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No separation with the 'Eyes and the Ears' of the ATCOs!

The Single European Sky should be safety driven

At its meeting on 3 and 4 June in Lisbon, the ETF analysed the recent developments around the future of the Single European Sky. It appeared clearly that, once again, the recent reports from the Airspace Architecture Study and the Wise Persons Group are pushing for an unbundling of services in the ATM industry.

This idea is far from being new as it is present in all the communications of DG Move since 1999. The ETF has already explained many times that the general unbundling of services is a wrong approach.

Currently in Europe, some Member States decided to separate support services from ATM core business but many of them decided not to do so. In the Member States where the decision was taken to keep those services inside the national ANSP, the performance of service provision is as good and sometimes better and cheaper as in the Member States where the decision was taken to unbundle the support services. That's why for the ETF, there is no evidence that such decision will lead to improve the ATM efficiency.

Trying to mandate the unbundling of those services with introduction of market principles, the EC is going to breach the existing well-established safety chain that currently exists in ATM. Doing this will have undoubtedly consequences on service delivery and, at the first row, on the level of safety. In addition, the unbundling of services will not solve any of the issues the Single European Sky is facing, and will only bring more fragmentation to the ATM industry. Rebranding the unbundling of services as a new concept of ATM Data Service Provision will not change anything.

In a general way, the ETF doesn't support the idea that services like CNS, AIS, MET, Training could be set as secondary services (designated as « support services ») which could be isolated and separated from a « core business » designated as a very tiny part of ATM services (ATCO activity only...). The ETF supports the idea that the different ATM services are part of a global and integrated safety chain. Indeed, Communication Navigation Surveillance Services (CNS) gather services that contain radio communication, radar antenna, phone communication etc. which are directly the « Eyes and Ears » of ATCOs. To separate artificially such services is clearly a big mistake.



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The ETF acknowledges that we need ambitious solutions to solve the capacity crunch that we will face in the next years. However, introducing unbundling and the market-driven approach to services is neither the ambition we need nor will it increase the capacity of the network whilst ensuring safety levels are maintained.

What the ATM industry requires is common standards for the ATM data that is lacking today. What is also needed is a legal framework encouraging more cooperation between ANSPs relating to the sharing of their ATM data.

It is also vital that sufficient and well-trained staffs are in place in ANSPs to meet the challenges ahead. Developing common EU competence standards can only help reaching this tangible objective.

In the next weeks, the ETF will work on a cooperative model for ATM data sharing and ATM services; this model will promote safety first and not market driven principles only trying to drive costs down.

For all these reasons, the ETF calls upon all the European ATM unions to get ready to act against the market driven approach of the European Commission.

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