Dear readers,

Traffic in Europe is growing again, with 40% more flights expected by 2035; however, the number of airports and even runways in Europe is hardly growing at all. This means that airports are becoming busier and there is ever-increasing pressure to maximise runway throughput and to make airports more efficient. It also means that essential maintenance of the existing airport infrastructure has to be fitted in around operations.

All of this potentially increases the risk of runway incursions – which are widely considered to be one of the most important safety concerns for aviation. Nowadays, we think that several things have to go wrong for there to be a major accident, given the safety nets we have in place and the layers of redundancy in aviation. However, it can take only one incorrect or misheard instruction for a potential high-speed collision to occur.

There are some fascinating articles on the subject in this edition – not just looking at the causes but also at how we can make runways safer, as well as more efficient. As ever, there is no single solution. Part of the response needs to be based on the human factors involved, learning from both negative and also positive incidents. Part of the response needs to address the operational procedures in place at individual airports, especially at times when unusual things are happening, such as works or maintenance.

Technology can also play a role here. SESAR has developed and validated new tools for controllers[1] and Remote Towers may have the capability of displaying information next to the aircraft on the screen. An article in this issue describes the new runway safety lights being evaluated at Paris Charles de Gaulle, which are a good example of how we can start to strengthen the safety nets in this crucial area.

However, technology can only take us so far and complex systems will not be appropriate for every airport. Dangerous runway incursions can just as easily occur at relatively quiet airports where vigilance and respect for procedures will continue to be our primary defence.

The European Action Plan for the Prevention of Runway Incursions is a useful guide to best practice for everyone involved – not just flight crews and controllers but also drivers of airside vehicles and even designers of airport lighting systems. The current edition (from 2011) is due to be updated so please do share your experiences – both good and bad – so that we can all improve safety on the runway.

The Director General

1- Conflicting ATC Clearances (CATC) and Conformance Monitoring Alerts for Controllers (CMAC)

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Since taking up his functions at EUROCONTROL, he has initiated the development of a Vision and Strategy, including the development of Centralised Services as part of the SESAR deployment concentrating on how to support controllers with new technology which increases safety.

Before joining EUROCONTROL, Frank Brenner was General Manager Operations for FABEC, Vice Chairman of EUROCONTROL's Performance Review Commission and a member of the Performance Review Body. Trained as an air traffic controller, he has held a number of posts at DFS including Head of ATM Operations, Director of Operations at the Business Unit for Aeronautical Data Management and Director of DFS's Control Centre Business Unit. operational posts.