



**FORTY-SECOND PLENARY (TRIENNIAL) SESSION**

(Strasbourg, 9 - 10 July 2024)

**Agenda item 4. Presentation of the Focal Point reports**

**REPORT ON ECAC ACTIVITIES IN THE FIELD OF SAFETY**

(Presented by Alessio Quaranta, President of ECAC)

**SUMMARY**

This paper presents the report of the ECAC safety activities, and in particular the activities of the ECAC Group of Experts on Air Accident and Incident Investigation.

**ACTION TO BE TAKEN**

The Plenary Session is invited to note the main achievements in the safety field for the period 2022-2024.

## Introduction

1. This paper presents an overview of the implementation of ECAC's aviation safety activities during the 2022-2024 triennium, highlighting some of the main achievements in this domain.
2. The following objectives in the field of safety were defined in the 2022-2024 work programme:
  - To promote European priorities in safety with international partners, regional and international organisations
  - To increase the effectiveness of the ECAC Member States' safety investigation authorities
  - To contribute to safety improvement by sharing expertise from ECAC Member States' safety investigation authorities.
3. To implement the agreed 2022-2024 work programme, ECAC safety activities focus on:
  - a) the sharing of experience on accident and incident investigations between ECAC Member States' safety investigation authorities, and with industry stakeholders.
  - b) the coordination of ECAC Member States' priorities in the 41<sup>st</sup> Session of the ICAO Assembly in 2022 and the 14<sup>th</sup> Air Navigation Conference in 2024, in close cooperation with the European Commission, EASA and EUROCONTROL.

## Organisation

4. In May 2020 Directors General appointed Mr Crispin Orr (AAIB, United Kingdom) as the new chair of the ECAC Group of Experts on Air Accident and Incident Investigation (ACC) and re-appointed him for a second and last mandate of three years in May 2023. Mr Kåre Halvorsen from the Norwegian Safety Investigation Authority (NSIA) was appointed by Directors General as the deputy chair of the ACC Group for a first mandate of three years on 31 May 2022.
5. The European Safety and Air Navigation Coordination Group (ESANCG) is co-chaired by a representative of one Member State (representing ECAC), Mr Kari Siekkinen (Finland) since September 2017, and one representative of the European Commission.

### **To promote European priorities in safety with international partners, regional and international organisations**

6. ECAC, the European Commission, EASA and EUROCONTROL managed the effective coordination arrangements for the participation of ECAC Member States in the 41<sup>st</sup> Session of the ICAO Assembly (27 September – 7 October 2022). Moreover, the European Safety and Air Navigation Coordination Group (ESANCG) was tasked with outlining the objectives to be pursued, drafting European working and information papers, and analysing the papers and positions of other ICAO States and organisations. European priorities for the Assembly focused on the following objectives:

- To enable extended Minimum-Crew Operations and Single-Pilot Operations
- To develop flight rules for safe UAS operations
- To standardise processes for high altitude operations
- To include State aircraft in Reduced Vertical Separation Minima (RVSM) airspace
- To enhance Global Navigation Satellite System resilience.

7. The European delegation achieved their main objectives as European papers related to safety and air navigation were overall supported by the Assembly.

8. In 2023 – 2024, based on the strategic orientations defined by Directors General, the ESANCG held several meetings to draft European working and information papers for the forthcoming 14<sup>th</sup> Air Navigation Conference (26 August – 7 September 2024) focusing on:

- Principles for the Governance of the ICAO Global Plans
- Air Navigation Priorities to Support Safe and Efficient Integration of Higher Airspace and Commercial Space Operations
- Future Air-Ground Connectivity
- Methodologies and Approaches to Managing Interacting Aviation Risks
- Global framework for aviation safety data and intelligence management
- Enabling successful deployment of Trajectory Based Operations/TBO
- Planning for GNSS contingencies
- Aviation safety and security concerns regarding interference to the global navigation satellite system (GNSS)
- Vulnerabilities of BARO-VNAV Approaches to Altimeter Setting Errors

These draft papers are currently being finalised and taken through the ECAC/EU dual clearance process.

**To increase the effectiveness of the ECAC Member States' safety investigation authorities and to contribute to safety improvement by sharing expertise from ECAC Member States' safety investigation authorities**

9. The ECAC Group of Experts on Air Accident and Incident Investigation (ACC) is established as a practical, technical working body, able to adopt broad general positions, rather than a more formal decision-making entity. Its membership is drawn from all ECAC Member States, and includes several observer States, such as the United States, Canada, Israel, Indonesia, Morocco and Singapore. In addition to the representatives of safety investigation authorities (SIA) and organisations (e.g. European Commission, EASA, EUROCONTROL and ICAO), the ACC group enjoys the contribution of aviation safety stakeholders such as aircraft manufacturers, engine manufacturers, airlines and pilots' associations. Since 2021, the ACC group has welcomed a new observer organisation: HeliOffshore.

10. Meetings of the ACC group also provide an opportunity for participants to receive updates from other organisations (e.g. European Network of Civil Aviation Safety Investigation Authorities (ENCASIA), European Society of Air Safety Investigators (ESASI)) whose activities are either linked to accident investigations or which have an impact on the work of accident investigators. For example, the coordination between ENCASIA and the ACC group is ensured through regular dialogue between the chair and deputy chair of ACC and the chair and deputy chair of ENCASIA, and the organisation of an informal annual coordination meeting to share work programmes, and deconflict meetings. In addition, the chair and deputy chair of ENCASIA often attend ACC meetings and vice-versa. This ensures proper coordination of activities and avoids any overlaps.

11. ACC also coordinates activities with ESASI, and has held at least 3 meetings back-to-back with the ESASI Forum (Derby, Budapest, Bratislava). This helps ensure the best use of member's time and achieve efficiency in terms of travel burden.

12. Consistent with the 2022-2024 work programme, ACC meetings enable in-depth exchange of information on a wide range of topics, such as:

- **Organisation of safety investigation authorities in Member States:** Detailed presentations (e.g. France, Hungary, Norway, Slovakia, Ukraine) enable a comprehensive understanding of their respective resources, capabilities and scope of activity. This has contributed to increasing the mutual understanding between safety investigation authorities.
- **Update of recent/on-going investigations:** Presentations contributed to the exchange of experience on the conduct of investigations and the challenges facing investigators in both aircraft and helicopter accidents/incidents. Accidents such as an incident involving a Bombardier Challenger 604 on 31 January 2022 at London Stansted, a serious incident on 23 May 2022 on approach to Paris-Charles de Gaulle airport involving an Airbus A320, an accident (runway excursion) on 5 February 2020 at Istanbul Sabiha Gökçen Airport involving a Boeing 737, were among the accidents/incidents recently discussed, along with general topics such as the investigation of “near-misses”.
- Business aviation and helicopters accidents and serious incidents were the focus of recent ACC meetings. Lessons learnt and the safety recommendations from several recent investigations were also shared among the ACC group.
- **Annual review of accidents and serious incidents:** This review is performed based on the accidents and serious incidents reported by Member States, and it leads to discussions on the main trends in terms of causes (e.g. incidents linked to the use of new technologies, airprox incidents involving drones) and tools used in investigations. This annual review brings together in one place a comprehensive record of investigations opened and investigations completed in the previous year, together with active links to all Final Reports and details of safety action taken and safety recommendations made. This is a valuable resource that is shared with all ECAC Member States, ICAO, the European Commission, EASA, IATA and others.

13. **ACC workshops:** The ACC Group also supports Member States in building their capacity to enhance aviation safety. This involves the organisation of ACC workshops (usually every two years) on issues of common interest to air accident investigators. The last ACC workshop was held in Bratislava, on 25 April 2023, and focused on the treatment of serious incidents. The main emphasis of the workshop was to develop an effective and consistent methodology for identifying those incidents that are serious, recognising those that warrant an in-depth investigation led by the SIAs, and the benefits of doing so.

14. **Code of Conduct on Co-operation in the Field of Accident/Incident Investigation:** Acknowledging that for many small and medium-sized safety investigation authorities within the ECAC region, a major public transport aircraft accident would be extremely challenging to manage without some form of external support from other SIAs, ECAC established the ECAC Code of Conduct on Co-operation in the field of Civil Aviation Accident/Incident Investigation. The Code of Conduct was initially opened for signature for the heads of the accident investigation bodies in April 2006, and an amended version was released in December 2016 (i.e. Directors General endorsed an amendment to the Code of Conduct on Cooperation in the field of Accident/Incident Investigation, to replace the existing reference to the Council Directive 94/56/EC by a reference to EU Regulation 996/2010). In 2022, Estonia, Germany and Montenegro signed the Code of Conduct. To date, the Code of Conduct has been signed by 38 out of the 44 ECAC Member States, and the ACC group promoted in 2022-2024 the signature of this Code of Conduct by the six remaining States.

15. **Guidance documents:** The ACC Group regularly develops guidance materials and notes for the benefit of all ECAC Member States and the wider international community:

- Following the ACC workshop in October 2021, the ACC Group established a repository for policy, guidance and other resources on UAS investigations on the ACC restricted site.
- The ACC Group made a significant contribution to the “Good practices for addressing communications with the media following aircraft accidents” guidance note which was developed by NETCOM and then adopted by Directors General in 2023.
- The ACC Group also cooperates with many stakeholders, from other international and European organisations and from the industry, and this includes close cooperation and coordination with ENCASIA. In the framework of this cooperation and building on the insights captured from the 2023 ACC workshop on this topic, a joint initiative on the creation of a guidance note on the investigation of serious incidents was launched in 2023. The ECAC/ENCASIA Guidance Note on the Investigation of Serious Incidents was formally adopted by ECAC Member States in May 2024, and is available on the ECAC website.

16. **International engagement:** ECAC has observer status in the ICAO Accident Investigation Panel (AIGP) and continues to participate in the meetings with the objective of promoting European priorities in ICAO and better informing ACC members of the developments in this Panel.

17. In addition, the ECAC Secretariat shared the expertise of ACC members with ICAO by sending the recently adopted ECAC/ENCASIA Guidance Note on the Investigation of Serious Incidents to the ICAO Secretary General on 4 June 2024, and by sharing the annual ACC occurrences reports with ICAO and other international partners (e.g. EASA, IATA).

#### **Action to be taken**

18. The Plenary Session is invited to note the main achievements in the safety field for the period 2022-2024.

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