

Minutes of the High-level workshop

"Working towards achieving socially responsible air transport - A matter for all of us"
4 April 2019, Brussels

On 4 April 2019, the European Commission organised, as announced in its report adopted on 1 March 2019 focussing on aircrews¹, a high-level workshop on "*working towards achieving socially responsible air transport*". The aim of the workshop was to bring together all interested parties to take stock of progress made on the social agenda for aviation which was set out in the 2015 aviation strategy. It was also to help identify possible ways forward to be explored by the next Commission but also by the Member States. The objective of this workshop was also to discuss how all interested parties can work together towards a socially responsible air transport in a highly competitive market.

The event brought together 140 representatives from the airlines, airline organisations, trade union associations representing the European aircrew as well as representatives from the Member States both from the aviation and the labour law side of the administration, the European parliament and the European Economic and Social Committee. It was kicked off by Commissioner Bulc and closed by Director-General Joost Korte from DG Employment, Social affairs and Inclusion. A panel of high-level stakeholders and authorities, including representatives from the European parliament (Karima Delli, chair of the Transport Committee) and the European Economic and Social Committee (J. Krawczyk, rapporteur for the Committee's opinion on the 2015 Aviation Strategy for Europe), had an exchange of views on lessons taken, top priorities and possible ways forward.

The high-level event was very much welcomed by the participants as an opportunity for all interested parties to share their views, concerns and experience about how to work together towards a socially more responsible air transport in today's market. Presentations and group discussions were very fruitful and provided useful insights on the situation of aircrews in Europe today, but also of airlines, and on how this is being tackled in the various Member States and by stakeholders.

The Commission's report was generally welcomed by the participants, in particular the acknowledgement that there are key issues affecting some European aircrews and airlines that need to be tackled. The concrete actions identified in the report to help address those issues in the short term were also seen as a useful first step.

Participants agreed that legal uncertainty regarding aircrews' social and working conditions and lack of enforcement at national level were the two main challenges. Aircrews are not always aware of the law applicable to them and which court to go to. It is sometimes difficult to know or understand which rules and protection apply to aircrews. Participants exchanged ideas on how to better share information and raise awareness among the interested parties about existing rules, in particular staff. Some suggested ways to start raising awareness for their employees as well as for the different national authorities, like creating a national EU info board where all relevant labour and aviation laws are gathered. Overall, it was felt that improving the dialogue and cooperation at all levels – in particular between the social partners, be it at national or European level, but also with the relevant national authorities – were key to achieve a socially more responsible aviation. For some participants, ad hoc rules

¹ Report from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions. *Aviation Strategy for Europe: Maintaining and promoting high social standards* (Brussels, 1 March 2019).

for the aviation sector could also help to improve legal certainty. The participants particularly welcomed the setting up of a group of Member State experts coming both from the aviation and the labour law side of the national administrations. This expert group should work on identifying best practices and ways to improve enforcement at national level, and involve social partners wherever appropriate. A first meeting of this expert group was held the day after the workshop, on 5 April 2019.