
Defragmenting Safety supervision in Europe

SATAC UNSA, the independent trade-union of French Civil Aviation Technicians, thinks that we have to consider and include the supervision's aspects in our project, and that it's time to draw a parallel between Air Navigation Services Provider and a Safety Supervision in Europe.

One of the main stakes is the guarantee of the highest possible level of safety and security for people and goods and the increase of this level depends on the enforcement in all fields of activity of a process of quality management.

The increase of the safety level also depends on trying to achieve higher efficiency in the supervision or control actions taken by supervision authorities regarding air navigation service providers and the various actors of air transport, aerial work and general aviation (airline companies, pilots' training schools, aircraft maintenance workshops, airport managers...)

Another stake is participating in the sustainable development of air transport through independent supervision of the respect of environmental demands by air transport operators, airport operators or air navigation service providers.

The European level is an essential element because of the work performed by the European Commission, Eurocontrol and EASA but also because of a general realisation of the needs to reduce the fragmentation of the European airspace. Indeed numerous issues related to civil aviation have been dealt with at a European level for several years.

During the European Summit in Bordeaux, in November the 17th, 18th and 19th of 2008, the French Presidency of Europe clearly confirmed that integration at the level of air navigation service providers would undoubtedly have consequences on the organisation of the supervision of the operators. Thus, national supervisory authorities must think about the way to accompany the integration of service providing.

It seems obvious that all current projects aiming at the establishment, in the future, of a single air navigation service provider, possibly gathering all personnel in charge of Air Navigation in Europe or in a part of Europe, should be accompanied by the simultaneous establishment of a single European Supervisory Authority, alone competent, at least within the perimeter under the responsibility of that single service provider.

Even if the wish for a progressive coming together of all European supervisory authorities notably within the framework of the supervision of FABEC, is now shared by all, it is still necessary to draw up a "travel warrant" aiming at harmonizing work methods, procedures, as well as regulations.

Indeed, not only is it necessary for each state to carry out air navigation supervision following the same procedures and with the same criteria, but one could not imagine that different regulations should be applied according to each state, most particularly when a single service provider is involved.

The MOSAIC project calls for such an evolution: It is the only possible way to ensure independent supervision in Europe, while striving for fair treatment and an improvement of air safety everywhere in the same way in Europe.

The coming together of the supervisory authorities will unavoidably lead to raising the issue of a Single European Supervisory Authority and as a consequence of its structure and its status.

The report drafted by the High Level Group (HLG) and commissioned by Mr Jacques Barrot, European commissioner, recommends the strengthening of EASA (recommendation n° 8) as the EU instrument to regulate air safety including airports and Air Traffic Management (ATM).

But, if EASA was to become a European Supervisory authority, its present European Agency status might make matters more difficult. That is why it is necessary to do things step by step and to find a compromise, with the aim of creating an international organisation which does not require a prior unanimous agreement of the EU member states.

Such a compromise, which could accompany the creation of MOSAIC, would become feasible after careful consideration: the aim being the implementation of harmonized or even common, supervision and certification work methods.

For that matter, MOSAIC will have to be "approved" by a supervisory authority in their capacity as the single, integrated air navigation service provider, just like any other service provider. Thus, it seems consistent and necessary to create, at the same time, an organisation, at the same European Regional level, to carry out this task and whose perimeter should be the perimeter of MOSAIC.

The single provider should be supervised by a single authority built alongside the provider with bridges linking the two organisations. For safety reasons, and to motivate staff, it will be important to preserve the culture and the expertise of air navigation services within the supervisory authority.

An extract from the speech delivered on November 18th 2008 by Patrick Gandil, General Director of the French Civil Aviation Authority at the Civil Aviation European Summit in Bordeaux

« Air Navigation does not work on its own : there are two types of service providers we constantly work with : to begin with the weather forecast department and other institutions which are prominent in this field, I mean Supervisory Authorities.

We are organised today with a Supervisory Authority in each State working today or tomorrow, according to the regulations developed by EASA. In the present system, with Europe not yet a totally integrated political structure, where the sovereignty of each state is still existing, there are many good reasons to have separate Supervisory Authorities, and yet "separate" should not mean "ignoring each other". Thus those Supervisory Authorities should also be thinking about what it means to have to supervise together organisations which work as if they were a unique organisation and this means our Supervisory Authorities should progressively become integrated. »

Extracts from the closing speech of the Civil Aviation European Summit in Bordeaux, delivered by Dominique Bussereau, the French Junior Minister for Transport on November 19th 2008

« France's aim, during the six months of our presidency of the European Union is to forward the construction of the Single European Sky which is based on the expansion of the tasks of EASA.

Obviously, such integration at the level of the service providers of Air Navigation may bring out further moves or initiatives. Such will be the case with the organisation of the supervision of the operators. National supervisory authorities will have to define how to accompany the integration of service providing. »