



International Civil Aviation Organization

WORKING PAPER

A41-WP/546
EX/260
13/9/22
(Information paper)
English only

ASSEMBLY — 41ST SESSION

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

Agenda Item 12: Outcomes of High-level Conference on COVID-19

RESPONSE TO THE CHALLENGES PRESENTED BY COVID-19 PANDEMIC

(Presented by Brazil)

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This paper presents information regarding the organization of the aviation sector in Brazil to address the challenges brought by COVID-19 pandemic that required intense coordination between the aviation and health sectors.

<i>Strategic Objectives:</i>	This working paper relates to Strategic Objectives: <i>Economic Development of Air Transport</i>
<i>Financial implications:</i>	
<i>References:</i>	

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 The COVID-19 pandemic was an unprecedented event in the history of aviation. It exposed the vulnerability of organizations at their various levels to the effects of a pandemic, with the disease spreading at an exponential rate on a global scale, exposing the health systems of several countries to the risk of collapse and leading to the death of many people. Given the low knowledge about the disease and the absence of vaccines or other effective measures that would allow social coexistence free of the risk of contamination, countries adopted social isolation measures to reduce the peak of contamination and relieve the pressure on the existing hospital infrastructure.

1.2 Given this scenario, the civil aviation sector experienced a dramatic drop in operations, first due to the closing of borders, which strongly affected international operations. Later, with the increase in confirmed cases of the disease and the fear of contamination that affected the population, 80% of the world's airline network was affected, generating an unprecedented crisis in the world civil aviation sector.

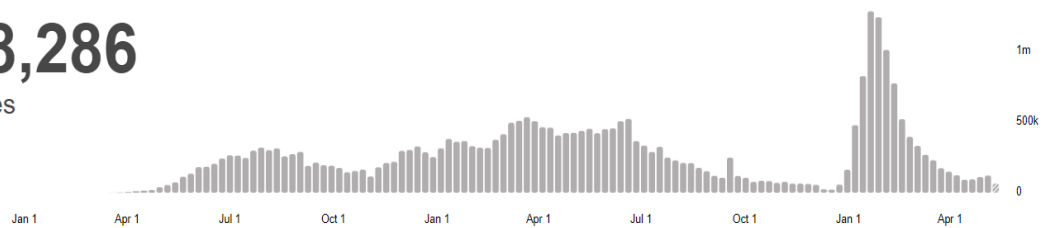
2. THE IMPACT OF THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

2.1 Due to the pandemic, Brazil suffered more than 30 million confirmed cases and approximately 665,000 deaths (close to 3 per thousand inhabitants), according to data from the World Health Organization (WHO).

Brazil Situation

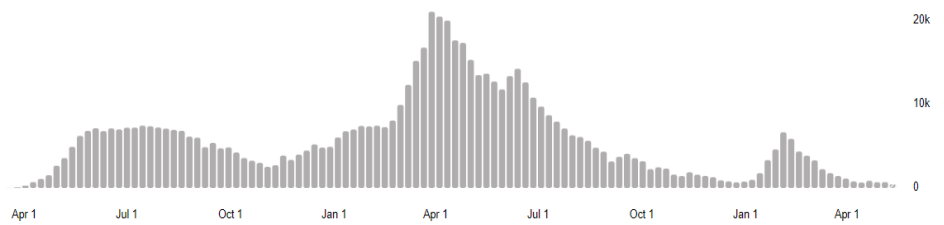
30,728,286

confirmed cases



665,216

deaths



Source: World Health Organization
Data may be incomplete for the current day or week.

Number of confirmed cases and deaths by COVID in Brazil.

Source: <https://covid19.who.int/region/amro/country/br>

2.2 In addition to significant human and social losses, there was also a significant economic impact, especially in the aviation sector, where it is estimated that the nominal revenue of the airlines fell by 55%, bringing the industry to levels equivalent to 2004¹.

2.3 To date, almost two and a half years after the pandemic began, operations have not yet returned to 2019 levels. In April 2020, the country experienced its lower point, with reductions of 92.6% and 95.1% in domestic and international flights respectively.

¹ <https://www.mckinsey.com/industries/travel-logistics-and-infrastructure/our-insights/taking-stock-of-the-pandemics-impact-on-global-aviation>

3. **RESPONSE OF THE BRAZILIAN GOVERNMENT**

3.1 As a response strategy, the Brazilian government adopted measures aligned with the sanitary authorities to coping strategies. Initially, those strategies aimed at reducing the risk of contamination for users and workers in the aviation system to prepare it for an eventual gradual resumption of operation. In a second stage, these strategies sought to increase passenger confidence accompanied by increased demand in the sector. Moreover, to mitigate the economic effects of the pandemic, regulations were relaxed to reduce the impacts and, even if marginally, to soften the losses of airline and airport operators.

3.2 The aviation sector in Brazil was able to organize itself quickly and adopt the sanitary measures with the contribution of the work coordinated by the Working Group for Recovery of Civil Aviation after COVID-19, to monitor the recovery of domestic and international airline operations at Brazilian airports, and to propose strategies and actions aimed at the safety, development, and sustainability of civil aviation. The group was composed of ANAC's technical branches and representatives from airlines, airport managers, health and safety agencies, and other institutions. It was organized into the following subgroups:

Subgroup 1 - Health Protocols

3.3 Responsible for the discussion with the Sanitary Authority (ANVISA) and the Ministry of Health responsible for dealing with COVID-19 in order to build understanding and application of the adopted sanitary protocols. Also responsible for analysing the impacts on Civil Aviation of the health safety measures discussed and, in addition, the feasibility of its implementation, using regulatory measures and disseminating best practices and guidance material.

Subgroup 2 - Regulatory Measures

3.4 Responsible for identifying, discussing, and proposing regulatory measures to address the economic and social effects of COVID-19 in the civil aviation sector.

Subgroup 3 - Data and Information

3.5. Responsible for monitoring the internal and external market situation and border closures in order to subsidize the discussions in the other groups.

Subgroup 4 - Communication

3.6 Responsible for disseminating the actions of the other groups, with a key role in communicating to society the sanitary measures implemented and their gradual flexibilization.

3.7 The work developed by the groups has been a constant presence since the beginning of the pandemic. After weeks of negotiations between the aviation and health sectors, Subgroup 1 published in May 2020, the Health Protocols for Civil Aviation Operations in the Pandemic Period², containing the health protocols to be adopted by airports, airlines, employees, and communication actions such as sound warnings. The Working Group timely analysed approved and implemented a total of 110 regulatory measures to provide the flexibility needed by airports and airlines to reduce costs while maintaining the necessary safety. Slot waivers, allowance to transport cargo onboard passenger aircrafts, adjustments for the flexibilization in the payment of grants, temporary exemptions for training, flexibilization of the rules of consumer relations are a few examples of the actions carried out.

² https://www.gov.br/anac/pt-br/assuntos/coronavirus/veja-tambem/nova-cartilha-protocolo-sanitario_v2-1.pdf

3.8 The role of subgroup 3 was critical, especially in the early stages of the discussions, when there were only a few reliable sources, and it was necessary to identify, process, and communicate that information to promote action.

3.9 Subgroup 4 activity increased as the actions of the other subgroups began to deliver results. In addition, due to constant shifts in the domestic and international scenarios, opening and closing borders, new entry restrictions, new variants and protocols, communication was paramount to inform, keep passengers informed, and rebuild passenger trust in aviation.

3.10 Additional political measures were needed to guarantee a minimum operations network considering the low activity levels experienced in April 2020, to ensure connectivity, avoid shortages, and allow for the transportation of supplies to combat the disease.

3.11 To support recovery, the Brazilian airlines, and the Brazilian Air Force (FAB) transported vaccines, oxygen, and health professionals, providing essential support to fight the Pandemic. In total, Brazilian airlines transported free of charge approximately 8,500 health professionals, 660 tons of equipment (food, PPE, respirators, etc.) and carried 315 million vaccines³.

3.12 The distribution of the vaccines to all Brazilian states relied heavily on air transportation, provided by the Brazilian airlines in alignment with the Ministry of Health. The Unified Health System (SUS) - Brazilian public health care system - was responsible for the distribution, application, and tracking of the tests and vaccines applied in the country, The government also developed the ConecteSUS, an App that reconcile testing and vaccination information with personal information from citizens.

3.13 To date, 476 million doses of vaccine have been distributed and 399 million doses have been applied, resulting in 85,8% of the population being immunized with two doses⁴.

4. LESSONS LEARNED

4.1 The actions of the Brazilian aviation sector were guided by its articulation with all stakeholders, especially with the counterparts in the health sector. It was possible to observe that the action through the GT Recovery was a sound decision, since it promoted the articulation between stakeholders by following a clear action plan and enabling quick responses. In our experience, it is essential to maintain connectivity through a minimum air network to avoid a lack of supply and to guarantee the transit of supplies to fight the pandemic. Timely actions aimed at ensuring Sanitary Safety, the financial sustainability of airlines and airports, and flexibility for regulatory adjustments were crucial in ensuring the sector's survival.

4.2 Much can be learned from the COVID-19 crisis. One of the main lessons is the experience of how to act in pandemic situations, identify the appropriate protocols and apply them in articulation with the health sector. In addition, It should be highlighted the approximation between the aviation and health sectors and the society's awareness about basic care to reduce the risk of contamination in public environments.

— END —

³ Until January 2022

⁴ <https://www.gov.br/saude/pt-br/coronavirus/vacinas/plano-nacional-de-operacionalizacao-da-vacina-contra-a-covid-19>