



PRESS RELEASE



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REALITY CHECK: WHAT'S BEHIND FLIGHT DELAYS?

What is the true economic impact of air traffic control (ATC) strikes in Europe? Following the allegations expressed by airlines about the consequences resulting of ATC strikes the European Air Traffic Controllers European Unions Coordination (ATCEUC) and the European Transport Workers' Federation (ETF) have unveiled today at a press conference in Brussels the real data behind the causes and consequences of flight delays. Our research based on official EUROCONTROL data has namely exposed that airlines themselves are by far the largest cause of delays and account for more than 50 percent of all delays in air traffic.

The right to workers' representation and collective action are enshrined in the founding Treaties of the European Union, while these Treaties stipulate that the EU has no competence on the right of strike which remains fully in the remit of individual Member States. In addition, international evidence shows that free and independent trade unions make a net positive contribution to productivity, competitiveness as well as safety. While we don't deny that industrial action has consequences on the traffic, we reiterate that it belongs to the fundamental rights of workers.

Charles-André Quesnel, Chair of the ETF Air Traffic Management Committee, commented: *"The airline lobby hired their own audit company to fabricate a study that would suit their needs. It disregards official EU statistics, doesn't reveal the data sources and its methodology is highly questionable. We can only conclude that their study's sole aim is to harm trade unions and undermine fundamental rights."*

Volker Dick, ATCEUC President, added: *"Instead of creating a hostile atmosphere by spreading dubious data to discredit their counterparts, the European airlines and the other aviation companies should address the underlying causes of social unrest. Only adequate investment in staff, technology and infrastructure will improve company's performance and deliver the much-needed expansion in capacity."*

He continued his comments: *"However, airlines and their new lobby association are increasingly questioning those fundamental rights under the guise of the alleged damages caused by ATC strikes. Official data show that by far the largest share of flight delays is the airlines' responsibility, accounting for 51% of primary delay over the period of 2010-2015 whereas industrial action accounted only for about 1% of the total delay in 2015. ATC strikes would count for less than 6% of flight cancellations"*.

Both ATCEUC and ETF are strongly engaged in the European Sectoral Social Dialogue Committee for Civil Aviation. Last year, they agreed jointly with the European ATM employers' organisation CANSO upon a 'Toolbox for Successful Social Dialogue' aimed at preventing conflicts and promoting good industrial operational cooperation.

François Ballestero, ETF Political Secretary concluded: *'We call upon European airlines to genuinely engage in constructive discussions at all levels aiming at establishing a qualitative social dialogue between companies and workers' representatives, which is the best pre-requisite way to prevent industrial action and limit their impact before relationships break down.'*

The full text of the study is available [online](#).

For questions or further information, please contact François BALLESTERO (ETF), f.ballestero@etf-europe.org, or Jean-Denis LARRERE (ATCEUC), larrere@atceuc.org.

European Air Traffic Controllers European Unions Coordination (ATCEUC) was created in 1989 and is currently composed of 32 professional and autonomous trade unions representing more than 14,000 Air Traffic Controllers throughout Europe. ATCEUC is a recognized social partner in air traffic management.

European Transport Workers' Federation (ETF) represents more than 270,000 civil aviation workers from 81 trade unions located in 42 European countries. We are a recognized social partner and the only representative of aviation workers across all sub-sectors (air traffic management, aircrew, ground handling, maintenance, etc.).