Mr Eamonn Brennan
Director General of EUROCONTROL
Rue de la Fusée, 96
1130 Brussels

Brussels, 11.6.2018

Subject: <u>USB Analysis on NM OPS Staff Issues</u>

Dear Sir,

During the special meeting held in a few weeks ago between you and the Trade Unions about NM OPS Staff issues and the local social dialogue process, we all agreed to organise staff meetings in order to improve communication. The aim was to improve the local dialogue within NM regarding the functioning of the NM Ops Room and to enable an open exchange of views between NM management, staff and social partners.

We would like to thank Ms Depicker and her department for coordinating and facilitating these discussions on the local dialogue process.

Unfortunately, the meetings did not deliver the desired result and USB decided to further investigate the most pressing issues and to inform you accordingly in this letter (see Annex).

USB regrets to inform you that it will have to reconsider its future participation in NM technical meetings if the situation described in the Annex is not effectively addressed and the recommendations set out are not given proper consideration.

Thank you in advance for your consideration. USB looks forward to a continued constructive dialogue with you, and would appreciate a positive intervention from your side in the interest of all parties at the Agency and of the customers of our services.

Yours faithfully,

Georges Tsolos
Vice-President

Copies: DNM, HR/SD, TUEM, FFPE, USEF and SC.

USB ANALYSIS OF NM OPS STAFF ISSUES

Introduction

This paper provides the views of the Union Syndicale - Brussels on the following items:

- Briefings by Director NM to Ops Room staff as described in the letter by the DG to USB on the 30th of April 2018;
- Root cause of staffing issues;
- Ops Room FTEs;
- Way forward to continue service provision.

Briefings by Director NM to Ops Room staff

The meetings took place as agreed but did not lead to an improvement of the relationship between the Director NM and the Ops Room staff.

USB has no interest in engaging in a discussion on the content of the meetings because this would distract from the two main messages that Ops Room staff took away:

- Director NM will stay until mid-2019;
- NM will recruit 5 staff annually from 2019 onwards (unclear whether this is before or after mid 2019).

Root cause staffing issues

NM historically defines its staffing needs as a headcount and not as available FTEs (Full Time Equivalents).

NM has determined that the minimum headcount needed is 164 (originally around 200) and has used natural outflow to decrease the number to 164.

In practice, NM currently has a headcount of 161 (based on roster evaluation).

In this roster calculation and resource planning, NM does not take into account:

- Retirement;
- Long-term sickness;
- Regular sickness;
- Part-time work (statutory right);
- Office tasks during planned Ops Room tasks;
- Unpaid overtime to be compensated in time.

As a result, the roster often looks to be filled but in practice results in significant gaps, which has a direct effect on the quality of the service delivered and associated customer satisfaction.

This decline in the quality of service is most visible and critical during the summer season with high capacity demands from the customers, increased industrial action within the network (where the NM Ops Room is fighting to reduce the impact on the customers and associated delays) and an increase in unstable weather, which also affects the workload.

In addition, NM management increasingly accepts improperly tested functionalities into the Ops environment that increases both the workload and customer dissatisfaction. The failure of the e-helpdesk in the NM22.0 release is a very clear example where all communication had to be by telephone (while understaffed) with no access to automated support.

Ops Room FTEs

USB has asked NM management for detailed information about the staffing situation. Unfortunately, no detailed data has been provided due to concerns surrounding personal data protection and confidentiality. USB was informed that NM management would try to present the status of the planned changes at the technical meeting in September 2018.

This is far too little far too late.

Based on publically available data, interviews with colleagues, headcounts and some educated estimates, USB has come to the following headcount:

- Retirement (no data available but assumed to be 6 FTEs per year on average);
- Long-term sickness (2 FTEs, on the basis of known cases at present);
- Regular sickness (5 FTEs per year based on a conservative estimate of 6 days per person per year, which is below the Agency average);
- Part-time work (6 FTEs, statutory right, 19 counted in the roster, average of 70% working time assumed but aware of growing interest given the ageing population);
- Office tasks during planned Ops Room tasks (2FTEs, irregular assignments estimated on 1.5% of total available headcount);
- Unpaid overtime to be compensated in time (2FTEs, sample taken of 40 staff members then extrapolated to the entire population).

As this FTE count is partly based on assumptions, there may be some divergence from the actual figures that NM has, but USB is very confident that this divergence is extremely limited.

Concluding on the NM Management approach, USB considers that NM Management Ops staff planning is on the basis of a minimum required headcount of 164:

164 (minimum)

-3 (staff shortage) -2 (long term sick)

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159 actual population

The USB FTE calculation however results in:

164 (minimum)

-3 (staff shortage) -6 (retirement) -2 (long term sick) -5 (standard sickness) -6 (part-time) -2 (office tasks) -2 (unpaid overtime)

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139 actual FTEs for 2018, which in effect means a **staff shortfall of 15%.**

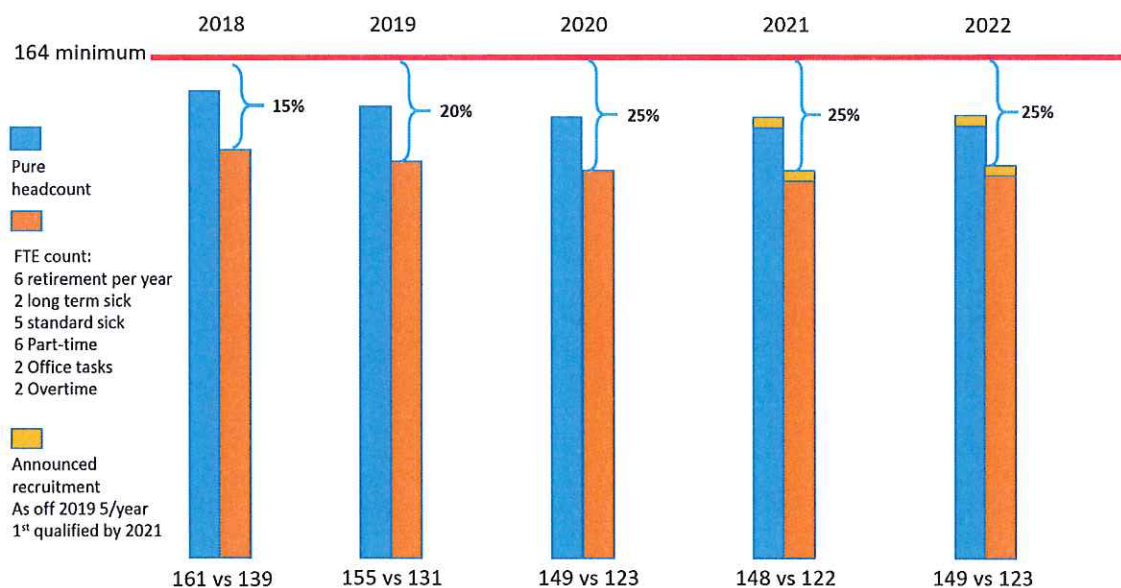The table below shows the trend from 2018 to 2022.

Fig 1. FTE development 2018-2022

The suggestion of the Director NM to recruit five staff members annually after his tenure will lead to an annual structural staff shortfall of 25% as of 2020. Increased part-time may push this to 30%.

Recruitment in 2019 means having staff available by 2021, as the recruitment process in general takes 9 months and training usually takes 1 year.

Myth of automation as solution

A standard argument put forward by NM Management is that automation will lead to increased productivity and will allow staff reductions.

The main example given is the 99% automated handling in the IFPS.

USB does not challenge this concept but argues that of the current 69 headcount in IFPS, approximately 15 will retire in the 2018-2022 timeframe. It is unknown what the expected increase in part-time work will be for these staff members. Furthermore, USB has not seen any evidence of a detailed workload assessment that would result in a logical assignment of staff to the IFPS.

It is also not a certainty that all current IFPS staff have the background needed to carry out other specific tasks in the Ops Room or that they are willing to move.

The concept of cross-training also raises issues with respect to competency requirements and the ability to stay up-to-date on multiple disciplines within the Ops Room.

In addition, this will likely add to discussions on grade brackets and career structures.

Need for training

USB considers, based on feedback, that new staff are not given the benefit of sufficient training to function effectively in the current conditions (i.e. staff shortages and the shortcomings of technical system support). This obviously leads directly to additional frustration of staff and a further decline in the quality of service.

Conclusion

USB is very much aware that the Director General, at the beginning of his tenure, cannot and should not be held accountable by staff for the current situation in the NM Ops Room.

USB and its members very much support the initiatives shown by the Director General in trying to find an investment budget for the Network Manager (i.e. the Agency) and his desire to move the Agency back into the centre of European Aviation.

The Director General must, however, be aware that all these good initiatives are under threat from a further decline of his most visible and relevant front-end service.

Based on the feedback from members and non-members alike, the atmosphere in the Ops Room is deteriorating rapidly and there is now a real possibility of industrial action, either non-organised or organised. The increase in staff complaints at SSP and intentional damage to personal property are tangible indicators.

Ops Room staff want to provide a good service and are dedicated to the tasks of the Agency. Ops Room staff are looking to the Director General to intervene both to save the service and try to create a situation of trust between the Director General and his Ops Room staff.

Actions needed

- Immediate moratorium on office tasks for Ops Room staff during the summer season;
- Immediate recruitment of 15 staff for the sections that have a shortage (they will not be on the roster until summer season 2020 and will be offset by future retirements);
- Immediate revision of the shift roster changes that changed the starting time from 13.00 to 12.00 (few people impacted but social impact substantial and an important signal to staff that they are being listened to);
- Prepare proper training environment and plans during summer 2018;
- Use summer 2018 to assess IFPS staffing situation and decide on transfer for training by October 2018 (retrained staff could be available by summer 2019 to relieve the 2018 shortage);
- Implement payment of an overtime scheme comparable with MUAC to encourage staff to keep a minimum service running;
- No more uncontrolled/untested system upgrades until the staffing situation has been resolved and testing activities are properly controlled and verified;
- Active messaging from the Director General to Ops Room staff that, besides the action taken (as recommended above) he is aware of the situation and will address the issues raised.