

Aeromedical Mental Health Assessment - Surveys

François Brambati, Anthony Wagstaff – 23/04/2024



Why the 3 Surveys?

The MESAFE approach puts at the centre of the research not only the **aeromedical examiners and medical assessors** but also the **applicants (pilots and ATCOs)**. This material is in line with a systemic vision, according to which attention to mental health fitness is not only from an aeromedical point of view, but also from the point of view of applicants, and is **a commitment that we all make**.

In line with this, MESAFE has assessed and evaluated how the mental fitness certification process affects them and how they perceive it. The **user-centred approach** facilitated the MESAFE team in attaining a more comprehensive **understanding of the current status of the aeromedical mental health assessment**, encompassing the **perspectives of both medical professionals and applicants**, thus providing the team with insights, suggestions, and indications pertaining to the challenges encountered in the process by both sides of the coin.



Survey information

Aeromedical Examiners and Assessors

Objective: Identify current gaps and needs concerning the mental fitness certification process from the point of view of AMEs and assessors, with special reference to:

- misalignments between the knowledge, skills and competencies obtained during education/training and the knowledge, skills and competencies required for a satisfactory aeromedical examination;
- factors that obstruct or facilitate the applicants' mental health assessment.

Target: European Medical Experts Group (MEG)

Number of respondents: 102

Pilots and ATCOs

Objective: Identify current gaps and needs concerning the aeromedical mental fitness certification process from the point of view of pilots and ATCOs, with special reference to:

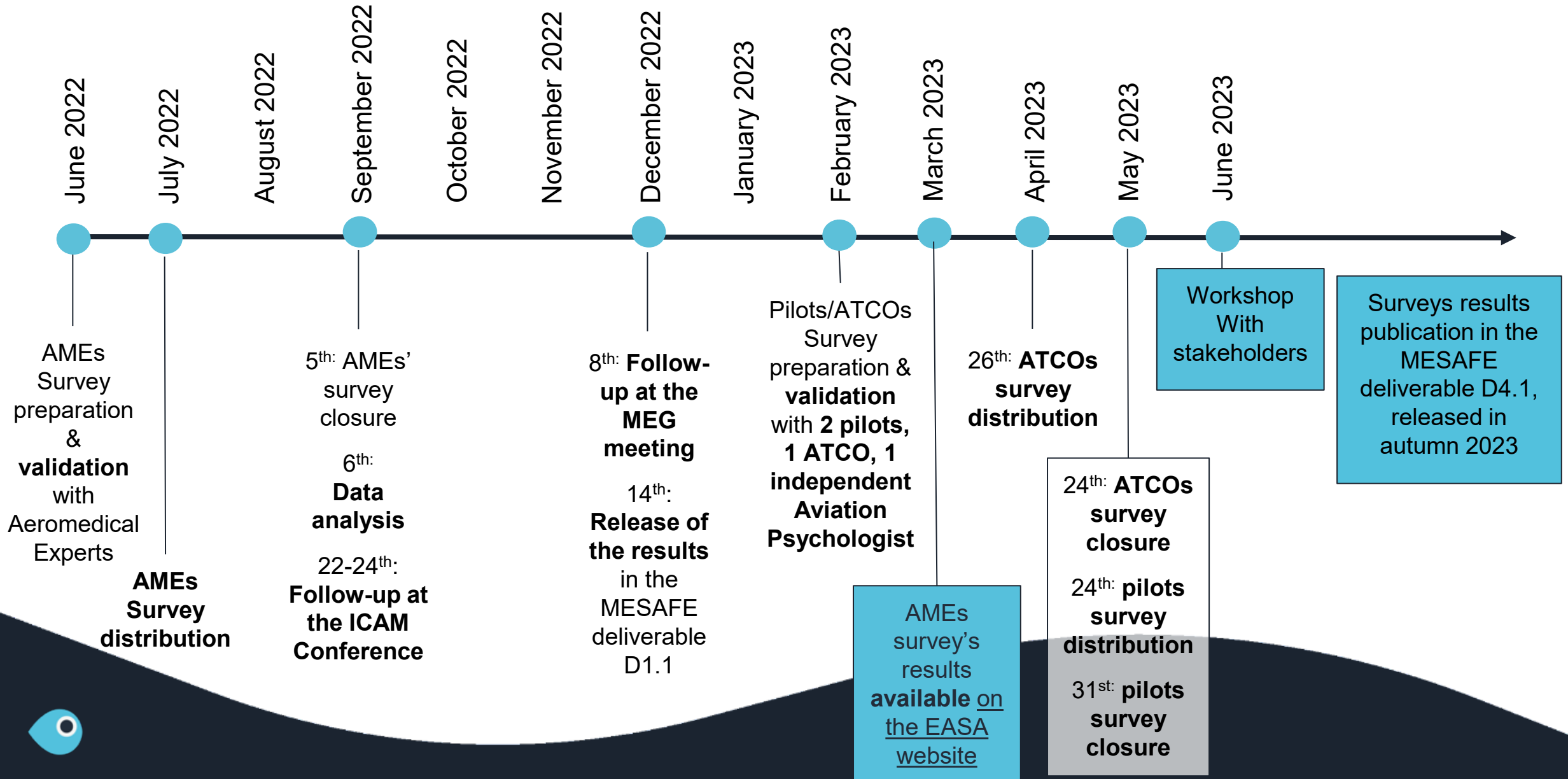
- misalignments between the available resources and the resources required for the mental health assessment and support;
- factors that have an impact on the pilots' and ATCOs' acceptability of the aeromedical mental health assessment.

Target: European pilots and ATCOs

Number of respondents: 166 pilots; 165 ATCOs



Surveys timeline



Surveys limitations

As any survey, also the MESAFE surveys present some limitations, as follows:

- **selection bias** of participants, because of:
 - fully voluntary participation;
 - no predefined balance between countries;
 - too little number of pilots and ATCOs who participated in the survey to be considered as representative of all the EU pilots and ATCOs population;
- **response bias**, because respondents might have given desirable answers;
- **qualitative data analysis**.



Surveys limitations

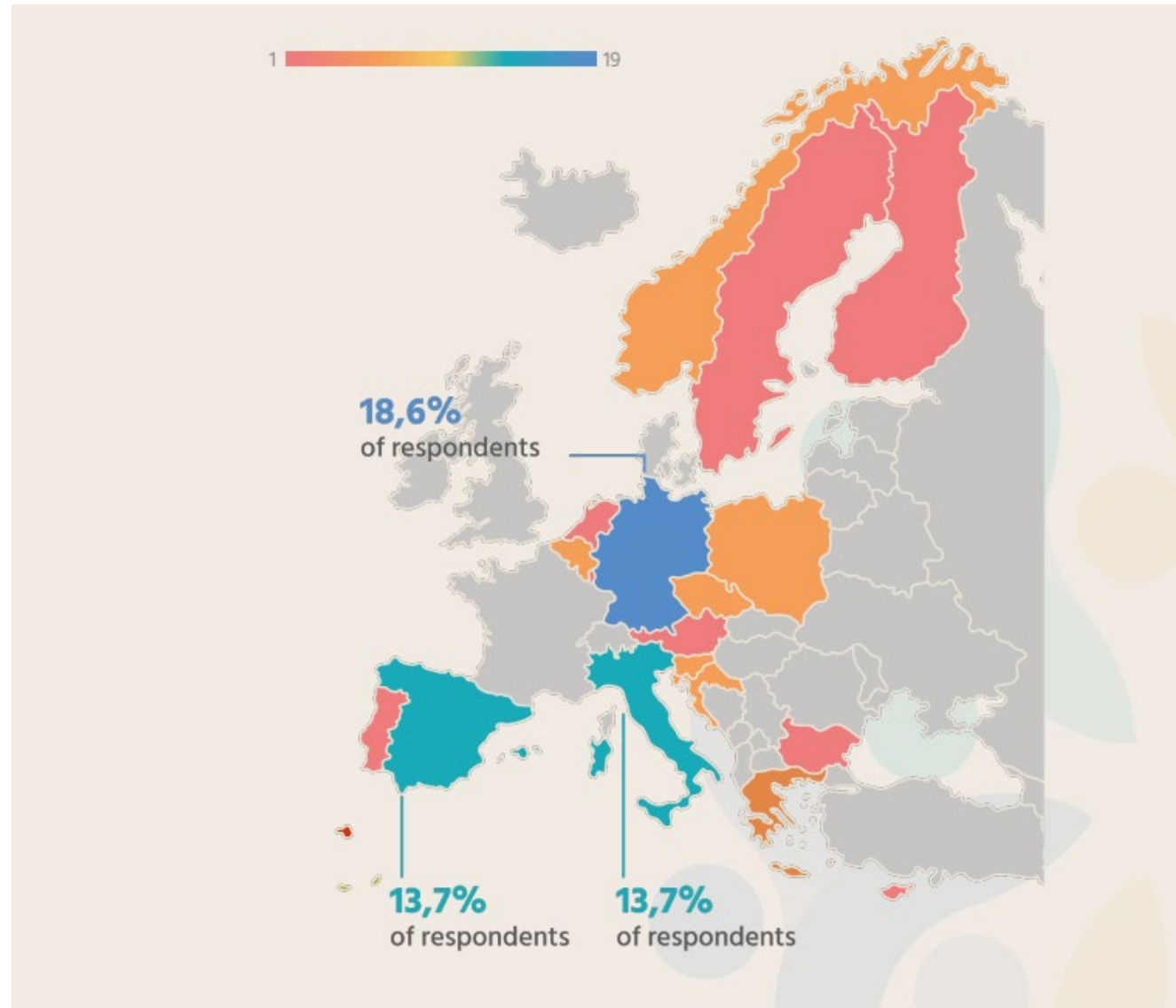
For these reasons, the results cannot be considered as statistically meaningful. Despite this, still high-level insights can be derived from the answers thanks to:

- the considerable **experience of all participants**;
- the considerable **overlap and comparability of the outcomes** of the three surveys.

Moreover, these surveys represent one of the first EU initiatives to investigate the mental health topic at institutional level, ultimately working as starting point to detect main gaps to be further investigated and consolidated.



Survey Sociodemographic — AMEs and Assessors

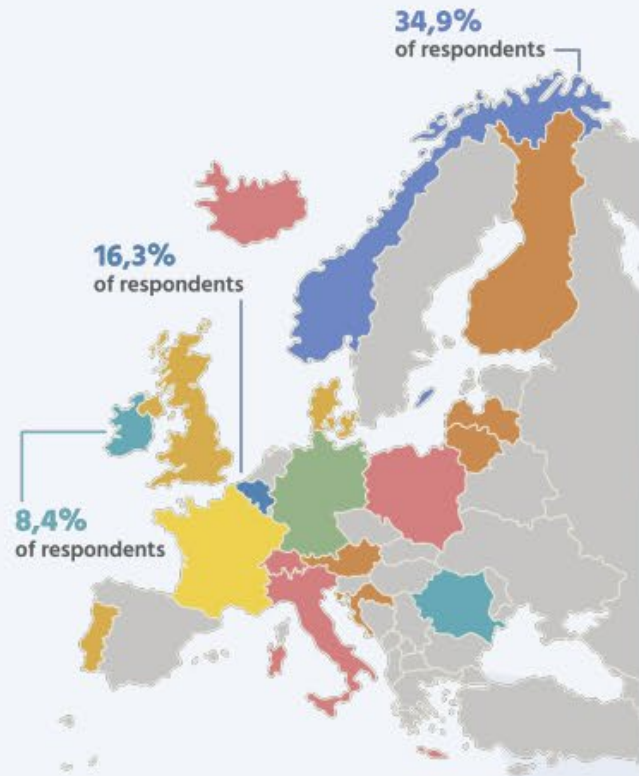


Survey Sociodemographic – AMEs and Assessors



Surveys Sociodemographic – Pilots and ATCOs

PILOTS



1 58

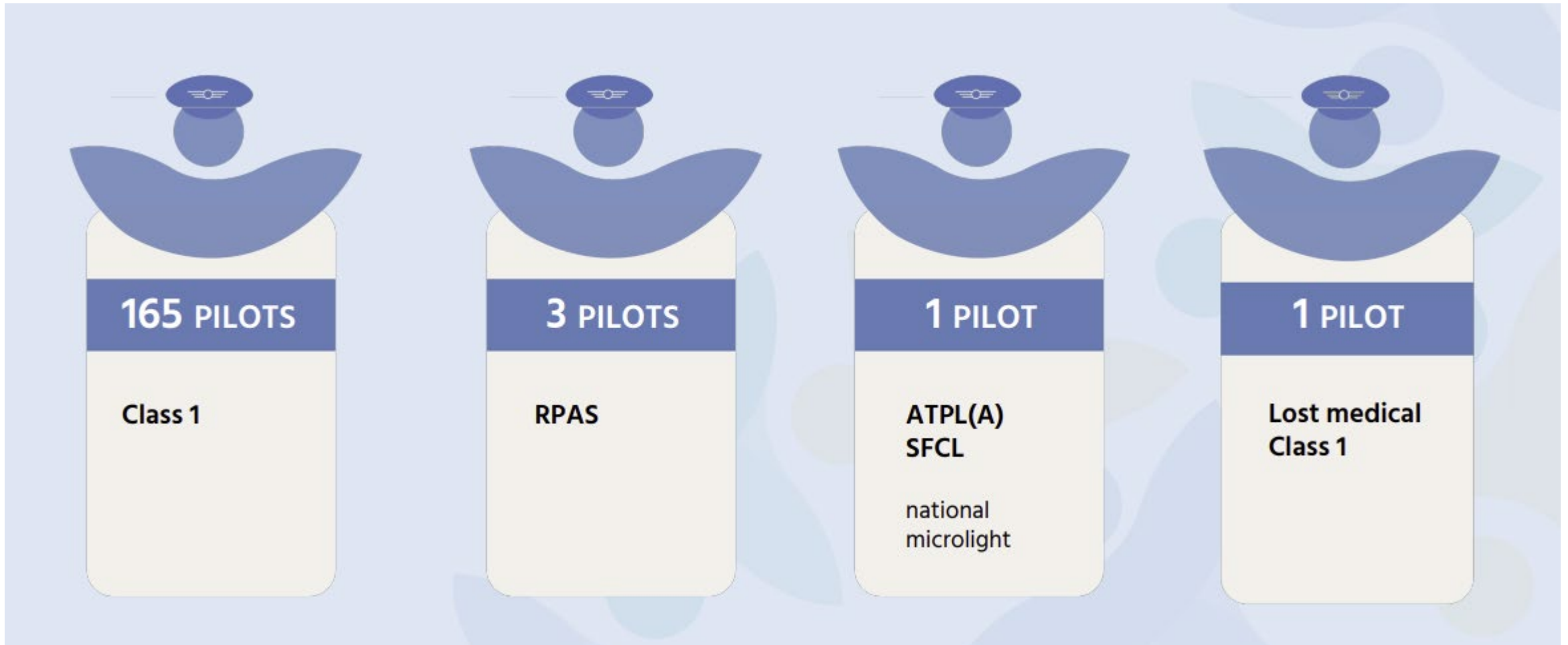
ATCOs



1 32



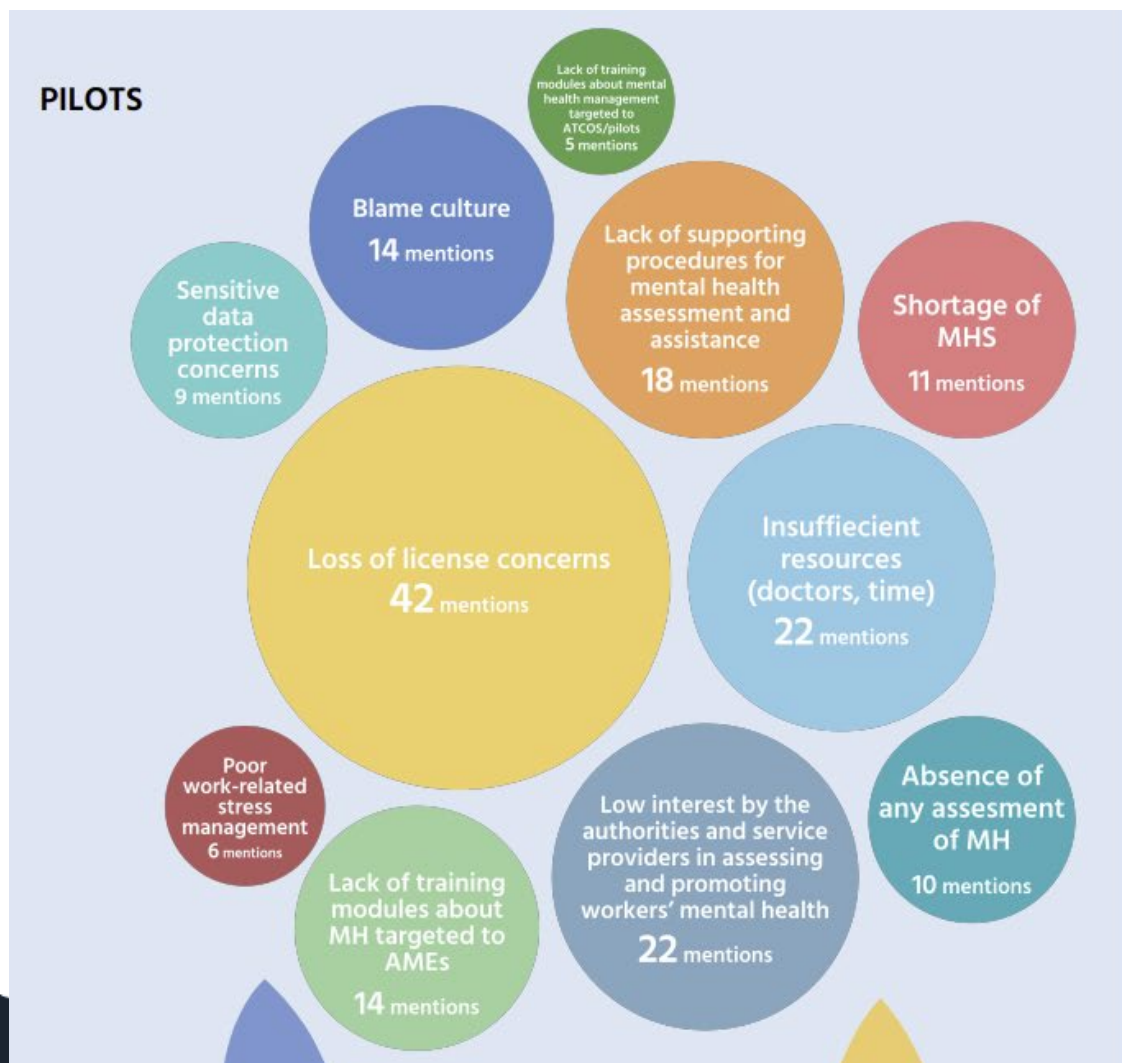
Surveys Sociodemographic – Pilots



Surveys Sociodemographic – ATCOs



Reported challenges — Pilots and ATCOs



Selected mentions: what applicants told us

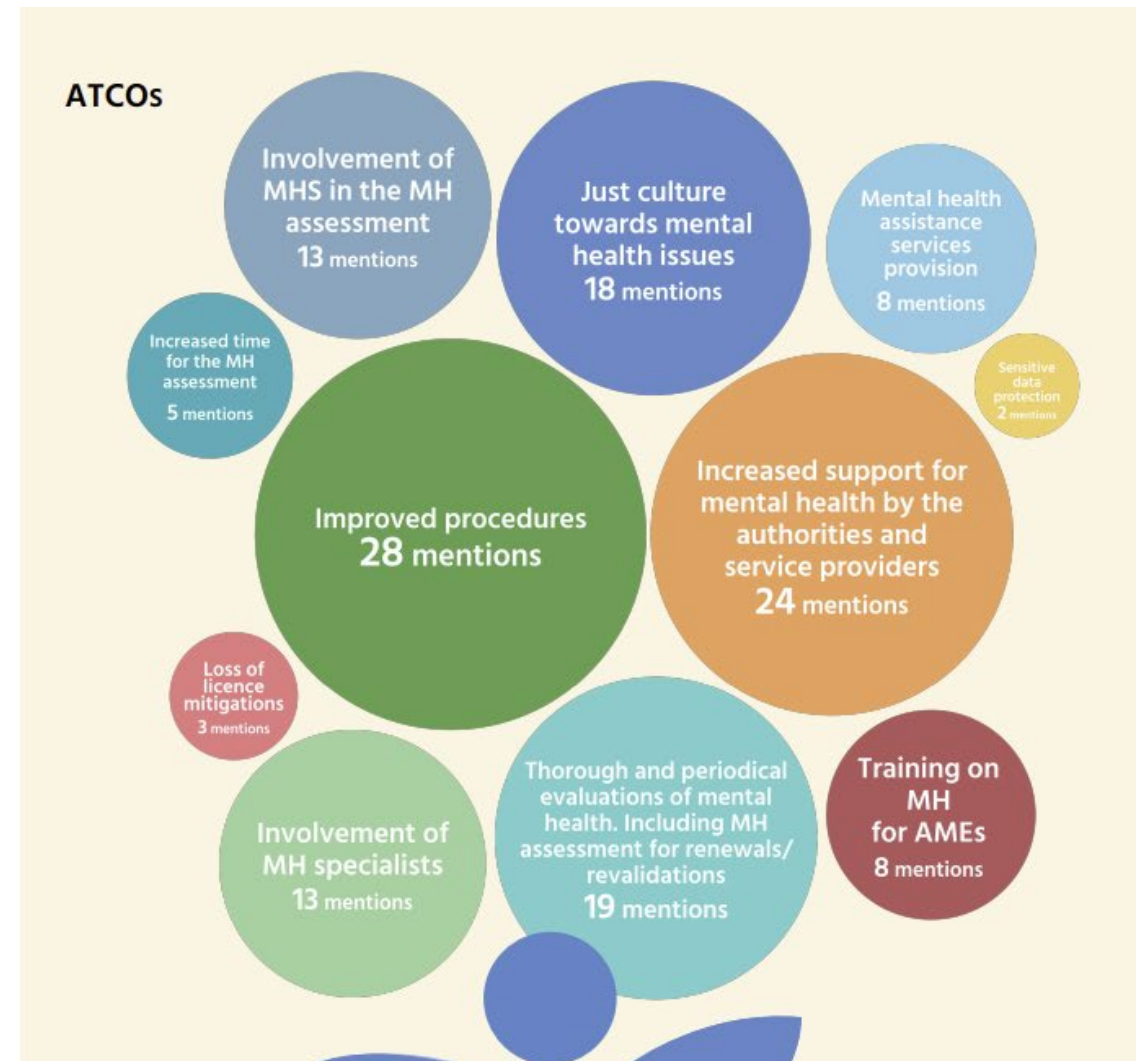
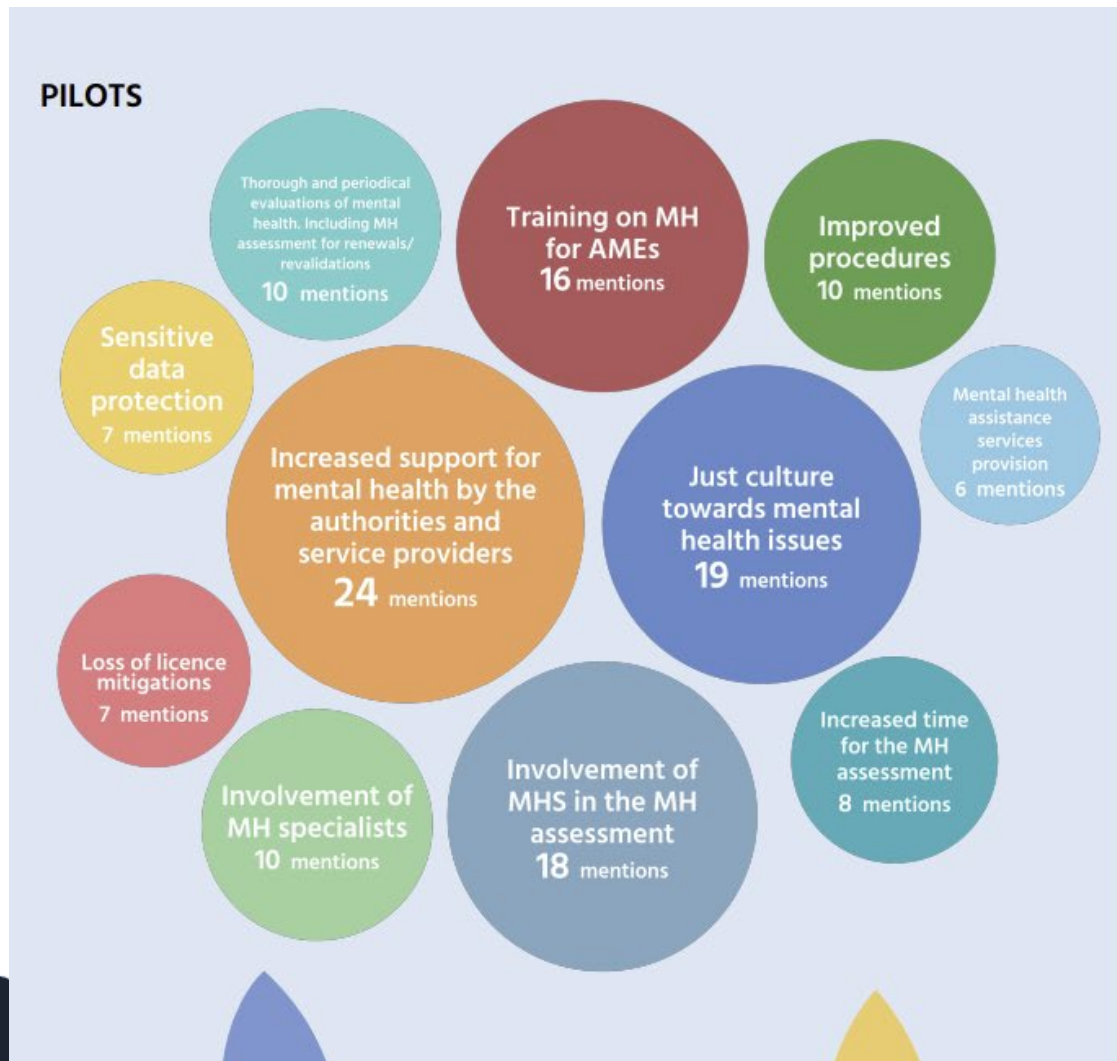
Loss of licence. “The fact that if you seek help you may be grounded. This may cause pilots not to seek the assistance they need. The same applies to other medical issues as well”.

Low interest in promoting mental health. “Too much focus on grounding and diagnoses, and too little on keeping people happy and flying”.

Insufficient training/resources. “I have been to several aeromedical examiners that share the same frustration, which I have discussed with them. They are neither trained nor do they have the time or resources to perform good assessments today.”



Reported Recommendations — Pilots and ATCOs



Selected mentions: what applicants told us

Increased time and MHS involvement. “More time on the exam and that it is a mental health professional who takes the exam”.

Preventive approach. “Let people talk about difficulties in a confidential way that would not impact the result. But give the applicant a recommendation on what they should do with a certain mental state.”

AME-MHS cooperation. “Give each ATCO the possibility to speak with a psychologist on a regular basis without the risk of losing the medical/be judged. Then if the AME is detecting something on the yearly exam, the psychologist assigned to the ATCO should be contacted and together make a strategy to get the ATCO cleared for duty if needed”.



Recommendations by applicants to improve the process

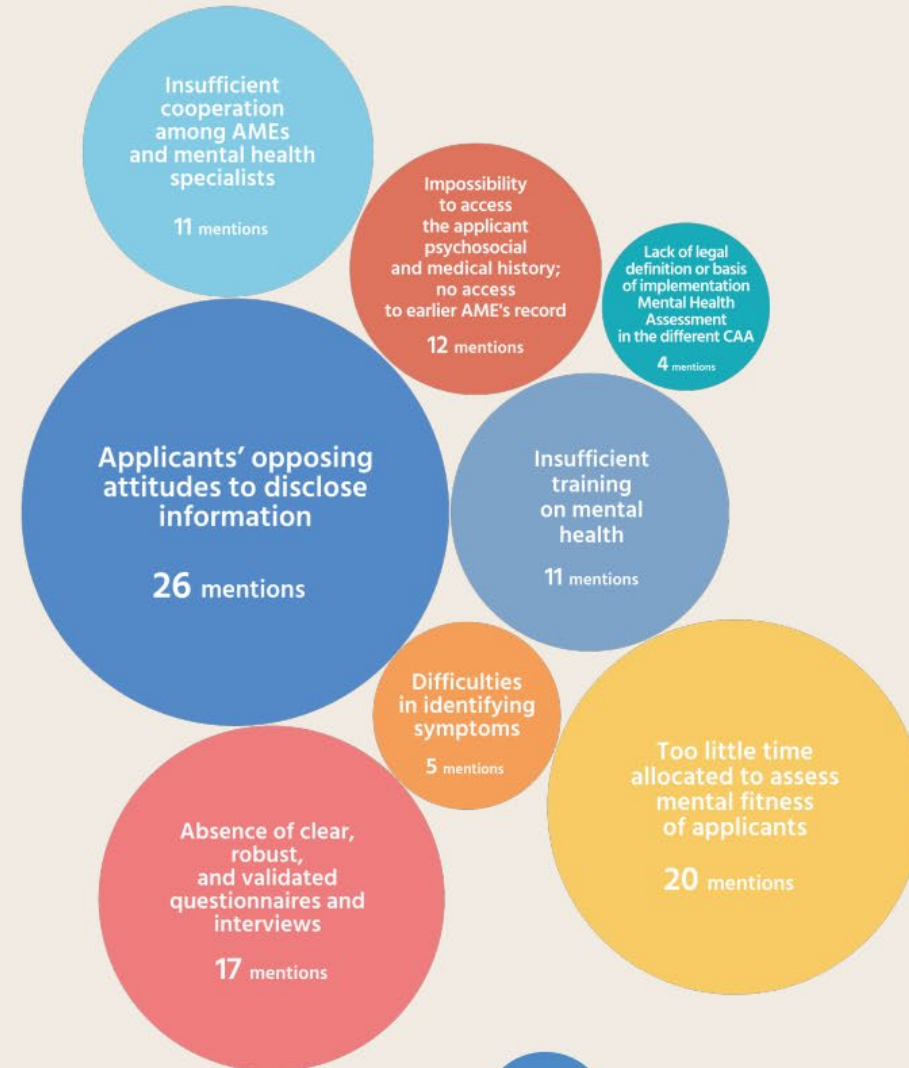
RECOMMENDATIONS	ATCOs	Pilots
Just culture towards mental health issues	18	19
Sensitive data protection	2	7
Loss of licence mitigations	3	7
Mental health assistance services provision	8	6
Involvement of MHS in the MH assessment	13	18
Increased time for the MH assessment	5	8
Increased support for mental health by the authorities and service providers	24	24
Thorough and periodical evaluations of mental health. Including the MH assessment for renewals/revalidations	19	10
Involvement of MH specialists	13	10
Improved procedures	28	10
Training on MH for AMEs	8	16
Mental health management training modules targeted to ATCOS/pilots	11	5
Work-related stress management	11	5
Peer Support Programmes	5	10



Reported Challenges — AMEs and Medical Assessors

Reported challenges

Currently, what are the challenges preventing a sound aeromedical mental health assessment?



Reported Recommendations — AMEs and Medical Assessors



Recommendations by AMEs to improve the process

RECOMMENDATIONS	AMEs
More time for the assessment	8
Possibility to access the applicant psychosocial history	10
Shared procedures among Member States	7
Standardized questionnaires and interviews	21
Periodical evaluation performed by mental health specialists	15
EASA guidelines on how to perform the assessment	4
Multidisciplinary collaboration with mental health specialists and peers support groups	11
Training and educational material both for AMEs and mental health specialists on their collaboration	11



Where can you find them?

EASA website, under the MESAFE project:

<https://www.easa.europa.eu/en/research-projects/mesafe-mental-health>





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