

Sofia, November 23, 2012

СИТС – СТСБ – КНСБ – ДП РВД

Ms. Doris Bures
Minister of Transport
Austrian Republic

By email

Dear Minister,

Re: Norbert Payr and Austro Control

Our trade union for ATS, as a part of the Federation of Transport Trade Unions in Bulgaria, has been informed by our European federation, ETF, that Austro Control has suspended Norbert Payr from his job as Air Traffic Controller (ATCO) and it has started the legal procedure to terminate his labour contract. Today the case is at the court.

Shortly, Norbert has been fired for a line in a newspaper, stated as elected Trade Union Representative, about a possible conflict of interest within the company. Austro Control considers that comment as a strong insult, heavily damaging the company.

Clearly, in a European democratic country this employer's behaviour is not acceptable and we believe that Austro Control severely overreacts.

On the contrary, we strongly believe that Norbert is intensely improving the Austro Control image, being an Austrian ATCO. Norbert had a key role in facilitating the FABCE (Functional Airspace Block Central Europe) development. He has been proactive in the creation of the FABCE Social Dialogue, working in cooperation with Austro Control and all the Trade Unions and ANSPs involved. At EU level Norbert is the co-chair of the Air Traffic Management (ATM) Social Dialogue working group, welcomed and appreciated by the CANSO side.

The Austro Control decision against him appears to be a tentative to limit the freedom of the Trade Union activity.

This decision has already created tension and difficulties in Austrian and in Europe. We had observed that the relations between the parties are further deteriorating as Austro Control management totally refuses to negotiate any compromise.

The management's action against Payr has meanwhile got a regional, European and worldwide dimension, overtaking the Austrian Borders:

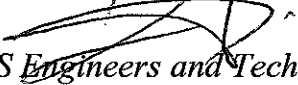
- The FAB CE Social Dialogue is on hold/stop because of a general union boycott due to the Austro Control's behaviour and is putting the Central European integration and the most important regional project of civil aviation, the FABCE, at risk;
- Austro Control is damaging industrial relations at European level and causing tensions between the European Social Partners;

- ITF, our worldwide federation, has been involved and has adopted a motion of support, and will give the case a worldwide dimension;
- ITF is planning to launch a worldwide solidarity campaign because ITF does not accept any such attack against their members and against workers' rights;

Our trade union fully support the ETF & ITF call to the Austrian Government to intervene in such a way that the Austro Control management shall withdraw all measures and reinstate Payr in all his rights and duties as a staff representative.

It is clear that, if Austro Control does not change its mind, this situation will create further tensions and difficulties at all the levels. Our trade union strongly believes that these negative effects can be avoided, for the benefit of Austro Control, FABCE, CANSO, all the ATM industry and the Austrian Republic.

Looking forward to a follow-up from your side.
Best regards,

Rumen Angelov, 
President of the ATS Engineers and Technicians Trade Union,
Federation of Transport Trade Unions in Bulgaria FTTUB