

OPEN LETTER OF POLISH AIR TRAFFIC SERVICES AGENCY TRADE UNIONS

on Single Person Operations

The Trade Unions operating within the Polish Air Navigation Services Agency, working in the best interest of the passengers and airmen, as well as of PANSAs itself, draw attention to the dangers caused by the recent actions of the Polish Air Navigation Services Agency, supposedly taken in search of savings.

PANSAs has made a decision to reduce the number of employees working daily and to force air traffic controllers to work individually in SPO (Single Person Operations) regardless of air traffic intensity. The number of operations in some units is comparable or even higher than before the pandemic. The statistics published by PANSAs do not take VFR traffic, be it private, training, military or medical flights, into account. The aforementioned traffic generates hundreds of operations daily at Polish airports and the air traffic controllers are required to guarantee its safety while maintaining its orderly flow.

The introduction of SPO shows the lack of basic understanding of the rules of operational work by the PANSAs management. It is a solution which is drastic, risky and, in our opinion, unworthy of the negligible savings it brings.

According to EUROCONTROL and all the accepted European standards SPO can be used **only temporarily** due to staff shortages, at night or at other time when air traffic is very limited. Air traffic control, like most heavy responsibility jobs, depends on **teamwork** allowing the controller to focus only on what is crucial. It also reduces the risk of the danger to the air traffic in case of sudden health problem of a single controller.

We also draw attention to the fact that PANSAs makes use not only of SPO but often relies on LPO (Lone Person Operations), an extremely dangerous solution. The situation when there is **only one air traffic controller** on site at a given moment has become standard not for 5 or 10 minutes but for many hours. In the case of any ATC indisposition having a negative effect on the ability to continue the service there is **no one** able to take over. This can cause a serious danger to the safety of the passengers and crews of all the aircraft for which the lone air traffic controller is responsible. At the same time LPO by its very definition prevents the use of Critical Incident Stress Management procedures. In case of an incident the controller has to continue working, dramatically increasing the possibility of a subsequent incident.

Working alone is a serious risk and stress factor, increases the probability of a controller error and can simply be dangerous, especially in the conditions we often have to work in, which often are far from perfect and where workspace is always designed around teamwork.

Finally, working in the SPO system dramatically decreases the probability of detecting and correcting a mistake, which can be dangerous even in small traffic volume and have very tragic consequences (like the Überlingen mid-air collision). It should be added that airline pilots work in pairs for a reason and that is to ensure the safety of the flight.

The Acting CEO takes on an enormous responsibility by making the decision to introduce SPO. He does not carry the burden alone, however, as the consequences are felt mainly by the rank and file air traffic controllers. Furthermore, the ability to decide when to make use of SPO is being taken away from the controllers and being imposed from the top down. Even now airspace users, including general aviation and flight schools, are affected by the decision as planned flights need to be limited or cancelled due to the reduced capability of traffic management by a single controller.

We urge the management to make every effort so that work in the SPO mode in all air traffic control units is used only sporadically as a last resort and with respect to all safety rules. We strongly object to the introduction of savings at the cost of safety.