

Additional Information on the ATCO Training with Regards to the Draft Performance Plan of the Slovak Republic for the RP3

In response to the jointly agreed conclusion no. 1 of the Stakeholder Consultation on the Draft Performance Plan of the Slovak Republic for the RP3, which took place on 6 August 2019, below are presented additional details concerning the new ATCO selection, training and licensing process introduced by LPS SR.

1. Selection procedure:

In order to meet the objective of improving the selection process of candidates for obtaining an air traffic controller license in the ACS rating and achieving more ATCO trained as soon as possible, the following changes have been introduced:

- in EUROCONTROL FEAST I. tests the criteria were aligned with the set requirements of EUROCONTROL and a so-called 'cut off score' was determined;
- the criteria for psychological examination have been tightened after consultation and the psychologist's visit to the ATS units;
- a new stage of the selection procedure was added in cooperation with a traffic psychologist who performs a personal diagnosis of cognitive functions of candidates that cannot be improved by training such as spatial perception, short and long term memory, stress and load management, etc.;
- the selection procedure has been running continuously since January 2018, increasing the possibility for candidates to apply at any time;
- the company made changes in the recruitment PR policy – promotion of the ATCO occupation as such;
- continuous communication with organizations testing candidates in order to verify the set standards on the basis of the results in each phase of training.

2. Training of students and students - air traffic controllers (SATCO):

In order to meet the objective of improving and accelerating the training of candidates for obtaining an air traffic controller license in the ACS rating category, and to increase the effectiveness of the training and achieve more ATCO trained as soon as possible, the following changes have been adopted:

- a change in the Initial Training Plan in its qualifying part, the former Phase A of Qualifying Training – Management Basics was modified and moved ahead of the Initial Training.

This phase was renamed to the so-called pre-Initio training; admitted applicants complete 30 exercises on the radar simulator under the supervision, guidance and evaluation of instructors / assessors from ACC Bratislava. This stage in a “computer game” environment tests the candidates (speed and accuracy of decision-making, stress management,

anticipation and conflict resolution), and at the same time acquaints them with the practical basics needed for ATC. The main objective of this training is to verify the abilities of the candidates selected as air traffic controllers at the ACC Bratislava and to fulfil the condition of their inclusion in the initial training in a relatively short time. The purpose is to increase the success of the training of air traffic controllers at ACC Bratislava.

At the end of the pre-Initio training and after successful confirmation of the results of the selection procedure, candidates are enrolled in the Initial Training course as set out in Commission Regulation (EU) 2015/340 of 20 February 2015 laying down technical requirements and administrative procedures relating to air traffic controllers' licences and certificates pursuant to Regulation (EC) No 216/2008 of the European Parliament and of the Council, amending Commission Implementing Regulation (EU) No 923/2012 and repealing Commission Regulation (EU) No 805/2011.

- changed approach to the assessment in the Initial Training Plan (ITP) in the Qualifying Training section – exercises aimed at teaching new topics are not assessed by the instructor, but only the student's strengths / weaknesses are recorded so that the student is not assessed in the training phase but educated. Control exercises have been introduced, in which a summative assessment is carried out to assess the achievement of training objectives and whether the level of students' knowledge and skills are in line with the training plan.
- during the ACS and pre-OJT training on the simulators the number and load of exercises were increased so that successful graduates would be able to control traffic in complex and dense traffic areas, thus speeding-up the selection of students and SATCO while not burdening the training in real operations in the workplace. This training takes around 8 months.
- the psychologist / human factor specialist participates in the training as a support for students and instructors in case of any problems.

3. ATCO Licensing:

- with regards to the training of students for ACC unit, ACP training (non-radar – procedural control) has been abolished, since this type of traffic control is no longer performed at ACC, which has had a direct impact on shortening the overall training period;
- with regards to the initial training at the training centre, Initial Training Plan (ITP) has been therefore modified in its qualification part, this training has been cancelled, which means shortening of the training;
- with regards to the unit training, ACC Training Plan (UTP) has been changed and this training is not performed anymore;
- PC (planning controller) training is conducted directly during the on-site real operations training phase.

4. Current situation:

- at the ACC Bratislava there are currently 7 students in real operations training and other 6 students will start qualification training in November 2019. These students have gone through the pre-Initio phase, i.e. they have already undergone the first selective phase, while the students who are in real operations training now have successfully completed the ACS qualification training.
- after making the above changes, LPS SR has been able to train an ATCO in about 1.5 years. We expect the average training time per students at maximum of 2 years.

5. Identified risks:

- availability of instructors: sufficient number of OJTIs and their effective training planning / adequate number of OJTIs

LPS SR now plans the simulator training for off-season periods where there is lower capacity demand, requiring less ATCOs in a shift (number of open sectors is lower).

On the contrary, real operations training is planned for summer periods, allowing OJTIs to train during normal shift so that does not reduce the number of occupied positions / open sectors.

- sufficient number of candidates

This risk has been identified and LPS SR has been investing efforts in raising awareness about the ATC profession, for instance during an air fest, through school excursions, or by the use of public media. Nevertheless, we see room for improvement and the use social media to promote the ATCO profession is planned.