



International Civil Aviation Organization
Asia and Pacific Office

Fourteenth Meeting of the Asia Pacific Accident Investigation Group (APAC-AIG/14)

(Bangkok, Thailand, 7-9 October 2026)

Agenda Item 5: Regional Cooperation

STRENGTHENING REGIONAL COOPERATION IN ACCIDENT AND INCIDENT INVESTIGATION: EXPERIENCE FROM ENCASIA

(Presented by EASA)

SUMMARY

This paper presents the experience of the European Network of Civil Aviation Safety Investigation Authorities (ENCASIA) as a useful reference for strengthening regional cooperation in civil aviation accident and incident investigation. ENCASIA provides, as an Investigation Cooperative Mechanism, a decentralised and structured framework through which independent national Safety Investigation Authorities (SIAs) can share expertise, resources, training and good practices while preserving their respective responsibilities and independence. Recognising the important role already played by APAC-AIG under the Regional Aviation Safety Group – Asia and Pacific Regions (RASG-APAC), the paper highlights practical areas in which regional cooperation and mutual support could be further developed, while acknowledging that any such mechanisms should be adapted to the specific needs, priorities and institutional arrangements of Asia-Pacific States.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 ICAO Annex 13 encourages cooperation among Contracting States in the investigation of aircraft accidents and incidents. Such cooperation can be particularly important where differences in resources, technical expertise, infrastructure or investigation workload may affect the ability of individual States to conduct independent, effective and timely investigations.

1.2 Regional cooperation provides an important means of addressing these challenges. By pooling expertise, facilitating access to specialised resources and developing common practices, cooperative arrangements can strengthen investigation capabilities while preserving the independence and responsibilities of individual national investigation authorities.

1.3 Within the European Union, this approach has been developed through the European Network of Civil Aviation Safety Investigation Authorities (ENCASIA). ENCASIA is a network of independent national Safety Investigation Authorities that provides a structured framework for cooperation, mutual support, exchange of experience and development of common practices.

1.4 ENCASIA's activities include facilitating mutual assistance between investigation authorities, developing training and guidance, promoting safety investigation best practices, supporting peer reviews, improving the management of safety recommendations and providing advice to European institutions on matters related to accident investigation and prevention.

1.5 In the Asia-Pacific region, the Asia Pacific Accident Investigation Group (APAC-AIG) already provides an important platform for cooperation among accident and incident investigation authorities. Within the RASG-APAC framework, APAC-AIG facilitates exchanges of experience, capacity building, mutual assistance and coordination on matters related to the effective implementation of ICAO Annex 13.

1.6 Against this background, the ENCASIA experience may provide useful examples for consideration as APAC-AIG continues to strengthen practical cooperation among investigation authorities in the region. The objective is not to replicate a particular regional model, but to share experience on cooperative mechanisms that may be adapted, where useful, to the needs and characteristics of the Asia-Pacific region.

2. DISCUSSION

2.1 ENCASIA was established under Regulation (EU) No 996/2010 and is composed of the heads of the civil aviation Safety Investigation Authorities of the EU Member States and/or, in the case of a multimodal authority, the head of its aviation branch, or their representatives. Other organisations, including EASA, participate in its activities as observers. ENCASIA is not a centralised investigation authority: investigation responsibilities remain fully with the independent national authorities.

2.2 The Network provides a structured framework through which its members can identify common needs, exchange experience and jointly develop practical solutions. Its activities are conducted through Plenary Meetings and dedicated Working Groups addressing areas including cooperation and mutual support, training, peer reviews, safety recommendations, family assistance and communication, and coordination on ICAO-related matters.

2.3 A number of ENCASIA activities may be of particular relevance when considering opportunities to further strengthen regional cooperation:

- a) a Mutual Support System, enabling investigation authorities to identify and request expertise, equipment or other technical support from partner authorities;
- b) a peer review programme, supporting continuous improvement through exchanges between investigation authorities;
- c) development and sharing of guidance, tools and good practices consistent with ICAO Annex 13;
- d) cooperation on training and competency development, including identification of common training needs;
- e) exchange of practices concerning family assistance and communication following major accidents;
- f) development of common approaches to the management and follow-up of safety recommendations, supported by dedicated information-sharing tools; and
- g) coordination and exchange of experience on matters being considered within ICAO forums.

2.4 An important characteristic of these mechanisms is that they support cooperation without affecting the independence of the investigation authority responsible for an occurrence. Assistance is provided on a voluntary and cooperative basis, allowing authorities to draw upon regional expertise while retaining full responsibility for the conduct of the investigation.

2.5 Experience within ENCASIA has shown that structured cooperation can be particularly valuable where investigation authorities have different levels of resources or encounter investigations requiring specialised expertise that may not be permanently available at national level. Cooperation can therefore complement national capabilities and contribute to greater resilience of the regional investigation system as a whole.

2.6 The Asia-Pacific region presents its own specific context, including its geographical scale, diversity of aviation systems and investigation authorities, and significant differences in available resources and technical capabilities. These characteristics reinforce the potential value of flexible and practical mechanisms through which investigation authorities can more easily identify expertise and request support from regional partners.

2.7 APAC-AIG already provides an appropriate regional framework within which such cooperation can continue to evolve. Building on existing arrangements, consideration could be given to progressively strengthening practical mechanisms in areas such as:

- a) identification and sharing of specialised investigation expertise and resources;
- b) arrangements for rapid mutual support in the event of major or technically complex investigations;
- c) regional training and competency-development initiatives;
- d) voluntary peer-to-peer exchanges between investigation authorities;
- e) sharing of guidance and lessons learned from investigations;
- f) cooperation on safety recommendations, family assistance and investigation communication; and
- g) continued coordination of regional perspectives on matters of common interest within ICAO.

2.8 Any such mechanisms would need to reflect the needs, priorities and institutional arrangements of Asia-Pacific States. They could therefore be developed progressively, building upon existing cooperation and initially focusing on areas where participating authorities identify the greatest practical added value.

2.9 This approach would also be consistent with the principles reflected in the ICAO Manual on Regional Accident and Incident Investigation Organization (Doc 9946) and the ongoing discussions on Investigation Cooperation Mechanisms (ICMs) within the AIG Panel, which recognises the benefits of cooperative arrangements among States and provides guidance for strengthening regional investigation capabilities.

2.10 Continued exchange between regional cooperation mechanisms (such as APAC-AIG and ENCASIA) can itself contribute to this process. Sharing experience on practical tools, challenges encountered and lessons learned can help regional networks identify approaches that are transferable while adapting them to their own operational and institutional circumstances.

3. ACTION BY THE MEETING

3.1 The Meeting is invited to:

- a) note the experience of ENCASIA within the European Union in developing practical mechanisms for cooperation and mutual support among independent Safety Investigation Authorities;

- b) recognise the important role of APAC-AIG in facilitating regional cooperation and capacity building in accident and incident investigation;
- c) encourage APAC-AIG members to continue identifying practical areas in which regional cooperation and mutual support could be further strengthened, taking into account existing arrangements and the specific needs of Asia-Pacific States; and
- d) support continued exchange of experience and good practices between APAC-AIG and other regional cooperation mechanisms, including ENCASIA, where this can contribute to strengthening accident and incident investigation capabilities in the region.

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