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TAKE ACTION TO PREVENT COLLISION

ETF Air Traffic Management Statement on COVID-19

Air traffic Management (ATM) as part of the wider aviation industry is facing the most significant crisis in its history. ATM staff continues to provide an essential service to ensure flights can continue to operate, with cargo and medical flights playing a particularly important role at the moment. Despite the vital importance of the industry, there are several crucial on-going issues. These are relevant to the continuing provision of ATM services now and, even more importantly, in the future, after we emerge from the current situation.

Worker Safety

The safety of our members at work is of paramount importance. Social distancing measures and personal protective equipment are cornerstones for the safe continuation for the provision of ATM services.

While the majority of employers are complying with the applicable rules, improvements can still be made in many places. We call upon all employers to live up to their legal obligations to protect their workforce and upon the governments to ensure proper monitoring.

Regulatory Flexibility

We welcome the initiatives by the European Aviation Safety Agency (EASA) and National Supervisory Authorities (NSAs) concerning licencing issues. To aid with social distancing measures and to provide flexibility to continue to allow service provision, arrangements were put in to place to extend qualifications and medical certificates. These actions have successfully translated into increased protection of staff and keeping the service safe. While exemptions and flexibility concerning the COVID-19 crisis are helpful, such provisions must be pinned to the outcome of the crisis.

EASA and NSAs must prevent 'regulatory creep' and ensure that standards are upheld to their pre-crisis levels. It is also critical to avoid any kind of overflow when the activity restarts. Within



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training organisations and NSAs, many licences may need to be revalidated at the same time, and flexibility arrangements must take this risk into account.

Economic Aid

Air Navigation Service Providers (ANSPs) derive their income from passengers and cargo flying through airspace and utilising airports. Due to the approx. 90% drop in air traffic, ANSPs are facing a severe cashflow problem. ANSPs are critical parts of national infrastructure, and due to the requirement to have to provide a service at all times, irrespective of traffic levels, they have a fixed cost base that is not easy to scale quickly. The ability to be able to provide pre-crisis service levels needs to be in place for the recovery as well, to ensure the whole aviation industry and the broader global economy can be ready to rebound.

ETF supports the initiatives from Eurocontrol to advance some of the air navigation service charges to allow important cashflow to reach ANSPs. We are concerned, however, that this is not enough: loans will need to be reimbursed and will further affect the ability of the passengers and freight to be transported as intended.

We call upon the Member States to provide adequate funding for their ANSPs so they can continue to provide services, both now and to support the resumption of more normal traffic levels. This situation demonstrates all too clearly how ANSPs are crucial parts of the State. They should not be operated on a 'market-based-for-profit model', as they will unlikely be able to withstand crises such as these without state intervention.

The performance scheme which governs air navigation charges needs immediate emergency measures. The scheme was never designed to deal with a crisis such as this, and the State plans for Reference Period 3 will now bear no resemblance to reality.

We call upon the European Commission to urgently address this situation and set out what it intends to do about the performance scheme. The Commission needs to provide clear information on how it intends to support ANSPs for the remainder of the Reference Period.

Operational Activity

ETF notes the initiative concerning flight profiles introduced by some airline trade associations and CANSO. Our members strive to provide the very best service at all times. They are already providing significant short cuts and continuous descent and climb procedures – they are professionals using their very best judgement. It is what they are paid to do, and they can do this without top-down interference from lobbyists.

Our members will continue to work with pilots, in the front-line operational environment, to make every flight as expeditious and environmentally friendly as they can, while remaining within important safety parameters.



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Single European Sky (SES) Reform

ANSPs are currently overwhelmed, focusing on how to survive, and they have little capacity to engage in a strategic discussion on the future of the European ATM. This crisis may introduce some far-reaching and long term changes. We need to return to a stable state - whatever that may look like - before determining how to proceed and what reforms would best fit the industry. ANSPs will likely face changes in the coming months – they might need some support under a revised Performance and Charging regulation.

We call upon the European Commission to take this into account and delay its work on publishing its next reform of the Single European Sky. Structural changes coming from an SES reform regulation during this time would be detached from reality and would cause unnecessary disturbance and distraction. There is a real danger a new regulation could hamper recovery, and not match the situation the European aviation market finds itself in.

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