

(English version)

**Question for written answer E-000764/25
to the Commission
Kostas Papadakis (NI)
(19 February 2025)**

Subject: The major shortages in staff and flight safety systems under the EU's Single European Sky initiative

In Greece, employees of the Civil Aviation Authority complain that the problem of staff shortages is growing, particularly in critical divisions, such as the Athens and Macedonia Region Control Centre, which monitors most flights within the FIR/UIR. Staff numbers for this region have been halved despite air traffic doubling. There are more than 100 vacant posts across the country.

For the past seven years there have been warnings about the fact that the collision avoidance system in the control tower of Eleftherios Venizelos Airport, which warns when aircraft are on a collision course, is not functioning, meaning that the air traffic controller on duty 'does not receive a notification from the system and, therefore, the avoidance of incidents depends solely on the operational acumen and readiness of the controller'.

In light of the above:

1. What view does the Commission take of the fact that the Single European Sky guidelines, for example concerning the pursuit of profit by monopolistic business groups, lead to understaffed civil aviation services, major work intensification and to corners being cut in terms of safety measures and modern safety systems, increasing the risk of major aviation 'accidents'/crimes?
2. What view does it take of the fact that the so-called unification of European airspace in the name of 'single European borders' goes against the sovereign rights of Member States — essentially stripping them of the power to control and manage their national airspace, entailing serious consequences and risks for their defence security — and is combined with dangerous NATO and EU military planning?

Submitted: 19.2.2025

**Answer given by Mr Tzitzikostas on behalf of the European Commission
(10 April 2025)**

1. Most Member States own the designated Air Navigation Service Providers (ANSPs). This is also the case in Greece, where the Hellenic Aviation Service Provider (HASP) is part of the Ministry for Infrastructure, Transport and Networks. Since ANSPs are monopolistic service providers, they are subject to economic regulation. The regulation requires the setting of binding targets for the key performance areas of safety, capacity, environment and cost-efficiency. ANSPs shall put in place the necessary measures to reach these targets, including via hiring of staff and via investments. With regard to profits, as referred to by the Honourable Member, the legislation in force ⁽¹⁾ allows for 'a reasonable return on assets'.

2. The Single European Sky regulatory framework aims at putting in place rules that contribute to a safe, sustainable and efficient air traffic management system in the EU. Very importantly, the application of this framework is without prejudice to Member States' sovereignty over their airspace. This sovereignty also applies to the way in which Member States coordinate operations between civil and military users, who are sharing the same airspace. In the case of larger cross-border military exercises, the Eurocontrol Network Manager — appointed by the Commission — typically offers to assist ANSPs in planning such events.

⁽¹⁾ Article 29.3 of Regulation (EU) 2024/2803: <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/eli/reg/2024/2803/oj/eng>