



Mr Henrik Hololei,
Director General DG MOVE, European Commission
By email only - Henrik.Hololei@ec.europa.eu

Mr Patrick Ky,
Executive Director, EASA
By email only - Patrick.Ky@easa.europa.eu

Brussels, 19 January 2021

Re: Vaccine prioritisation for essential aviation workers

Dear Mr Hololei,
Dear Mr Ky,

The COVID-19 pandemic has had a devastating effect on our European society and economy. As you well know, the aviation sector remains in an unprecedented crisis, with the closure of several European airlines and deep capacity reductions. Over 166,000 aviation job losses have already been announced.¹

The development and regulatory approval of COVID-19 vaccines is thus welcome news for all. Prioritisation – within government vaccination programmes – of essential workers in industries that are the drivers of the economy, such as air transport, has the potential to speed up Europe’s economic recovery.

Transport workers will be crucial to this economic recovery; many of them will be responsible for ensuring the safe and smooth transport of the COVID-19 vaccine both in Europe and around the world. IATA expects this to be the largest single transport challenge in our history, requiring the equivalent of over 8,000 Boeing 747 cargo aircraft. Similarly, passenger flights are crucially important for cargo transport, as about 50% of all air cargo is transported in the belly of passenger aircraft. Transport workers, including airline crew members having direct contact with passengers, will be needed to respond to the pent-up demand for air travel in the coming months, and as we seek to restore consumer confidence in air travel as the safest means of transport.

¹ Source: Five Aero, Dec. 2020

Although the rollout of the vaccine remains at an early stage and will not be widely available before the second half of 2021, we note that national governments are already planning (or have planned) which groups will be prioritised to receive the vaccine - naturally starting with a prioritisation of frontline healthcare workers and the most vulnerable citizens. However, we are concerned that essential transport workers have not systematically been identified as a group requiring a high degree of priority, despite the obvious benefits it would bring both in terms of health and restoring passenger confidence.

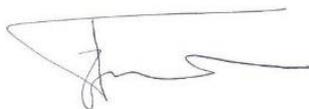
We believe that staff who have direct contact with passengers (flight crew and airport staff) should be considered essential workers and given higher priority in vaccination programmes. Similarly, cargo staff directly involved in the transport of COVID-19 vaccines and essential goods should also be prioritised to support national vaccination campaigns throughout the EU.

We also understand that some third countries might introduce COVID-19 vaccination as an entry requirement. In this scenario, European airlines with non-vaccinated crews will not be able to fly to these specific countries. Therefore, not vaccinating crew as part of priority transport workers might result in a competitive disadvantage for European airlines when global aviation traffic resumes.

While this remains an issue of national competence, we believe that the European Commission and EASA have an important role to play in ensuring that essential aviation workers are prioritised in vaccination programmes. This would facilitate the recovery of the European air transport system and with it, an expedited recovery for European tourism and our wider economy.

We would be grateful for the opportunity to discuss this matter with you and consider ways in which we can work together to encourage European governments in assigning a higher priority to essential aviation workers in their rollout of COVID-19 vaccines.

Yours sincerely,



Thomas Reynaert
Managing Director
Airlines for Europe - A4E



Rafael Schwartzman
Regional Vice President Europe
International Air Transport Association - IATA