

## **European Aviation Safety Programme, *a pioneer approach for safety in Europe.***

In order to further improve the already high level of safety obtained in the civil aviation industry, ICAO has promoted the principles of safety management<sup>1</sup> revolving around Safety Management Systems (SMS) for industry organisations and State Safety Programmes (SSP) for contracting states. When developing these principles, ICAO mandated that all contracting states have an SSP, but certain political systems such as the one set up in the European Union need further consideration.

The sharing of roles between the European Union and the Member States, as described in the Basic Regulation makes it impossible for the Member States to alone take full responsibility for an SSP. Many States do not have such a programme today. There is a need for a European Aviation Safety Programme (EASP) to complement what is done by the Member States which encompasses the powers transferred to the Union.

In view of this need and in order to streamline the strategic approach, a European Aviation Safety Advisory Committee (EASAC) was established in October 2009 with representation from industry, some Member States, EUROCONTROL, the European Commission and the Agency. Its fruitful guidance and the collaboration mechanisms established have culminated in the development of two important elements of the EASP: a *manual* and a *safety plan*.

The last piece of the puzzle will be provided by the European Commission in the form of a suitable *strategy* for the future of European aviation safety. This will be a high level statement expressing where we wish to be in a few years; thus providing direction. With these three elements: a strategy, a programme and periodic safety plans the picture is complete.

Europe is pioneer in this endeavour as no other region in the world has similar documents that turn safety management into action. Both elements have been warmly endorsed by the Management Board of the Agency in December 2010.

### **The main elements**

The proposed approach for European aviation safety is based on three elements:

- A set of policies and objectives from political authorities (*the strategy*).
- An integrated set of regulations and activities aimed at improving safety (*the programme*).
- A high level safety issues assessment and related action plan (*the safety plan*).

### **The manual**

A manual describes the EASP and how it should function. It comprises a set of processes and activities.

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<sup>1</sup> Requirements are now included in ICAO Standards: Annex 6, 8, 11, 13, 14 and parts of Annex 1.

It is divided in two parts. The first part addresses the European aviation safety system created by the Basic Regulation, the so called EASA system. It sets the scene. It describes the different actors, their roles, their responsibilities and how they interact with each other. This is fundamental to understanding how the system can be used to improve safety. The document also describes the external actors who influence the system. They are quite varied and also have a significant role on the functioning of the system.

The second part describes how the system should work to continuously improve safety. The introduction of formalised safety management in all sectors of the civil aviation industry is still in its infancy. Indeed, ICAO has introduced a paradigm change which is being deployed at the moment. This change of paradigm consists of two elements: SMS/SSP and performance based regulation using a total system approach. To take into account this changing environment, this part of the document proposes aspirations as well as existing processes. It constitutes EASAC's proposal for transitioning towards a safety management approach which encompasses this change in paradigm that is not implemented today in all cases. The proposal places the collective management of safety at the core of the aviation system.

The EASP manual is an initial document. As the implementation of the safety management principles develops, the system will have to evolve. The institutional framework adds an extra level of difficulty to an already complex exercise. That is why the document must serve as a basis for a collaborative development of a more mature EASP in the future. Collaboration is the key to the successful implementation of safety management. This is especially true in our case and may well serve as a model for other regional cooperation approaches.

The EASP also aims at providing assistance to Member States in preparing their SSPs. It gives the European view of the different interfaces and of the common issues to be addressed. This European vision is fundamental to the collaborative approach and vice-versa. Indeed, a common understanding of how the EASA system functions and of the roles and activities of all the actors is the basis of the teamwork we will have to set up in order to succeed in this challenging endeavour.

## **The Safety Plan**

The management of safety has evolved over the years. The review of the rare accidents that occur is not enough to achieve significant improvement; incidents and occurrences must be analysed to understand the risks to aviation safety. Improving our safety records has become a challenging job that requires collective effort and prioritisation of scarce resources. The publication of a Safety Plan shows the European commitment to action.

The intention behind such a document is to close the safety management loop by connecting the safety issues identified at European level through the analysis of safety occurrences with the action plans and initiatives launched to mitigate the underlying risks. It states the European will to resolve the key issues that concern aviation safety.

The first edition has been developed following a bottom up approach. The initial priorities have been set up by aggregating the national priorities provided by the

Member States. These priorities have been compared to priorities established by ECAST<sup>2</sup>, EUROCONTROL or the Agency.

This first version of the Plan allows starting a process of fruitful exchanges between the various actors (EC, EASA, Member States, EUROCONTROL, stakeholders and safety initiatives) and will be a clear sign of Europe's determination to achieve high consistent levels of safety.

Future editions will follow a more robust cooperative methodology as opposed to the one (bottom-up) used for this first version. The principles for development of the next plans are described in the EASP manual.

The Safety Plan proposes a path for the next 4 years that depicts a comprehensible picture of the safety work in Europe across all domains of aviation. It establishes the first layer of priorities which is further complemented at national level by safety plans and SSPs and at Agency level by an internal safety programme. It builds a network for action. Coordination and close collaboration are key to keeping it up to date and effective.

### **Content of the first Safety Plan**

This first edition of the Plan encompasses three broad areas: systemic, operational and emerging issues. The risks identified in these areas are mitigated by safety actions that Member States, EUROCONTROL, the European Commission, the industry and the Agency will consider taking on board. All the partners work together, streamline their activities and add their efforts to drive our accident rates even further down.

Among the systemic issues within the Plan is the implementation of Safety Management principles in the States and across industry, along with the enablers of such implementation. These principles will have to be embedded in a system that is becoming more and more complex.

The operational issues cover the main risk areas that affect fixed wing commercial air transport operations: runway excursions, mid-air collisions, controlled flight into terrain, loss of control in flight and ground collisions. Most safety outcomes fall under one of these broad families. Some of the operational issues affecting other types of operation like helicopters or general aviation are also addressed.

Actions to address issues that are emerging, like the introduction of new systems and types of operations, new regulatory and oversight approaches, environmental factors or the next generation of aviation professionals have been also identified in the Plan.

Human factors and human performance affect all the above areas and are addressed in a dedicated section.

The ultimate value of this Plan resides in the actions it contains and stakeholders' commitment to implementation. It is a living document.

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<sup>2</sup> ECAST is the European Commercial Aviation Safety Team, a component of the European Strategic Safety Initiative (ESSI). ESSI is an aviation safety partnership between EASA, other regulators and the industry. For more information visit <http://www.easa.europa.eu/essi/>