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European Transport Workers' Federation
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COVID-19: Aviation workers urge the EU and the Member States to save and rebuild European aviation

ETF Civil Aviation Section is closely monitoring the developments in European aviation caused by the spread of COVID-19. It is clear that we are dealing with an unprecedented crisis and that aviation will not be the same once the immediate threat is over. It remains to be seen how long the crisis will last and when the demand for airline services will return.

We welcome the fact that several demands from the ETF statement of 5 March 2020 entitled "[Keep Europe Moving!](#)" have been addressed at the European level:

- EASA's Safety Directive *Operational measures to prevent the spread of Coronavirus `SARS-CoV-2` infection* mandates aircraft disinfection and carriage of universal precaution kits on each aircraft¹;
- Proposal for an amendment of Regulation (EEC) No 95/93 on standard rules for the allocation of slots enabling a temporary waiver on the "use it or lose it" policy²;
- European coordinated response to counter the economic impact of the Coronavirus³, including proposals to protect workers from unemployment and loss of income.

However, we insist that a series of **aviation-specific measures** are taken in short, medium and long-term perspective both by the European Institutions as well as the individual Member States:

Getting ready for the restart

After the phase of crisis management, we need to get ready for the restart of aviation, as soon as the initial shock is over. All aviation companies – be it airlines, air navigations services providers, airports or ground handling operators – felt the adverse effects of COVID-19 in financial terms. We therefore fully support the measures published by the European Commission on 13 March 2020, including the state aid and fiscal framework flexibility. At the same time, any new aviation taxes at EU or national level should be deferred to aid the sector's future recovery.

¹ <https://www.easa.europa.eu/SD-2020-01-pdf>

² https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/info/files/regulation-coronavirus-allocation-airports-slots-march-2020_en.pdf

³ https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/ip_20_459



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Health and safety, salary and reinstatement guarantee

Given the nature of their work, front line staff are exposed to a potential threat of COVID-19. Therefore, we welcome the fact that - in line with our previous demands - some of the measures proposed by EASA are becoming mandatory, but more binding measures are needed:

- Coordinated hygienic protocols should be established for other aviation-related activities such as ground handling or airport operations;
- Member States should establish short-term work schemes or other suitable measures to retain the workforce, and ensure that every worker is reinstated after the crisis under the same terms and conditions. Aviation will only be able to resume quickly if skilled workers are available.

Lessons learned for the future

Over the past years, workers suffered from the blind liberalisation of aviation. While prices have gone down and passenger numbers up, workers have paid the price. Their salaries decreased, and their working conditions deteriorated. If aviation is to retain its essential role in providing connectivity for Europe, we should not repeat the same mistakes and rely only on the market forces.

We cannot allow free-market practices to exploit a global pandemic, allowing some companies to profit in this unnatural environment. Employees will suffer unnecessarily, and the public will see a considerably reduced offer of airline services. The EU and the Member States must take their responsibility to maintain a coherent aviation system, including through measures such as state intervention or even renationalisation of parts of the industry if needed.

The EU and the Members States need to take responsibility and help to rebuild an aviation system that is resilient and future-proof. Aviation is not only part of the economy, but it also has an important societal function.

Importance of social dialogue

Especially in the time of crisis, social dialogue plays an essential role in finding solutions that are balanced and accepted by all partners. We, therefore, demand that all changes affecting workers and their working conditions need to be properly consulted and negotiated with trade unions in the framework of the social dialogue, as well on an ad hoc basis.



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