

**59th CONFERENCE OF
DIRECTORS GENERAL OF CIVIL AVIATION
ASIA AND PACIFIC REGIONS**

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AGENDA ITEM 1: THEME TOPIC

**PROMOTING DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION IN THE
AIRPORT WORKFORCE**

(Presented by Airports Council International)

INFORMATION PAPER

SUMMARY

This paper explains the importance of promoting Diversity and Inclusion in the airport workforce in response to the current and anticipated challenges facing the aviation industry. It also lays out the airport industry's plans to assess and promote these concepts.

Additionally the paper describes the efforts of the Global Aviation and Aerospace Skills Taskforce (GAAST)) to help ensure a sufficient number of aviation workers for the future of the industry.

PROMOTING DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION IN THE AIRPORT WORKFORCE

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 ACI presented a paper (DGCA58/DP/6/04) on the promotion of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion amongst aerodrome operators to the last DGCA conference, inter alia, to encourage ICAO and States to consider partnering with ACI and airport operators in the promotion of gender equality at airports at national and regional levels. Action Item DGCA/58/1 refers.

1.2 This paper follows up on DGCA58/DP/6/04 and focuses on the broader issue of workforce shortage at airports and how the promotion of Diversity and Inclusion, as well as other operational and policy measures, may help airports meet the challenge.

2. DISCUSSION

2.1 Gender equality (UNSDG5), and decent work and economic growth (UNSDG 8) are two of the seventeen United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (UNSDG) adopted in 2015.

2.2 ACI supports the promotion of these two objectives at airports for the strategic growth of the industry and the betterment of humanity.

2.3 The challenges that airports face have been changing in the last few decades.

2.4 During the Asian economic and air travel booms from the 1980s to the 2000s, airports in the region were often constrained by infrastructural capacities, such as the capacity of runways, aircraft parking stands, and passenger terminals either for the lack of space or the historical lack of capital. The latter part of this period witnessed massive airport expansions and construction of new airports such as those at Beijing, Delhi, Incheon, Hong Kong, Shanghai, and Singapore.

2.5 However, seismic shifts in demographics and worker mentality have changed the situation. Many airports are facing a new challenge of recruiting enough workers including qualified and licensed workers to meet growing traffic demand.

2.6 There are many reasons for this phenomenon but the most commonly mentioned are: a shrinking pool of workers because of an ageing population, loss of glamor of air travel as flying is no longer considered a privilege, and the new generation of workers being attracted to new growing sectors of economy such as new technologies and the gig economy deemed more promising and personally fulfilling.

2.7 Besides many of the workers who left the industry during the COVID-19 pandemic, voluntarily or involuntarily, have only been partly replaced by inexperienced ones.

2.8 With the exception of the issue caused by COVID-19, these problems are expected to be long term trends and are not expected to become less severe in the next few years.

2.9 In the face of this chronic staffing shortage, airports may examine and streamline operational processes, automate processes, or augment their workforce by adapting their human resources policies and recruitment processes to suit the local market and social conditions. On the other hand, States should consider relaxing immigration restrictions and implementing programmes to allow skilled and nonskilled workers with critical roles for the performance and operations of the aviation ecosystem to enter their country to perform specific duties. This can include the establishment of aviation workers visas or immigration policies.

2.10 Furthermore ACI believes that having a diverse and socially inclusive workforce will help address shortage of personnel with the required competency at airports.

2.11 What is Diversity and Why?

2.12 A diverse workforce includes workers from different ethnic and cultural backgrounds, genders, ages, physical ability, religions, socioeconomic statuses and neurodiversity¹.

2.13 Organizations that embrace diversity in their workforce tend to be more attractive to prospective employees, more innovative and able to generate more new ideas. Airports run by diverse teams are able to better understand their customers, especially at international airports where airlines and passengers come from diverse backgrounds.

2.14 On the other hand, organizations that are monocultural and lack diversity are prone to blind spots in decision making.

2.15 ACI is currently in the process of defining the terms related to Diversity and Inclusion specifically for airports, in consideration of the unique aspects of the aviation industry.

2.16 How to Promote Diversity?

2.16.1 Having a plan and policy in place is a good start. With the support of senior management, this may be drafted and implemented by a special task force led by the human resources department.

2.16.2 Data collection on workforce demography, current hiring practices and employee experience is an important step in setting up a plan. ACI is therefore conducting a study to assess the state of *Diversity and Social Inclusion at Airports*, across key underrepresented populations working in the airport industry (including but not limited to gender, disability, race, and age etc.). The scope of the study foresees the involvement of employees, at different levels, both regionally and globally. The study is aimed at assessing and highlighting airports' adoption of industry best practices in *Diversity and Social Inclusion* as well as developing a future action plan to guide airports in this endeavor.

2.16.3 The plan and policy for each airport may include measures such as expansion of current recruitment channels, blind screening for example without the name of the candidate to reduce bias on ethnicity or nationality suggested by the name, having a diverse hiring committee, and training interviewers to avoid bias.

2.16.4 Initiatives to promote DSI should be adapted to the situation of the organization. Tailor-made and targeted initiatives, with executive leadership support, are crucial for ensuring success.

2.16.5 It should be emphasized that the DSI should be conducted without compromising the competency requirements for the jobs concerned.

2.16.6 ACI notes that currently there seems to be a gap between the desire to practise Diversity and Inclusion and its actual implementation. ACI however believes that with promotion, encouragement and collaboration, the airport industry will be able to enhance Diversity and Inclusion progressively in future.

2.17 What is Inclusion and Why?

2.17.1 Inclusion aims at enhancing the ability, opportunity, and dignity of individuals who may feel disadvantaged because of their identity, such as gender, age, race, ethnicity, religion, and physical disability.

2.17.2 It involves giving everyone equal opportunity, making them feel welcome, valued and

¹ Neurodiversity refers to the wide range of differences in how human brains function and process information. It recognizes that these variations are natural and valuable, rather than viewing them as deficits or disorders.

respected, and give them a sense of belonging at the workplace

2.17.3 In very simple terms, it means ensuring “No One is Left Behind” in the organization or in society.

2.18 *How to Promote Inclusion?*

2.18.1 As for many other initiatives having an impact on the whole organization, leadership commitment is of the utmost importance to promote inclusion.

2.18.2 Increasing diversity on the governing board and in senior management, reflecting the diverse populations they serve, would help secure leadership commitment to inclusion.

2.18.3 Specific measures include flexible work arrangements to allow for personal situations, providing training and education on inclusion, and listening to employee feedbacks.

2.18.4 Training on diversity and inclusion should be provided to employees, e.g. through workshops, addressing topics such as unconscious bias, cultural competence and inclusive leadership practices.

2.19 *Global Aviation & Aerospace Skills Taskforce (GAAST)*

2.19.1 A joint initiative from States and Industry organizations led to the creation of the Global Aviation and Aerospace Skills Taskforce (GAAST), with ACI as a founding member. The task force strives to achieve its objective by:

- Sharing best practices and experiences;
- Creating catalogues of measures for implementation by States and Industry;
- Broadening the reach of actions taken by individual actors to increase their impact;
- Enhancing collaboration and coordination of programmes and measures; and
- Contributing to the work of ICAO, leading up to the 42nd ICAO General Assembly scheduled for 2025.

2.20 The taskforce aims to take a people-centered approach to global policy development and discussions with the objective of ensuring that the current and future aviation workforce is sustainable, robust, and fit for purpose. The taskforce has five workstreams to look at the challenges that the industry is faced with, namely: 1) improving the perception of the sectors, 2) the attraction of new talents, 3) upskilling for new and expanding technologies, 4) outreach to young people, and 5) promoting diversity, and equality and sustainable career pathways.

2.21 *Conclusion*

2.21.1 In conclusion promoting Diversity and Inclusion at airports does not only help achieve the United Nations Development Goal number 5 of Gender Equality, and Goal number 8 Decent Work and Economic Growth, but also help resolve the chronic shortage of workers, enhance innovativeness, customer service, and organization performance in general at airports.

3. ACTION BY THE CONFERENCE

3.1 The Conference is invited to note the information contained in this Paper.

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