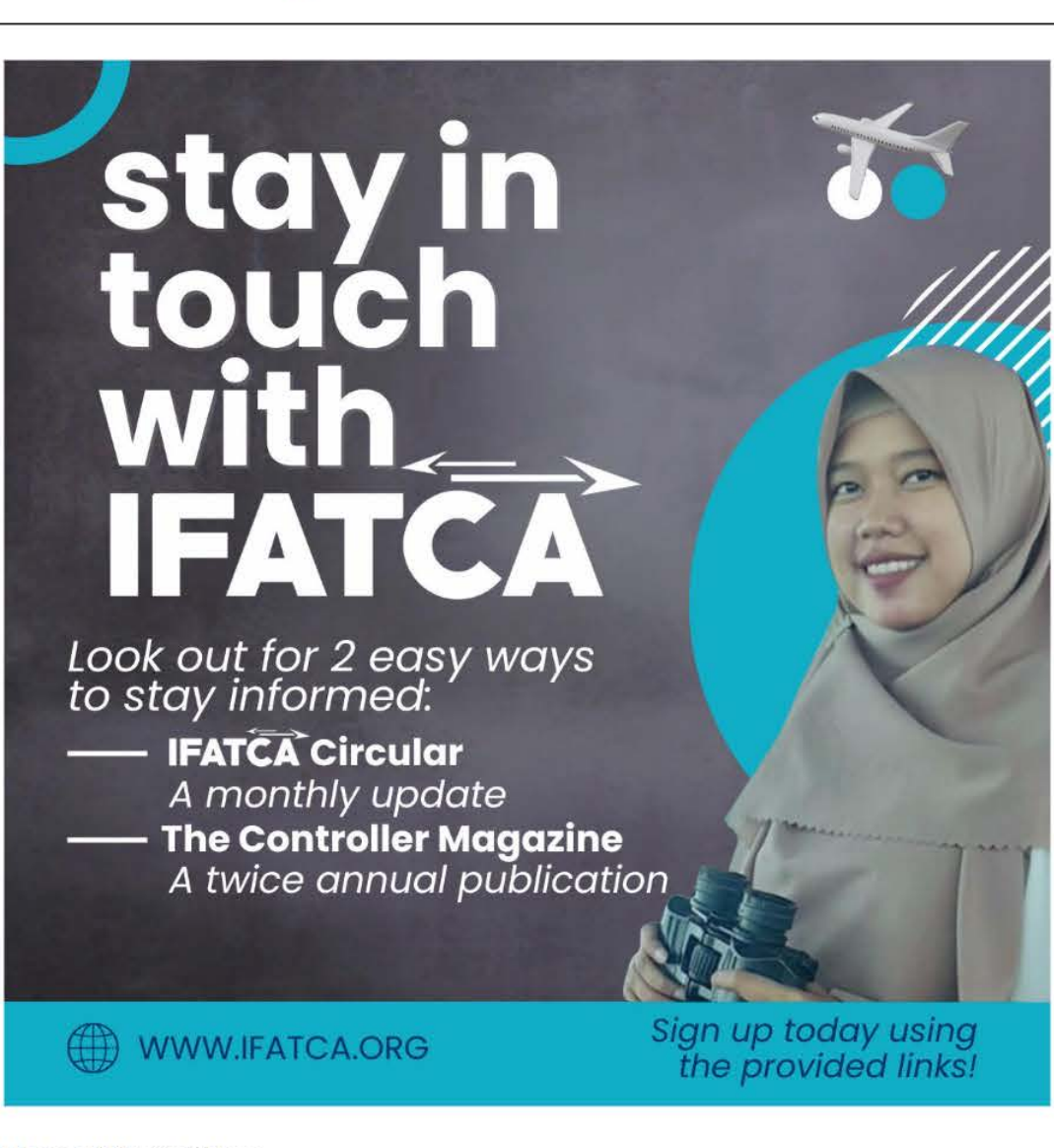
In 2026, Elections will take place for the Standing Committee Chairs:

Constitution and Administration Committee (CAC)

Technical and Operational Committee (TOC)

Deadline for nominations:
19/02/2026

Stay in Touch with IFATCA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IFATCA Spotlight Podcast

The **IFATCA Spotlight** Podcast is made by ATCOs for ATCOs and provides insight into different challenges and solutions ATCOS face worldwide.

In the first episode of 2026, IFATCA Spotlight podcast host Thorsten Raue interviews Cristian Radu, a prominent figure in Romanian air traffic control and a liaison officer with our Romanian Member Association RATCA. Cristian shares his journey into air traffic control, the challenges faced by RATCA as a professional association, and the structure of air traffic control in Romania, including the recent introduction of remote tower operations. The conversation also delves into the impact of the Ukraine war on Romanian airspace, the implementation of team resource management and critical incident stress management, and the community engagement through EDCO sports events. Cristian provides insights into the upcoming IFATCA conference in Bucharest and highlights Romania's rich culture and cuisine.

Episode will go live on 26/01/2026

Check out all episodes via podcast.ifatca.org or in your favourite podcast app.

THE CONTROLLER
Journal of Air Traffic Control

-=>*The Controller* Archive <=-

The Controller magazine's archive is now available on the IFATCA website. The archive contains all issues from the past six decades. In addition, we have started working on a searchable index of all articles ever published. As you can imagine, this is a massive task: the index currently holds just over 3,000 entries. Clicking on the page number takes you directly to the article. For the moment, the index can be found here. There is no link yet in the website menus as we are still tweaking this feature. Some information (e.g. on who authored an article) is also missing at the moment.

Feedback, including any mistakes or missing articles, is welcome via webmaster@ifatca.org.