

Maastricht, 22 March 2021



“ EUROCONTROL is confronted with a resistance to change within the workforce. The lack of diversity in terms of age, gender and nationality contributes significantly to the keeping in place of the status quo. A change in terms of this mindset and this lack of diversity is needed if EUROCONTROL wants to be ready to thrive in the future. Although certain efforts have already been taken to improve diversity and inclusion in the Agency, there is no sustainable improvement.

Without any evidence, Deloitte connects two statements and concludes that one must follow from the other. Such a logical fallacy is a well-known technique used by demagogues, wanna-be dictators and conspiracy theorists to prove whatever bat-shit crazy ideas they have. Instead of a 'Fundamental Review', they could have used "Make EUROCONTROL Great Again" and have given everyone a nice, red MEGA baseball cap - it wouldn't have cost 300.000 euro!

Resistance to Change?

Quite sensibly, EUROCONTROL staff is adverse to change when there is no improvement linked to the change. Change for the sake of changing - especially if suggested by claim-to-know-it-better companies like Deloitte, who have made it their business to suggest changes - is met with skepticism. Usually, it is because the reasons for the suggested changes are not explained, are explained using bogus arguments or when the overriding argument is simply vague cost-saving promises.

It is understandable that every DG wants to make an impression in the short 5 years that he has (there has not been a 'she' yet? Or does diversity not apply to the top of the organisation?). But for the staff, such major changes every 5 years or so are terribly cumbersome, as mostly, these are not improvements but rather further complications or even degradations. It is perfectly natural for people to seek and expect a certain amount of stability without this being classed as 'resistance to change'.

What is more, we work in a safety-critical environment: this comes with a price of being very critical towards change. This is generally considered an asset in our business, not something that needs to be constantly challenged. Having said that, of all the ANSPs in the world, MUAC is probably the one that develops, validates and implements the most changes per year. There are several major updates to the various ATC systems per year and many more smaller ones in between. It has allowed us to remain well ahead of other centres, resulting in continuous efficiency, cost and safety improvements. This is a team effort across all the staff in MUAC - to call us resistant to change is complete and utter nonsense.

A Lack of Diversity?

As flattering as it is to suggest that the “workforce” has any meaningful influence in the hiring policies and practices of the Agency is again extremely simplistic and gratuitous. From that, it also follows that blaming the workforce for the lack of diversity is nothing more than an intentional misdirection. Instead of blaming the workforce, let us look at some real evidence.

The Staff Regulations, Title 1 - article 1b, state that “the Director General shall determine, by agreement, after consulting the Staff Committee, measures and actions to promote equal opportunities for men and women in the areas covered by these Staff Regulations, and shall adopt the appropriate provisions notably to redress such de facto inequalities as hamper opportunities for women in these areas.” Of course, diversity is about more than equal opportunity between the different genders. But importantly, in the past three years, the Director General has not introduced or proposed a single diversity measure to the social dialogue.

Rather than the workforce, many of the top functions within the Agency are decided at a State (read political) level. It is clear that the Director General would like to change this and decide on his own. But given his track record, the question is whether this will improve diversity in the Agency, or whether it will simply put (or keep) like-minded yes-men in key positions.

More contradiction?

Of the 42 existing nationalities at EUROCONTROL, the 8 most common account for 80% of the workforce; (research box, page 42).

While these numbers are probably correct, they are given without any context. Countries have different population levels. Not all countries joined at the same time. Local working conditions play a role as does the willingness of individuals to pack up and migrate to another country: the further away, the less people are willing to move. What is worse is that, in the SAME REPORT, Deloitte is suggesting to increase this ‘problem’: *Administrative staff should be appointed locally under local market conditions* (page 56, 7th bullet). How is this recommendation going to improve diversity?!?

EUROCONTROL is not a supermarket that can be staffed with people from the local employment office. Most jobs are highly specific and specialized. While diversity is important and no one can object to efforts to improve, we definitely question whether diversity is the real goal or whether it is being used as a trojan horse for the Director General to undermine the Member States’ say in how the Agency is run.

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