



International Civil Aviation Organization

WORKING PAPER

A42-WP/584

EX/268

12/9/25

(Information paper)¹

ASSEMBLY — 42ND SESSION

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

Agenda Item 13: Aviation Security — Policy

GOOD PRACTICES IN PREVENTING AND MANAGING UNRULY AND DISRUPTIVE PASSENGERS (UPAX)

(Presented by the International Transport Workers' Federation (ITF))

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This information paper provides a global overview of good practices within civil aviation to prevent and manage unruly and disruptive passengers (UPAX). The paper highlights the critical role of social dialogue and meaningful worker participation in establishing robust “zero-tolerance” policies and effective safety cultures. It concludes with recommendations for ICAO, Member States, and industry stakeholders to foster collaborative, worker-inclusive approaches for a safer air transport environment.

<i>Strategic Goals:</i>	This working paper relates to Strategic Goal <i>Every Flight is Safe and Secure</i>
<i>Financial implications:</i>	None
<i>References:</i>	Convention on Offences and Certain Other Acts Committed on Board Aircraft (Tokyo Convention, 1963) Protocol to Amend the Convention on Certain Other Acts Committed on Board Aircraft (Montreal Protocol, 2014) ITF Global Report on Violence and Harassment in Aviation (2023) Various industry initiatives and national policies

¹ Arabic, Chinese, English, French, Russian, Spanish versions provided by International Transport Workers' Federation.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Unruly and disruptive passenger behaviour poses a persistent threat to aviation safety and the wellbeing of passengers, aviation workers, and companies. Despite legal frameworks, incidents continue to rise, calling for practical and coordinated solutions. This information paper showcases effective prevention and management strategies, emphasizing that meaningful worker participation and robust social dialogue are paramount to developing successful safety cultures and ensuring safety for all involved in air transport. The multi-factorial nature of UPAX demands a holistic, multi-pronged prevention strategy.

1.2 While non-compliance and verbal disruption are most common, physical abuse and severe threats to flight safety also occur. Such events cause costly disruptions and impact aviation workers' wellbeing. Common triggers include alcohol intoxication, non-compliance (e.g. mask mandates, seatbelts), and passenger frustration due to delays, queues, or staffing issues.

2. DISCUSSION

2.1 **Good Practices in Preventing and Managing UPAX:** Effective UPAX management involves a multi-faceted approach, integrating collaborative efforts, robust policies, comprehensive training, public awareness, and dedicated staff support.

2.2 **Partnership and Cooperation:** Multi-stakeholder collaboration is crucial for coordinated policies and joint actions. Aena (Spain) fosters close relationships with airlines and police, holding centralized briefings on UPAX. The United Kingdom (UK) has a voluntary Code of Practice, agreed by stakeholders, promoting a unified approach. Finland's campaign, "Put yourself in flight mode" promotes awareness through joint industry action. The Canadian Air Transport Security Authority (CATSA) implements a zero-tolerance policy at screening checkpoints. The International Air Transport Association (IATA) actively collaborates with airports and retailers to promote responsible alcohol sales.

2.3 **Social Dialogue and Collective Agreements:** Direct engagement between employers and worker representatives (trade unions) is vital for negotiating UPAX policies and support, often formalized through collective agreements. Aer Lingus (Ireland) developed its Disruptive Passenger Policy (DPP) in collaboration with unions. Air France (France) has negotiated agreements with unions addressing "Passenger Customer Incivilities" (PCI), outlining prevention, training and support. At Bologna Airport (Italy), a trade union strike in 2021 against violence led to a multi-stakeholder working group (École nationale de l'aviation civile (ENAC), airport, police, unions) to implement a coordinated response. In Colombia, Bill 153 of 2024, driven by social partners (pilot and other worker organizations), seeks stricter penalties and a comprehensive legal framework for disruptive behaviour. In Brazil, similar ITF-backed legislation aims to enhance safety and protection through clear penalties.

2.4 **Integration of Policies and Procedures:** Comprehensive, consistent policies spanning the entire passenger journey ensure a seamless approach to UPAX management. Luxair (Luxembourg) uses a risk assessment system covering the entire passenger journey. The UK Code of Practice aims for a "common, consistent approach" integrating pre-emption, reporting and denying boarding procedures. Australia's Civil Aviation Safety Authority (CASA) requires operators to maintain UPAX procedures for all stages of travel. The Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) of the United States of America (USA) enforces a "zero tolerance" legal policy and provides a "Zero Tolerance for Unruly and Dangerous Behaviour Toolkit" for airports. In France, a system of graduated administrative sanctions was announced on 1 June 2022, allowing administrative fines of up to €10,000 (doubled for repeat offences) and a boarding ban for up to two years on French company aircraft, alongside potential criminal penalties of up to five

years' imprisonment and a €75,000 fine for hindering flight personnel or refusing safety instructions. Turkey introduced fines to deter disruptive behaviour and promote safety, alongside measures by airlines like Ryanair to enforce their own on-board conduct rules. New Zealand introduced a new system in 2004 via amendments to its Civil Aviation Act 1990 (Section 65P), allowing authorities to either charge offenders under criminal procedure or issue an infringement notice (similar to a speeding fine) ranging from NZD 500 to 1,000, which can be paid on the spot, on arrival, or by post.

2.5 Training and Capacity Building: Providing staff with skills for UPAX prevention, de-escalation and management is paramount. This includes training to recognise and manage “anomalous behaviour” stemming from cognitive, mental, neurological, or sensory impairments, or the influence of legalised substances, requiring nuanced behavioural and situational assessment. Aena (Spain) offers mandatory online training on airport culture, including de-escalation. Lufthansa (Germany) trains cabin crew in UPAX management, covering verbal de-escalation and restraint. Aviator Airport Alliance (Europe) provides comprehensive training for ground staff, focusing on conflict management and early intervention. CASA (Australia) mandates regular UPAX training for operators. IATA provides extensive guidance and training to airlines, including using training actors for realistic de-escalation practice.

2.6 Awareness Campaigns: Public information campaigns educate passengers on acceptable behaviour and consequences, often through multi-partner collaborations: Aena (Spain) and Bologna Airport (Italy) participate in the European Union Aviation Safety Agency's (EASA) “Ready to Fly” campaign. Campaigns like “One Too Many” and “Fly Safely” promote responsible behaviour with industry support. The FAA (USA) publishes a “Zero Tolerance for Unruly and Dangerous Behavior Toolkit” with videos and images on expected behaviour and repercussions. Campaigns like Finland's “Put yourself in flight mode” and Colombia's efforts to improve the “culture of flight” aim to foster a positive social contract for air travel.

2.7 Staff Support and Wellbeing: Comprehensive support for staff exposed to UPAX incidents is crucial for their wellbeing and operational resilience. Aena (Spain) offers a psychological support hotline. Aer Lingus (Ireland) supports staff in prosecutions and includes wellbeing in training. Air France (France) has agreements with trade unions for staff support, including legal care and “incivility referents”. In Australia, airlines have launched peer support programs and offer online counselling via Employee Assistance Programs (EAP).

2.8 The Imperative of Social Dialogue and Worker Participation: The meaningful participation of workers and their representatives through social dialogue is crucial for effective UPAX prevention and management. Frontline workers possess invaluable first-hand knowledge of challenging situations and effective de-escalation techniques. Their involvement ensures solutions are practical and fosters “buy-in”, making policies more effective and sustainable. The ITF advocates for robust labour participation: worker representatives should be encouraged to provide input and report cases without fear of retaliation, have access to necessary information, and participate in both policy development and implementation. A “safety culture” is essential, where workers are protected when raising safety concerns or proposing solutions. This protective environment encourages reporting and continuous improvement. Examples like the Bologna Airport strike and Colombia's social partner-driven bill demonstrate how collective action and social dialogue can drive significant safety improvements and legislative change.

2.9 Conditions for Success and Avenues for Global Extension: Successful UPAX management relies on: multi-stakeholder collaboration, clear zero-tolerance policies, robust training (including experiential learning), proactive prevention, effective staff support, and strong legal deterrence (including Montréal Protocol 2014 (MP14) ratification). Avenues for global extension include:

- a) **ICAO Leadership:** ICAO should continue to promote urgent MP14 ratification to close jurisdictional gaps.
- b) **Dissemination of Best Practices:** ICAO and industry bodies should facilitate the sharing of good practices, especially those integrating social dialogue.
- c) **Mandating Social Dialogue:** Member States should integrate requirements for meaningful social dialogue into national aviation safety regulations, leveraging ILO Convention 190.
- d) **Data Collection and Analysis:** Standardized global data collection on UPAX incidents is needed to inform evidence-based policy.
- e) **Targeted Campaigns:** Continued support for awareness campaigns educating passengers on behaviour and consequences, focusing on responsible alcohol consumption.
- f) **Investment in Worker Wellbeing:** Promoting industry-wide investment in comprehensive staff support programs.

3. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

3.1 The rising prevalence of unruly and disruptive passenger behaviour demands proactive, collaborative and integrated solutions. The meaningful participation of workers and their representatives, fostered through robust social dialogue, is central to the success of these initiatives.

3.2 To ICAO and Member States:

- a) **Prioritize MP14 Ratification and Implementation:** Expedite ratification and effective implementation to close jurisdictional gaps and strengthen legal deterrence.
- b) **Promote Social Dialogue and Worker Participation:** Actively integrate principles of meaningful social dialogue and worker participation into national aviation safety frameworks, leveraging ILO Convention 190.
- c) **Facilitate Global Best Practice Sharing:** Develop and disseminate comprehensive guidance and case studies on effective UPAX management, highlighting multi-stakeholder partnerships and innovative training.
- d) **Enhance Data Collection:** Establish standardized global data collection mechanisms for UPAX incidents to inform evidence-based policy.

3.3 To Industry Stakeholders (Airlines, Airports, Concessionaires):

- a) **Foster Collaborative Frameworks:** Establish formal, multi-agency cooperation mechanisms for coordinated prevention and response.
- b) **Implement Comprehensive Training:** Invest in advanced, practical, scenario-based training for frontline staff, emphasizing early detection, de-escalation, self-protection, behavioural and situational assessment, and legal powers, potentially using experiential learning.
- c) **Launch Proactive Awareness Campaigns:** Develop and sustain impactful public awareness campaigns on expected behaviour, safety rules, and consequences, with a focus on responsible alcohol consumption.
- d) **Prioritize Staff Support and Wellbeing:** Provide robust and holistic support systems for affected workers, including psychological assistance, peer support, and legal aid.