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IFATCA CIRCULAR

March 2026

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FROM THE EXECUTIVE BOARD

Dear friends and colleagues,

Welcome to the March IFATCA circular, the one edition before the 65th IFATCA Annual Conference in Bucharest, Romania. A city where history, culture and energy meet at a crossroad, where West meets East, North meets South. Romania has long been a bridge between regions, ideas and traditions — and, as many of you already know, also a place where hospitality is taken very seriously... especially when good food and good company are involved.



It is my pleasure to introduce this **Circular**, which brings information TOGETHER from friends and colleagues from across the Federation - to share information, ideas, exchange perspectives and reflect FURTHER on the developments shaping the future of our profession.

The past years have clearly demonstrated that aviation continues to evolve rapidly. Staffing shortages, technological transformation, geopolitical disruptions and increasing operational complexity are placing growing pressure on the ATM system. Yet, through all these changes, principles must remain constant: “ **Safety, Human performance considering well-being and professional expertise to deliver**” must remain at the centre of our work.

Air Traffic Control has always been — and shall always remain — a **human enterprise: for the people, by the people.**

As my 3rd and final term serving as EVP EUR comes slowly to an end, all me some time to reflect.

As EVP EUR, I saw our role not only as managing the present, reacting to issues affecting our Member Associations (MAs) but also as encouraging change, improving relationships and strengthening the voice of operational expertise in research, innovation and policy discussions. None of this would have been possible without the support of an exceptional team, the commitment of our MAs and the trust placed in us by colleagues across the EUR region and the Federation..

Our Federation is built on something simple but powerful: **people, volunteers, working TOGETHER.** We are controllers first and foremost — friends, colleagues and professionals who share the same responsibilities, the same challenges and, very often, some sense of humour that helps us navigate local issues, night shifts and heavy traffic peaks. "And it is not because we do a serious job that we always have to be serious"...We still remain leaders, with a smile.

Throughout these years, I have always believed in one guiding principle: **respect, integrity, personal ethic and professionalism.** Our profession thrives when we treat each other as colleagues first, beyond nationality, background or personal differences.

This spirit is perfectly captured in the European motto that guided many of our initiatives:

“TOGETHER – FURTHER.”

The coming years will bring both challenges and opportunities. It will be up to all of YOU to ensure that technological progress, institutional reforms and operational developments continue to serve the fundamental objective of aviation: **safe, performant and efficient air traffic services delivered by highly skilled professionals, helped by well-designed advanced tools, within a safe and secured environment supported by Just Culture principles.**

Through dialogue, cooperation and mutual understanding, including local and international authorities, and airlines, we can continue strengthening our profession and the community that supports it.

In these very troubled times, it may be useful to recall — and paraphrase — the words of an American President: “Do not ask what the Federation can do for you, but rather what you can do for the Federation— not only for the Federation, but for Humanity!” Our profession carries responsibilities that go beyond organisations and titles. Every day, through our professionalism, cooperation and commitment to safety and efficiency, we contribute to something much larger than ourselves. Aviation connects people, societies and cultures, and we, as air traffic controllers, play a small but essential role in keeping that connection safe, reliable and human. Humanism knows no borders, no nations, and no political frontiers; it unites us all as ONE. The ATCO community has, more than ever, its role to play.

Finally, I would like to take this opportunity to warmly welcome my successor, **Benjamin Fichtner (Helvetica - Switzerland)**, who will take over the role of EVP EUR after the Annual Conference in Bucharest. I wish him every success, strength and enjoyment in this important responsibility.

Enjoy this edition of the circular and I am looking forward to meeting you soon in Bucharest.

Yours faithfully,

Frédéric Deleau
IFATCA EVP Europe

Middle East Unrest Statement

IFATCA Statement - Middle East Unrest

“We sincerely hope for a swift and peaceful resolution to the current unrest. We stand in full solidarity with our colleagues operating in conflict-affected zones, often under exceptionally difficult and uncertain circumstances.


We also wish to acknowledge and support those managing substantially increased traffic volumes and complex rerouting operations as aircraft are diverted away from impacted airspace. Such situations place additional operational and mental demands on controllers and supporting personnel alike.

In all circumstances, we commend the professionalism, resilience, and unwavering dedication of Air Traffic Controllers who continue to safeguard the continuity, efficiency, and above all, the safety of air traffic operations during these challenging times.”

IFATCA Executive Board

IFATCA & IFALPA Joint Papers

Harmonized Implementation Of The ICAO “4 Levels Of Threat”

 <p style="text-align: right;">POSITION PAPER 26POS02 23 February 2026</p> <h2 style="text-align: center;">Harmonized Implementation of the ICAO "4 Levels of Threat" System for Managing Unruly Passenger Events</h2> <p>BACKGROUND The growing number of unruly passenger events worldwide poses a significant threat to flight safety and security which requires a coordinated and consistent response to protect crews and passengers alike.</p> <p>ICAO Doc 8973 (the Security Manual) provides guidance for classifying and managing these incidents, based on a globally recognized framework known as the "4 Levels of Threat". This framework is designed to ensure a common language for communication and response between flight crews, ANSPs, airlines, and law enforcement agencies such as police and security forces.</p> <p>However, only a limited number of States have incorporated the "4 Levels of Threat" system into their national security plans. This lack of harmonization can create significant operational challenges, such as misunderstanding between flight crews and ATCOs as to the nature and severity of the unruly passenger event occurring onboard, with the threat being addressed differently depending on the State overflown.</p> <p>ICAO's FOUR LEVELS OF THREAT The ICAO framework classifies unruly passenger behaviour into four levels of increasing severity.</p> <p>Level 1 - Disruptive behaviour, including suspicious or verbally threatening behaviour.</p> <p>Level 2 - Physically abusive behaviour.</p> <p>Level 3 - Life-threatening behaviour.</p> <p>Level 4 - Attempted or actual breach of the flight crew compartment.</p>	<p>POSITION The ICAO classification provides a clear, standardized approach to assess and manage incidents, ensuring that all stakeholders have a shared understanding of the severity and required actions. IFALPA and IFATCA believe that the harmonized implementation of this system in National Security Programs will bring significant benefits, including:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Improved operational safety; assurance that all stakeholders—crew, air traffic control services providers, airlines, and ground responders—are working within a common framework. 2. Better incident management: standardized threat levels will reduce communications workload and improve coordination, especially in cross-border operations. 3. Training consistency; the use of a common system will allow for more consistent training for all the stakeholders implied. <p style="font-size: small;">©2026 The International Federation of Air Line Pilots' Associations. This publication is provided for information purposes only. In all cases pilots should follow their company's guidance and procedures. In the interest of flight safety, reproduction of this publication in whole or in part is encouraged. It may not be offered for sale or used commercially. All reports must credit IFALPA.</p>
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Joint IFATCA/IFALPA paper on Harmonized Implementation of the ICAO "4 Levels of Threat" System for Managing Unruly Passenger Events.

Only a limited number of States have so far incorporated the 4 levels of threat system into their national security plans and lack of harmonization can create significant operational challenges.

IFATCA and IFALPA believe that the harmonised implementation of this system in National Security Programmes will bring about significant benefits.

[READ MORE HERE](#)

Cyber Threats

 <p style="text-align: right;">POSITION PAPER 26POS05 2 March 2026</p> <h2 style="text-align: center;">Cyber Threats</h2> <p>NOTE <i>This paper supersedes 16POS08, of the same name.</i></p> <p>INTRODUCTION IFALPA and IFATCA continue to monitor the threat of cyberattacks against aircraft, ground facilities, and other critical infrastructures which pose a significant threat that may cause disruption, unsafe situations, or ultimately loss of life. The purpose of this paper is to articulate this threat, draw attention to ways in which it is being addressed and propose a way forward.</p> <p>BACKGROUND Today's commercial flights, whether passenger or cargo, generate and require a large amount of data and interfaces that are critical to the safe operation of the aircraft. Much of the technology currently in use was developed at a time when aircraft were relatively unconnected to the external environment, and therefore most of the systems were not originally designed with cybersecurity principles in mind. Furthermore, communications between such systems cannot be checked for integrity and are unencrypted.</p> <p>Cyberattacks can be carried out from virtually anywhere, by anyone with sufficient knowledge, using low-budget methodologies. These attacks can have several objectives, such as obtaining confidential, critical or sensitive information, manipulating or erasing information and/or controlling or destroying systems or services. In many cases, the compromised system may not even have been targeted but is taken down as a result of an attack elsewhere (collateral damage).</p> <p>Cybersecurity should therefore be considered throughout all aviation communications pathways and applications. This cannot be done in silos, i.e., by single entities for their own systems only. Due to the many interdependencies in civil aviation, cybersecurity should be a shared responsibility of National Authorities, aircraft manufacturers, airlines, airports, and Air Navigation Service Providers (ANSPs), together with their respective supply chains. Since public safety is at stake, States and oversight entities should have the authority to ensure all parties act in accordance with current standards.</p>	<p>REGULATIONS IFALPA and IFATCA welcome actions taken by States to establish regulations and procedures that set the minimum requirements that the aviation industry must meet. Many Authorities have either created or are in the process of drafting their own regulations concerning information security. Recognizing that it will take time for these regulations to come into full force and be audited, IFALPA and IFATCA encourage affected entities to comply at the earliest opportunity. States lacking cybersecurity regulations should develop and implement them without delay. IFALPA and IFATCA also welcome ICAO's Cybersecurity Action Plan (CyAP), which provides the foundation for States, industry stakeholders, and ICAO to work together to develop the ability to identify, prevent, detect, respond to, and recover from cyberattacks on civil aviation.</p> <p>State regulations should mandate proper training of all relevant personnel so that they can detect and report actual cyberattacks and vulnerabilities in a timely manner, and act accordingly. Compliance should be audited by the relevant authorities.</p> <p>INFORMATION SHARING In other industries, information sharing has proven to be essential in the protection of critical infrastructure. In many countries, structures have already been set up for civil aviation. It is essential that all stakeholders share information on security breaches, detected attacks, and best practices to enhance the overall security of the system. This requires a great degree of trust and confidentiality, and the assurance that the information on the methodology behind any security breach will not be made public until appropriate countermeasures have been implemented. State regulations should mandate the timely reporting of relevant cyber events (including attempted attacks).</p> <p>POSITION The cyber threat landscape is of significant concern to the safety and security of civil aviation. This threat should continue to be addressed in a coordinated manner, both by industry and regulators.</p> <p>BRIEFING LEAFLET ON CYBER THREATS The dedicated IFALPA Briefing Leaflet, 17SECBL01 provides guidelines to help establish an environment in which cyber threats are fully understood and managed, reducing risk to an acceptable level.</p> <p><small>©2026 The International Federation of Air Line Pilots' Associations. This publication is provided for information purposes only. In all cases pilots should follow their company's guidance and procedures. In the interest of flight safety, reproduction of this publication in whole or in part is encouraged. It may not be offered for sale or used commercially. All reports must credit IFALPA.</small></p> <p style="text-align: right;">2</p>
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The cyber threat landscape is of significant concern to the safety and security of civil aviation. This threat should continue to be addressed in a coordinated manner, both by industry and regulators.

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Man-Portable Air Defence Systems (MANPADS)


 <p style="text-align: right;">POSITION PAPER 26POS04 26 February 2026</p> <h2 style="text-align: center;">MANPADS</h2> <p>NOTE <i>This paper supersedes 23POS03, of the same name.</i></p> <p>BACKGROUND The threat from Man-Portable Air Defence Systems (MANPADS) is not a new one for civil aviation. MANPADS have existed for over 60 years and are found in the arsenals of more than 100 countries. The first reported attacks using MANPADS occurred in the 1970s. Since then, more than 60 civilian aircraft have been hit by MANPADS, resulting in over 1,000 deaths worldwide, as reported in RAND's research report of 2019.</p> <p>DESCRIPTION MANPADS, being man-portable, are light and small, very short-range surface-to-air missiles used to intercept fixed- and rotary-wing aircraft in flight and during approach or take-off phases. They are mainly shoulder-fired and designed to be used by one person or a small team. They can be used from various locations (e.g., ground, boats, flats, mountain terrain) and can be easily hidden.</p> <p>In general, they carry around less than 3kg of explosives, can operate up to an altitude of 26,000ft and have a short flight time before they are armed. In terms of detonation, most systems have a proximity sensor causing the warhead to explode and scatter shrapnel over a wider area when approaching the target. The latest systems can also track a laser to target and are even flown using First-Person View (FPV).</p> <p>Defence systems fitted to military aircraft have been gradually enhanced to counter ground-to-air weapons such as MANPADS. However, most civilian operators do not carry that same technology and protection. In addition, MANPADS development has largely focused on defeating these countermeasures, ensuring the warhead remains on target.</p> <p>PROLIFERATION Current and emerging conflicts have been leading to a proliferation of all types of weapons, including MANPADS. They have also increased the number of well trained and experienced users, which in turn has increased the likelihood of a successful shot.</p>	<p>Moreover, the resolution of some of these conflicts has presented an opportunity for trafficking, as the stocks of MANPADS are no longer used for military purposes.</p> <p>Although the vast majority of MANPADS are kept securely in State-owned facilities, it is now estimated that several thousands of MANPADS are in the hands of non-State actors, having been acquired, for example, by illicit transfers, purchase on the black market, or through theft. Most components of MANPADS have a long shelf life, which keeps them dangerous for a significant amount of time after production.</p> <p>INTERNATIONAL RECOGNITION OF THE PROBLEM The threat to civil aviation represented by MANPADS is well recognized by ICAO through several documents, including Annex 17, the Security Manual (Doc 8973), the Aviation Security Global Risk Context Statement (Doc 10108), the Risk Assessment Manual for Civil Aircraft Operations Over or Near Conflict Zones (Doc 10084), and the MANPADS information and airport vulnerability assessment Guide (ICAO Toolkit, 2015). ICAO has identified MANPADS as a critical threat and has been urging States to implement strict and effective controls on the import, export, transfer or storage of MANPADS as well as the destruction of unauthorized MANPADS on their territory.</p> <p>Several international initiatives have also emerged to control the proliferation of weapons and to recover weapons held illegally for military purposes. For example, the United Nations has set up a programme to prevent, combat, and eradicate the illicit trade in light weapons in all its aspects and stress the need for transparency in arms control.</p> <p>POSITION The MANPADS threat should be treated as an increasing concern, even outside conflict zones. Preventing the proliferation of MANPADS is the most effective countermeasure. States should continue to develop national programmes and policies to set up mitigation strategies against the MANPADS threat by conducting vulnerability assessment of airports, controlling global exports and providing transparency of where and when the weapons systems are sold or destroyed. National Agencies should share information on the presence and availability of MANPADS worldwide.</p> <p><small>©2026 The International Federation of Air Line Pilots' Associations. This publication is provided for information purposes only, in all cases pilots should follow their company's guidance and procedures. In the interest of flight safety, reproduction of this publication in whole or in part is encouraged. It may not be offered for sale or used commercially. All reports must credit IFALPA.</small></p>
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Civil aviation continues to face evolving security challenges including the ongoing threat posed by Man-Portable Air Defense Systems (MANPADS).

The International Federation of Air Line Pilots' Associations (IFALPA) and IFATCA have jointly published a new position paper, reinforcing that preventing the proliferation of MANPADS is the most effective way to safeguard global aviation.

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Endangerment Of Flight Operations By Protesters

 <p style="text-align: right;">POSITION PAPER 26POS06 5 March 2026</p> <h2 style="text-align: center;">Endangerment of Flight Operations by Protesters</h2> <p>BACKGROUND Recent years have seen a very concerning increase in the number of incidents linked to the intentional disruption of flight operations by protesters breaching airport perimeters and sometimes damaging aircraft and/or airport equipment. Examples include covering aircraft with paint, flying drones in final approach paths and occupying aprons.</p> <p>Most of these incidents have been largely harmless to people, causing only economic consequences. IFALPA, IFATCA, and IBAC are concerned that some of these actions could pose risks to flight safety and potentially result in serious injuries or a catastrophic event.</p> <p>THREAT IDENTIFICATION Establishing measures to prevent these disruptions has proven challenging, and available intelligence on these groups is often limited. Individuals protesting may come from a variety of cultural and social backgrounds and act for a range of motivations, including political, religious, social, environmental, and/or personal reasons. They may be affiliated with organized groups that provide financial or logistical support or act alone with minimal connections. Of particular concern, they may also be employed in the aviation industry and share insider knowledge.</p> <p>EXPOSING VULNERABILITIES As shown by the multiple events involving breaches of airport perimeters and Security Restricted Areas (SRAs), protesters have managed to circumvent security measures to achieve their goals. In doing so, they have exposed weaknesses in aviation security systems that could in turn be exploited by other groups for criminal or terrorist purposes.</p> <p>CURRENT MITIGATING MEASURES Airports have generally been responding to breaches of their perimeter by stopping operations, sometimes for many hours, leading to significant disruption. However, closing an airport to counter protester actions is never a desirable solution and could</p>	<p>potentially create an emergency situation. In most cases, flight crews are not briefed on the reason for the airport closure and are simply asked to divert.</p> <p>POSITION IFALPA, IFATCA, and IBAC believe that the best line of defence against the endangerment of flight operations by protesters is to prevent them from accessing Security Restricted Areas in the first place. Legislation should provide an effective deterrence, and States should establish and implement regulations, practices (such as regular assessment of airport perimeter protection) and appropriate penalties for offenders.</p> <p>Awareness campaigns should be organized with the aim of educating the public at large as to the risks and implications of breaching the airport perimeter.</p> <p>IFALPA, IFATCA, and IBAC further believe that any action by any person such as protesters that jeopardizes the safety of aircraft should be classified as a "serious incident" (as per the ICAO Annex 13 definition) and be subjected to a thorough investigation by the relevant Authorities. If security infrastructure has been impacted, such actions should be considered an "act of unlawful interference" as per ICAO Annex 17 and handled accordingly.</p> <p><small>©2026 The International Federation of Air Line Pilots' Associations. This publication is provided for information purposes only, in all cases pilots should follow their company's guidance and procedures. In the interest of flight safety, reproduction of this publication in whole or in part is encouraged. It may not be offered for sale or used commercially. All reports must credit IFALPA.</small></p>
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IFATCA Joint Position Paper with The International Federation of Air Line Pilots' Associations (IFALPA) and IBAC, Endangerment of Flight Operations by Protesters

Recent years have seen a very concerning increase in the number of incidents linked to the intentional disruption of flight operations by protesters breaching airport perimeters and sometimes damaging aircraft and/or airport equipment. Examples include covering aircraft with paint, flying drones in final approach paths and occupying aprons.

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International Women's Day



International Women's Day 2026
Joint Statement

For ALL Women and Girls: Rights. Justice. Action.

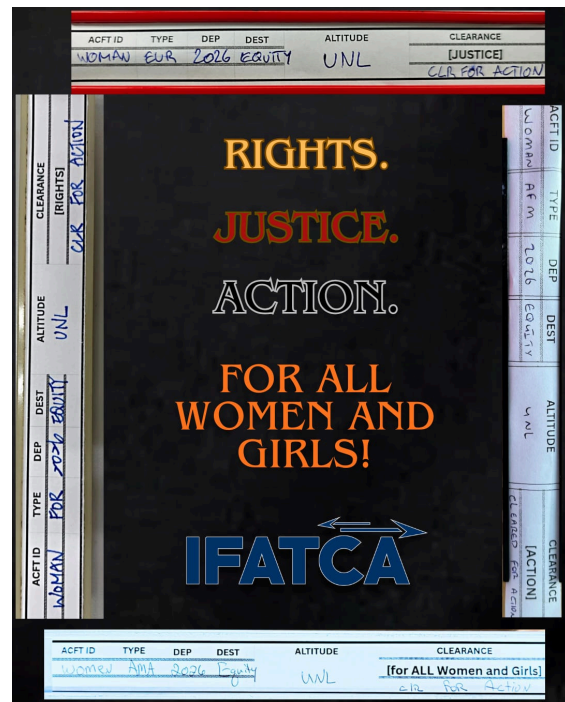
On this International Women's Day, IFATCA is proud to stand together with **(IFALPA) IFATSEA IFAIMA** and **IFISA** for the sixth year in a row in support of the United Nations theme: For ALL Women and Girls: Rights. Justice. Action.

Across the aviation industry, progress toward gender equality has been made, yet women remain significantly underrepresented, particularly in operational and leadership roles. This continued imbalance highlights the need to move beyond commitment alone and focus on meaningful, sustained action.

Equal rights and fair treatment in the workplace are fundamental human rights. Justice requires that barriers to entry, progression, and retention are actively identified and removed. Action demands coordinated efforts across the aviation sector to create inclusive, supportive, and sustainable working environments for all. Advancing gender equality is central to social sustainability in aviation and directly supports the attraction, retention, and development of the next generation of aviation professionals. Work-life balance, inclusive policies, and access to career development opportunities are essential to building a resilient and future-ready workforce.

Let us use International Women's day as a call to action to strengthen collaboration and ensure that rights and justice are translated into real change. Sharing and evaluating our progress will ensure accountability and lasting impact. Together, we can help shape an aviation industry where all women and girls can thrive

[READ MORE HERE](#)





International Women's Day 2026 Joint Statement

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Let us use this day as a call to action to strengthen collaboration and ensure that rights and justice are translated into real change. Sharing and evaluating our progress will ensure accountability and lasting impact. Together, we can help shape an aviation industry where all women and girls can thrive.

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Welcome New IP ScioTeq



IFATCA is delighted to welcome ScioTeq as a premium Industry Partner. ScioTeq is a developer and manufacturer of high-tech, innovative, life- and mission-critical visualization and computing solutions for the Air Traffic Control, Avionics and Defense & Security markets.

Did you know, every day, more than 80,000 flights are controlled from a ScioTeq Air-Traffic Control display? Their displays incorporate decades of experience with visualization for the aerospace industry. So, they know the market and its needs, while their R&D team keeps up with the latest technologies.

They know that to make informed decisions quickly, ATCOs need the clearest possible view of the skies. Hence the importance of bright, high-resolution and reliable ATC displays as an intrinsic part of an ergonomic Controller Working Position. By combining their ever-broader range with innovative technology, ScioTeq ensures that every ATCO can be equipped with the optimum window into their ATM system.

ScioTeq ATC solutions are designed together with customers to ensure their solutions precisely meet ATC needs. Talking to ATCOs and air traffic service providers, their experts gain deeper insight into operators' working habits, challenges and wishes – as a perfect start to develop the right solutions.

ScioTeq's partnership with IFATCA signals a clear intent to involve the end users as key stakeholders

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65th Annual IFATCA Conference Bucharest, Romania

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Stay in Touch with IFATCA

A promotional graphic for IFATCA. The background is dark grey with a teal circle on the left and a white airplane icon in the top right. The main text 'stay in touch with IFATCA' is in white, with 'IFATCA' in a larger font and a double-headed arrow above it. Below this, it says 'Look out for 2 easy ways to stay informed:' followed by two bullet points: 'IFATCA Circular A monthly update' and 'The Controller Magazine A twice annual publication'. On the right, a woman in a hijab is smiling and holding binoculars. At the bottom, there is a teal bar with a globe icon, the website 'WWW.IFATCA.ORG', and the text 'Sign up today using the provided links!'.

Please Sign up Here:

For the circular: <https://lp.constantcontactpages.com/s1/Hlg3w4l>

For The Controller:

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IFATCA @ ICAO

GANP Study Group meeting in Montreal



IFATCA at ICAO GANP Study Group meeting in Montreal. Feb 9-13 the 9th edition of GANP.

Kateriina Syaves (Finland) represented IFATCA.

GANP is unknown to many, or perhaps considered as a high-level paper without importance on an every day level, but that is not true! The GANP is the way to the future and will have an impact to the work of all aviation professionals.

The Global Air Navigation Plan, GANP is an important planning tool for setting global priorities to drive the evolution of the global air navigation system and ensure that the vision of an integrated, harmonised, globally interoperable and seamless system becomes a reality.

IFATCA Spotlight Podcast

The **IFATCA Spotlight** Podcast is made by ATCOs for ATCOs and provides insight into different challenges and solutions ATCOS face worldwide.

In this 20th episode of IFATCA Spotlight, host Thorsten Raue interviews Tapio Puisto, a member of the Finnish Air Traffic Controllers Association (FATCA). They discuss Tapio's journey into air traffic control, the structure and operations of Finnish ATC, the challenges posed by weather and geopolitical issues, and the future of air traffic management in Finland, including innovative projects like the Multi Remote Operated Tower.

Check out all episodes via podcast.ifatca.org or in your favourite podcast app.



THE CONTROLLER

Journal of Air Traffic Control

-=>The Controller Archive <=-

The Controller magazine's archive is now available on the IFATCA website. The archive contains all issues from the past six decades. In addition, we have started working on a searchable index of all articles ever published. As you can imagine, this is a massive task: the index currently holds just over 3,000 entries. Clicking on the page number takes you directly to the article. For the moment, the index can be found [here](#). There is no link yet in the website menus as we are still tweaking this feature. Some information (e.g. on who authored an article) is also missing at the moment.

Feedback, including any mistakes or missing articles, is welcome via webmaster@ifatca.org.

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