

ETF - Women in Aviation

- Rationale and objectives

This paper is a living document that aims to

- **voice women's issues that are common to all professions in aviation**
- **and for the first time ever (we think...) voices profession-specific issues (air crew, ground staff, ATM) with content gathered among female unionists around Europe.**

This document is drafted by the ETF Women in Aviation Working Group and all women working in our sector are invited to contribute and to report on issues that might be missing in this document.

We invite trade unions to use this paper as a basis for information, discussion and campaigning. You can use as an additional argument the [“Joint Statement of the European Social Partners in Aviation to address gender balance in aviation”](#). Among others, the European social partners commit to “establish gender-responsive work organisation measures and policies”.

Introduction

Very short and non-exhaustive overview of obstacles to accessing the labour market for women in general.

- Gender pay gap
- Pension gap
- Double burden (caring for others and domestic work)
- Work-place discrimination
- Low number of women in decision-making positions
- Sexual harassment and how to deal with being a woman in a male-dominated industry

Sector-specific issues for women in aviation in general

General overview of gender issues in the aviation industry (across professions)

- Salary segregation
 - o More men found in higher paid professions (ATCOs, pilots, ATSEPs...)
- Glass ceiling
 - o Low number of women in management position (even in professions numerically dominated by women e.g cabin crew)
- Sticky floor
 - o Very low horizontal mobility across professions
- Work-life balance
 - o Reconcile working shifts with care work
- Commuting and access to facilities
 - o Workplace usually at airports or close to airports: safe commuting and walking to workplace especially at night
- Health consequences related to shift work
 - o Night shifts can lead to an over average rate of [Breast cancer/night shift recognition in France](#)

- Higher risk of fatigue
- Higher risk of infections and diseases
- Exposure to fumes/UFP/ground

Sector-specific issues by profession

CABIN CREW

	Issues	Way forward ?
Isolation	Vulnerability exacerbated by mobile workplace and changing teams	
	Isolated at work, never working with the same people	
	Sexual harassment on board and during lay overs by customers and co-workers	
	Less prone to react against misconduct or harassment exacerbated by isolation	
	Specific heightened alert when laying over in countries where cultural misconception around being a woman is possible	
Recognition and image	Passenger perception makes it difficult to be recognised as safety professionals	
	Risk to the safety of all passengers if companies don't promote cabin crew as safety professionals.	
	Uniforms often too tight and still based on sexual stereotypes.	Better possibilities to choose different parts of the uniform and be able to wear comfortable shoes.
	Uniforms are not always adapted to the right season or weather conditions at destination. (especially women's uniforms)	Introduce season-based uniforms and differentiate in between bases/countries. (some companies do have seasonal uniforms already today) Choice of the worker to wear whichever type of uniform and appropriate shoes, fit for the weather conditions. Get input from staff before introducing new uniforms; need for a uniform committee involving the union and/or works council (flying personnel).
	Requirements on hair and makeup	
Representation and "glass"	Few operational leaders are women - The main progression for a cabin	Encourage and promote women to take on



ceiling”	crew is to become a senior cabin crew, or purser. - Low number of companies that have at least a 50-50 presence of men and women as senior or purser.	coordination and leadership roles. Flexibility for women coming back from maternity leave. Learning programs Mentoring
Disciplinary issues	Imbalance in treatment between pilots and cabin crew in case of illegal behaviours	Anti-discrimination clause in the CLA
Work-life balance	Specificity of working time rules for air crew and implications on women	
	Part-time issue: when flying half the block hours, there may be an impact on holiday days.	More research should be made on how each company manages part-time. A consideration should be made that if there is a limitation both on block hours and days off for full-time, shouldn't it be the same for part-timers?
	Difficulty in organising shifts when spouse or partner is also a cabin crew. Particularly complicated when sharing custody of a minor.	Possibility to ask for shift to be adapted to the couple's need (some companies are starting to allow). Check for different roles
Violence and Harassment	Often by unruly passengers who should have already been prevented from entering into plane.	ETF Compendium of best practices in preventing and managing disruptive incidents in civil aviation
	Reluctance to report incidents due to lack of Just Culture.	
	Harassment by superiors and fear to report	Encourage reporting, establish structures for clear disciplinary measures
	Just as with ground staff, often women are front line workers. It is often women in the aisle of the plane.	Proposal for companies to organise mixed crews
Health		
	Reproductive health Possible negative effect of long haul flying on effectiveness of fertility treatments. A sanitary stop is sometimes difficult to arrange and a tight and light-coloured uniform is not comfortable. - Extra sleeping problems often come as a symptom. When experiencing hot flashes, a tight and plastic-y	Insert menstrual/menopause health into CLA Extra leave (not within sick leave) for menopause. Explore Spanish law on



	uniform and the lack of fresh air can be uncomfortable	menstruation leave.
	Weight gain - Difficult to keep a healthy diet while away from home for extended times. - Colleagues struggle with a healthy weight. Food in the plane often contains a lot of fat and carbohydrates. - Irregular sleep and time differences have a negative influence on your weight. - Not exclusively a women's issue, but links to issue of women in menopause, for whom the problems are bigger than for men.	
	Gender-specific consequences of radiation on future ultra long-haul flights	Research.

PILOTS (additional to common elements with cabin crew)

	Issues	Way forward ?
Isolation Male dominated jargon	Only 6% of pilots are women; discrimination among co-workers	
Training + license keeping	Difficulty to access training due to high costs; More difficult to keep the license e.g. due to maternity leave	Scholarships for women pilots

GROUND

	Issues	Way forward ?
Violence and harassment	Unruly and violent passenger behaviour (especially in customer-facing roles) Harassment from co-workers or leaders Walking from parking lots at nights.	ETF Compendium of best practices in preventing and managing disruptive incidents in civil aviation Bologna-protocol approach to emergency Get in flight mode- campaign in Norway
Representation and "sticky floor"	Difficulty in getting into other jobs in the ground (most women are on the landside)	Improve terms and conditions in order to make landside jobs more attractive for everyone (women and



		men alike) Improve access without pre-requisite Adapt equipment to make it fit for women (which would in turn improve men's working conditions as well): e.g Fraport experimental project on ULD with an automatic lid. The project was successful but the ULD never got certification.
Recognition and image	Uniforms of landside agents often too tight and still based on sexual stereotypes Hair and make-up requirements	Better possibilities to choose different parts of the uniform and be able to wear comfortable shoes.
	Most uniforms for ramp are made for male bodies and often not fit for purpose.	
Health	Reproductive Health - Periods, dysmenorrhea and sanitation - Excessive length of time in between toilet breaks - Excessive distance of toilets in short breaks - Menopause issues	
	Bag weight: excessive for women, but in general for everyone	Lower the weight to improve health and safety for everyone
	Radiation for colleagues at TSA	
Work-life balance	Difficulties with split-shifts, irregular working hours and work at weekends.	

ATM

	Issues	Way forward ?
Representation and sticky floor	Low number of women Air Traffic Control Officers (ATCOs) and Air Traffic Safety Engineering Professionals (ATSEPs) , compared to men and other roles in ATM.	Targeted recruitment should be the way forward in this regard.
Access to the profession	Women less prone to take the risk to go through a costly training. Even when training is paid, the figures around female applicants are low	
	General lack of awareness of ATC careers, even more so among women	Increase information and advertising of ATC career options, especially on social



		media in collaboration with employers Careers day/fair targeted to high school; family day
	FEAST (First European Air Traffic Controller Selection Test), standard ATCO test used in 50+ ANSP criticized for gender bias, namely for favouring young men with extensive experience of computer gaming.	Challenge the disproportionately low female numbers passing these tests
Education specificity and skills spectrum	ATCO and ATSEPs Licence is very specific so the education is high but very narrow and not reusable in other roles	Upskilling or encouraging diversity in roles would be useful.

Resources

- [Women and aviation: Quality jobs, attraction and retention \(ilo.org\)](https://www.ilo.org/public/english/employment/equality/gender/aviation/quality_jobs_attraction_and_retention.pdf)
- [ILO conclusions of the technical meeting on aviation](#)
- [Aviation for all](#)
- [Elevate aviation](#)
- [Ellas vuelan alto](#)
- [Preventing and managing disruptive incidents in civil aviation](#)
- [Invisible Women | Caroline Criado Perez](#)
- [What's a Woman's Job ? | ETUI](#)
- [ETF Compendium of best practices in preventing and managing disruptive incidents in civil aviation](#)

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