

**INTERNATIONAL CIVIL AVIATION ORGANIZATION**
**Fourth Meeting of the APIRG Airspace and Aerodrome Operations Sub-Group  
(AAO SG/4), Virtual Meeting, 16 to 18 August 2021**
**Agenda Item 3            Planning and Implementation**
**Agenda Item 3.1:        Airspace (Safety, Capacity and Efficiency) projects.**
**REPORT OF THE AIR TRAFFIC SERVICES COMPETENCY STUDY (ATSCS)**

*(Presented by the ATSCS Project Team)*

<b>SUMMARY</b>
<p>This paper provides update on the ongoing <b>Air Traffic Services Competency Study (ATSCS)</b>.</p> <p>The paper also provides for the changes taken on the study due to the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic.</p> <p><b>Action for the meeting is as per paragraph 3</b></p>
<p><b>REFERENCE(S):</b>            ICAO Assembly Resolution A38-12, Appendix D            ICAO Doc 9841 Manual for Approval of Training Organizations            ICAO Doc 9868 Procedures for Air Navigation Services- Training            ICAO Doc 10056 Manual on Air Traffic Controller Competency-Based Training and Assessment            ICAO Doc 10144 ICAO Handbook for CAAs on the Management of Aviation Safety Risks related to COVID-19</p>
<p><b>Related ICAO Strategic Objective(s):</b>            A – Enhanced Aviation Safety            B – Improved Capacity and Efficiency</p>

**1. INTRODUCTION**

1.1            APIRG/19 noted the recommendations from the Tenth ATS Incident Analysis Group meeting (AIAG/10) and the TAG/5 meeting convened in March 2013 (Johannesburg, South Africa), which had identified that there was a similar pattern of causal and contributing factors to ATS incidents in most AFI Flight Information Regions (FIRs). The meeting acknowledged that the issue of ATC competence warranted special attention and in this regard agreed on the following Decision 19/18, which required the establishment of the Air Traffic Services Competencies Study Group (ATSCSG) in order to:

- a) Study the shortcomings in ATC training including States’ and ANSPs training

programmes and plans; and

- b) Establish and provide recommendations that would address issues relating to lack of competency of ATS personnel in the AFI region.

*(The TORs and composition of the members of the study group as adopted by APIRG/19 are provided as Appendix 1 to this WP)*

1.2 First Meeting of the Air Traffic Services Competencies Study Group (ATSCSG/1) was held in Nairobi, Kenya, 22-23 July 2014.

1.3 ATSCSG/1 resolved to develop and circulate a survey tool to the stakeholders in order to collect data on the shortcoming in ATS training in the region; this included the Air Traffic Controllers' and the pilots' professional bodies and Aviation Training Organisations (ATOs). The collection of data was to enable the Study Group (SG) obtain adequate information to determine the competency status and recommend ways of addressing the issues affecting training.

1.4 The SG was to make physical visits to selected academies/schools/institutions located within the AFI region. However, in order to manage costs, time and other resources, visits were to focus on the four institutions with low output/enrolment of Air Traffic Management (ATM) and Aeronautical Information Management (AIM); including Message Handling candidates, and four with the highest output of the same. In addition, four Air Navigation Service Providers (ANSPs) having the highest number of Unsatisfactory Condition Reports (UCR) in the region were to be visited.

1.5 The Survey rolled out in May 2016 to end of 2017.

## **2. DISCUSSION**

2.1 The study was to take a maximum of two years, at the end of which the Group was to provide a report to the ATM/AIM/SAR Sub-Group, however due to unforeseen challenges in obtaining funding the Group did not meet its objective.

2.2 At the end of the survey period, only four responses received from ANSPs. There was no response from the pilot and air traffic controller professional bodies, as well as none from the Aviation Training Organisations (ATOs).

2.3 In 2017, due to the change in the APIRG framework from Sub- Groups to projects, the SG became a project under the Airspace projects and was renamed the ATS Competency Study (ATSCS). The project Team lead by the International Federation of Air Traffic Controllers Associations (IFATCA) was composed of five AFI states, two ANSPs, four international organisations and one Regional Monitoring Agency (see Appendix 1).

2.4 The tasks to be carried out by the project team called for time and resources to be committed to the project. Whereas the team comprised of members dedicated to the course, funds have not been available.

2.5 In 2019, new challenges to the ATS competency emerged due to COVID-19

pandemic; as a result, the team have noted that:

2.5.1 There is need to review the requirement for physical visits to organisations as had originally been planned.

2.5.2 The pandemic has necessitated the need for a conversation on implementation of ATC competency related to recurrence/currency requirements in an environment of reduced traffic.

2.6 The shortcomings identified earlier through studies by IFATCA on the need to address variance between existing operational requirements, industry best practices and ICAO recommendations for ATC training still exist.

2.7 Although the study initially sought to establish deficiencies in competencies across ANSPs, there is additional need to establish the mechanisms put in place by ANSPs to mitigate the risk of degraded competency arising from low traffic environment similar to that created by the COVID-19 pandemic. Evaluation of ATCO competency will need to incorporate challenges of maintenance of competency during and after such situations and make recommendations that will inform methodology of compliance.

2.8 Also noted is the increased requirement for training using non-classroom environment. There is therefore need to provide data that will inform decision on acceptable models of compliance through simulator derived proficiency checks.

2.9 In order to improve data collection, the study team have taken the following action:

2.9.1 The Survey revised and re-submitted to ANSPs/States through a State Letter (SL). The new questionnaire includes an evaluation of competency challenges emanating from the effects of the pandemic.

2.9.2 The Survey Monkey tool reviewed and made available for use by any ANSP that may prefer to use the tool instead of the hard copy survey.

### **3. ACTION BY THE MEETING**

3.1 The meeting is invited to:

- a) Take note of the progress and challenges of data collection of the ATSCS.
- b) Urge AFI States to provide contacts to enable focused channelling of responses to the survey already sent out to ANSPs.
- c) Urge AFI ANSPs to respond to the new questionnaire by 31 August 2021.
- d) Review and give directions on the requirements for physical visits to organisations/units.
- e) Review the TORs of the ATSCS as necessary.
- f) Review and reconstitute/confirm the Membership of the study team.

----END----