



# BEA

Bureau d'Enquêtes et d'Analyses  
pour la sécurité de l'aviation civile

## Dealing with families (and the media) during an accident investigation

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*Workshop and Tenth Meeting of the Asia Pacific  
Accident Investigation Group (APAC-AIG/10)  
Bangkok/Virtual 8 November 2022*

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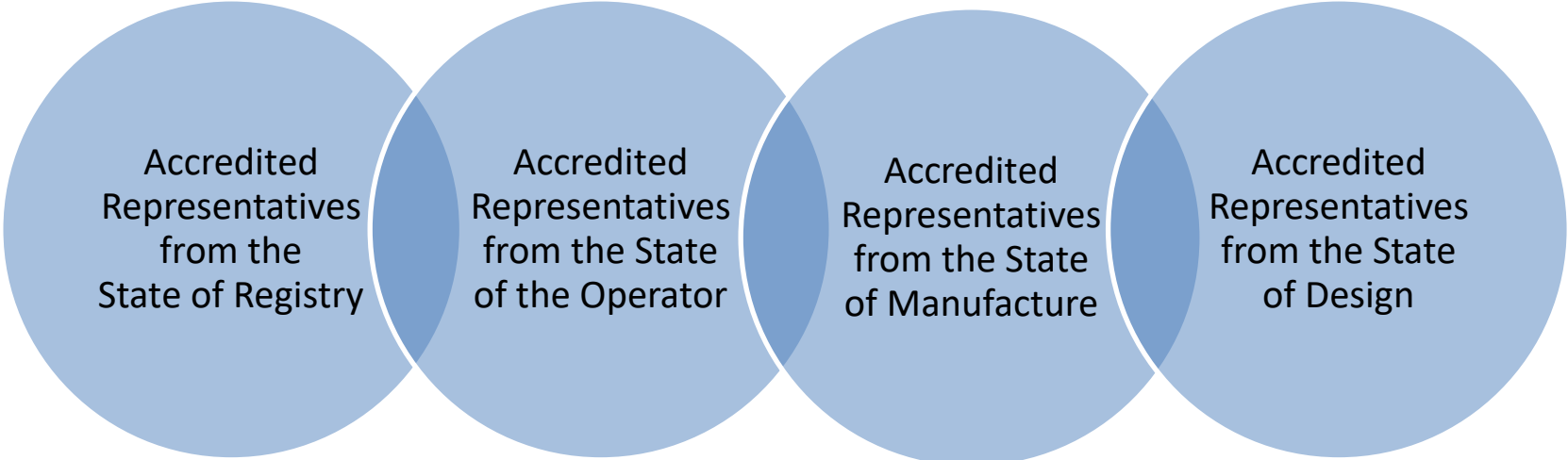


RÉPUBLIQUE  
FRANÇAISE  
*Liberté  
égalité  
fraternité*

# Summary

- Overview of BEA Policy
- Various situations on dealing with Families and the Media
- Recent Examples
- European Initiatives (examples)
- Conclusions

# THE STATE OF OCCURRENCE CONDUCTS THE SAFETY INVESTIGATION...



Accredited  
Representatives  
from the  
State of Registry

Accredited  
Representatives  
from the State  
of the Operator

Accredited  
Representatives  
from the State  
of Manufacture

Accredited  
Representatives  
from the State  
of Design

... AND CONDUCTS AND COORDINATES ALL THE COMMUNICATION (Standard 5.26b)

## ICAO Principle: the Investigation Authority of the State of Occurrence Manages Communication

According to the country's policy, the BEA can be the spokesperson or on the contrary, be restricted to silence.

Example: Mali, 2014

The State of occurrence has the possibility of delegating the investigation to the BEA.

Example: Cotonon Benin, 2003

It is essential for the BEA's credibility to comply with the communication policy of the State of Occurrence.

Example: Egyptair, 2016

# Establishing Credibility

- The public and the families of victims in particular, **are susceptible to any inconsistency in the information** to which they have access via the authorities and/or media.

## INITIAL COMMUNICATION IN THE EVENT OF AN ACCIDENT

Compassion for the  
families

Help/  
Assistance

Start of safety  
investigation

Start of judicial  
investigation

BEA

# Guiding Principles of BEA Communication

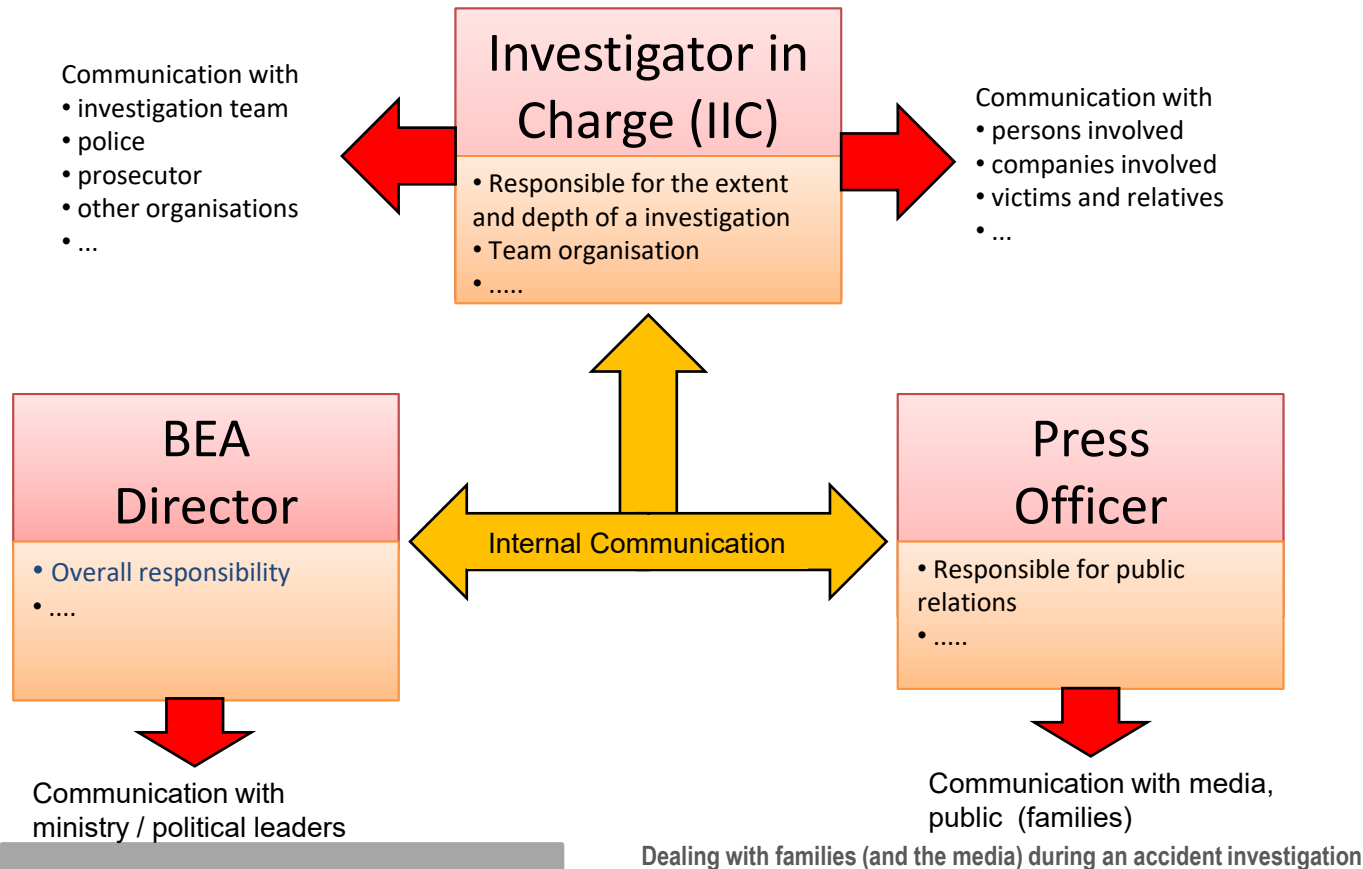
**Validated  
information only**

**Inform about the  
role of the BEA at  
the public's service  
and preserve BEA's  
image of  
independence**

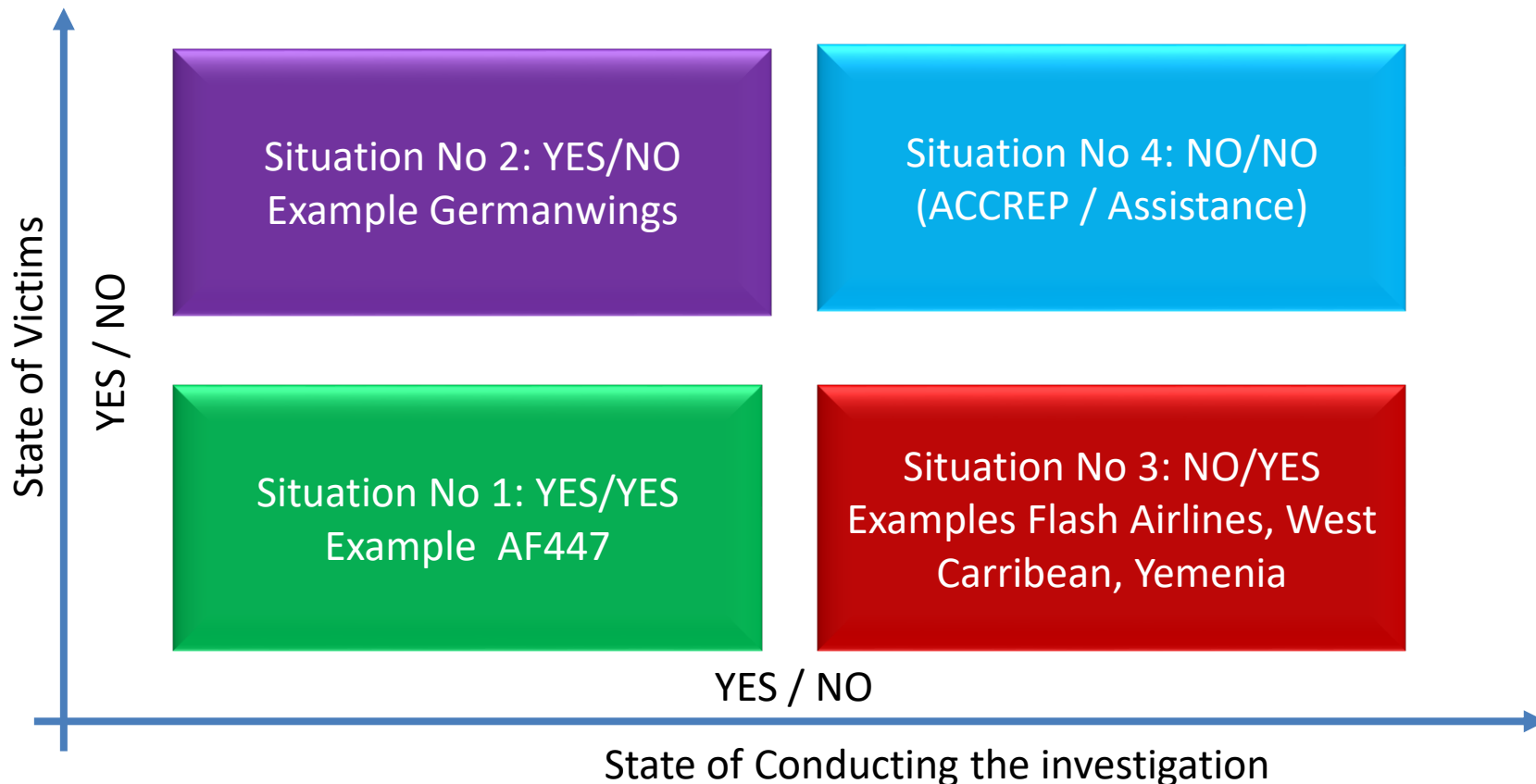
**The BEA  
determines the  
detailed  
circumstances  
=  
prevent  
speculations**

**Reliable  
information  
=  
respect for and  
confidence of  
families**

# Coordinating Communication



# Different Experiences



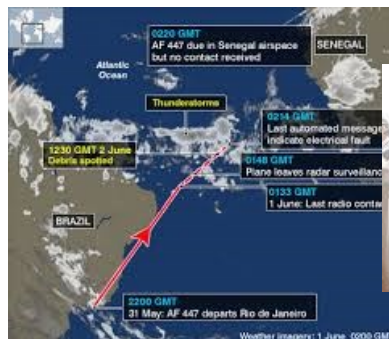
State of Conducting the investigation

Dealing with families and the media during an accident investigation



# Example No 1: AF 447 Accident

- ❑ 228 victims
- ❑ 32 nationalities
- ❑ 3-year investigation
- ❑ 23-month search
- ❑ around 32 million Euros

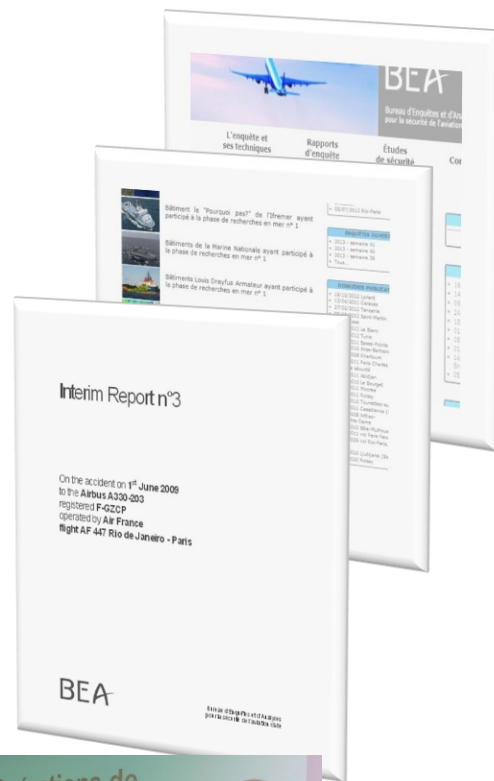


# Issues Relating to Victims' Families

- ❑ Grief
- ❑ Language barrier
- ❑ Conflicting reports
- ❑ Loss of confidence

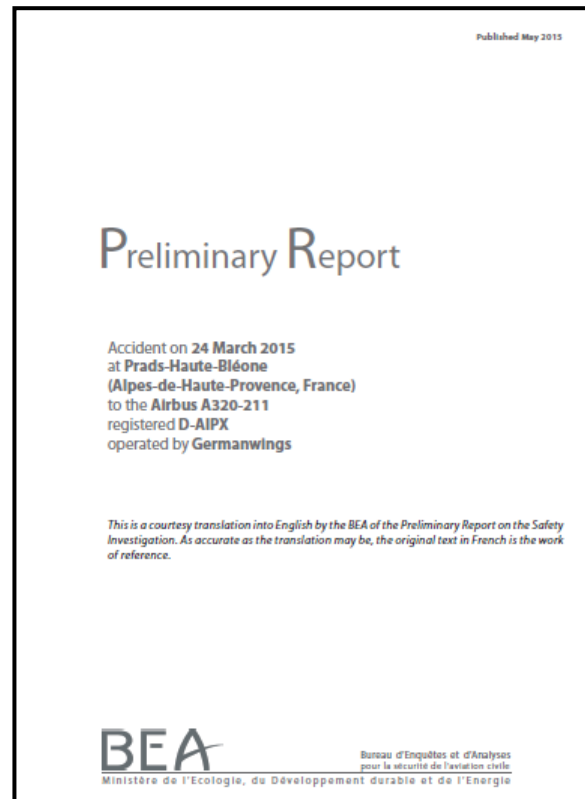


- ❑ 57 Press releases
- ❑ 52 Information bulletins sent to victims' families before public release
- ❑ 12 Press briefings
- ❑ 10 Videos
- ❑ 10 Information meetings with family associations
- ❑ 3 Interim reports + docket (July 2, 2009; December 17, 2009; July 29, 2011)
- ❑ Final report (July 5, 2012)



# Example No 2: Germanwings accident

- ✓ 24 March 2015
- ✓ 150 fatalities



# Example No 2: Germanwings accident

- ✓ French investigation
- ✓ No French victims
- ✓ Strong involvement of judicial authorities



# Timeline of the Germanwings investigation



36H00

1,5 MONTH

1 YEAR



## Germanwings pilot was locked out of cockpit before crash



COMMENT

Recommend

0

Tweet

0



Q Zoom

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

A search helicopter flies Wednesday over the area where a Germanwings Airbus 320 crashed Tuesday in the French Alps.

### » RELATED CONTENT

- American crash victims: US government contractor, daughter

By Nicola Clark THE NEW YORK TIMES

Posted Mar. 25, 2015 at 8:46 PM

Updated Mar 26, 2015 at 8:15 AM

PARIS — As officials struggled Wednesday to explain why a jet with 150 people on board crashed in relatively clear skies, an investigator said evidence from a cockpit voice recorder indicated one pilot left the cockpit before the plane's descent and was unable to get back in.

A senior military official involved in the investigation described "very smooth, very cool" conversation between the pilots during the early part of the flight from Barcelona to Düsseldorf. Then the audio indicated that one of the pilots left the cockpit and could not re-enter.

"The guy outside is knocking lightly on the door and there is no answer," the investigator said. "And then he hits the door stronger and no answer. There is never an answer."

He said, "You can hear he is trying to smash the door down."

# CVR leak: the "Investigation within the Investigations"

- ✓ Reminder of the source « a senior military official »
- ✓ Investigation led by the "*Inspection Générale de la Gendarmerie Nationale*" (IGGN)
- ✓ Closed "sans suite" on 15 October 2015



# Political leaders on the accident site

- Less than 24 hours after the accident!



# Germanwings Key Facts

No French victims  
No French coordinator  
Difficulty to access families contact info

Simultaneous presentation of the final report to families in Germany & Spain



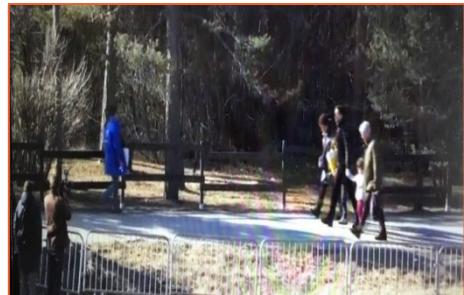
**Lufthansa**



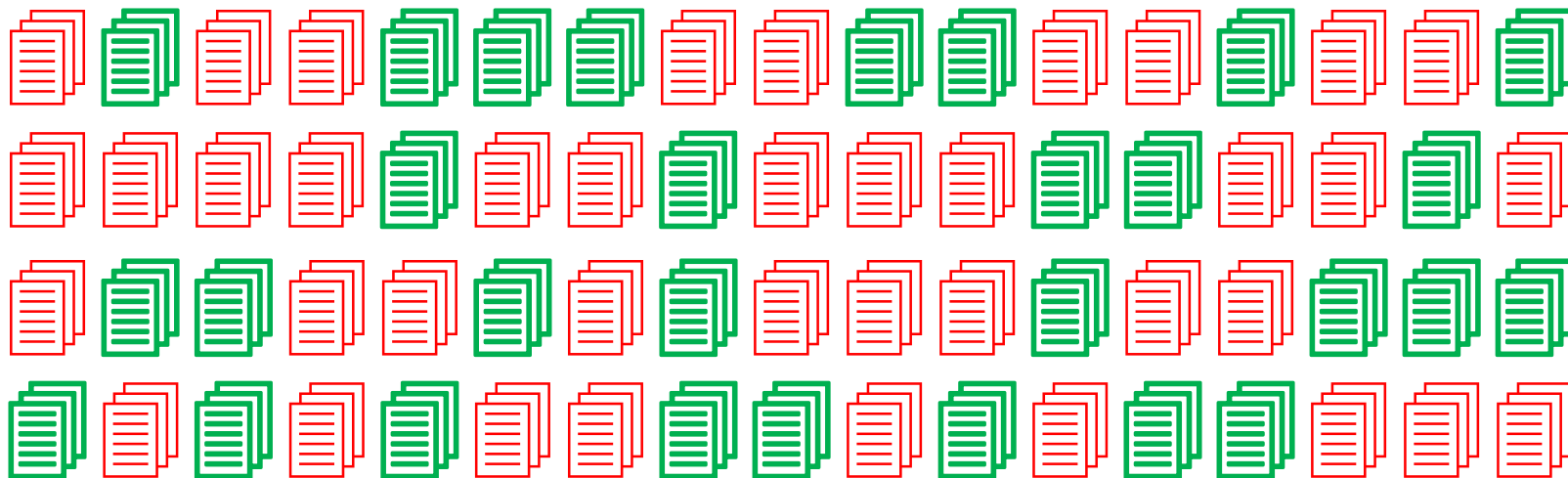
High pressure from the medias  
from day 1 + leaks

Challenge to always inform families  
first / before medias

# Germanwings Memorial and Site Visit

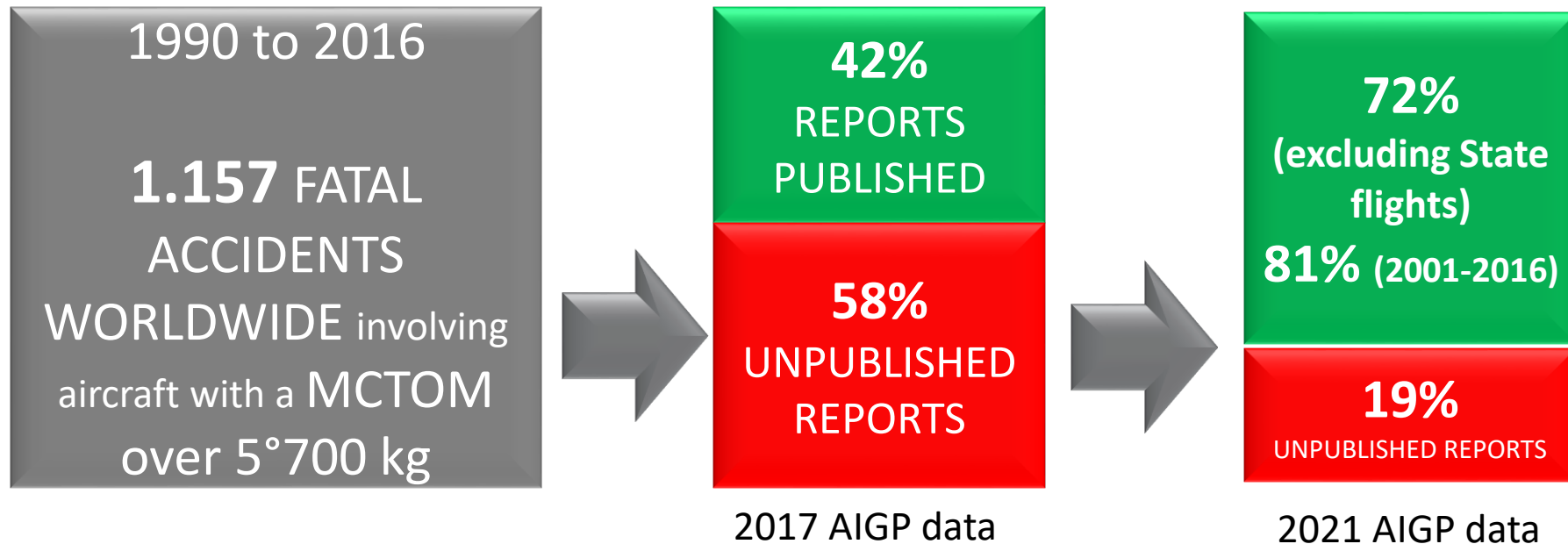


# Published Accident Investigation Reports



The Germanwings final report was published timely and relatives informed.  
Is it always the case ?

# Published Accident Investigation Reports



Are Families treated the same all over the world ?

# What can ICAO do about it ?

## Recommended Practice... (initiated by AIGP)

*If the State conducting the investigation does not make the Final Report or an interim statement publicly available within a reasonable timeframe, other States participating in the investigation are entitled to request in writing from the State conducting the investigation express consent to release a statement containing safety issues raised with such information as is available. **If the State conducting the investigation gives express consent or does not reply to such a request within 30 days, the State making the request should release such a statement after coordinating with participating States.***

*(Paragraph 6.6.1)*

## ...limitation

**What if the State conducting the investigation does not consent and still does not publish any information ?**



# Example No 3 : Major Air Accidents involving French Nationals

## Flash Airlines 604

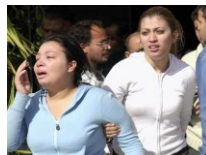
Aircraft: B737-300

Date: 3/1/04

Location: Sharm el-Sheikh (SSH)

Casualties: 148 deaths

Inv. body: Ministry of Civil Aviation (Egypt)



## Yemenia 626

Aircraft : A310-324

Date: 30/6/09

Location: Moroni (HAH)

Casualties: 152 deaths, 1 injured

Inv. Body: Agence Nationale de l'Aviation  
Civile et de la Météorologie (Comoros)



# West Caribbean, MD-82, Venezuela, 16 August 2005



152 French Nationals out of 160 Fatalities



# European Initiatives (examples)

EC workshop on emergency plans (Brussels, 31 January 2014)

ENCASIA training at BFU (Braunschweig, 1-3 December 2014)

ISASI 2015 (Augsburg) – Tutorial/Workshop

ENCASIA 2016 Work Programme - Leaflet

ECAC workshops:

- May 2016 - The Hague (ACC)
- June 2016 - Malaga (FAL)



# ENCASIA Training – December 2014

## BFU - Braunschweig



### Training objectives:

- Prepare Safety Investigation Authorities to respond to a major accident, wherever it occurs in the Union;
- Provide guidance on dealing with the immediate environment of SIAs, in particular the aspects on media, politics and families
- (...)



**Feedback on major accidents from  
BEA, BFU and DSB**

## Recommendation from ISASI workshop on the social dimension of safety investigations

The tutorial/workshop recommended the development of a **vademecum** (a manual/leaflet for frequent or regular use), which would be **specifically prepared for victims and their relatives** in order to facilitate the understanding of the **role** and the **different phases** of a safety investigation as well as its **relationship with the other entities involved** in handling the accident.



## February 2017: ENCASIA approval of:


- The **leaflet/practical guide** on safety investigations for air accident victims and their relatives (available on Internet)
- The **memo** for safety investigators on relations with air accident victims and their relatives



# ENCASIA Leaflet

- Available in 23 EU languages



 Choose available translations

English ✓	Deutsch
français	Nederlands
español	italiano
hrvatski	čeština
dansk	eesti
ελληνικά	latviešu
lietuvių	magyar
български	Malti
polski	português
română	slovenčina
slovenščina	suomi
svenska	

# A practical guide for air accident victims and their relatives on safety investigations



## Introduction

Who does what?

In most EU Member States two separate investigations (judicial & safety)

**Role of National coordinator / coordinating agency (called reference person/point of contact in Reg 996)**

Liaison with other national coordinators

**Understanding the role and the different phases of a safety investigation**



# Memo for safety investigators on relations with air accident victims and their relatives



## ■ Role of safety investigator

Prevention, not apportion of blame  
To investigate and provide answers  
Not to provide psychological support

## ■ Better understand what families go through

Grieving process  
Intricate situation



+ Expecting the recovery and return of bodies



# Different stages of grief / investigation

Periodical briefings Authorities – Air Accident Victims and their Relatives

Start of the  
safety  
investigation

Visit of  
accident site  
(if possible)

Release of  
factual  
information

Interim  
statement/report

Final report

First hours

First weeks

First months

First quarter

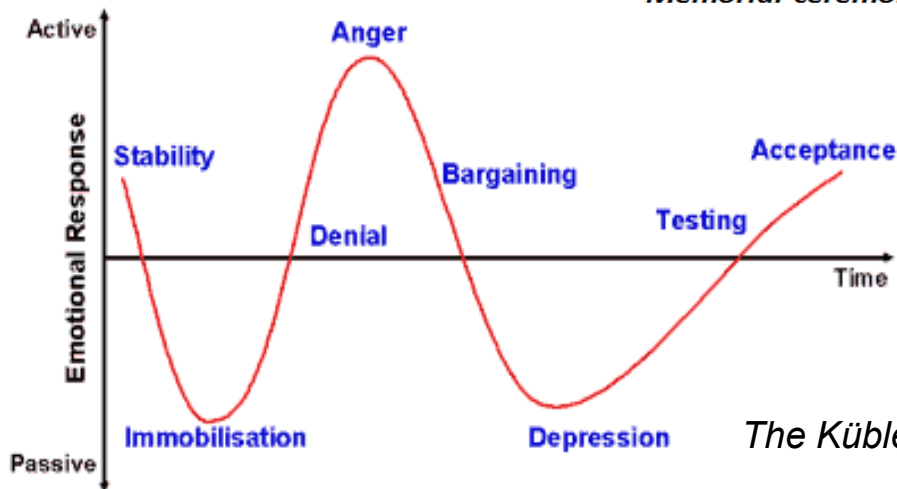
First year

Second year

Third year

First anniversary  
Memorial ceremony

2nd and 3rd anniversaries



*The Kübler-Ross Grief Cycle*





# Conclusions

- Importance of publishing final reports in a timely manner
- Accident/incident Investigation Authorities are normally dealing with information on the investigation process/results (and not with assistance except NTSB)
- In spite of the new Regulations and the progress made, the subject of assistance to air accident victims and their victims remains a sensitive and complex one
- When a major fatal accident occurs, it requires appropriate actions from a large number of actors. **Preparation is crucial!**



# BEA

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Thank you for your attention

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