



EUROPEAN  
TRANSPORT  
WORKERS'  
FEDERATION

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The sustainable aviation vision of the European Transport Workers' Federation

## Landing desirable jobs

September 2022

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# Landing desirable jobs

## INTRODUCTION

In 2021, the latest report from the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) reaffirmed that “It is unequivocal that human influence has warmed the atmosphere, ocean and land”. Citizens, organised civil society, worker movements, environmentalists, young activists, all those who care about the well-being of the planet and its living beings know all too well that the United Nations is right to call the current climate crisis a ‘code red’ situation.

For this reason, urgent action is necessary in all sectors of the economy to try and mitigate the effects of climate change with substantial efforts needed in decarbonisation. At COP26 in November 2021, 197 governments reaffirmed the target set out in the Paris Agreement in 2015 for countries to restrict global temperature increases to 1.5 degrees, which will require emissions cuts of 45 percent by 2030 (relative to 2010 levels), and net zero by 2050.

The aviation industry globally is lagging behind on this schedule. While the Paris Agreement currently does not foresee emissions reporting for the sector, responsibility lies with ICAO to develop its own targets. In this context, the ICAO CORSIA targets allow continued growth in flights from 2019 levels so long as such growth is carbon neutral. Carbon neutrality relies for now on early-stage technological advancements which might take time to prove their effectiveness and offsetting models whose functioning is often undermined by corporate interests as highlighted by many, including environmental groups and unions.

Based on the most alarming estimates (other calculations are more conservative), aviation currently accounts for 2.5 percent of global carbon emissions and up to 3.5 percent of the greenhouse warming effect. These figures are very low if compared to other industries such as energy use in industry or buildings; however, they are also very high given that only 11 percent of the global population flew each year before the pandemic, and only 1 percent were ‘frequent flyers’ that produced most emissions. Additionally, more than half of CO<sub>2</sub> emissions produced by the aviation industry comes from long-haul flights.

Zooming in on the European context, aviation accounts for 4.8 percent of total CO<sub>2</sub> emissions, and it is clear that the sector needs a much more ambitious decarbonisation plan, one that has people at its centre. Right when the emissions were at their lowest during the travel restrictions imposed by governments to contain the COVID-19 pandemic, it is bitterly ironic that the industry’s own workers and transport workers in general suffered disproportionately. While aviation workers at all levels witnessed job losses, loss of income, physical and mental health distress, and discrimination for defending their rights at work, many employers in the aviation industry took this as an opportunity to lay off staff, cut labour rights and working conditions. Furthermore, States failed to protect jobs in the sector by offering unconditional state aid to employers without job retention guarantees.

Indeed, the current 2022 summer chaos is a graphic representation of the fact that the aviation sector is not what it once was and the lay-offs and “contingency plans” due to the COVID crisis only made it worse. Today, workers in the sector are faced with low wages, long hours and precarious contracts including agency work, zero-hour contracts and even self-employment. Workers are routinely expected to work beyond the point of fatigue, and this is only getting worse as passenger numbers increase, capacity remains stagnant and the industry relies on overtime.

Pushing workers to the limit is nothing new. The industry has long been subjected to a race to the bottom in job quality. For decades we have seen the end of decent work, and the introduction of jobs with low pay, bad conditions and high workloads. This has been brought on by push for ‘free market’ economic policies of the EU which have prioritised the maximisation of profits for business owners at the expense of aviation workers across Europe.

**Faced with economic, social and environmental concerns that concretely affect their day-to-day lives, aviation workers and their unions across the globe are aware that we only have one planet and to care for it means to care for present and future generations of working families. They know that there is no work on a dead planet and that new viruses and extreme climate events already are (and will be even more) a new reality as long as exploitation of natural resources, depletion of biodiversity and pollution remain the overlooked negative externalities of our capitalist system.**

Emission figures might be disregarded by some, but the **aviation sector has a big role to play in mitigating the effect of climate change** by reducing CO2 emissions and doing its part to achieve environmental sustainability. In this context, aviation workers must be key actors of change in the sector and they call for complete sustainability where social sustainability goes hand in hand with the environmental one.

**Aviation workers**, who have suffered years of liberalisation in the sector, the deterioration of working conditions and collective bargaining, care about their jobs, livelihoods and the impact their industry has on the environment. Nevertheless, they **cannot be the ones to pay the price**.

The European Transport Workers’ Federation (ETF) and its civil aviation section promote a model of sustainability where workers and their unions fight for a prosperous future in an industry that becomes ever more sustainable thanks to technological advancements mainly, gradual and long-term take up of alternative modes of transport, where possible, and a quality professional alternative for workers taking up new roles.

The only way forward for the workers of a sector that is crucial for mobility, connectivity, job creation and retention, but also for carbon cutting, is the perspective of a just transition where new technological advancements are accompanied with training, reskilling, mobility schemes and strong social protection.

This paper is the result of European aviation workers’ collective dialogue, intelligence and deep expertise on the ground or in the air. It outlines their vision for future desirable jobs: jobs that are full of knowledge, jobs that are healthy to perform, jobs that pay living wages, provide quality working conditions, reduce their impact on the environment and foster a work environment characterized by safety, just culture and democratic participation of workers.

# AVIATION IS A COMMON GOOD

Ever since humanity appeared on the Earth people have travelled from one place to another for a number of reasons just like they have eaten, heated their houses, and performed many other activities. Of course, the quest for the well-being that few enjoy today came at the cost of the suffering of many who still cannot afford to travel, eat or heat their houses comfortably. Still, during the last two centuries, with the emergence of mass society, fossil fuel energy production and consumerism, working people in the most advantaged regions of the world saw their livelihoods and quality of life improve substantially. Improvements were not obtained without a fight and the unions' role was crucial for establishing labour rights, better working conditions, holiday pay, the 5-day working week, sick leave and other social protection mechanisms that, while ever more in danger, we enjoy to this day. Protecting, representing, unifying the working class is a union business, but so is promoting freedom and enjoyment of social and technological progress.

As the climate crisis worsens, and the effects are more and more visible and tragic, awareness on environmental behaviour is raising in the media, education institutions, advertisements, activist groups and consumers. Most campaigns are indeed focused on consumers' behaviours and financial choices, namely on which product or service to purchase.

While the aviation sector needs to go a long way to reduce its impact on the environment and effectively decrease GHG emissions, it cannot be overlooked that aviation has a vital social and economic role in our world. While well meaning, campaigns and pressure on consumers, which tend to put the emphasis on a single isolated consumer behaviour (flying), result in guiltting passengers who are already environmentally aware into changing their behaviour. A common misleading shortcut of such approach is to believe that consumers' behavioural change alone will have a relevant impact; citizen's engagement is indeed fundamental for change and innovation to occur in society and unions are strong allies and mobilizers in this process. However, this approach only works if coupled with major policy frameworks that tackle GHG emissions at the source and turn citizen's will into law. Focusing solely on consumers' behaviour is paradoxically beneficial for the capitalist system that generates over-consumption for it effectively shifts responsibility and accountability from producers ("polluters") and elected decision-makers towards the people.

**Long distance travel to see family and friends, and for holidays, is a major social benefit** that should not only be preserved, but ideally be extended more equally at the global level with a special focus on low-income and migrant families. Travelling is a right for which working people cannot be guilted or shamed, and, specifically, so is flying which also happens to be the only available mode of transport in many circumstances (e.g., accessing remote regions).

Additionally, aviation also makes a substantial contribution to the economy. The industry creates an estimated 87 million jobs globally, including 11.3 million jobs directly. Travel for business, while often necessary, has a potential for diminishing as we witness a more prominent diffusion of teleconferencing, but is also important for innovation. Moreover, air freight of critical goods such as medical supplies has a vital social role.

European aviation workers promote the **freedom of flying within the planet's limits**. Quality and efficiency

in flying should be prioritized compared to quantity, by making sure that a certain number of measures are put in place, such as renewing cargo jets which are usually older and more polluting, operating passenger jets at full capacity, choosing the most efficient route, and many others outlined later in this paper.

## SUMMARY

- Aviation carries many social benefits and people, also working people, will need to fly
- Need for robust policy and legislative framework to go hand in hand with environmental campaigns
- Prioritize quality flying over quantity: fly within the planet's limits

## 'THE PLANET IS FINE' – WHAT ABOUT THE WORKERS?

In a 1992 show in New York, world-known stand-up comedian George Carlin stated what would later become, probably to his deceit, a mantra for environmentalists and activists willing to engage other people in the fight against climate change: *"There is nothing wrong with the planet. The planet is fine, the people are f\*\*\*\*d"*. While the current climate urgency is much more complicated to summarize than a reductionist, yet powerful trope, it is useful to remind sceptics that the ultimate effects of GHG emissions are very much tangible for humans, be it health issues caused by air pollution, or other phenomena like climate refugees, crop diseases and new viruses.

European aviation workers believe that only healthy jobs are sustainable jobs: this goes for all professions of course and working in a safe workplace is a right, but the situation is particularly acute for aviation workers.

Engine efficiency, new propulsions systems, including hydrogen and battery powered aircraft, and sustainable aviation fuels (SAFs) are promising technological advancements that foresee to reduce the aviation industry climate impact. As stated in the International Transport Workers' Federation's (ITF) paper on sustainable aviation, "it is predicted that in the long term, these measures could reduce emissions by more than 75%. There are significant differences over how much each measure can contribute. Improved engine efficiency, hydrogen, and sustainable aviation fuels account for the lion's share of emissions reductions in most models". However, the carbon intensity of such solutions should be thoroughly assessed in order for a climate friendly supposed progress to actually be fit for purpose. Most importantly the impact these new technologies, especially SAFs, will have on aviation workers' health should be evaluated by including health and safety concerns in the very design of these new solutions and by including workers' representatives at every step of the process. Pilots, cabin crew, maintenance, repair and overhaul workers, ground staff, and ATM staff must all have a say in their development. Trade unions should also be involved in the development of health and safety standards at the international and national level. Health and safety systems must be based on the principle of equal participation of workers and management.

Airports will be the focus of the big changes in the short term. Electrification in airports will require aviation workers to handle high wattage equipment. New procedures and practices will also need to protect airport workers from extreme heat. Additionally, improving health and safety at airports can go beyond decarbonisation measures.

## **Air quality in the cabin and on the ground**

Poor air quality is an on-going issue for air crew who are faced with bleed air which circulates through the aircrafts' air conditioning and can be contaminated by chemicals such as oil or hydraulic fluid. Another category of workers for which air quality is of utmost importance ground staff workers, especially those working on the tarmac, who because of their profession, are subject to inhaling ultra-fine particles (UFP) from jet blast and other fumes emitted by aircrafts and other machines that operate on the ground. As demonstrated by several studies, ultra-fine particles are carcinogen and several cases of lung and bladder cancer have been correlated to this phenomenon in the airports of Amsterdam and Copenhagen.

## **Electrification and improvement of airports**

As mentioned earlier, the role of airports is paramount especially when considering that many improvements can be implemented without having to wait for new technology to be available. The Copenhagen airport is an example of sustainability that is being implemented thanks to the continuous negotiation and collaboration between employers and unions. In particular, the airport has set an ambitious goal of becoming emission-free by 2050, and many practices that are already in place for ground operations could be replicated elsewhere prioritising the right investments and the workers' well-being.

Simple actions like turning off the Auxiliary Power Unit (APU) and replacing the power supply to aircraft with ground power/air conditioning will go a long way in reducing CO<sub>2</sub>, and so will taxi provided by tow trucks which emit less emissions. Moreover, Copenhagen airport also has rules around APU usage on stand, which must be turned off in a matter of minutes very soon after arrival.

In general, electrification of airport operations (including ground fleets and mass transit links), and development of renewable energy production such as solar power installations would be very welcome steps towards more sustainable airports. And in terms of future development, it is worth to wonder: is it sustainable to have airport capacity development projects, nowadays, when capacity can already be found elsewhere?

## **Uptake of Sustainable Aviation Fuels (SAF)**

Fuel is the first cost area of any airline and fuel prices can significantly affect aircraft operators' economic performance and negatively impact competition on the market. Practices such as 'fuel tankering', i.e. loading more fuel than necessary in order to avoid refuelling at the destination where prices are higher, leads to unnecessary fuel burn (increase of emissions) and undermines fair competition.

The ETF supports the development, incentivising and promotion of SAFs. Being an example of technological advancement that promises to make the industry substantially greener, the ETF also supports the EU-mandated progressively higher uptake of SAFs (up to 63% by 2050) by airlines as a welcome progress. The European Parliament is currently amending the proposal for it to be more ambitious both in terms of uptake percentage and timeline, and of SAF origin.

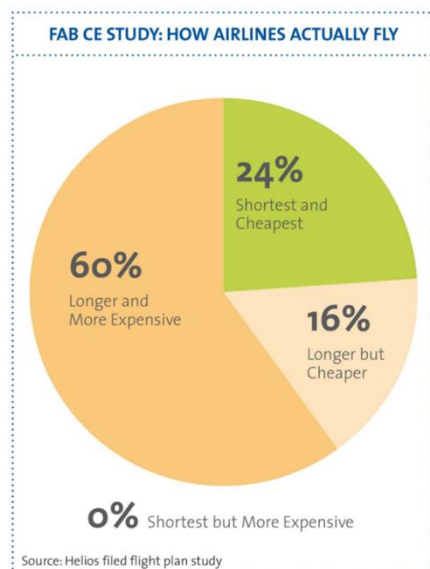
However, as the price of SAFs are considerably higher than fossil fuels for now, a particular focus on airlines' practices vis-à-vis the workers is needed to ensure that the cost of these higher prices is not paid by aviation workers by airlines making unjust savings on social and labour costs. Additionally, practices of non-EU airlines should be closely monitored to avoid fuel-tanking.



## Role of Air Traffic Management (ATM)

Unsurprisingly, the most efficient and most environmentally friendly route for an aircraft to fly to a given destination is the shortest one which allows, to a certain extent, to minimize the use of fuel.

However, as airspace users pay ATM charges to the air navigation service providers of the countries whose territories they fly over, in order to be able to use the air space, they often wish to choose the cheapest route available which is not necessarily the most environmentally sustainable one. However, as a study commissioned by FAB CE showed, they fail to even select the best available route under their own criteria.



Moreover, the utmost priority of the industry and of ATM in particular is safety: in an air space that is at its full capacity it can be problematic to prioritize the environmentally sustainable route over unforeseen traffic, military operations, weather conditions etc. Additionally, there needs to be a coherent and continuous exchange between ATM and pilots on how best to manage fuel burn/CO<sub>2</sub> emissions, namely on issues such as descent profiles. Continuous descent operations were very popular during the past pandemic years (with low traffic) and justified by a considerable amount of fuel which could be saved; however, the capacity needs make it impossible to have all aircrafts fly continuous descents at

present time and it is clear that industry sees capacity as a greater concern than environmental matters, which leads to flight profiles with unoptimized flight levels, low filed flight plans or even detours to avoid those regulations.

### SUMMARY

- Only healthy jobs can be sustainable
- Much can be done already now with the current technology to improve the sustainability of aviation
- Air quality must be improved both in the cabin and on the tarmac (tackle bleed air and jet blasts)
- Electrification of airports, more efficient use of APU on stand, improved taxi operations
- SAFs need to be promoted. They shouldn't be carbon-intensive or harmful to handle
- Efficient routing and descent profiling can be improved, but significant limitations out of our control remain (traffic, military operations, weather, safety considerations)

## WHO PICKS UP THE BILL?

Provided that workers representatives are involved all along the process, the green transition of the aviation sector will bring remarkable benefits for the environment and for the health of workers, passengers, and residents living close to the airports.

The transformation in engine and fuel efficiency, logistics, and production processes will be necessary but costly. Labour is often referred to as a major cost area for employers in the industry. But the social discontent of summer 2022 shows that compressing labour costs results in the plain impossibility for operations to



continue. In general, all matters related to sustainable aviation fuels (SAFs), their uptake and promotion, or fuel taxation in connection with the ETS system should be tackled by the EU as much as possible at the international level. Climate friendly measures at the EU level, even when commendable, often end up posing a competitive disadvantage compared to non-EU operators who do not have to follow climate regulations in their countries and regions; therefore, deteriorating working life of the European aviation workforce, which generally enjoys better rights and social protection than their international colleagues, and continuing the exploitation of non-EU workers across the globe, all the while allowing carbon leakage. The race to the bottom mentality in a sector that is liberalised for decades and also global by its nature needs to stop and workers cannot be considered a cost to limit in view of the green transition.

The States who have provided major financial support to employers in the aviation sector during the COVID crisis (and before) without requiring decent levels of job retention are again the ones funding the research ahead of the industry's green transition. It is essential that States and public institutions monitor closely the practices of the private actors they directly or indirectly fund, in order to safeguard labour and social standards.

## **Jet fuel taxation**

The ETF firmly believes that the aviation sector needs to do its part in reducing greenhouse gas emissions and mitigating the effects of climate change. Therefore, a tax on kerosene in aviation, which is being currently put forward in the framework of an EU directive proposal, represents a matter of tax and climate justice with regards to the planet and workers. However, every tax measure in this sphere should take into account the potential direct or indirect negative effects this new cost can have on labour, as it would not be the first time that working conditions, contracts and rights at work deteriorate and shrink to unfairly compensate a cost rise in other areas.

As a new EU law proposal extends this taxation to business flights in order to capture more uses by individuals, the ETF expresses satisfaction that a considerable polluter within the aviation sector, i.e. business aviation, will incur fuel taxes, and will not benefit from the transitional period granted to passenger flights.

The Just Transition Fund, the European Social Fund+ (ESF+) and the Social Climate Fund, which were presented by the European Commission in July 2021 need to live up to their promises and ensure that the cost of climate policy is not paid by the workers and their families.

## **Market-based offsetting schemes**

The EU Emission Trading System (ETS) directive is being revised in the framework of the EU's effort to meet its climate targets. In order for the EU to be able to promote a more ambitious, uniform global regulation on carbon pricing, it must have a mandate to negotiate for this at global level. In addition to its global mandate, we propose the application of one or both of these mechanisms in order to ensure fair and sustainable implementation of the ETS and support a broader application base in the short term: a) introducing a carbon border adjustment mechanism; b) replacing the free allocation system with targeted protection against unfair competition.

The ETS should support a move towards more sustainable modes of transport, including within the aviation sector, and should therefore promote a reduction in the use of business aviation. The ETS should encourage the use of sustainable mass transport and therefore force business jet users to pay higher charges.

Crucially, ETS revenues should be reinvested in development projects that will further reduce the environmental impact of aviation, by supporting a reduction in cost and greater uptake of SAFs. This can primarily be done by supporting greater SAF production. It should also support the transition of airports, fuellers and ground handlers to new regulations being imposed on SAF usage in European airports.

Through the ETS, the proposal should encourage operators to develop inter-modal transport networks in their major hubs in order to expand to a greater network of destinations, while also reducing unnecessary ultra-short-haul flights. This could be done by increasing or protecting the level of free allowances where an airline has moved parts of its operations from air to rail or other lower emitting forms of transport.

On another note, ICAO's Carbon Offsetting and Reduction Scheme for International Aviation (CORSIA) may have positive impacts in the future, but in the short term it must be treated with extreme caution. CORSIA proposes to offset emissions by investing in projects that reduce GHGs in the atmosphere, either through carbon sinks (such as tree planting projects), or mechanical carbon capture and storage (CCS) processes. Carbon trading schemes like CORSIA have been criticized for 'carbon leakage', or the idea that activities to reduce carbon pollution in one industry or region inadvertently end up increasing carbon emissions in other areas. Additionally, such market-based schemes can become mired in transparency and accountability concerns, particularly relating to the quality of the offsets. A European Commission funded study of CORSIA found that only 2% of the projects and 7% of available credits have a high likelihood of reducing emissions. Regional initiatives such as the EU Emissions Trading Scheme are vulnerable to similar problems.

CORSIA is a cornerstone of ICAO's policy of carbon neutral growth from 2019 levels. However, given widespread concerns over CORSIA's effectiveness, CORSIA offsets should not be used to justify industry growth until there is compelling evidence that it can deliver genuine emissions reductions. Instead, investments in technological and structural change measures, i.e., in-sector solutions, must be accelerated.

## **Efficient routing and SAF uptake through air traffic control charges**

To date, air traffic control charges are calculated per distance travelled and maximum take-off weight. This system is old and does not reflect enough the need to pay attention to ecological flight operations. In Europe individual air navigation service providers set prices and some are lower which attracts traffic from neighbouring countries. This, in most cases, prevents the ecological route (normally the most direct) because airlines see a business case to fly a detour, depending on the level of the kerosene price.

The starting point is the current system of collecting air traffic control charges in Europe, but instead of calculating the air traffic control charges according to a key of NM (nautical miles) and MTOW (maximum take-off weight), ETF proposes to use an ecological basis as a calculation in the future. Each manufacturer can provide an average consumption for its aircraft types. The aircraft type with the lowest reasonable consumption on an annual reference date (or per reference period) is to be set as the baseline in Europe. Deviating from this, will result in a penalty system based on route charges variation for those types that

consume more fuel.

There will be a further penalty for those aircraft operators who do not meet a specified quota of sustainable fuel. This penalty is to be reduced as the proportion of blended fuel increases. The blending quota is to be increased progressively. Another advantage is that there will be no distortion of competition with non-EU operators in key markets such as the trans-Atlantic market, since they also have to route their flights to the Americas via Europe.

Another proposal is a penalty system for deviations from the most ecological route (the shortest available route based on the wind forecasts on the day). Every day, EUROCONTROL should define the most ecologically efficient route between 2 points over Europe, depending on the current weather conditions. If there are deviations from this, although air traffic control authorities provide sufficient capacities, this also leads to a penalty from the original base value.

The level of the reference charge should correspond to the current charge level (or full cost coverage of air traffic control). The additional revenue from the penalty surcharges is to be used by the air navigation service providers to promote ecological air traffic.

These measures are intended to accelerate the switch to sustainable aviation fuels, minimize fossil CO2 emissions over Europe and promote ecological innovations in aviation.

## **Pricing and the low-cost model**

If travelling is a right, making travels and flying more accessible to working people must become a societal achievement. Air transport allows for connectivity of outermost regions, shipping of vital technology and supplies in remote areas and for maintaining social bonds among people.

With the emergence of the low-cost airlines model in Europe, access to a greater share of population that could not afford to fly before was granted. Unfortunately, though, what should be an effort to make aviation more inclusive for working people, represents in reality an economic model that is not sustainable under any point of view, especially in terms of social considerations.

Low-cost airlines have actively promoted an economic model where workers are disposable and this attitude is reflected in every aspect of working life, from the contracts which are mostly precarious, the low salary levels, deteriorated working conditions, and explicit anti-union policies that hinder workers' right of association and pose obstacles to proper representation and collective bargaining.

The ETF wants jobs in low-cost sector to be sustainable and desirable and this does not always fit with low prices.

## **Private aviation and the carbon footprint of the richest**

Let's consider a Bombardier Global Express business jet carrying on average six passengers and three crews: it emits 2.1 tonnes of CO2 per hour. An Airbus 320 NEO emits 2.4 tonnes of CO2 per hour while carrying 200 people. The example serves as a reminder that a serious reflection on the environmental impact

of private aviation is needed. Just one percent of people (private aviation users and frequent flyers) cause 50% of aviation sector's global CO2 emissions! As affirmed in a 2021 study by the NGO Transport & Environment: "In 2019, one tenth of all flights departing from France were with private jets, half of which travelled less than 500km. In fact, private jets are twice as likely to be used for very short trips (< 500 km) within Europe as compared to flights in commercial aviation. [...] private jets are 5 to 14 times more polluting than commercial planes (per passenger), and 50 times more polluting than trains, a gap which will grow as private jet users move towards aircraft which are bigger and more polluting than their commercial alternatives".

To make sure the private aviation industry is sustainable, from 2030 onwards, only zero carbon private flights (such as battery powered flights) should be allowed. Private flights should also be included in CORSIA (from which they are currently excluded).

Private aircraft also make the sky more crowded for less people travelling, a taxation of jet flights carrying 20 or less (excluding medical flights) via route charges adaptation should be considered.

Additionally, workers in private aviation companies are very rarely unionised and are subject to very difficult working conditions.

#### **SUMMARY**

- Taxing jet fuel is a matter of climate and social justice that shouldn't have repercussions on workers
- Market-based off-setting schemes like ETS and CORSIA are useful, but prices are too low. Against free allocation and in favour of an increasingly greater mandate of the EU at the international level
- Proposal to promote efficient routing and SAF uptake through a penalty-based system in air traffic charges
- Prices in the low-cost sector are too low and the pressure on labour cost is detrimental for workers and not sustainable
- Private aircraft are 5 to 14 times more polluting than commercial planes (per passenger). They should be heavily taxed and, if not carbon zero, banned by 2030.

## **JUST TRANSITION**

In Europe the aviation sector has been liberalised for many years producing detrimental effects on the quality of service for passengers and the well-being of workers. Nevertheless, aviation remains a major asset for States and should be recognised as a public good. Publicly funded research is producing the technological advances that are necessary for the green transition. This highlights the need for greater democratic oversight of the industry to make sure that aviation delivers benefits for all groups in society.

Social expectations and environmental goals can go hand in hand if aviation workers are active agents of the transition process and as long as just transition mechanisms are in place. Engaging aviation workers means addressing critical issues that have placed the workforce under intolerable strain over many years. These issues include employment security, access to decent work, equality for women and young workers, robust health and safety protections, and improved worker representation.

In this context of great transformation, every effort must be taken to retain workers in their existing roles. Where this is not possible, sufficient funding and methodologies must be made available for retraining workers into for different roles within the industry. Where redeployment is necessary, it must come with equal levels of pay, skill levels, and trade union representation.

The road to decarbonisation must ensure that the industry is able to retain necessary skills and expertise, and also avoid short term job cuts that will harm the industry's ability to conduct the transition most effectively. All aviation employers should engage their workers and unions around climate change issues through corporate-level just transition committees. Such committees should be built into collective bargaining structures and work toward enterprise-wide plans for emissions cuts while creating high quality jobs and upskilling plans.

Airport workers must be integrated into airport-wide multi-employer efforts to create zero carbon facilities. New green measures will not only reduce the carbon footprint at airports, but they also will have direct impacts on the health and safety of airport workers. Correspondingly, airports need to revise their governance systems to become more cohesive across all stakeholder types; wide variances in policies among different airport employers hinders both the effectiveness of climate change mitigation efforts and the just transition of their collective workforces to a greener economy.

Nationally (or internationally in some cases, such as the EU), just transition committees in the aviation industry should be formed that complement processes at the enterprise and airport levels. As certain factors could lead to a dramatic cut in the long-term traffic (national or supra-national restrictions for environmental issues; repetitions of pandemics; a growing "flight shame" among passengers; etc...), these "just transition committees" should work to avoid massive job destruction, by planning large professional retraining plans, especially in territories where aviation is a major provider of employment.

Worker, employer, and government participants should represent all key stakeholders and help formulate climate change policies that single employers and locations could not implement on their own. These include tax measures, funding mechanisms, operational regulations, safety net provisions, and cross-sector training initiatives.

## SUMMARY

- Aviation should be recognised as a public good because it fosters economic development and social bonds.
- States should have a greater democratic oversight over aviation companies because they finance not only social protection schemes but also research used to develop technological advances to make aviation greener alongside significant grants and tax exemptions
- Workers need to be included in the green transition every step of the way from design to implementation
- Workers should be retained in their role and if this is not possible a robust training programme needs to prepare them for their new role with equal levels of pay, conditions and union representation

- Airports need to revise their governance systems to become more cohesive across all stakeholder types
- Just transition committees should be established in all companies
- Just transition committees should work to avoid massive job destruction, by planning large professional retraining plans, especially in areas where aviation is a major provider of employment

## CONCLUSION

European aviation workers are not only workers but also citizens. The fight for a more sustainable working and living environment is a matter of climate justice and social justice for which they cannot pay the price. CO2 and other emissions are a marker of what is wrong with our economic system: negative externalities that hinder the very health and well-being of people who should be benefitting from social and technological progress. Yet profit comes always first to the detriment of workers and the environment. Change is on its way and all modes of production need to take into account how harmful their emissions are being on people. For this reason, ETF believes that all types of CO2 emissions should be taxed progressively by revenue: this would weigh in environmental concerns into the consumption of the wealthier while improving funding for the just transition and incentivizing green innovation.

## ABOUT THE ETF

The [European Transport Workers' Federation \(ETF\)](#) represents over 5 million transport workers from more than 200 transport unions across Europe, from the European Union, the European Economic Area, and Central and Eastern Europe, in over 30 countries. ETF's work is driven by its vision for Fair Transport: quality jobs with safe, reliable transport services for customers.

For more information on sustainable aviation, please contact Mila Shamku, Policy Officer for Aviation at ETF [m.shamku@etf-europe.org](mailto:m.shamku@etf-europe.org)