



Minutes

Ground Handling Working Group meeting

24 January 2023 (hybrid)

1. Welcome, adoption of the draft agenda and approval of minutes of last meeting on 2 March 2022

ACI (chair) and ETF (vice-chair) co-chaired the working group meeting. The draft agenda was adopted. The draft minutes of last meeting on 2 March 2022 were adopted.

2. Staff shortages – developments and forecast for next Summer

ACI presented the topic on staff shortages – developments and forecast for next summer (see slides). He highlighted the necessity to focus on quality and resilience and improving the social stability.

ETF underlined the importance to work on social issues. The example of ground handling at Rome Airport led to more stability in the market.

ASA mentioned the recent request by EASA on waste water resampling (China) which might cause disruptions.

A4D highlighted the effect of the Brexit. Many workers left the UK which had a major effect on airports.

ERA stated that in Germany each Bundesland performs its own background checks.

ENAA added that local coordination is crucial at every airport.

ACI shared the example of the Airport of Amsterdam where a social agreement was adopted in summer 2022 to solve the disruptions.

The chair suggested to send a joint letter to the European Commission (Commissioner Vălean) to give the social dialogue more visibility and to show the commitment of the social partners to work together on the stability in the sector and to make the airport an attractive workplace.

The Social Partners agreed to send a joint letter. The final version will be agreed in the following week.

3. Collective labour agreements

ETF provided a presentation on “Airports: A complex system in a fragmented sector”.

ASA reported that in North America the situation is evolving – back to pre-Covid – concerning the discussion on wages.

ETF underlined that wages are important to live in a decent way. Furthermore, ETF mentioned that the staff shortage in the ground handling sector is a key issue.

ACI expressed that there is a trend from sole competition and efficiency to more comprehensive views where airports and other stakeholders take into account the social dimension as a part of the stability of the sector.

The chair concluded that the social partners will keep the focus on making the airport an attractive place of work in order to avoid disruptions in the coming summer.

4. EASA upcoming Ground Handling Regulation – social dimensions, presentation by Julia Egerer (EASA)

EASA presented an overview on the state of play of the upcoming European Ground Handling Regulation - Rulemaking task 0728 on Ground Handling Requirements (see slides).

A first feedback round was held after slide 9 of the presentation.

ACI stated that airports welcomed the rulemaking and underlined the importance that there is a coherent approach between the airport, the airline and the ground handling organisation. ACI stressed that the future regulations need to be coherent with the existing rules.

ASA mentioned that just culture is a major challenge in ground handling (fear of reporting). Anonymous benchmarking is being piloted.

ETF stated that training is very important for the just culture in a sector with a high staff turnover. Audit results have to be implemented afterwards.

ERA referred to the lack of an occurrence reporting in ground handling, e.g. in Germany and difficulties in GH regarding language proficiency.

EASA continued the presentation. Afterwards the social partners exchanged on the use of industry standards to credit oversight, i.e. enabling competent authorities to take into account if a GH organisation is working in accordance with an industry standard and reducing the oversight from the competent authority as a result.

ASA mentioned that the different approaches taken per airline creates tensions and makes training difficult.

ETF expressed their interest to participate in the discussions currently taking place at EASA between EASA, IATA, ACI and ASA on the application of the IATA industry standards and requested to be consulted by EASA on the changes introduced to the draft regulation regarding industry standards.

EASA stated that crediting of industry standards and the role of industry standards was indeed not included in the first draft that was consulted with stakeholders in the summer of 2022. EASA mentioned that due to feedback from industry, who have developed industry standards, EASA is now discussing with IATA, ACI and ASA on the role of industry standards and how to credit industry standards for oversight. After discussions with those industry stakeholders a concept will be developed which will be included in the revised draft of the Opinion, which will then be consulted with all stakeholders (Member States and all industry stakeholders, including ETF). EASA took note that ETF would like to be part of the discussion.

The chair thanked EASA for the presentation.

5. Unruly passengers – update from ETF on compendium and recent developments

ETF briefed on the main results of the social dialogue project. ETF reported about the main findings and best practices of the compendium and distributed it to social partners. Furthermore, ETF mentioned the joint statement of EU civil aviation social partners on unruly passenger behaviour of 16 September 2022.

ETF invited participants to use the compendium. Additionally, she provided an update of the actions taken by the Bologna Airport.

6. AOB

At the end of the meeting the chair announced that the plenary is scheduled for 26 October 2023.

The chair thanked all participants.