

Saving Summer 2022 – A practical guide

As we continue to struggle through a difficult summer, the ETF has developed a guide of priorities to consider when discussing how best to retain and recruit workers at airports and in the aviation industry more broadly. Our advice looks at the overarching concerns in European aviation, but we recognise that each workplace will have a unique set of circumstances, and therefore there is no one-size fits all approach. As a first step, employers and unions must sit down and negotiate locally through collective bargaining structures, using our advice as a guide to discussions.

All dialogue must be based on the fair and equal principles of social dialogue with the aim to reach agreement between unions representing workers, and their employers. In some airports we are starting to see stability returning thanks to well-planned and negotiated agreements between unions and employers. These agreements encourage staff retention as there is a clear path forward to improve conditions, while also attracting new staff by making terms and conditions more competitive.

- **Some key aspects to attract more workers and improve staff retention in the short-term:**
 - Adapt to the cost of living
 - Work must pay, and work at airports must be just as beneficial to a potential or current employee as any other sector. Considering the global cost of living crisis, and the 'great resignation', now is not the time for employers to attempt to reduce employment costs. Not adapting to the cost of living will force workers to leave

and go to sectors where their work will have material benefit to them and their families.

- Improving work-life balance
 - One of the biggest complaints from airport workers is shift patterns. Split-shifts should be avoided, and workers should be given the opportunity to ensure a decent work-life balance.

- Airport-wide or sector-wide agreements
 - To ensure a level-playing field at airports, airport-wide or sector-wide agreements around minimum pay and conditions should be considered. These agreements ensure that all workers in the airport or sector are treated fairly and helps to prevent high levels of local competition for workers. Such agreements can also provide protections around transfer of staff and allow staff to move freely and securely between employers.

- Airport Committees
 - Airport-wide committees comprising workers representatives, airport authorities, national aviation authorities and all employers at the airport are a good way to ensure quick and efficient airport-wide dialogue when dealing with issues related to human resources, recruitment, and retention. Airports committees allow all stakeholders to engage openly on airport-wide issues and can improve both operational efficiency and social dialogue.

- End COVID-era agreements
 - With workers stretched to their limits, and traffic recovering quickly, now is the time to end COVID-era agreements and to adapt to the new climate in the industry. By continuing COVID-era pay agreements, employers run the risk of losing workers to other sectors and other employers within the industry, as workers try to make ends meet during the cost-of-living crisis, and the competition for workers heats up.

- Protecting workers at work
 - With the increased wait times at airports, and the increased stress amongst passengers during this busy period it is important to ensure that workers are protected from disruptive passenger incidents in the airport. Employers and unions should consider ways to protect workers such as panic buttons at boarding/check-in, training to handle disruptive passengers and the response times of emergency services should they be required. A good dialogue with local law enforcement is essential, as is a direct relationship between workers/unions and local law enforcement.