



**IANS**

Institute of Air Navigation Services

**ELPAC**

English Language Proficiency  
for Aeronautical Communication



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**SAFETY** in aviation is paramount

there must be **NO**  
**COMPROMISE**

**ELLP**

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## INTRODUCTION

As of March 5th 2008 air traffic controllers and pilots operating in internationally designated airspace and on international air routes will have to demonstrate their proficiency in the language(s) they use for aeronautical communication. More information can be found in ICAO Annex 1 Personnel Licensing (Chapter 1, paragraph 1.2.9), Appendix 1 and Attachment 1 to Annex 1 (Holistic Descriptors and Rating Scale). Level 4 of ICAO's language proficiency requirements is set as the operational standard which air traffic controllers must meet. This language proficiency will be a licence endorsement without which air traffic control services cannot be provided.

As of May 17th 2010 all air traffic controllers, and holders of a Student Air Traffic Control Licence, of the European Union Member States will have to demonstrate language proficiency in English (European Parliament Directive on the Community ATC Licence; Article 5 para (d); Article 8 1-4; Article 11 4 and Annex III).

To help the Air Navigation Service Providers (ANSPs) and the National Supervisory Authorities (NSAs) of its Member States meet ICAO and EU language proficiency requirements EUROCONTROL (the European Organisation for the Safety of Air Navigation) has developed a test of English Language Proficiency for Aeronautical Communication – **ELPAC**. This test allows air traffic controllers to demonstrate their proficiency in the English language in aeronautical communications with pilots and fellow controllers.

ELPAC is designed for **operational** air traffic controllers and reflects the range of tasks undertaken in air traffic control communications. The focus of the test is on language proficiency, not operational procedures.

# LANGUAGE

## testing in aviation

Language testing in aviation has exceptionally **high-stakes**. Controllers who fail to demonstrate compliance with the ICAO and EC language proficiency requirements may have their licence suspended or even withdrawn - a consequence which can have severe professional repercussions on not only the career of an individual controller but also on the providers of air traffic services.

Therefore all participants and stake-holders involved in aviation language testing have the responsibility to ensure that the language proficiency tests they select, provide or develop for the aviation industry are **valid, reliable, effective, and appropriate**.

The ICAO and EC language proficiency requirements point towards the **aviation context** for testing. Demonstration of actual **speaking and listening** ability is required.

Aeronautical communication is highly specific and as such any language proficiency test that aviation professionals, controllers and pilots are asked to undertake should reflect the aviation context as opposed to other contexts such as those provided by academic or business-related language proficiency tests.

States and Air Navigation Service Providers (ANSPs) cannot afford to waste money on inadequate or unproven tests. Thus language testing for licensing purposes needs to be of the **highest possible quality**.



# ELPAC TEST

## development



As a result of feasibility studies carried out in 2004 EUROCONTROL's Human Resources Team (HRT) approved the project in October 2004 and initial development started in November of that year. In February 2005 a core Development Team, consisting of ATC and English language experts from six European countries and EUROCONTROL<sup>1</sup> began constructing test specifications and items/tasks in accordance with the ICAO language proficiency requirements. Many of these experts have experience in language test development through long association with the PELA Test<sup>2</sup>.

Adrian Enright (EUROCONTROL, Luxembourg) - project leader for PELA and a member of the ICAO PRICE Study Group - manages the ELPAC project assisted by Magdalena Večeřová of the Czech Republic as language test design expert. ENOVATE A.S. (Bergen, Norway) is the software consultant to the project and has developed a tailor-made program based on the successful BITE system (Bergen Interactive Test of English). ELPAC Paper 1 (Listening Comprehension) is delivered as a web-based test.

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*Bulgaria, Czech Republic, France, Germany, Hungary, Spain and Maastricht UAC* <sup>1</sup>

*Proficiency in English Language for student Air Traffic Controllers* <sup>2</sup>

# ELPAC

## test design

ELPAC tests English language proficiency at **ICAO level 4** (operational) and **level 5** (extended). Both **phraseology** and **plain language** are assessed in the context of aeronautical communication. Plain language proficiency is an essential component of radiotelephony communications as it is not possible to develop phraseologies to cover every conceivable situation.

ELPAC is both a **web-based** and interactive test. In particular, the web-based elements will not only ensure that test administration is as economical as possible but it will also provide a high level of test security and ensure confidentiality of all data.

There are two test papers: **Listening Comprehension** and **Oral Interaction**.

## PAPER 1 Listening Comprehension

Paper 1 tests understanding communications between pilots and controllers and between controllers and controllers in both routine and non-routine situations. The recordings are based on authentic material and range from short standard pilot transmissions to longer communications in which the controller deals with non-routine or unusual situations.





## PAPER 2 Oral Interaction

assesses the controller's proficiency through non-visual and visual communication in three tasks. These will include:

- the correct use of standard ICAO phraseology,
- switching between structured phrases [RTF] and plain English,
- making an appropriate response to a pilot message,
- resolving misunderstandings,
- dealing effectively with the relationship between pilot and controller,
- negotiating a developing unusual situation,
- making a verbal report in English (of the unusual situation),
- producing extended speech in an aviation context.

## ELPAC Test implementation

On September 6th 2007 EUROCONTROL officially launched the ELPAC test making it available to the National Supervisory Authorities and Air Navigation Service Providers of EUROCONTROL and ECAC States.

However, before starting testing NSAs and/or ANSPs will be required to:

- sign a Licence Agreement with EUROCONTROL (respecting test security, confidentiality of data and maintaining ELPAC Test standards),
- select qualified personnel (English language and ATC experts) to receive training from EUROCONTROL as ELPAC test administrator, marker and examiner,
- accredit these testing personnel (following successful training).

Once these conditions are fulfilled NSAs and/or ANSPs will receive the ELPAC Test and can start testing their air traffic controllers.

# INFORMATION ON ELPAC

Sample versions of Paper 1 and Paper 2 are available for familiarisation on: [www.elpacsample.info](http://www.elpacsample.info)

For further information on the ELPAC test visit: [www.elpac.info](http://www.elpac.info)

Or email: [elpac@eurocontrol.int](mailto:elpac@eurocontrol.int)



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