



CONNECT

TRADE UNION

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SUBMISSION TO THE OIREACHTAS JOINT COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORT AND COMMUNICATIONS

Tuesday 9th February 2021 @ 11.00am

RE: ISSUES AFFECTING THE AVIATION SECTOR AS A RESULT OF COVID-19

- EU Traffic Light System
- Covid Testing at Airports
- Covid Impacts on Workers in the Sector
- Travel into Ireland
- Vaccine Roll-out

Chair and members of the committee, please find below the submission of Connect Trade Union on the above issues.

(a) Introduction:

Connect Trade Union are the largest engineering union in the Republic of Ireland affiliating to the Irish Congress of Trade Unions for just under 40,000 workers across all sectors of Irish society.

In the transport sector we would represent approximately 3000 workers across, rail, shipping, air and road transport with 50% of those being electrical trades, mechanical trades and engineering workers in the aviation sector primarily in aircraft maintenance, aerospace component production and facilities maintenance in companies such as Atlantic

Aviation, Honeywell Aerospace, Noonan, SR Technic, Aer Lingus, Ryanair, Growing Aviation Solutions, SRT Design and Lufthansa Technik Shannon.

Connect Trade Union would also represent all electrical trades, civil trades and most mechanical trades working in maintenance provision in DAA, SAA, and various regional airports.

In addition, we would have a larger number of workers supporting these industries in contract support, construction, specialist services, lift maintenance and a number of other sectors.

While taking in to account the impact that the Covid-19 pandemic has had generally on the various sectors of the Irish economy the downturn in the aviation industry has been without doubt the sector most severely impacted.

In the first lockdown passenger throughput in Irish airports reduced by over 98% and even in phase 3 lockdown throughput was running at around 66% reduction on the same period for 2019. This was even worse than the hospitality industry which for phase 3 lockdown showed a 50% reduction from the same period in 2019.

The situation is even worse for regional airports especially now with the announcement from Ryanair to temporarily suspend services from Ireland West Airport for 4 weeks and maybe more and the decision by Aer Lingus to move aircraft from Shannon.

(b) Impacts on workers

- Earnings (2021)
 - 3rd wave has had more severe reductions in the working week and the subsequent impact on pay.
 - More worker than before on lay-off
 - More workers than before on reduced hours
 - Deferred pay agreements
- Job security (2021)
 - Greater redundancies
 - Increased Lay offs
 - Fear of further redundancies and lay offs
 - Fixed term contracts not being renewed despite previous commitments to do so.
- Health & safety (including mental wellbeing) 2021
 - Increase fear of the virus especially new variants
 - Ongoing concern of adequate and safe procedures especially with more contagious variants
 - Concern about proper PPE

- Some employers continuing to use the pandemic to enforce work practice changes initially sought pre-virus and with no relation to the pandemic

Unless assistance is given to the sector the long-term impacts are likely to be greater than those experienced so far, impacting not only the industries directly affected but those indirectly affected in the local supply chains and communities local to airports and production/maintenance facilities.

(c) Health & Safety



As mentioned earlier our members have genuine fears for their health and safety as they go about their work in the airports be that direct interfacing with customers or working on equipment and facilities used by customers.

Employers must implement and maintain best practice in,

- Provision of proper PPE
- Proper procedures and policies
- Clear signage and traffic/workflow maps
- Adequate sick leave to ensure that workers who are unwell do not hide their symptoms to continue to work in order to maintain their income
- Rapid testing for all passengers and all staff
- Follow on checks to ensure arriving passengers isolate as required and report as required
- Full contact tracing for passengers and staff
- Welcome for more restrictions on inward and outward travel

2021

- Members seeking mandatory isolation for passengers from Red flagged countries
- Concern about increased transmission of Covid due to new variants
- Members seeking complete ban on passengers from countries with new more severe variants
- Concern about slow roll out of vaccines for staff at airports

New Traffic light system



Connect Trade Union welcomes the new EU traffic light system primarily as a more accurate and up to date measurement system on Covid infection rates in countries providing passenger throughput in our members places of work and thus offering the opportunities to react faster to put in place measures to safeguard our members in their place of work and by extension their families and the communities where they live.

Connect Trade Union are calling for further supports for the aviation industry to facilitate

- Continued employment
- To enact a comprehensive maintenance programme to take advantage of the current availability of plant and machinery on downtime
- To prepare the sector for the expected upsurge in travel once the virus subsides and vaccination levels allow safe travel.
- To provide the health and safety measures outlined above

(d) Summary:

Connect Trade Union welcome this opportunity to address the Oireachtas committee again and hope you will take our concerns in to consideration during your deliberations.

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& CONSTRUCTION WORKERS IN IRELAND.

While our members in transport and aviation in particular, continued working through the pandemic and will continue to work the above recommendations must all be put in place to ensure their work is safe work.

In relation to earnings and income security Connect Trade union is seeking that the EWSS is extended and improved to ensure employment is maintained in the industry to best cope with the upturn once it comes which if a vaccine proves successful may be more immediate than previously thought and items such as the following should be considered as part of any Covid plan for the sector

1. No worker should be made compulsory redundant while his employer is benefiting from any government subsidy during the pandemic.
2. No permanent reduction should occur in any workers terms and conditions of employment unless by collective agreement while their employer is availing of any government subsidy during the pandemic.
3. That the EWSS be increased to 85% of a worker's net pay pre-Covid similar to the German Kurzarbeitergeld system or 90% as in Sweden.
4. That for any worker on layoff who cannot avail of voluntary redundancy due to the government's temporary suspension of section 12 of the redundancy payments act the period of layoff should count as service.
5. Shannon Airport be returned to be part of the DAA as the separation has been a failure.
6. The full implementation of the Aviation Task Force Report
7. The full implementation of all the health & safety measures outlined in section c.
8. Any tax liability a worker may have as a result of a poorly thought out and poorly implemented TWSS in 2019 should be written off by the revenue

Thank You, Paddy Kavanagh

General Secretary, Connect Trade Union

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