



ECA
Piloting Safety



European Cabin Crew Association

Adina-loana Vălean
EU Transport Commissioner
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Sent to: Adina-loana.Valean@ec.europa.eu
Cc: Henrik.Hololei@ec.europa.eu / Elisabeth.Kotthaus@ec.europa.eu

Brussels, 20/04/2020

Re: COVID-19 Crisis Flexibility on EU261 for Socially Responsible Airlines

Dear Mrs. Vălean,

We know that you are well aware of the severe impact the COVID-19 crisis has on Europe's aviation and the people working therein, most of whom are now on temporary unemployment, short-time work, or facing the prospect of dismissal.

As this crisis will last much longer than anticipated, airlines – which face significant liquidity problems – risk being pushed into deep restructuring, downsizing and possibly bankruptcy. Wide-spread and lasting unemployment would be the result. And air transport – a vital infrastructure which is key for Europe's post-crisis recovery – will be put at risk.

This is why we – on behalf of Europe's pilot and cabin crew community – join other stakeholders in their urgent call for temporary flexibility to be granted for compensation under the EU passenger rights Regulation 261/2004.

In doing so, we consider it essential that air passengers keep their right to compensation, but for the form of this compensation – i.e. refund or voucher – to be decided by the passengers at a stage when the aviation sector has recovered from the crisis.

Equally essential is that such flexibility is *conditional* on the airlines managing this crisis in a *socially responsible* manner, i.e. not resorting to mass dismissal of aircrew and other staff, and not engaging in 'social free-riding' by using atypical aircrew employment, such as (bogus) self-employment or precarious broker agency set-ups.

We therefore urge you to explore all possible avenues – beyond the guidelines issued a month ago – to swiftly enable such temporary flexibility to be granted by the EU Commission and/or Member States, and conditional on a commitment of the beneficiary airlines to maintain jobs in a socially responsible manner – just as any government bailout support should be tied to social responsibility.

Yours sincerely,

Jon Horne
ECA President

Annette Groeneveld
EurECCA President