

Do not take safety for granted

The traditional way that industries improve their safety records is to examine the causes of accidents and then develop new rules and standards to make sure the same accidents cannot happen again. But in air traffic management (ATM) the number of accidents is so small this does not work. Instead, ATM safety experts use increasingly sophisticated analytical tools to look at the causes behind safety occurrences – the events which could have resulted in accidents but didn't. This could mean aircraft flying too close to one other or equipment failures which lead to a temporary loss of communications between controllers and pilots.

Incident reporting improves safety



What is FABEC doing to support just culture?

FABEC's air navigation service provider (ANSP) partners have developed some of the most sophisticated safety management programmes and analytical tools to measure and improve safety performance in Europe. Just culture is at the heart of this. FABEC closely monitors the number of separation minima infringements and runway incursions. The performance of the safety management system is under constant review.

How can we make a safe aviation system even safer?

The aviation industry globally – and Europe in particular – has an extraordinarily successful safety record. According to figures from the European Aviation Safety Agency (EASA) there were no fatal accidents in Europe involving commercial passenger airlines in 2018, nor in 2017 – even though the number of flights has been increasing, from 10.7 million flights in 2017 in the 44 States of the European Civil Aviation Conference, to 11.0 million flights in 2018. But while 2017 was considered the safest year ever in commercial aviation history, “worldwide in 2018 there were 530 fatalities in 11 fatal accidents, setting us back to a level not experienced since 2015,” says EASA.



Ensuring everyone is comfortable reporting safety concerns

One key element to understanding the causes behind potential fatal accidents is a “just culture” reporting environment, which means creating an atmosphere of trust in which people are encouraged, even rewarded, for providing essential safety-related information – but in which they are also clear about where the line must be drawn between acceptable and unacceptable behaviour. In a just culture environment individuals are not blamed for honest errors, but are held accountable for wilful violations and gross negligence. If controllers, pilots, technicians, engineers and other aviation professional staff feel uncomfortable about reporting safety concerns, then any technical shortcomings or inconsistencies in procedures and rules can have potential fatal consequences if they are not identified and remedied.

However, a totally “no-blame” culture is neither feasible nor desirable.

Just culture is aligned with European law

In Europe, the European Union (EU) not only formally enacted the concept of a just culture as part of EU law, with the introduction of **Regulation (EU) No 691/2010**, but it also introduced elements of this culture in **Regulation (EU) No 996/2010** governing air accident and incident investigation, which also addresses the need to achieve a balance between the objectives of the judiciary in determining whether criminal intent was involved, and the need of the aviation industry to be able to run a real-time self-diagnostic system without unnecessary interference from the justice system. According to **Regulation (EU) No 376/2014** if disciplinary or administrative proceedings are instituted under national law, information contained in occurrence reports shall not be used against the reporters or the persons mentioned in occurrence reports – unless there are cases of wilful misconduct or disregard of an obvious risk and profound failure of professional responsibility involved.

