



A EUROCONTROL-FAA Action Plan 15 White Paper

October 2015

“Safety culture means that I do it right when no one is looking.”

“It is not a question of having, or not having, safety culture; if you want a good safety picture, you have to have it.”

On being asked why Skyguide got into safety culture, the response was: “Why wouldn’t we? A Safety Management System is important, but without a positive safety culture it is useless.”

“I would sleep much better if safety culture was at the highest level.”

“The only danger is that people get complacent; you have to keep your eye on the ball all the time.”

“In a safety culture survey you may turn over a stone and not like what you find underneath, but in my experience every CEO I know is willing to do that, and wants to understand the problem.”

“I think of safety culture as management intention. The Board needs to be committed to safety. We aim to lead by example.”

“The CEO has to be serious, and be a role model, for everyone.”

FOREWORD

EUROCONTROL / FAA Action Plan 15 on Safety Research aims to advance safety concepts and practices in air traffic management, via the sharing of expertise from its membership. Since 2003 it has had three main goals: understand system safety, develop new approaches to assess and improve safety, and disseminate key results into the industry. AP15 came into existence in 2003 and its current terms of reference run until the end of 2016.

Safety Culture is seen by AP15 as critical to safety in air traffic operations. The first White Paper developed by AP15 on Safety Culture in 2008 focused on explaining what safety culture was, and how it could be measured and improved in Air Traffic operations. At the time, approximately ten Air Navigation Service Providers (ANSPs) were already engaged in evaluating and improving their safety culture. Today, in 2015, the number has risen to more than thirty European Member States.

This White Paper seeks to answer a simple question put to those at the top of eight organisations who have invested in safety culture: was it worth it? We asked CEOs and other senior executives what their safety culture journeys were like, what they have learned along the way, and whether they intend to continue on this path.

The AP15 Membership hopes this White Paper will help understanding of this area, and its critical importance in keeping our skies safe both today, and in the future.

AP15 Membership

- **EUROCONTROL** – Barry Kirwan [Co-chair], Tony Licu, Eric Perrin, Andrew Kilner, Nigel Makins, Steven Shorrock, Beatrice Bettignies-Thiebaux
- **FAA** – Jerome Lard [Co-chair], Dino Piccione, Paul Krois, Jim Daum, Michael Sawyer
- **NASA** – Michael Fearly
- **NATS (UK)** – Neil May, Sam Espig
- **DFS (Germany)** – Joerg Leonhardt, Nils Schader, Andre Perott
- **AVINOR (Norway)** – Anne-ki Chavez
- **LFV (Sweden)** – Billy Josefsson
- **Astro Control** – Michaela Schwarz
- **Airservices Australia** – Damien Armenis, Claire Marrison
- **NavCanada** – John David, Remi Joly, Heather Henderson

Note: The quotes cited throughout this report do not necessarily reflect the opinions of AP15 individuals, nor their organisations. Similarly, the quotes do not necessarily reflect participating ANSPs' present or future policies. They are best seen as a snapshot of reflections at the time of the interviews, most of which were carried out in late 2014 and early 2015.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

With several safety culture programmes in the domain of Air Traffic Management (ATM) now running for a decade or longer, and more than thirty countries in Europe and North America engaged in safety culture efforts, it is useful to step back and take stock of the overall performance and utility of safety culture. Since it has proven almost impossible to link safety culture efforts to safety outcomes in high reliability industries such as ATM (due to low accident and incident rates, and too many confounding factors), it was decided to ask those at the helm of a number of air traffic organisations whether they found safety culture useful, and whether they felt the ‘journey’ of starting and maintaining a safety culture initiative has paid off.

This White Paper therefore charts the safety culture journeys of eight Air Navigation Service Providers (ANSPs) who have aimed to evaluate and improve their safety culture during the past decade. The ANSPs are those of Austria, Hungary, Malta, Norway, Slovenia, Switzerland, the UK and Canada. Interviews were carried out with senior executives (usually the CEO) of each organisation to find out why they got interested in safety culture, what they learned, and whether they are still continuing to invest in safety culture.

The two main benefits appear to be a clearer and more comprehensive picture of the true strengths and vulnerabilities in an organisation’s strategic and day-to-day safety management, and the identification of new ways forward to maintain and improve safety.

However, what is most interesting is what the CEOs say and think about safety culture. For this reason, most of the space in this White Paper is given over to their views and perspectives, mainly in the form of quotes taken from the interviews. It is hoped these experiences and perspectives may be of use to other CEOs and Senior Executives who are either already dealing with Safety Culture issues, or are considering embarking on their own safety culture journey.



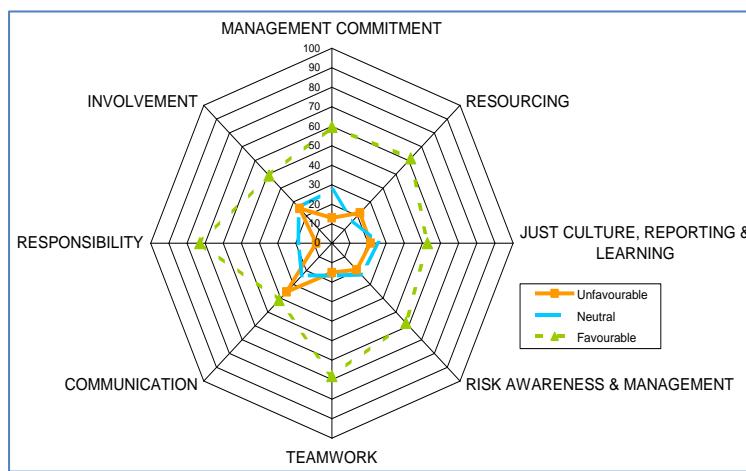
Background

Safety culture has been defined as '*the way safety is done around here*', and first arose as a concept following the Chernobyl nuclear power plant accident in 1986. Since then its importance has become well-accepted in a number of industries and services, including petrochemical, air traffic management, and health care. It complements a SMS – a safety management system – which represents an organisation's safety *competence*. Safety culture concerns an organisation's *commitment* to safety. Both are generally seen as required in order to deliver a high level of safety. Although the safety culture focus is often on controllers and engineers, it also concerns senior executives and their willingness to give safety its due priority when faced with cost, production or other business pressures.

Following the Überlingen mid-air collision (2002) and the Linate runway incursion (2001) accidents in Europe, EUROCONTROL began researching into safety culture, borrowing from the nuclear power and oil and gas industrial domains where safety culture was already relatively mature, and developed an approach for European ANSPs (though several ANSPs had already begun safety culture interventions).



The EUROCONTROL Safety Culture Programme began in earnest in 2006. It gained a significant boost in 2010 at a CEO safety conference held in Belgrade, when two CEOs stood up and told other CEOs that 'safety culture was worth the effort'. At the time of writing this White Paper, more than thirty ANSPs have been surveyed in Europe – eight of them more than once – and a number of other countries around the globe have also carried out safety culture surveys and enacted safety culture improvement programmes.



But it is hard to link safety culture surveys and the initiatives that result from them to clear safety improvements. This is largely because no ANSP is standing still, and there are always a number of safety initiatives ongoing, and also there are – thankfully – very few accidents, making any kind of statistical or evidence-based correlation impractical.

So, how to measure whether safety culture is working, and is worth the effort? Intrinsic to safety culture is being able to challenge people about safety, and this also holds for safety culture itself. It was therefore decided to ask a number of Senior Executives from organisations who had tried safety culture, what they thought about it, whether they valued it, how it had helped them, and in particular, whether they would continue to invest in it.

Approach

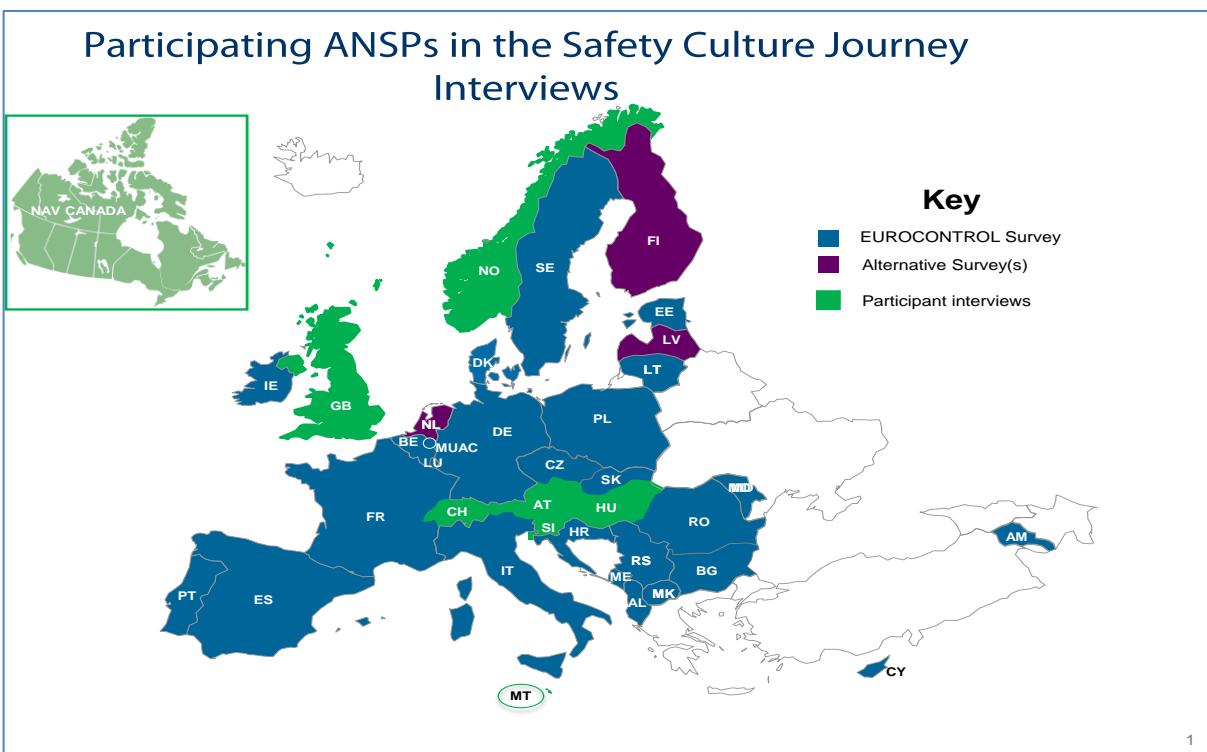
Selection of ANSPs

The interviews were arranged through existing contacts from the safety culture programme. Although the majority of European States have used the EUROCONTROL survey approach, the idea was not to be restrictive, and so three of the participants (Skyguide, Austro Control and NAV Canada) use alternatives, and two of the ANSPs (NATS and HungroControl) have used both the EUROCONTROL and other methods. Initially a dozen or so ANSPs were contacted, and in the end eight were able to participate within the timescale (second half of 2014).



Interviewees

- **Austro Control** (Austria) **COO** *Thomas Hoffmann*, Safety Manager *Alfred Vlasek*
- **Avinor** (Norway) **CEO** *Anders Kirseborn*, Safety Manager *Anne-ki Chavez*
- **HungaroControl** (Hungary) **CEO** *Kornél Szepessy*, Safety Manager *Mihály Kurucz*
- **MATS** (Malta) **CEO** *Carmel Vassallo*, Senior Head of ACC *Joe Degiorgio*, Senior Head Safety, Quality & Security *Francis Bezzina*
- **NATS** (United Kingdom) **CEO** *Martin Rolfe*, Safety Directors *David Harrison¹* & *Richard Schofield*
- **Nav Canada** (Canada) **President & CEO** *John W. Crichton*, VP Safety *John David*
- **Skyguide** (Switzerland) **Director Safety, Security & Quality** *Simon Maurer*
- **Slovenia Control** (Slovenia) **CEO** *Franc Željko Županič*, Safety Manager *Beno Pačnik*



¹ Also Chair of the CANSO Safety Standing Committee

Questions

The question set was kept straightforward and minimal, and based partly on an earlier study with CEOs which also resulted in an AP15 White Paper on Safety Intelligence².

The principal set of questions is listed below in Table 1. As can happen in interviews, the interviewer and/or interviewee may occasionally deviate from the planned question set to explore something relevant. The interview time ranged from 30 -75 minutes, with most interviews lasting just under an hour.

Table 1 – Principal Question Set used in Interviews

A: Safety Culture

1. What does safety culture mean to you?
2. How important is Just Culture to you?
3. What is the real value of a safety culture survey to you?
4. Why did you get into safety culture?
5. What were the main challenges in getting started?
6. What changes has it brought to the organisation?

B: Managing Safety at Board Level

7. What is your involvement, at Board level or otherwise, with your ANSP's safety issues?
8. What are your personal goals for safety in your ANSP?
9. Is safety in a good place now?
10. Are any external factors and developments putting pressure on safety?
11. Is the regulator happy with your ANSP's safety performance? Are you happy with the regulator?
12. How do you send clear safety messages to your direct reports on the Board? And the controllers and the rest of the organisation?

C: Safety Culture and the Future

13. Do you think integration into FABs might affect safety culture?
14. How do you see safety culture evolving in the future in your ANSP?
15. What are the key factors for a successful safety culture journey?

The following section gives highlights from the interviews, using selected quotes, and seeks to draw common perceptions on the value and usefulness of safety culture. One of the interviews (NATS) was recorded using video, and is available at the following link on the Skybrary website:

http://www.skybrary.aero/index.php/NATS_Safety_Culture_Journey_2

²

http://www.eurocontrol.int/sites/default/files/article//content/documents/nm/safety/safety_intelligence_white_paper_2013.pdf

PART A: SAFETY CULTURE

1. What does safety culture mean to you

Safety Culture is notoriously difficult to define, with either long definitions or ‘sound-bites’ such as ‘the way safety is done around here’. The CEOs, however, were all clear on what it meant to them.

“Safety culture means that I do it right when no one is looking.”



“Safety *is* first. It is essential, and should pervade the company from top to bottom. It depends on technology and human resources. But raising safety awareness is not enough – we need behaviour to follow.”

“Safety culture is the bedrock of everything we do in NATS. It’s about the values and beliefs we all hold, and if we get all the behaviours – from the top, all the way down – working as one around the subject of safety, then it plays into everything we do.”

“I think of safety culture as management intention. The Board needs to be committed to safety. We aim to lead by example.”

“Safety is number 1, not just because it’s a regulation or a motherhood thing, but because it’s a business imperative. We cannot afford to have NAV CANADA perceived as cutting corners or not having safety as our top priority, because it would be bad for the business.”

“It is not a question of having, or not having, safety culture; if you want a good safety picture, you have to have it.”

“Safety culture is an attitude among management and operations. The CEO has to send a message, and have a system for informing people and the media. The CEO has to be serious, and be a role model, for everyone.”

“It’s a general understanding and acknowledgment by everyone that safety is the top priority. Everything else is secondary when you are running an operation. It needs to be ingrained into everyone so it’s second nature. Safety is a process, and an attitude.”

2. How important is Just Culture to you?

Just Culture is seen as a critical enabler for safety culture. In particular it is about trust between management and staff. But it is not the same as a blame-free culture. Everyone is expected to act responsibly and safely. If there is no Just Culture or a poor one, there are also likely to be issues with the reporting of safety-related events, so that those at the top may not be aware of their ANSP’s true safety performance. But Just Culture is not simply a matter of agreeing and enacting a policy. As shown in the comments below, it requires a continual conversation.



“Just culture is quite fragile. It is something we work on all the time. It is probably the most important ingredient of a solid safety culture.”

“Just Culture is so obviously part of our daily life in HungaroControl. For us, the point is, if you have no Just Culture policy working in your company, you have no chance to have a precise safety management system; and you won’t even be able to understand what is actually happening or might happen. We need Just Culture to work, to be a reality and part of our daily operations, in every head of every ATCO.”

“We have had a Just Culture policy since the late 2000s, partly as a result of two incidents. We rolled out just culture awareness material across the centres one by one.”

“I became aware that some people were being disciplined for honest mistakes, which ended up in grievances. I dug into it, then put an end to it. It was the opposite to what I’d been used to in my experience in aviation. I knew we were going to get better reporting.”

“I believe there is some room for improvement in what Just Culture is about and I know it is difficult to get the balance right. It is easy to sit and think about it in the office, but when you’re a front-line supervisor, you have to talk about it and address the everyday issues. There is still some leadership work to do: operational staff need to better understand how their behavioural choices can be critical to safety. Communication is paramount, we can’t just say ‘this is the rule, now stick to it’. I take time for conversation with operations staff and make sure I highlight the benefits of just culture for the organisation.”

3. What is the real value of safety culture to you?

The unanimous response was that if you want a full picture of safety, not only the risks but how to improve safety, you need to look into safety culture.

“It is like a compass which shows your current position so that you can reach your desired destination. It is also important to know from a financial point of view which safety areas to invest in. After a survey you can quite transparently see the weaknesses and the strengths. We always learn something.”



“A central safety tool is the safety culture survey. The survey gets people throughout the organisation thinking and talking about safety culture. It helps us understand how safety is perceived and what we need to improve. Comprehensively understanding safety culture is critical to improving safety performance.”

4. Why did you get into safety culture?

Several CEOs already had experience of safety culture in previous organisations, or else moved into their new organisation and inherited ongoing safety culture processes. All found it a natural process to be involved in.



“Skyguide was one of the first European ANSPs to engage in safety culture surveys, following the tragic mid-air collision over Überlingen in 2002, whose after-effects transformed the company and led to a markedly increased focus on safety.”

“The external trigger points going back over decades were a series of accidents, from the Herald of Free Enterprise to the NIMROD accident. But particularly over the past decade, one of our main themes was ‘*people create safety*’, so it was natural that we got involved in safety culture.”

“AVINOR was to some extent a guinea pig for the survey process back in 2007, but incidents were going up, and we needed to do something different.”

“In 2009, CANSO developed a safety culture survey as an important Safety Management pillar. After evaluating the survey, Austro Control welcomed it as an approach to help us get a better understanding of how safety is perceived in our organisation. Two years later EASA 1035/2011 included requirements on implementing a proactive safety culture.”

“At the CEO Conference in Belgrade (2010) safety culture was discussed with all the CEO’s and directors of the organisations. It was clear that it was going to be important.”

5. What were the main challenges in getting started?

For several organisations, there were two main issues. The first was convincing people, especially senior people. Once the decision had been made, the main issue was resources. Although the EUROCONTROL safety culture survey was freely offered, there were still resource implications for the ANSP.



“To be frank the hardest part was to convince former management in the old days. It took some time to convince people. Safety meetings and awareness sessions helped, attended by managers, CEO, unions etc.”

“After privatisation, what we (NAV CANADA) inherited was very much a command and control structure, so the management levels in Operations were militaristic; we had to change that, and were the first to put in a non-punitive reporting system.”

“You have to find resources: from the safety department, from EUROCONTROL, and you have to make sure that in the organisation that leadership team is ready to support also.”

“Gaining release of staff for the safety culture workshops, especially with a new Centre opening. But we got lots of volunteers.”



6. What changes has it brought to your organisation?

Changes appear to be of two types: cultural, and concrete. The first usually brings the organisation to a better understanding and

alignment of its own safety culture values. The second results in reinforcing the processes that uphold safety.

“We now have a strong Just Culture, a very healthy level of reporting, and a full integration of CISM (Critical Incident Stress Management) support for controllers.”

“It has changed the way the Executive Board deals with safety. Now, we do really try and drive safety culture from the top.”

“We realised there wasn’t alignment from top to bottom on some key issues, e.g. some people thought that Just Culture meant ‘no-blame culture’. Although we already had a Just Culture Policy, we realised we had to give people more detail.”

“Better sharing of safety information. Some years ago, there was a virtual firewall confining safety-related information (e.g. from incidents) to the Safety Department, based on good intentions to protect controllers from any recrimination following incident reporting. But it meant that managers outside safety had no information on which to drive safety in their units.

One of the major changes was an opening up of information throughout Skyguide, in agreement with all parties (especially the unions), enabling all parts of the organisation to act on safety information.”

PART B: MANAGING SAFETY AT BOARD LEVEL

7. What is your involvement, at Board Level or otherwise, with your organisation’s safety issues?

Each organisation has safety discussions in its regular Executive Board meetings, sometimes supported by a (safety) Dashboard. The Safety Director or Manager prepares issues for discussion at the Board Meeting. CEOs generally run the meeting, and ensure that safety issues are properly talked through by all the Board members until an action is defined. Some CEOs take a more active role, others stand back a little and get involved when needed, e.g. when there is a debate between one or more directors over which course of action to take.



“We have two Boards: one with our external stakeholders, and an Executive Board. In the Executive safety is the first agenda item every month, and the Safety Director produces a report. We have a Dashboard, and a conversation, so everyone is involved.”

“Every Board meeting has a heavy safety briefing. We are hoping to use the Dashboard more.

We want more monitoring of trends, to be looking ahead, using a computerised tool. It is important not just to look in the rear view mirror, but also to see around the corner. To know our highest risks, and to focus on them. Also, we look at *all* risks e.g. financial risk management.”

“We have weekly board meetings to discuss business, once per month we focus on safety issues. Safety department provides information needed as continuous activity.”

“We have a Board Safety Committee – they provide oversight on how we’re doing, on all the metrics, and they review the annual safety plan and report. The other Directors and I are involved.”

“Senior Management have a quarterly half-day Executive Board meeting on safety issues, and a thirty minute safety slot at every fortnightly Executive Board meeting. There are several safety dashboards, but when an element goes ‘red’, Skyguide makes sure it does not have a knee-jerk reaction, but instead deliberates over the best course of action. This engagement of the Executive Board with safety demonstrates what is known as safety intelligence, ensuring that safety is understood and gets support at the very top of the organisation.”

“We have to be more than just pen-pushers, have to help people feel they are part of something. We want to know how things are working so that we can respond. Sometimes you have to take things with a pinch of salt. Other times we need to take immediate action.”

8. What are your personal goals for safety in your ANSP?

Some of the personal goals concerned safety culture itself, for example to have not only awareness of safety, but behaviour that followed such awareness. An example was given that we all know we should separate garbage into different bins for the sake of the environment, but the question is whether we do it or not. So it can be with safety and safety culture. Awareness is good, but it is not the endgame. There were also comments on specific risks and their reduction, e.g. risks of runway incursions and better engagement with Airports on safety, as well as concern about emerging threats such as Laser Interference and Drones.



“I would sleep much better if safety culture was at the highest level.”

“I want my fellow Managing Directors to understand their safety accountabilities.”

“To be as absolutely safe as possible and not have any material incidents.”

“Zero accidents and serious incidents, better infrastructure related to security, and being ‘leading’ in safety (according to the safety maturity survey). Implementation of Human Factors is a strategic future area.”

“I’d like safety to be part of everything we do at Slovenia Control. It’s non-negotiable.”



9. Is safety in a good place today?

The general perception was that safety is in a good place now, and that in recent years real progress has been made, in some cases by increasing resources for safety and the adoption of clear policies reinforcing safety. There are also some big changes being introduced now, e.g. remote towers, which represent a challenge.

“I would much rather people tell me, than say ‘we knew that would happen’. If I ask people to tell me where the next incident is, they usually have a pretty specific idea.”

“At Austro Control we’ve made good progress, especially in the last years. We have developed Just Culture Guidelines and will continue to further implement these. When it comes to safety and just culture we all really need to continuously walk the talk”

“At MATS we have 20% of controllers working part-time for safety. So if something in the Ops room is causing headaches, we know about it because people will come and discuss. We have 25 working in safety part time, out of 150 in the workforce. Now every three months we have a “dirty linen meeting”. The CEO puts on some drinks and pastries and we discuss anything and everything.”

“At Avinor we are working on the development of Remote Towers, because we have a big home market (48 towers), and half of these are good candidates for Remote. This will be a big change. The unions are positive, so we are working on this together with them. Ops worry that it will be difficult to handle all this at the same time. But we work hard with the Unions. Overall, I don’t see any red lights.”

“We are currently at 80% on the safety maturity. We are realistic – everything we declare we want to know 100% that we are there. We only claim what we are sure is true.”

“We’ve been through all kinds of restructurings and it’s not going to change our focus on safety. The only danger is that people get complacent; you have to keep your eye on the ball all the time.”

10. Are any external factors and developments putting pressure on safety?

Concern was expressed that external pressures could erode safety, e.g. particularly in Europe the pressure to reduce costs may eventually impact on safety, and that Just Culture is still not strong enough. At least one CEO, however, thought that some pressure needed to be applied to increase efficiency.



“Some of the concerns for the future relate to external agents and agencies. An external prosecutor could ask for information and data recordings, thus putting trust in the reporting process under strain.”

“There will be external challenges, but safety is non-negotiable. Whenever we have to invest money or new staff for safety, there is always discussion about costs and saving money. It is an important discussion, but sometimes when I talk to customers they only want to talk about costs. What I try to explain to them is that we also need the staff to maintain and improve safety.”

“There is a huge pressure from the European Commission on the ANSPs to reduce ATM expenses, which sooner or later might produce challenges for some ANSPs to compromise safety. So, it is a risk, and we all must deal with this.”



“In the coming years pressures may come to bear on all European ANSPs that will truly test a company’s safety culture resolve. Companies want to be safe, but they also want to be competitive.”

“Europe and cost reduction is not helping, pressure on the whole business, not just safety, to reduce costs, impacts everything, people, and equipment, recruitment, everything.”

“[The European Performance Scheme] I don’t feel it’s a big issue yet, but in a couple of years when towers start competing, perhaps then. I’m an economist by training, and I have to say the ATM business case is not as good as in other industries. So, starting to measure the ANSPs is a good thing, it brings a better focus on service to the airlines and a focus on business, and serves as an enabler to change the focus and improve the business – even if the actual targets may not be right yet. Unit cost works as a “currency” in the organisation. It is important to have something externally-driven like this, otherwise we would just go on as usual.”



“The Performance Scheme is not affecting safety yet, but it is maybe changing the focus, so that we need to keep the focus on safety, or else we will slowly slide into a place where we don’t want to be.”

“We are being asked to compete and cooperate at the same time. Some years ago we would share information with all other ANSPs. In the future, we will have to think twice.”

11. Is the regulator happy with your ANSP’s safety performance? Are you happy with the regulator?

All reports on relationships with the regulator were positive, with open and direct dialogue existing between ANSP and regulator. The only issue was that some European regulators (NSAs: National Supervisory Authorities) are still building their competence in ATM, and so may ask some questions that appear irrelevant or out of scope for the ANSP. But all the relationships were seen as good and helpful.



“We have received no complaints about our safety performance. The relation with our CAA is excellent at the moment, we can work together, and can discuss topics if there is an issue.”

“Our relationship is very good. This is not just because our buildings are close physically. At the moment we have drawn up a plan for RNAV procedures. It took some convincing but we

have brought the regulator with us. This has helped our relationship also with the airfield operator. Obviously we are audited and if there is a finding they tell us, and we would need to correct our ways. But the helping relationship works both ways.”

“We have a very constructive relationship with Transport Canada. We don’t have highly prescriptive regulation.”

“We have a good relationship with the regulator. Sometimes they ask questions that seem beyond the scope, but really the relationship is good.”

“We have a very good relation with the regulator, open and direct dialogue, and have regular meetings. They have direct access to all the reports (this is mandated by law). The Regulator (as with a number of NSAs at this time) have an issue with competence in ATM, and so sometimes they fire questions at us that seem irrelevant. Regulators like details, but perhaps a focus on more system-wide issues would be more useful and more challenging to us.”

12. How do you send clear safety messages to your direct reports on the Board? And the controllers and the rest of the organisation?

The interviewees were all focused on communications concerning safety, whether on a more personal basis, or through formal channels and internal meetings. The CEOs also enlist their Directors to send safety messages.



“There is no substitute for talking to people. It can be uncomfortable but it is the right thing to do. The worst thing you can do is hide in your office. If the only contact with you is a photo in rogues’ gallery on the intranet, this is no good. Staff need to trust you and know you.”

“I have regular meetings with unions and the controller association. They have been very constructive, and are completely on board with safety.”

“Safety is always a given as being important. So, to emphasise it even more, I for example decided to put safety as the first item on the agenda of our management meetings, to give the awareness that safety is the number 1 priority.”

“I always consult the Safety Manager, but I also make it a point to attend safety assessment workshops and safety meetings. I try to show to employees that safety is given upmost importance. Safety will always get priority over other meetings.”

“I give occasional messages, but there are also messages from the other VPs. We have an operational safety newsletter, the safety flash alerts and safety bulletins, as well as a strategic safety planning exercises on an annual basis. We also have an integrated safety group, with managers attending from every unit in the country.”

“We show the controllers that management is reacting to their safety concerns. The Roadshows are a major way to convince controllers and others, by visiting the units and

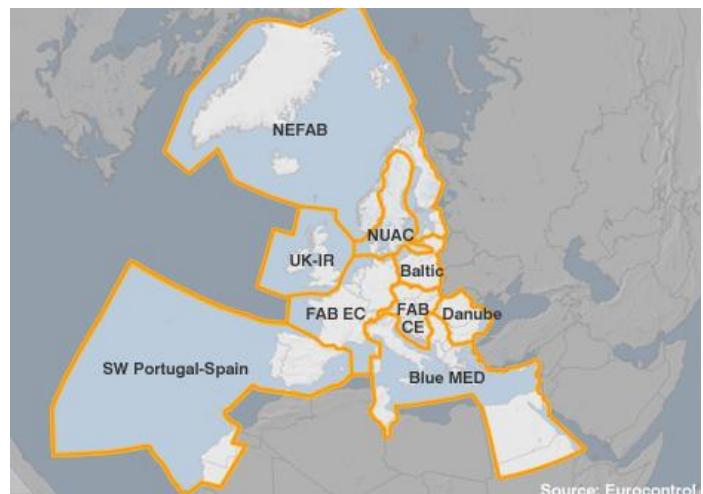
talking to them face-to-face. We also emphasise the importance of controllers understanding that they need to report, or else their issues don't feed up the chain to my level."

"I give messages to my Directors, through our weekly meetings, and then through the Directors. But when there is some really important message about safety, and a need to energise the people through the autumn or the spring, then we have a safety forum event where we invite everyone and I inform them, and receive and answer questions from the people."

PART C: SAFETY CULTURE & THE FUTURE

13. Will integration into FABs affect safety culture?

In Europe there is the intention that the future landscape of individual ANSPs working alone within their national airspace will change to one divided up into a smaller number of Functional Airspace Blocks (FABs), each comprising a cluster of ANSPs. The first official FAB is already running – Nordic Unified Air Traffic Control (NUAC) – a collaboration between Sweden and Denmark, but other ANSPs are also working closely together and preparing the way for more extensive FAB arrangements. Generally no problems were foreseen by the interviewees, and safety is seen as one of the first areas for harmonisation, although some of the detail has still to be worked out.



Source: Eurocontrol

"FAB-CE was already a well-developed plan when I joined the company, and initially integration was a taboo, different parties could not agree... But we have just founded a joint company to manage the FAB development. We must be very aware of the safety aspects of these commonly-executed activities. FAB-CE must harmonise its SMS activities, which are closely related to the cultural aspects of each state. A common safety manual for ANSPs has just been approved, and there is an intense cooperation on safety."

"Within our own FAB (NEFAB) we don't have so much of an issue there yet. UK-IAA FAB, NUAC and NEFAB/Borealis – these kinds of FAB arrangements are commercial cooperation tools, more business-founded than FABs, and are voluntary. They are there for the sake of the business, rather than being imposed."

"We already have data-sharing agreements with all FAB ANSPs. These agreements have, for example, enabled us to recognise a safety hotspot in a neighbouring ANSP's airspace; we are now working together to find a common solution which will later be documented in a letter of agreement. Cross-border investigation is also becoming easier as several FAB partners are now beginning to write reports in English rather than in their native language."

“We are trying to work together and confidence is growing. It seems that if you mature naturally, it can work. If you try to impose something, it doesn’t work. So it will take time.”

“At the management level it is easy to discuss good ideas and cooperation, but at the actual technical level there is a lot of work to do. People need to understand what some of these things mean and what they mean in our organisations. Really, FABs should not affect safety culture as it is part of OUR organisation, how WE think about safety.”



14. How do you see safety culture evolving in the future in your ANSP? Will you continue with the safety culture survey process?

All of the ANSPs interviewed are proceeding with the safety culture process, though one is evaluating its position and considering alternatives to the conventional survey process. Several ANSPs are also adding in new initiatives to ‘keep safety culture alive’.



“We now run cross-industry safety conferences which we call HungaroControl Safety Management Forum – nuclear, chemical, oil & gas, rail, etc. – to share safety ideas and also to put some pressure on legislative powers. As a result of these regular meetings, for example, the Nuclear Power people have now implemented part of HungaroControl’s Just Culture policy.”

“Full steam ahead – we’re in a good place, we’ve just got to stay there. But the follow-up to these surveys is really important. We don’t just give results. We determine where the threat is and then go back and discuss it and work it out with the employees.”

“We now have to work hard, we have a good result and we have to keep this good result and keep safety positive.”

“From a CANSO perspective, I’d like to see it open up more, more use of safety culture globally, and more sharing of safety culture data so we can learn from each other.”

“Despite the positive changes, Skyguide is questioning whether to continue with the surveys, although there is no question concerning our continued pursuit of improving safety culture. The survey process has lost some of its appeal internally, due to no longer deriving useful or new issues, and controllers and some others wanting to see more action. Every quarter, we now do a Target Group Survey, in which thirty or so personnel from across the whole company take part to determine what safety issues matter to them. These yield faster and more focused information than the large surveys being conducted every 3 years.”

“We have a one-page strategy for each unit and the company, key strategic goals and measures and KPIs that fit together. We aim to be Strategic. Each two months we focus on a

particular area, e.g. safety for 2 months, commercial for two months. This brings things alive, and we can go deeper.”

“We need more safety intelligence – for example, we need to get tools to make safety visible, make it tangible for employees and managers, to keep it living. As well as a Safety Dashboard for the Executive Board, we need customised dashboards for controllers and Unit chiefs. We envisage multi-levelled dashboards. We want people to see their contribution in the context of traffic, capacity and safety, and for example to see how many safety assessments are going on.”

15. What are the key factors for a successful safety culture journey?

Three factors emerged consistently: trust, leadership from the top, and continuous engagement. **Trust** is a double-edged sword, since controllers and others need to be able to trust the motives and sincerity behind the survey, but also management need to be able to trust that others will participate in an honest way, since for management, conducting a safety culture survey can represent a risk. Usually the survey process itself increases trust by allowing people to express their concerns and have them discussed.

Leadership shows people that safety culture is not just about awareness, but is also about behaviour, and most staff pay attention to their leaders' behaviour. **Continuous engagement** is necessary to keep safety culture alive.



“Trust. It takes a long time and a lot of trust to achieve a good working safety culture.”

“At the end of the day, it [success] depends on relationships within and across different sub-cultures, and ensuring trust through transparency. Overall, the key to a healthy and living safety culture is trust.”

“Don't blame people for not understanding safety culture, instead spend time explaining what it's all about. We invest time asking our ops-people what they need to work safely. We also have more and more ops-people actively involved in safety management. Our safety management organisation is service oriented and we make sure to invest in training; this approach has helped us gain trust.”

“In a safety culture survey you may turn over a stone and not like what you find underneath, but in my experience every CEO I know is willing to do that, and wants to understand the problem.”

“When our new COO entered the organisation, he made sure to first attend the Integrated Management System and Safety Training as a new manager. During the training, he didn't let himself get distracted by a laptop or mobile and actively participated in the group exercises. This sent a very strong signal throughout the organisation and showed that he is serious about safety and expects the same from others. Our COO also asks a lot of safety related questions, almost always requests supporting data and is a very straightforward communicator. Our safety culture has noticeably changed with him!”

“It’s a business imperative, engagement in safety. It’s never been an issue to find money for safety, but we need to keep our eyes on the ball, keep people motivated and engaged on it, continuously. I go to the sites on an annual basis, and everyone has access to me. I can openly talk with the unions and other groups and address any issues. I can also talk to any VP or employee in their group.”

“Surveys and reports are not the goal, living safety culture is.”

CONCLUDING REMARKS

Safety Culture is clearly seen as worthwhile by these eight ANSPs, all of whom are continuing their safety culture ‘journey’. The major perceived benefits are a more comprehensive risk picture, important for those at the helm who are managing the risks in their organisations, and the knowledge that safety is ‘alive’ and keeping everyone safe. Just Culture, and more generally trust within the organisation, are both seen as critical ingredients for a solid safety culture.

One of the key success factors is leadership from the top, with the CEO enlisting the help of his or her fellow Directors, but also engaging in periodic face-to-face dialogue with the workforce, which not only demonstrates a belief in safety, but also enhances trust, and enables those at the top to hear unmodified messages from those working at the sharp end.

Whilst FABs are seen as an opportunity, external cost pressure is seen as a challenge, though there is strong determination not to let such pressures erode safety.

Safety Culture is not a ‘tick-in-the-box’ exercise; it is a continuing conversation on safety within an organisation. As such, it can be particularly useful for CEOs trying to navigate their ANSPs successfully through a changing and increasingly pressured climate. As one CEO put it, safety culture is like a compass, helping you to see where you are, and how to reach your destination safely.

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