CASE STUDY COMMENT 1
RADU CIOPONEA
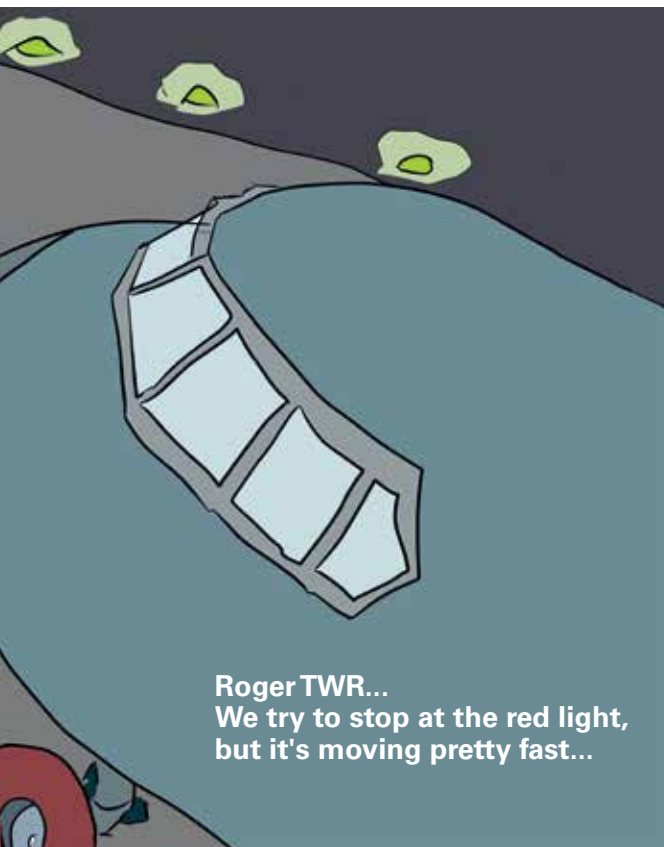
RADU **CIOPONEA**

is an aeronautical engineer with nearly 25 years in ATM, having held an ATCO license in his home country after which he joined EUROCONTROL as a safety specialist. He worked on safety matters for the past 18 years in areas like Just Culture, safety performance or safety management tools. He supports European and non-European ANSPs in their SMS and in his free time he likes fly gliders and powered aircraft. Safely.

The proletariat cause:
Unions versus Management. Or is it?

Here we go again. How and why have we arrived at a point where the management and the unions completely and utterly lack the basic understanding of the safety implications of their decisions? The CEO dismisses the safety recommendations, effectively rendering useless a time-honoured system and a legal obligation, the airside manager is running a garage, and adding insult to injury, the Unions "protect" their members by interfering with what is a strictly professional, safety-critical activity. What it's interesting is that none of them seem to be concerned about safety, yet all of them must know better. I'm also taken aback by how easily ATCOs would simply follow the decision of the union not to use the stop bars. I'm not sure where in the certification process, the safety case or the procedure design the Unions are included. I also wonder how a Union can overrule an internal procedure which is also a legal obligation on which they have no competence or authority. And then, whose responsibility will it be when non-usage of the stop bars is determined to have been a major contributor to an accident? Would a "the Unions told me so" excuse stand scrutiny, let alone be accepted as a defence in Court?

For sure, this is an imagined case. Or is it? It may well be, but it's surely not unrealistic. Something like this may soon come to an airport near you. Something like this may already be unfolding at an airport near you. The silver lining in this entire story is that costs are carefully being kept under control so we can all fly CheapAir to that sunny destination wearing only flip-flops and the 10kg small backpack allowed for free in the cabin. But the small drift into failure that happens all around us, the posturing of the Unions concerned with everything that would make a good political case, the managers that are pressed by Boards, shareholders and mindless politicians to keep costs down and their bonus up… all this may end up in smoke one day. Quite literally. And then the blame game will start with Unions and management once again united in a mutual finger-pointing exercise, promptly remembering that they are supposed to be antagonistic.

Last but not least, I'm sure Pia must've looked pretty in her black dress. I'd submit her role there was supposed to be more than representing the Fashion Channel though. While I fully realise how difficult it is to fight stubborn and narrow-minded management, particularly when Unions also work against basic common sense, simply considering a job change is perhaps not the best way of action? And if that is what she wanted, why delay? Leave without delay and let someone more competent and/or more determined ensure the safety of that place. She didn't. She may have to do it now. Not on her own terms, though. But in any case, the Union will be there, shoulder to shoulder, to defend her. So will the CEO. Or will they?

**Roger TWR…
We try to stop at the red light, but it's moving pretty fast…**

A RECOMMENDATION
Safety costs money, whether to implement, maintain or improve. It's as simple as that. When savings must be made, when policies must be applied or when personal issues intervene, safety must not take a back seat, lest it backfires and leads to an incident or accident. At that point, all cost, policy or personal issues will take on a whole new meaning. Yes, safety is expensive, but these are monies wisely spent and must continue to be spent for the long term survival of our industry and customers. Quite literally. Savings, policies and personal priorities should always heed safety priorities.