

Innovation finds its own path

Ann Persson Grivas, Director General of Swedish ANSP, LFV, says a focus on safety allows the organisation to be bold in its solutions.



Credit: Peter Holgersson

What are your initial impressions of LFV and what are your immediate plans?

I was in Madrid at World ATM Congress before I took up the position so I could get a sense of LFV and the industry. I was delighted to find out that LFV has an excellent name in the industry. It is a brand known for safety and innovation.

And when I arrived I could see those qualities were evident in everything we do. I was impressed by the safety efforts and by safety development. In particular, I was pleased that the Just Culture ethos is strong.

Putting safety first is a good platform for development. It allows us to be innovative. It is no surprise that LFV is at the forefront of developing smart solutions for tomorrow's air traffic management.

I am taking my time to analyse everything before I decide if any changes are needed. When you are new, you need to ensure you have a good understanding of all the challenges and opportunities before making major decisions. But, of course, there is always room for improvement. Any changes we make will be positive ones that will reinforce our reputation for safety and original thinking.

Does your background at SAS give you a different perspective of air traffic management?

I will bring a very strong customer focus with me. It is already embedded in LFV culture but it is something that I am keen to ensure our organisation continues. And coming from a

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de-regulated market means I know only too well the need for cost efficiency, good productivity and competitiveness.

Digitisation will be a major part of achieving those aims. Airlines are embracing technology in all aspects of operations, both customer-facing and in the back office. Going forward, I expect that to be an area we will explore fully.

How important is CANSO to LFV strategy?

CANSO is absolutely vital to LFV and to the industry. It is speaking up for ANSPs and giving us a voice on the global stage. ATM is actually a small part of the aviation value chain and that makes it even more important for the sector to speak loudly and clearly on key issues. CANSO does that. That makes it relevant to its Members.

CANSO is also important in addressing questions about the future of aviation, which would otherwise be difficult to answer in such a dynamic industry.

ANSPs have their daily job to do and necessarily concentrate on their own requirements. CANSO is about expanding our horizons. It will help global ATM find the right path forward.

It is exciting to think about the future of the industry. I am sure CANSO will play a critical role in transforming and harmonising global ATM.

What difference will North European Free Route Airspace (NEFRA) make to airspace users?

The NEFRA initiative was only launched on 25 May 2017 so it is very early days. But it will doubtless prove to be a huge advantage for airspace users.

NEFRA means airlines can fly the shortest route possible once all the relevant factors – weather, traffic, and so forth – have been taken into consideration. Such developments are vital to the sustainability of the industry not only in terms of efficiency but also in terms of the environment. Less fuel burned means a cost reduction and fewer emissions.

And as traffic grows, an initiative like NEFRA will take on even greater importance. It will not just be an advantage then – as it is now – it will be essential.

What more can Europe and Scandinavia do to achieve seamless skies?

To be honest, it is a question that is at least as much for politicians as it is for an ANSP. What we do technically or operationally must be consistent with the regulatory framework. And it is that framework that is the limiting factor.

Of course, we all know that European airspace is fragmented and that many improvements could be made in airspace design.

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There is still a lot of work ahead, but I think it is work we are all prepared to do because the potential benefits on offer are huge for all stakeholders. It will enable us all to grow in a sustainable manner.

LFV also operates in the United Arab Emirates. What is your view on corporatisation and the ANSP business model in the future?

Our business plan certainly is not based on being a big global consultant. We simply haven't got the resources for that.

But what we do have is great technical ability and an innovative spirit. I think we can benefit from that. It is inevitable that those qualities will drive a new business model. Every business should always be looking for new revenue streams. Exactly what form they will take for LFV is still being assessed.

What are the lessons learned from remote tower operations so far and how do you see this technology developing in the future?

LFV started operating a remote tower service in April 2015. It was the first operating licence in the world for this technology.

We have gained some useful experience and LFV will be looking to expand the remote tower concept in the years ahead.

It is hard to say where the technology might go in the future though. Innovation tends to find a different path from the one you expected. But you can be sure that it will lead to opportunities. LFV and, indeed, the entire industry, needs to be ready for that.

LFV is engaged in a research project looking at drones. What are your thoughts on how to merge drone and civil aviation traffic?

I am an optimist. There must be a way that we can safely handle drones without disrupting normal civil aviation operations. I am not sure yet what the solution will look like – it is too early to say – but I know that we will find one. There is too much riding on it.

Besides, ANSPs and the industry have a good track record for finding the right way forward – a way that allows us to take advantage of new technologies while maintaining an excellent safety record.

Do you see being a female DG in a male-dominated industry as significant?

I hope I can bring something different. I certainly intend to try.

In Sweden in 2014, we proclaimed the first feminist government in the world. And I have personally been involved with diversity and gender equality issues. It is not about having a particular quality but about providing a different perspective. When arriving at the right decision, you need to know you have examined a variety of perspectives.

In truth, I am just happy to be involved in aviation again and to have this opportunity. It is such a great sector to be involved in. LFV is at the forefront of digital development, and environmental and safety progress. I am determined to continue that tradition. I look forward to learning about, and from, the international community. ➔



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