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ATCEUC AND ETF stand together against attacks on ATM workers' rights

“Workers and employers, or their respective organisations, have, in accordance with Community law and national laws and practices, the right to negotiate and conclude collective agreements at the appropriate levels and, in cases of conflicts of interest, to take collective action to defend their interests, including strike action” – Article 28 of the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights

At the Airlines for Europe (A4E) AGM meeting held in Brussels on 8 February, CANSO (Civil Air Navigation Services Organisation), signed up to the A4E ‘Call for Action’. ATCEUC and ETF believe that supporting A4E in this approach is a little naive and a short-sighted strategy. We do not believe it is for Air Navigation Service Providers (ANSPs) to support an attack from airspace users on their own staff. Therefore, we consider the content of the press statement following this event as a dangerous step in the wrong direction for the future of European ATM.

ATCEUC and ETF would like to recall the common practices used by A4E in their lobbying strategies:

- The use of deceitful figures and information
- Press and communication campaigns aiming at the manipulation of the EU Institutions, passengers and stakeholders, including CANSO
- Blasting minds on the high costs of aviation taxes, airport charges and Air Traffic Controllers (ATCOs) strikes hoping that the force of repetition leads to general acceptance

Charles-André Quesnel, ETF ATM Chair commented: *‘In addition, the EU Institutions have no competence on issues related to the organisation and possible limitations on the right to strike. Indeed, requesting that the impact of industrial action on passengers must be minimised notably by a compulsory minimum of 72 hours notification of participation in a strike is a responsibility of Member States, ANSP and trade unions. ATCEUC and ETF wish to remind that the national interest should not be guided by an airline association whose sole aim is to increase the profits of its members’.*

We would like to remind the fundamental high safety function of the Air Traffic Management staff and their day-to-day responsibility to organise the air traffic in a safe way. Some of their industrial actions aimed at improving the safety of the passengers. ATCEUC and ETF have developed a strong cooperation to eliminate any risks on safety.

Volker Dick, ATCEUC President added: *‘It is a pity that inside A4E a specific low fares airline bosses the show to destroy workers’ rights. Now all the other A4E members are engaged in this aggressive and unethical employment behaviour that is jeopardising ATCOs’ social rights. Day after day, A4E continue to reveal their true nature: an aggressive and dangerous lobby group only concerned with its own financial interests and without any social responsibilities’.*

Finally, last year, CANSO, ATCEUC and ETF agreed upon a ‘Toolbox for Successful Social Dialogue’ aimed at preventing conflicts and promoting good relations within ANSPs. We wish to see CANSO and its members focusing and promoting constructive discussions based on this ‘Toolbox’ rather than attempting to limit their impact after relationships have broken down.