



# AUSTRO CONTROL JUST CULTURE ASSESSING SAFETY BEHAVIOURS 'BEST' PRACTICE

Austro Control started the Just Culture (JC) journey in 2006 driven by a cultural change program in the ATM department. More than 10 years later Austro Control looks back on a well-established and mutually agreed Just Culture Policy and Guidelines.

## Just Culture in Safety Investigations

Parallel to the "Fair-Play" programme, JC principles were embedded in the Safety Reporting and Investigation process aiming to encourage:

- reporting to ensure organisational learning.
- Safety investigators to use "blame-free" language in the course of investigative interviews and report writing.

## Just Culture Task Force 2008-2013

In 2008, a dedicated "Just Culture Task Force" (JCTF) consisting of operational staff, Union representatives and safety experts was founded to ensure the efficiency of the Integrated Safety Management System (IMS) covering Quality, Safety, Security and Environment. In recognition of JC as a Safety Key Performance Indicator (SKPI) at EU level in 2010, Austro Control gave JC another push, through a re-invigorated JCTF, including safety, HR and legal experts as well as operational staff and Union representatives. A JC Policy and Guidelines were delivered and instated in 2013.

## The Austro Control Just Culture Policy

The JC Policy and Guideline promotes an open environment for reporting safety concerns without fear of retribution. The Policy and Guideline draws a clear line in the sand on behaviours that are tolerated and those that are not. The evaluation of people's behavioural choices is made by an independent Just Culture Committee (JCC) using a JC Tool to provide a fair, objective and consistent approach.

## The Just Culture Committee

The JCC consists of five independent experts:

1. Operational Safety Manager (providing operational expertise and a view of the ATM system as a whole)
2. Local Safety Committee Member (providing knowledge about local operational practices)
3. Human Resources Expert (providing HR expertise and ensuring compliance with employment law)
4. Operational Business Unit Manager (providing operational expertise from a management perspective)
5. Safety Manager (providing safety management expertise and ensuring compliance with safety regulations)

In addition there are two more (non-voting) roles: a Staff Union Representative and a JC Facilitator.



## The Just Culture Tool

The JC Tool is based on the JC model by David Marx © Outcome Engenuity. The tool consists of three decision trees asking a standardised set of questions to be answered (yes/no format) by members of the JCC. The questions are related to duties of personnel involved in an event. The JC Tool:

- ensures that each behaviour is assessed in an objective and transparent way;
- considers repetitive behaviour; and
- provides actions to be taken ensuring a fair and consistent treatment of staff.

## What are the consequences of unacceptable behaviours?

The consequences of unacceptable behaviour were agreed in the JCTF and may range from:

- individual coaching to increase risk perception
- removal of incentives that make unacceptable behaviour more likely
- providing a warning
- removing staff from safety-critical tasks (relocation/ degradation)
- removal of rewards
- dismissal.

## The three behaviours © Outcome Engenuity

Outcome Engenuity defines three behaviours:

1. Human error (unintentional act, unintentional consequence)
2. At-risk behaviour (intentional act, unintentional consequence)
3. Reckless behaviour (intentional act, intentional consequence)

Austro Control draws the line between a single human error (tolerated) and repetitive errors, at-risk behaviour and reckless behaviour (not tolerated). The legal terms “negligent behaviour” were defined to be related to “at-risk behaviour”, while “gross negligence” and “wilful misconduct” are defined as “reckless behaviour”.

According to the Austro Control JC Policy, a single human error being the product of system design will not have any individual disciplinary consequence, whereas repetitive error, at-risk- and reckless behaviour will.

## How does it work in practice?

The JCC convenes based on a written report about unacceptable behaviour submitted by a line manager, the safety manager or a lead investigator. The JCC meets within 40 days of the report.

A full investigation report including a statement by the involved employees on why their behaviour made sense at a time must be available to the JCC. All information and the names of the involved personnel are treated as confidential.

At the beginning of the JCC, the facilitator presents all information based on the safety investigation. The members then have the opportunity to ask questions for better understanding and have a facilitated discussion about the facts. In case some facts are missing, the lead investigator is on call to complete the picture. If the facts cannot be completed, the JCC may adjourn.

Once all members have reached an understanding of the facts, the facilitator poses the standardised questions in the JC Tool. Each member provides answers in a concealed “vote” including a short argumentation / evidence. The result is determined by the majority.

Based on the result, the JCC recommends certain actions to prevent reoccurrence of unacceptable behaviour. In case the committee recommends individual disciplinary action, the facilitator reveals the identity of the relevant persons towards their line manager. The identity of other involved personnel remains protected.

## What are the lessons learnt so far?

- The quality of the safety investigations improved as investigators were trained to gather more facts needed for the JC Tool.
- The awareness of acceptable and unacceptable behaviour and associated consequences has increased.
- The awareness of managers with respect to JC principles has increased.
- The general attitude towards professionalism at work has improved.

