



ETF continues to oppose new Eurocontrol Administrative Reform

Eurocontrol Member States are now being called upon to approve by correspondence, the Administrative Reform package proposed by Eurocontrol management. The ETF, the largest representative body of aviation workers in Europe, along with Eurocontrol unions FFPE, USB and USEF remains opposed to the administrative reform, a position that was expressed at the Eurocontrol Provisional Council meeting on June 29th 2022.

Eurocontrol has historically had a competent and capable workforce which has served the Agency, airspace users and citizens well for many years. It is important for Eurocontrol to engage in meaningful dialogue to ensure that this competent and high level of skill remains.

We are calling on Member States to reject the proposed Eurocontrol Administrative Reform at this occasion to allow negotiations to restart in 2023. Progress has already been made, and can continue to be made but unilateral actions does not support negotiation, and it does not encourage workers to remain in employment in the Agency.

Outsourcing is not the answer

The Administrative Reform proposal ignores the reality that the HR department at Eurocontrol is understaffed, inefficiently managed and unable to provide the training for managerial competence standards which Annex 1 of the proposal identifies as lacking. It is clear that the significant amount of outsourcing of HR, along with other departments such as finance and IT has had a negative effect. The solution to this problem is not to outsource the work to external companies not familiar with Eurocontrol or its systems and procedures. Eurocontrol has a unique role as a European Network Manager and as such needs a unique training programme which only Eurocontrol itself can provide efficiently. An ineffective training system will only damage Eurocontrol in the long-term and, in extreme cases, could result in disruption to the network itself.

Eurocontrol must remain a good employer

The proposal surrounding the introduction of a 'behaviour remedial training' process is concerning to the ETF on a number of levels. Firstly, the proposal does not clarify what behaviour is considered acceptable

or not from workers, nor does it explain what kind of actions would be considered as part of this process. We cannot allow a situation where a person's career is dictated by one manager without a proper disciplinary procedure in place. The existing independent committee already provides a space for workers, their representatives, and management to discuss individual cases and have them addressed accordingly. The removal or limitation of the independent committee goes against best practice in the sector and remains far more efficient and practical compared to the weak and slow arbitration process in ILOAT.

Furthermore, we note that Eurocontrol also has already replaced a number of permanent employees with workers on short-term and temporarily contracts. This not only damages the standards of work in Eurocontrol but also does not allow newer members of staff the opportunity to commit to a career in the Agency which will lead to higher staff turnover and eventually a brain-drain of skills from the Agency and into jobs with better conditions. At present, the recruitment department already struggles to hire candidates with the best skills. Potential candidates are more likely to refuse precarious employment conditions, and jobs without a real possibility for career development.

Lastly, the proposal to structure careers in limited brackets will not promote internal development of staff and will not encourage staff to remain in Eurocontrol in the long-term. It is important that all employers, and in particular those operating the function of states, ensure there is sufficient career progression within the Agency in order to keep good candidates.

Concerns around conflict of interest

Despite previous concerns raised by the FFPE, USB and USEF unions in Eurocontrol, management continues to ignore the need for conflict of interest provisions to be included in the staff regulations. Currently, a breach of the code of conduct concerning a conflict of interest goes without sanction, and this needs to be corrected. As an agency with significant influence on the European aviation industry, it is vital that opportunistic individuals cannot take advantage of the agency for personal or financial gain. Conflict of interest provisions are common practices in Member State governments, and this should be the same in Eurocontrol.

Progress can be made but more dialogue is required

The ETF and the unions FFPE, USB and USEF support in principle some form of administrative reform, but this reform needs to work for both workers and employers alike. The framework agreement in place between unions and management stipulates that the Director General must set up a conciliation and arbitration procedure; so far this has been rejected by the Director General. The same framework agreement ensures that any change to working conditions, terms and conditions of employment or general issues related to staff must involve dialogue between management and unions. This too has been rejected. It is clear to us that progress can only be made through a transparent and honest dialogue and the continued rejection of dialogue by the Director General is unacceptable.