

# Role of slot coordinators and schedule facilitators during the COVID-19 recovery period and beyond

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## General background

The Covid-19 pandemic and the resulting global travel restrictions have caused an unprecedented crisis of the aviation industry. Passenger numbers have slumped drastically, and airline schedules have been reduced to a minimum. The uncertainty about how the situation will evolve and how demand will develop, is leading to continuous revisions of airlines' schedule planning and late updates. Airports, therefore, are facing difficulties to make the most efficient use of their infrastructure, having to adapt/reduce their facilities and resources according to the uncertain need. The same applies to other stakeholders, such as Air Navigation Service Providers or ground handling agents.

The crisis also has significant impact on slot coordination and schedules facilitation. In the present situation it can be expected that most of the coordination parameters, regularly applied by slot coordination - based mostly on runway capacity, noise regulations, night flight restrictions, apron etc. - are unlikely to be reached in the immediate future.

Airport coordinators and facilitators manage slots and schedules continually in a neutral, non-discriminatory and transparent way to ensure the most efficient use of airport infrastructure in order to maximize benefits to the greatest number of airport users.

They supply the most accurate, up to date schedule data to airports, ground handlers, ANSPs and the Network Manager to support daily operations as well as forward planning.

They also provide professional advice to governments, the European Commission and other authorities on overcoming shortfalls in capacity through slot coordination and schedule facilitation. Their role is at least as important in times of crisis as in more normal situations.

During the current Covid-19 pandemic, however, there is not yet a common concept for the recovery period. EUACA sees an important role for slot coordinators - together with airlines and airports - in developing a joint concept to enable a restart of aviation. This document provides proposals on what such concept could look like and what contribution slot coordinators and schedules facilitators could make to it.

## Impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic on airport capacity and air transport demand: role of coordinators and schedules facilitators

Air transport demand and airport capacity have been severely affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. In order to enable for a recovery of air operation, it might be necessary - just like in other industry areas - to implement rules for social distancing at airports and possibly aircraft. Airlines, for example, might have to reduce the number of available seats in the aircraft and might have to undergo longer ground times due to new cleaning procedures. Airports will have to revise the existing airport capacity analysis and recalculate how many passengers can be accommodated in terminal buildings - i.e. check-in areas, security filters, boarding areas, etc. - while enabling the necessary minimum distances between passengers. This might also lead to modified passenger and aircraft processes.

Based on the new calculation, new (or reduced) temporary coordination parameters might have to be implemented to be used by slot coordinators and schedules facilitators as additional criteria for slot allocation. The implementation of the new (or reduced) temporary coordination parameters might be done in the form of local guidelines.<sup>1</sup> In the case that such temporary coordination parameters lead to conflicts with or between historic rights of individual airlines, the local guidelines will have to include priority rules to be applied by coordinators in a transparent and neutral way. Each constraint should be responded to with a targeted measure, which means for example, the target to reduce passenger numbers in terminal buildings in order to enable for social distancing, should be achieved by introducing passenger flow parameters instead of by reducing existing runway movement parameters.

### Summary – the main fields and tasks for coordinators and schedules facilitators in the recovery period

In the COVID-19 pandemic recovery phase, slot coordinators and schedules facilitators can mainly contribute in the following fields and with the following measures:

- **New capacity analysis** for all airports due to possible reduced passenger handling capacity (social distancing); contribute to the consultation process with all stakeholders on the new capacity parameters (through the relevant slot coordination committee) including an initial evaluation of the impact of the new proposed capacity parameters on the airline schedules at the airport.
- **Impact assessment:** support national and local authorities with the impact assessment for the proposed measures e.g. with regard to airline schedules at the airport concerned, as well as support the airport managing body with the capacity analysis to determine any new capacity parameters to be applied.

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<sup>1</sup> Pursuant to Art. 8 para. 5 Regulation (EEC) No 95/93 (“Slot Regulation”).

- **Level changes:** support national authorities in their decision about a possible temporary change of level of coordination that might be required or recommended at some airports as a consequence of the new measures imposed.
- **Consultation with stakeholders:** participate actively through the various slot coordinators and schedules facilitators associations (e.g. WWACG, EUACA, APACA, etc.), so that airlines, airports and slot coordinators ideally can decide jointly in the World Airport Slot Board (WASB - the relevant international industry body that governs the slot coordination activity) about the best practices to apply with regard to the new requirements.
- **Accurate schedule data collection and exchange:** strengthen communication with airlines in order to receive the most updated information on schedules. Providing online access to Coordinator's database to airlines and airports to enable them to check and trace any update on schedules and any airport capacity that may become available for new schedules. Designing automatic processes to exchange information on schedules with the relevant ANSPs and/or other regional air navigation authorities.
- **Local Rule:** Consider the use of local guidelines (Local Rule), to be implemented in accordance with normal procedures, such as approval by a coordination committee; a Local Rule would give clarity and help manage the scenario of temporary reduced capacity by introducing new (or reduced) temporary coordination parameters. When feasible, coordinators should promote the application of the existing industry recommended practices<sup>2</sup> on this matter, so that procedures are applied everywhere as closely harmonized as possible.
- **Manage the demand for airport infrastructure** against the reduced supply of capacity, providing a process that is fair, transparent and non-discriminatory. In principle, coordinators should ensure that airlines are able to use their allocated slots before satisfying demand for new slots or re-times. In case historic slots exceed the new capacity parameters, priority rules have to be implemented in order to reduce the number of allocated slots.
- **Mechanism for the release of capacity:** provide the mechanism to support the release of capacity and ensure it is available for use as soon as it is released, by monitoring closely the status of the authorized slots/schedules and requesting airlines to comply with any minimum requirement about anticipating schedules information and cancellations.
- **Protection of rights (airlines and airports):** Act in accordance with the applicable regulatory framework in order to protect any airline or airport right to

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<sup>2</sup> EUACA Recommended Practice 2 ("[Airport capacity reduction](http://www.euaca.org/up/files/DocsEUACA/RECOMMENDED%20PRACTICE/RP2_Capacity%20Reduction_eff20161205%20(1).pdf)")

[http://www.euaca.org/up/files/DocsEUACA/RECOMMENDED%20PRACTICE/RP2\\_Capacity%20Reduction\\_eff20161205%20\(1\).pdf](http://www.euaca.org/up/files/DocsEUACA/RECOMMENDED%20PRACTICE/RP2_Capacity%20Reduction_eff20161205%20(1).pdf)

be preserved in the context of the crisis, for instance, by means of a slot waiver<sup>3</sup> that may have been decided by the relevant authorities in order to protect historic rights for use in subsequent seasons.

- **Data provision:** provide data to the relevant authorities with regard to a possible application or extension of a waiver (with regard to the 80/20 rule) and give advice about the conditions/requirements that should be met to merit for that relief.

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<sup>3</sup> See Art. 10 a Regulation (EU) 2020/459.