



Copenhagen, 28 April 2017

## CONCLUSIONS OF THE JOINT GROUND HANDLING SOCIAL PARTNERS' PROJECT

The European Social Partners (ESP) representing employers and workers in the European Airport Ground Handling Sector – Airport Council International (ACI Europe), Airport Services Association (ASA) and European Transport Workers' Federation (ETF) – met on 27 and 28 April 2017 in Copenhagen to discuss the outcomes of their joint project on market access, social conditions, vocational standards and quality standards in the ground handling industry with the active participation of the European Commission and the European Aviation Safety Agency (EASA). This conference was the closing event of an EU co-financed project in the framework of social dialogue.

The aim of the project was to prepare social partners' views in light of the assessment of Directive 96/67/EC on access to the groundhandling market at Community airports that was announced as part of the Commission's *Aviation Strategy for Europe*. In the initial stage of the project, an extensive research has been conducted by the consultant companies Syndex and STC-Group consisting of desktop and questionnaire research. The outcome of the research has been subsequently debated in two workshops and presented during the final conference. A final document summarizing the research and the debates in the workshops and the conference will be made available in the 2<sup>nd</sup> half of 2017.

The ESP support the inclusion of ground handling into the remit of EASA and the development of robust Europe-wide safety-related rules. In this sense, the ESP also welcome the Council's General Approach and the European Parliament Report regarding the European Commission's proposal to include Ground handling services in the revision of Regulation 216/2008 and endorse the need for these services to comply with the essential requirements set out in Annex VII. However, the three organisations have strong concerns regarding the Council General Approach in point 4.1c) of Annex VII which stipulates: *"the provider shall provide the ground handling services in accordance with the procedures and instructions of the aircraft operator it serves"*. It is the airline as a client to determine the kind of ground handling operations it needs but not the level of safety required for achieving those operations. It is, indeed, the ground handler's responsibility to safely supply the required services in full compliance with the procedures contained in the aerodrome rules and with the commonly agreed safety standards which implies adequate safety qualification and training. This wording would also strongly jeopardize the work already undertaken by the three organizations within the European Aviation Social Dialogue with the aim to determine minimum common standards recognized at European level.

Furthermore, the ESP believe that the market developments have caused excessive pressure both on the ground handling companies and workers. There is a need for common baseline rules that will ensure level playing field and binding social protection for the workforce. The European Social Partners agree that qualifications and social conditions have to be taken into account during the selection process of ground handling providers. They also insisted on the key role of the collective agreements to provide for stability and social justice for the sector.

ACI, ASA and ETF remain committed to joint work on further harmonization of ground handling rules in the EU. To this end, they call on the European Commission and EASA to properly consult before undertaking any legislative or rulemaking activities. The ESP also offer the Commission and EASA the assistance of their respective experts in developing these rules.