

The ECAC Network of Chief Economists

Interview with **Ana Mata**

*Director of the Management Control and Studies Bureau,
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The ECAC Network of Chief Economists was set up in 2016 with the objective of bridging the gap of incomplete knowledge of essential data in the air transport sector. It has the mandate in particular to list existing economic studies, statistics and other relevant materials on issues such as connectivity, taxation, airport charges, traffic data, route potential analysis, economic impact of regulations, air navigation services charges, etc. and to exchange views on permanent or current challenges faced by the aviation community. Chairing the Network since 2017, Ana Mata (Portugal) answers a few questions for ECAC News to present its recent activities.

What is the Network of Chief Economists? How does it relate to the Economic Working Group? How does it function?

The Network of Chief Economists (NCE) reports its activities to the Economic Working Group (ECO). Both ECO and NCE aim to support the understanding of economic issues of common interest to the aviation community within ECAC.

NCE's main goal is to bridge the gap of incomplete knowledge in essential areas related to economic matters. Its priorities are to identify relevant studies, material or data on issues such as, amongst others, connectivity, taxation, airport charges, traffic data, the economic impact of regulations, and air navigation services charges.

Sharing information and exchanging views on those relevant topics is also a priority. To address this challenge, it was considered crucial to establish a common and stable platform to list and exchange the relevant material.

NCE concluded a survey on economic studies and statistical information last year: how was this project led? What were the main outcomes/benefits?

Following Directors General's mandate at DGCA/147 in December 2016, the NCE launched a survey at the beginning of 2017 to identify the data, economic studies and statistics available in ECAC's Member States and, after assessing the results, to establish a common ground and a platform to exchange information.



Meeting of the ECAC Network of Chief Economists in October 2018 in Paris

The survey was designed to gather information on statistics and economic studies produced or co-produced by ECAC Member States, and it was divided into three parts: respondent profile, sources of statistical information, and information on the production of economic studies and statistical production for the period between 2011 and 2016.

With a response rate of 72.7% (32 out of 44 Member States), the survey also compiled the Member States' perspectives on the most relevant topics for the coming years.

More generally, what have been the NCE's main achievements so far?

In conducting its annual work programme, the NCE now aims to have an overview of existing studies available in ECAC Member States and to identify what new studies and statistics need to be developed to provide Member States with the relevant information on key economic issues.

Furthermore, and in line with the NCE's Terms of Reference, the group considered creating a common platform where that information could be shared. For that purpose, a dedicated page was created for the Network on the ECAC website, where studies and statistics recently published by Member States could be uploaded (on a yearly basis).

It was also decided to develop a forum allowing the members to exchange views and additional information. These exchanges would initially take place via email and an interactive platform could be developed as a further step.

The NCE is currently working on a survey related to airport charges and levies: What are main economic issues currently before the NCE? And more generally, what issues (if different) do you believe will become the air transport economics questions of the next decade? What topics do the Member States consider most pressing to analyse?

Following the results of the previous survey, a second survey was launched with the aim of presenting an overview of the airport charges' regulations and models applied at ECAC level, with a view to further developing research around airport taxation issues.

From the comments of the 32 Member States which responded to the survey, it was possible to conclude that most States are interested a further analysis

of airports' charging models (e.g. cost-based vs price cap, single till vs dual till), the modulation of charges, and a benchmark analysis of the charges.

Regarding the areas that Member States consider most pressing to analyse on economic related issues, Member States have shown an interest in developing connectivity topics, airport and air navigation charges, and capacity and air fares related issues.

EXCERPTS FROM NCE TERMS OF REFERENCE (August 2016)

« 1. The Network of Chief Economists has the mandate to:

- Identify and list existing economic studies, statistics and other relevant materials on issues such as connectivity, taxation, airport charges, traffic data, route potential analysis, economic impact of regulations, air navigation services charges, etc.
- Share information on economic studies they intend to develop.
- Exchange views on permanent or current challenges for the aviation community with regard to methods (e.g. data collection, surveys, studies, strategic intelligence).
- Establish a platform for exchanging afore-mentioned studies, statistics and relevant materials as well as national and international data sources.
- Provide analysis in order to support policy discussion in the Economic Working Group, as requested and subject to resources being available.
- Share information on the impact of new technologies for air transport economics and the impact of macro issues on the air transport sector such as globalisation and migrations.

2. The Network of Chief Economists shall report on its activities to the Economic Working Group on an annual basis. This report may also include recommendations for further activities to be undertaken by the Network and/or on issues to be discussed at Directors General meetings. This report should include the draft work programme of the Network for the upcoming year. »

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Ana Mata has been Director of the Management Control and Studies Bureau in the Portuguese Civil Aviation Authority (ANAC) since 2008, and Coordinator of the Economic Regulation Directorate since 2014. Her main activities relate to airport and air transport economic regulation as well as monitoring the civil aviation markets, and assessing the quality and availability of data. She also conducts several studies including the Statistical Yearbook and economic studies on the competitiveness of civil aviation areas and their impact on the Portuguese economy.

Ms Mata joined the civil aviation authority in 2000, working as head of the Air Transport Licensing Department. Ms Mata has a postgraduate degree in I&T - business engineering, a master's in management and strategy from the Lisbon School of Economics & Management, and a degree in business management from the University Institute of Lisbon.