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## COVER NOTE

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| From:            | Secretary-General of the European Commission, signed by Ms Martine DEPREZ, Director  |
| date of receipt: | 19 December 2024   |
| To:              | Ms Thérèse BLANCHET, Secretary-General of the Council of the European Union  |
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| Subject:         | COMMISSION DELEGATED REGULATION (EU) .../... of 19.12.2024 supplementing Regulation (EU) 2018/1139 of the European Parliament and of the Council by laying down requirements for the safe provision of ground handling services and for organisations providing them |

Delegations will find attached document C(2024) 8926 final.

Encl.: C(2024) 8926 final



EUROPEAN  
COMMISSION

Brussels, 19.12.2024  
C(2024) 8926 final

**COMMISSION DELEGATED REGULATION (EU) .../...**

**of 19.12.2024**

**supplementing Regulation (EU) 2018/1139 of the European Parliament and of the Council by laying down requirements for the safe provision of ground handling services and for organisations providing them**

(Text with EEA relevance)

## **EXPLANATORY MEMORANDUM**

### **1. CONTEXT OF THE DELEGATED ACT**

#### *Relevant institutional background*

Ground handling (GH) is an aviation domain comprising numerous and distinct activities, some of them having a significant safety-critical aspect and involving multiple actors in their execution. GH organisations offer a wide range of services to aircraft operators both on aerodrome premises and outside aerodromes. Moreover, different GH organisations may perform GH activities to the same aircraft at the same time during an aircraft turnaround.

GH is a significant and critical part of the aviation industry, subjected to a high degree of competition and commercial pressure. Considerations on aircraft characteristics, an increase in ground support equipment at aerodromes, faster turnarounds, cost reduction programmes, minimal training and high staff turnover are all challenging factors to the improvement of operational safety. Ground operations on aprons have become increasingly complex due to the growth of air traffic and the proliferation of third-party ground handling service providers (GHSPs) in addition to the numerous conditions set by aircraft operators and aerodromes.

Considering the significant impact of ground handling activities on flight safety, the Union legislator, acknowledging the need to ensure a safe end-to-end air transportation, extended the scope of Regulation (EU) 2018/1139 <sup>(1)</sup> to cover the ground handling services.

With this extension, the organisations providing ground handling services are formally subject to compliance with Annex VII to Regulation (EU) 2018/1139.

#### *Objectives*

The specific objectives of this proposal are to:

- establish requirements for organisations providing GH services to declare their capability and the availability to them of the means, to discharge their responsibilities associated with the services provided;
- establish conditions and procedures for the declarations submitted by organisations providing ground handling services;
- establish requirements that detail the privileges and responsibilities for organisations providing ground handling services;
- provide detailed requirements to cover the means necessary for the organisations providing ground handling services to ensure safe provision of those services at the Union aerodromes, including, among others, facilities, personnel, equipment and material;

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<sup>1</sup> Regulation (EU) 2018/1139 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 4 July 2018 on common rules in the field of civil aviation and establishing a European Union Aviation Safety Agency, and amending Regulations (EC) No 2111/2005, (EC) No 1008/2008, (EU) No 996/2010, (EU) No 376/2014 and Directives 2014/30/EU and 2014/53/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council, and repealing Regulations (EC) No 552/2004 and (EC) No 216/2008 of the European Parliament and of the Council and Council Regulation (EEC) No 3922/91 (OJ L 212, 22.8.2018, p. 1) (<https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?qid=1535612134845&uri=CELEX:32018R1139>).

- ensure a baseline for the safe provision of ground handling services by establishing requirements for a management system for organisations providing GH services at aerodromes within the scope of the Basic Regulation, including a safety management system;
- ensure minimum training standards for GH personnel and their continued competence;
- ensure that the ground handling organisations adequately maintain the ground support equipment used for the provision of services.

*Reason for the proposed EU GH Regulation and the problem(s) it is intended to resolve*

Safety in aviation is as strong as its weakest link.

Until its inclusion in the scope of the Basic Regulation, GH has been the only major safety-critical domain, with an impact on over 300 000 employees in the Union alone, not being directly subject to a European aviation safety regulation.

The safety, reliability and consistency of flight operations must begin long before take-off and must continue on the ground. Aprons are often the most congested and busiest areas of an aerodrome with aircraft turnarounds carried out under significant space and time constraints.

The safety-critical dimension of GH activities is visible when errors occur in the provision of those services: those errors may lead to damage to the aircraft on the ground or to equipment, injuries or even death to persons on the ground or, in the worst-case scenarios, to aircraft accidents. Such occurrences have a significant cost impact on aircraft operators, aerodrome operators and GH organisations. Furthermore, undetected or unreported errors and damage during the provision of GH services can affect the aircraft's mass and balance, aerodynamics, airworthiness and performance, having thus a direct impact on flight safety.

To have a clearer picture of the safety dimension of the GH services covered by the Basic Regulation in order to propose a balanced level of details in the implementing rules, the European Union Aviation Safety Agency ('the Agency') analysed the safety issues in GH activities, which were already highlighted in the safety risk portfolios published in the past five issues of the EASA Annual Safety Review and the European Plan for Aviation Safety (EPAS).

The statistics of safety reports recorded in the European Central Repository (ECR) of the European Commission for all aviation domains since 2015 <sup>(2)</sup> have revealed a relatively low number of reports submitted by GH organisations and the fact that the amount of reporting per Member State is not at all proportional either to the size of the Member State or to the number

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<sup>2</sup> 2015 is the year when Regulation (EU) No 376/2014 became applicable. That Regulation applies also to GH organisations.

Regulation (EU) No 376/2014 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 3 April 2014 on the reporting, analysis and follow-up of occurrences in civil aviation, amending Regulation (EU) No 996/2010 of the European Parliament and of the Council and repealing Directive 2003/42/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council and Commission Regulations (EC) No 1321/2007 and (EC) No 1330/2007 (OJ L 122, 24.4.2014, p. 18) (<https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A32014R0376&qid=1704375957338>).

of aerodromes within the scope. In fact, there is a visible imbalanced reporting ratio at Union level. More details are provided in the regulatory impact assessment related to the proposal.

The level of safety estimated from submitted reports may be inaccurate, as the reporting culture, safety culture and accuracy of reporting have not been assessed consistently, there is no feedback loop for reports submitted by GH organisations, and often no consistent exchange of safety information between airlines, airports and GH organisations. The legal framework established through Annex VII to the Basic Regulation needs detailed implementing rules to ensure consistency in the way in which the reporting obligations are performed. This regulation is based on the safety data from the ECR and provides details for organisations to increase the safety awareness of their personnel, improve their safety culture and reporting culture, and at the same time ensure a feedback loop among organisations sharing responsibilities in the same ground operations on the one hand and, on the other hand, between the organisations and their competent authorities through the safety reporting system. A strong focus is put on the development of a safety culture by GH organisations, as part of their safety management system. The requirements provide mitigations to address the safety issues revealed through the statistics of those safety reports.

Statistics and a report of the International Air Transport Association (IATA) <sup>(3)</sup> show damage to the aircraft during GH activities estimated to EUR 1.5 billion costs in Europe, and almost USD 5 billion costs per year worldwide, only for commercial operations. A high number of incidents and accidents resulting in aircraft damage can indicate multiple other factors or causes that become clear only when further analysing the events that led to those incidents and accidents. The contributing factors to these occurrences could be human factors (lack of awareness, fatigue, pressure, lack of proper training, deviation from the operational procedures) or organisational aspects (poor quality management, poor maintenance of equipment).

Indicators such as the highest staff turnover in the aviation industry (turning to an annual 70 % or even 100 % turnover rate post-Covid with some GH organisations operating in Europe) coupled with the business need to remain competitive and minimise the costs where possible may also contribute to an increased level of safety risk to the entire flight and ground operation.

The desired level of standardisation of procedures and training is not consistently achieved throughout the industry. Organisations providing ground handling services in Europe have a different level of understanding of, and familiarisation with, the safety management system (SMS). For GH organisations providing worldwide services, the SMS is not an alien concept; often safety awareness and safety culture are well embedded in their organisations. Unfortunately, this does not always happen at smaller GH organisations; providers of GH services at only one aerodrome or just a few, those organisations operating locally, which struggle to survive strong competition, are less familiar with the SMS concept, if at all.

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<sup>3</sup> [IATA Ground Damage Report: the case for enhanced ground support equipment](#), published in December 2022: 'Analysis of the current situation together with the forecast traffic growth and change in aircraft type mix shows that, unless measures are actively taken to reduce the ground damage incident rate, the current annual total ground damage costs will double to \$9.7 billion over the next 15 years.' (p.7).

Moreover, responsibility for the safe provision of GH services has always been with aircraft operators, as contractors of GH services, and less with GH organisations providing the GH services. This regulation provides detailed implementing rules to support GH organisations to implement an appropriate SMS, scalable to the complexity of their organisation and the types of services provided.

Training of personnel is one of the most critical mitigation measures to maintain or improve safety in ground handling operations. The essential requirements of Annex VII to the Basic Regulation need to be further detailed in implementing rules to ensure that GH organisations apply a minimum level of training for GH personnel, which is standardised and subject to oversight by competent authorities, to ensure its harmonisation.

#### *Consistency with existing provisions in the policy area and other Union policies*

The Council Directive 96/67/EC, ‘the Ground Handling Directive’, on access to the GH market at Community airports, has a different scope (economic) and does not regulate aspects of safety.

The GH Regulation will also not overlap with the existing EU legislation on health and safety of ground handling workers (examples of such regulations are the Framework Directive 89/391/EEC applying to all sectors, including ground handling, several Directives on occupational health and safety such as the Workplaces Directive 89/654/EEC, the Personal Protective Equipment Directive 89/656/EEC, the Manual Handling of Loads Directive 90/269/EEC, the Vibrations Directive 2002/44/EC, the Noise Directive 2003/10/EC, the Work Equipment Directive 2009/104/EC).

#### *Added value of the EU GH Regulation*

In line with the empowerment of the Commission as specified in Article 39(2) of Regulation (EU) 2018/1139, this delegated act introduces requirements for ground handling organisations regarding the conditions and procedures for the declaration by those organisations of their capability, and the availability to them of the means, to discharge the responsibilities associated with the services provided in compliance with the essential requirements of Regulation (EU) 2018/1139. This regulation also includes detailed implementing rules on the privileges and responsibilities of organisations providing ground handling services to develop and maintain a management system including the development of a safety management system, a process to manage changes, a training programme to ensure competence of GH personnel, a ground handling services manual containing operational procedures for ground handling services, a maintenance programme for the ground support equipment. These detailed rules aim at ensuring a safety baseline and a level playing field of ground handling services and organisations providing them at Union aerodromes within the scope of the Basic Regulation.

## **2. CONSULTATIONS PRIOR TO THE ADOPTION OF THE ACT**

In accordance with Article 128(4) of the Basic Regulation, before adopting a delegated act, the Commission shall consult experts designated by each Member State in accordance with the principles laid down in the Interinstitutional Agreement of 13 April 2016 on Better Law-

Making. The present draft delegated act is based on the Agency Opinion No 01/2024<sup>4</sup>. The content of the Opinion was consulted the first time with the public in June-September 2022 through the ‘Working paper on draft EU Ground Handling Regulation’ and the second time in July-September 2023 with the Agency Advisory Bodies, the Ground Handling Expert Group that provided technical expertise to the Agency, and the Member States Advisory Body (MAB) through the Notice of Proposed Amendment (NPA) 2023-106 ‘Ground Handling Requirements’ (RMT.0728).

As overall feedback that can summarise the comments received, this proposal is much welcomed by the GH industry, aerodrome operators, aircraft operators, one workers federation, and competent authorities.

### **3. LEGAL ELEMENTS OF THE DELEGATED ACT**

Article 39(1) points (d) and (e) of the Basic Regulation empower the Commission to adopt delegated acts, in accordance with Article 128 of that Regulation, laying down detailed rules for the provision of ground handling services and the organisations providing them.

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<sup>4</sup> <https://www.easa.europa.eu/en/document-library/opinions/opinion-no-012024>



# COMMISSION DELEGATED REGULATION (EU) .../...

of 19.12.2024

**supplementing Regulation (EU) 2018/1139 of the European Parliament and of the Council by laying down requirements for the safe provision of ground handling services and for organisations providing them**

(Text with EEA relevance)

THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION,

Having regard to the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union,

Having regard to Regulation (EU) 2018/1139 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 4 July 2018 on common rules in the field of civil aviation and establishing a European Union Aviation Safety Agency, and amending Regulations (EC) No 2111/2005, (EC) No 1008/2008, (EU) No 996/2010, (EU) No 376/2014 and Directives 2014/30/EU and 2014/53/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council, and repealing Regulations (EC) No 552/2004 and (EC) No 216/2008 of the European Parliament and of the Council and Council Regulation (EEC) No 3922/91<sup>(5)</sup>, and in particular Article 39(1), points (d) and (e) thereof,

Whereas:

- (1) Regulation (EU) 2018/1139 establishes the essential requirements for the safe provision of ground handling services and organisations providing them at the Union aerodromes within the scope of that Regulation. Article 37(2) requires providers of ground handling services to make a declaration regarding their capability to discharge their responsibilities associated with the safe provision of ground handling services.
- (2) To ensure a total-system approach and guarantee a baseline for safety in all aviation-related activities, and in line with the principle of subsidiarity, detailed rules for the provision of ground handling services and the privileges and responsibilities of organisations providing them should be laid down.
- (3) Pursuant to Article 4 of Regulation (EU) 2018/1139, those rules are to reflect the state of the art and best practices in the field of ground handling; take into account the applicable International Civil Aviation Organization ('ICAO') Standards and Recommended Practices ('SARPs') and worldwide ground handling operation experience, as well as scientific and technical progress in the ground handling domain; be proportionate to the size and complexity of the ground handling activities; and provide for the necessary flexibility for customised compliance.
- (4) The Regulation should ensure a level playing field for the provision of ground handling services for all organisations providing those services, including self-handling by aircraft operators, at aerodromes within the scope of Regulation (EU) 2018/1139.

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<sup>5</sup> OJ L 212, 22.8.2018, p.1, ELI: <http://data.europa.eu/eli/reg/2018/1139/oj>.



- (5) For aircraft operators performing self-handling or aerodrome operators providing ground handling services, which already have management system structures required under other Union regulations in the aviation sector, the ground handling requirements should be easy to integrate so as to create minimum disruptions to the established system of organisations and national competent authorities. Therefore, this Regulation should be aligned as much as possible particularly with Regulations (EU) No 965/2012<sup>6</sup> and (EU) No 139/2014<sup>7</sup>, as the ground handling domain is an interface between air operations and aerodrome operations, and therefore the management systems as regulated by these acts should be aligned and the necessary cross-references established.
- (6) This Regulation does not cover those ground handling activities that are already regulated by other acts, such as flight dispatch, load control, and ground supervision, which are covered by Commission Regulation (EU) No 965/2012, marshalling of aircraft, which is covered by Regulation (EU) No 139/2014, or oil handling, which is covered by Commission Regulation (EU) No 1321/2014<sup>8</sup>.
- (7) In line with the proportionality principle, with regard to self-handling by aircraft operators, this Regulation should only apply to self-handling activities by aircraft operators performing commercial air transport operations with complex motor-powered aircraft. It is considered that Commission Regulation (EU) No 965/2012 sufficiently addresses the safety risks of self-handling activities performed by operators conducting any operations that are not commercial air transport operations, either with complex or with other-than-complex motor-powered aircraft.
- (8) The measures provided for in this Regulation should improve and promote the safety of ground handling services and a safety culture within the organisations providing such services. Therefore, the requirements laid down in this Regulation should provide the necessary tools and a description of the process for organisations to implement a safety reporting system, to help them collect and analyse the safety data obtained from those reports, and to establish and foster a safety culture with each individual employed in their organisation.
- (9) With this Regulation, ground handling organisations are to assume full responsibility for the safe provision of services, their operations, and control the operational risks of their activities, while aircraft operators continue to remain responsible for the safety of the aircraft and for the flight, while aerodrome operators continue to remain responsible for the safe operation of aerodromes. Therefore, ground handling organisations should develop and implement a management system with effective safety management processes capable of identifying and managing the safety risks, including those arising from interfaces with the aircraft operators and the aerodrome operators, through the application of adequate and proportionate mitigation measures.

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<sup>6</sup> Commission Regulation (EU) No 965/2012 of 5 October 2012 laying down technical requirements and administrative procedures related to air operations pursuant to Regulation (EC) No 216/2008 of the European Parliament and of the Council ([OJ L 296, 25.10.2012, p. 1](#)).

<sup>7</sup> Commission Regulation (EU) No 139/2014 of 12 February 2014 laying down requirements and administrative procedures related to aerodromes pursuant to Regulation (EC) No 216/2008 of the European Parliament and of the Council ([OJ L 44, 14.2.2014, p. 1–34](#))

<sup>8</sup> Commission Regulation (EU) No 1321/2014 of 26 November 2014 on the continuing airworthiness of aircraft and aeronautical products, parts and appliances, and on the approval of organisations and personnel involved in these tasks ([OJ L 362, 17.12.2014, p. 1](#)).

- (10) The management system developed and implemented by ground handling organisations should be proportionate, scalable to the size and complexity of their organisation and activities, and should cover the management of safety, management of changes, safety reporting, training of personnel, records and documentation, maintenance of ground support equipment used, identification of safety-related interfaces with other stakeholders involved in ground handling activities, operational procedures, and compliance monitoring. Ground handling organisations should strive to develop and foster an organisational safety culture, in which employees understand their individual importance in the aviation safety chain and contribute actively to maintaining and improving the level of safety in their daily operational tasks. This Regulation contains provisions to support organisations to develop and cultivate a healthy reporting culture.
- (11) To ensure a common approach in addressing the safety risks arising from the interfaces between ground handling, aircraft and aerodrome operations, and to promote a common understanding of hazards and risks, ground handling organisations, aircraft operators and aerodrome operators should have the same safety information and safety data when these are relevant for them and when these information and data may affect the safety performance of either organisation. To achieve this, such organisations should be able to share among themselves relevant safety information, as well as information resulting from occurrence reports or oversight inspections and audits.
- (12) Ground handling services, provided *to* an aircraft *at* an aerodrome, are an interface in themselves between aircraft and aerodrome operations. The safety risks arising from this situation should be properly acknowledged through a regulatory framework for the interaction between organisations, so as to enable them to identify those operational interfaces having an effect on safety and apply proper mitigation measures to minimise the risks in operation. At the same time, ground handling organisations should be able to discuss safety on an equal ground with the other stakeholders involved in those operational interfaces and provide them with the possibility to apply their own operational procedures if they are based on their safety risk management processes and if this is agreed with the aircraft operator to which they provide services.
- (13) To ensure a smooth transition from the existing national regulations of the Member States to this Regulation, it is necessary to provide ground handling organisations that are already operating at the time when this Regulation becomes applicable with sufficient time and minimum conditions to shift from the existing national regulations of the Member States to this Regulation.
- (14) Training of ground handling operational personnel is one of the most important measures for mitigating the safety risks in ground handling activities. Ground handling organisations should ensure that all operational personnel involved in ground handling activities are competent to provide those services. The competence of the operational personnel should always be maintained. Therefore, this Regulation establishes minimum requirements regarding the training and assessment programme for the safety-relevant personnel to ensure that they develop and maintain the competencies necessary to perform their tasks safely and effectively.
- (15) To support the mobility of personnel across ground handling organisations and to reduce the training costs upon re-training of a new employee that already has already achieved the required qualifications at the previous employment, ground handling personnel should be able to easily provide proof of training already completed. The

ground handling organisation should therefore provide to the employee a copy of respective training records, upon request, which should enable the easy assessment and mutual recognition of training across organisations subject to this Regulation.

- (16) Flight safety and safe provision of ground handling services depend heavily on the use of functional, properly maintained ground support equipment. The functionality of the equipment used for the provision of ground handling services should be ensured by the application of a maintenance programme, including preventive maintenance, developed and applied in accordance with instructions and manuals of the equipment manufacturer. The rules should also be technology-neutral, to allow innovations and a smooth adoption of new technologies at a fast pace, while keeping an environmentally friendly approach towards the choice of ground support equipment. At the same time, the rules should provide the possibility for organisations to adopt and implement practices and business models that minimise aerodrome congestion and make aerodrome operations safer and more efficient, such as equipment pooling or a safety stack model, where the aerodrome specificity allows for the implementation of such business models.
- (17) This Regulation should ensure a pragmatic and balanced approach between prescriptive and performance-based rules. Flexibility in the approach towards requirements on operational procedures for ground handling services is a key to achieving the safety objectives. Therefore, it is essential that the requirements covering the operational procedures remain performance-based and rely on the voluntary application of industry standards and good practices, as well as operational procedures well established by aircraft operators and ground handling organisations.
- (18) The essential requirements in Annex VII, point 4.1(c) to Regulation (EU) 2018/1139 mandate that organisations provide ground handling services in accordance with the operational instructions and procedures of the aircraft operators. The operational procedures for the same ground handling service and to the same type of aircraft may differ significantly between aircraft operators, and this increases the risk of human error as it could lead to aircraft damage and endanger flight safety. The essential requirements in Annex VII point 4.2.3 to Regulation (EU) 2018/1139 require that ground handling organisations develop their own operational procedures for the provision of ground handling services. This Regulation enables ground handling organisations to apply their own operational procedures if this is agreed by the aircraft operator. Furthermore, this Regulation makes ground handling organisations formally accountable and responsible for the safety of their own services by the application of an effective safety management system. This should also support ground handling organisations in developing, assessing, discussing and agreeing with the aircraft operators on common operational procedures that are safe for both parties. All these elements, placed in several requirements, should improve the existing level of trust between the aircraft operator and its provider of ground handling services, and lead towards a harmonisation of the operational procedures.
- (19) This Regulation should further ensure that it provides solid elements for organisations to improve their analysis of causes of events identified through their own compliance monitoring processes or through the national competent authority oversight, and also to improve their safety reporting culture. At the same time, the Regulation should also provide a framework for the provision by the national competent authorities of direct and consistent feedback on reported ground handling events directly to the ground handling organisations.

- (20) It is necessary to provide sufficient time for the ground handling industry and national competent authorities to implement the new regulatory framework after the entry into force of this Regulation, therefore a transition period of 3 years should be provided for its deferred applicability and a transition period of 6 years should be provided for the deferred applicability of the requirements covering the information security management.
- (21) The requirements laid down in this Regulation are based on Opinion No 01/2024 issued by the Agency in accordance with Article 75(2), points (b) and (c), and Article 76(1) of Regulation (EU) 2018/1139.
- (22) In accordance with Article 128(4) of Regulation (EU) 2018/1139, the Commission consulted experts designated by each Member State in accordance with the principles laid down in the Inter-institutional Agreement of 13 April 2016 on Better Law-Making<sup>9</sup>,

HAS ADOPTED THIS REGULATION:

### *Article 1* **Subject matter**

This Regulation establishes common requirements for the provision of ground handling services and organisations providing them at aerodromes within the scope of Regulation (EU) 2018/1139.

### *Article 2* **Scope**

1. This Regulation shall apply to the ground handling organisations that provide any of the ground handling services specified in paragraph 2 at one or more aerodromes within the scope of Regulation (EU) 2018/1139:
2. This Regulation shall apply to the following services provided to aeroplanes:
  - (a) passenger handling, including passengers with reduced mobility, including safety aspects of passenger and baggage acceptance at the aerodrome, safety of passengers during boarding and disembarkation using ground support equipment and during transit or transfer, and ground transportation of passengers between the aerodrome terminal and the aircraft;
  - (b) baggage handling, including baggage identification, sorting, building, transfer, arrival and reclaim;
  - (c) the following aircraft servicing activities:
    - (i) operation of ground support equipment (GSE) used for ground handling services, including loading and unloading of catering, and the movement of those GSE on the apron and around the aircraft;
    - (ii) aircraft refuelling and defuelling, namely into-plane fuelling services at the aerodrome;

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<sup>9</sup> OJ C 321, 31.12.2003, p. 1.

- (iii) aircraft toilet servicing;
  - (iv) potable water servicing;
  - (v) aircraft exterior cleaning;
  - (vi) aircraft de-icing and anti-icing;
  - (d) the following aircraft turnaround activities:
    - (i) activities upon aircraft arrival, including aircraft securing on the ground;
    - (ii) loading and unloading of baggage, cargo, mail, catering, and loading supervision;
    - (iii) activities upon aircraft departure;
    - (iv) aircraft towing and pushback;
  - (e) the following cargo and mail handling at an aerodrome :
    - (i) cargo acceptance on behalf of the aircraft operator;
    - (ii) final build-up and storage;
    - (iii) final weighing and tagging of unit load devices;
    - (iv) final checks before air transportation;
    - (v) ground transportation of cargo and mail between the point of final checks and the aircraft.
3. This Regulation shall not apply to the following activities and organisations performing them:
- (a) marshalling of aircraft;
  - (b) flight dispatch tasks performed by flight dispatchers as defined by Regulation (EU) No 965/2012;
  - (c) load control tasks related to load planning, mass and balance calculations, load control messages and communications, and issuance of load control documents;
  - (d) ground supervision;
  - (e) oil handling for the aircraft (including replenishment, servicing) performed by maintenance organisations approved under Regulation (EU) No 1321/2014, other organisations compliant with Regulation (EU) No 1321/2014, and other maintenance organisations holding an approval issued in compliance with ICAO Annex 8 Chapter 6;
  - (f) aircraft exterior cleaning when performed by maintenance organisations approved under Regulation (EU) No 1321/2014, other organisations compliant with Regulation (EU) No 1321/2014, and other maintenance organisations holding an approval issued in compliance with ICAO Annex 8 Chapter 6 and the activity is included in the organisation's maintenance manual;
  - (g) any other ground handling activity when performed by a maintenance organisation approved under Regulation (EU) No 1321/2014, other organisations compliant with Regulation (EU) No 1321/2014, and other maintenance organisations holding an approval issued in compliance with ICAO Annex 8 Chapter 6 for the purpose of aircraft maintenance;



- (h) ground transportation of passengers and crew members when this is the only service provided by an entity;
- (i) self-handling, when performed by aircraft operators performing any of the following types of operations:
  - (i) commercial air transport operations with other-than-complex motor-powered aircraft;
  - (ii) any flight operations with complex or other-than-complex motor-powered aircraft that are not commercial air transport operations;
- (j) handling of passengers with reduced mobility, or ground transportation of passengers and crew members, or both, when these are the only ground handling services provided by an aerodrome operator with its own personnel, not cumulated with other ground handling services provided by that aerodrome operator.

### *Article 3* **Definitions**

For the purpose of this Regulation, the following definitions apply:

- (1) 'ground handling organisation' means one of the following:
  - (a) a stand-alone ground handling organisation or a ground handling organisation that is part of a single ground handling organisation business grouping;
  - (b) an aerodrome operator providing ground handling services;
  - (c) an aircraft operator providing ground handling services to itself or within a single air carrier business grouping (self-handling);
- (2) 'single ground handling organisation business grouping' means two or more ground handling organisations providing services in more than one Member State and are registered in territories to which the Treaties apply, which facilitate the harmonisation of their management systems and main organisation processes for the purpose of compliance with this Regulation, including applying the same policies, processes and procedures to the components of their management systems such as the safety management, documentation, compliance monitoring, management of changes, training of ground handling personnel, operational procedures, and maintenance programme for ground support equipment;
- (3) 'passenger handling' means activities related to any kind of assistance to arriving, departing, transfer or transit passengers, including, where applicable, passenger and baggage acceptance, travel documents and flight tickets check, boarding pass issuance, gate activities, passenger boarding and disembarkation;
- (4) 'ground support equipment (GSE)' means a motorised or non-motorised mobile vehicle, apparatus or piece of equipment that is designed, built and used for the provision of ground handling services on the movement area of an aerodrome;
- (5) 'baggage handling' means a process consisting of several steps covering baggage sorting, baggage build, baggage transportation from the sorting area to the aircraft and vice versa, gate delivery baggage, baggage arrival, mishandled baggage, baggage reconciliation;

- (6) 'into-plane fuelling service' means delivery of fuel to an aircraft;
- (7) 'aircraft de-icing' means a ground procedure by which frost, ice, snow or slush is removed from an aircraft in order to provide uncontaminated surfaces. The process can combine de-icing and anti-icing performed in two steps;
- (8) 'aircraft anti-icing', means a ground procedure that provides protection against the formation of frost or ice and accumulation of snow or slush on treated surfaces of the aircraft for a limited period of time (holdover time);
- (9) 'aircraft turnaround' means a coordinated process of activities associated with the handling of an aircraft, its passengers, baggage, mail and cargo, occurring in a predetermined time interval between the aircraft arrival and its departure;
- (10) 'aircraft loading' means stowing load or unit load devices (ULDs) on board the aircraft in accordance with the loading instructions;
- (11) 'baggage' means the personal property or other articles of a passenger or crew member carried on a flight;
- (12) 'cargo' or 'freight' means goods or property that are carried on an aircraft, other than baggage, mail, company material, company mail, and in-flight supplies, which are not consumed or used during flight;
- (13) 'mail' means dispatches of correspondence and other items, other than the aircraft operator's mail, tendered by and intended for delivery to postal services in accordance with the rules of the Universal Postal Union (UPU);
- (14) 'aircraft towing' means the forward movement of an aircraft in service or out of service by using external power of ground support equipment that supports the aircraft's nose landing gear or is attached to it;
- (15) 'aircraft pushback' means the movement of an aircraft from a nose-in parking position by using external power of ground support equipment. The operation may involve a towbar;
- (16) 'unit load device (ULD)' means a device for grouping and restraining cargo, mail and baggage for air transport that is either an aircraft container or a combination of an aircraft pallet and an aircraft pallet net, which is designed to be directly restrained by the aircraft cargo loading system (CLS).
- (17) 'load control' means a process under the responsibility of the aircraft operator, to ensure that the aircraft is safely and efficiently loaded before each flight;
- (18) 'organisation providing ground handling services in more than one Member State' means a ground handling organisation or a self-handling aircraft operator that provides services at aerodromes in more than one Member State and is overseen by more than one competent authority. It includes organisations that may or may not be part of a single ground handling organisation business grouping or of a single air carrier business grouping;
- (19) 'audit' means a systematic, independent and documented process for obtaining evidence and evaluating it objectively to determine the extent to which requirements are complied with;
- (20) 'inspection' means, in the context of compliance monitoring and oversight, an independent and documented conformity evaluation by observation and judgement accompanied, as appropriate, by measurements, testing or gauging, in order to verify



compliance with applicable requirements; whereas an inspection may be part of an audit, but may also be conducted outside the normal audit plan, in particular, to verify the closure of a certain finding;

- (21) 'dangerous goods (DG)' means articles or substances which are capable of posing a hazard to health, safety, property or the environment and which are shown in the list of dangerous goods in the Technical Instructions or which are classified according to those Instructions;
- (22) 'ICAO Technical Instructions' means ICAO Doc 9284 'Technical Instructions for the Safe Transport of Dangerous Goods by Air';
- (23) 'notification to captain (NOTOC)' means accurate and legible written information provided to the commander or pilot-in-command concerning dangerous goods shipments or other special cargo that is to be carried on board the aircraft;
- (24) 'just culture' means just culture as defined in Article 2, point 12, of Regulation (EU) No 376/2014;
- (25) 'aircraft handling' means all the ground handling activities and communications occurring on the movement area, including aircraft refuelling and defuelling, aircraft de-icing and anti-icing, replenishing with potable water, toilet and wastewater services, catering handling, aircraft cleaning services, provision and operation of ground support equipment, aircraft access, securing of aircraft on the ground, aircraft loading and unloading, aircraft pushback or towing, equipment attachment and removal, operation of vehicles and equipment in the immediate vicinity of the aircraft;
- (26) 'passenger boarding bridge' means a telescopic corridor that extends from an airport terminal to an aircraft for the passenger boarding and disembarkation;
- (27) 'turnaround coordination' means a ground handling function with a safety role, which coordinates the ramp handling activities and ends with the release (dispatch) of a flight upon the completion of the ground handling services to the aircraft on the apron;
- (28) 'cargo compartment' means the area of an aircraft that may be used for the transport of cargo, and/or baggage;
- (29) 'equipment restraint area (ERA)' means a safety buffer area around the aircraft, which shall remain free from obstruction and foreign object debris before and after aircraft arrival and departure and during aircraft manoeuvring to and from the parking stand, except for the ground support equipment and personnel required for manoeuvring;
- (30) 'loading instructions' means a set of instructions supporting the person supervising the aircraft loading in ensuring the correct and safe loading of the aircraft;
- (31) 'mass and balance documentation' means documents containing data about the aircraft mass and balance, centre of gravity, aircraft load, notification to captain (NOTOC) for dangerous goods, loading instructions, load information;

#### *Article 4*

### **Conditions and procedures for organisations providing ground handling services**

The conditions and procedures for organisations providing ground handling services to declare their capability and the availability to them of the means, to discharge the responsibilities for the safe provision of services as referred to in Article 37(2) of Regulation (EU) 2018/1139, shall be as set out in Annexes I and II to this Regulation.

#### *Article 5*

### **Transitional provisions**

Organisations already providing ground handling services on [*the date of entry into force of this Regulation*] shall submit a declaration in accordance with point ORGH.DEC.100 of Annex I to this Regulation from [*one year before the date of application of this Regulation*], in accordance with a plan established and agreed with their competent authority as identified in point ORGH.GEN.105 of Annex I to this Regulation.

#### *Article 6*

### **Entry into force and application**

1. This Regulation shall enter into force on the twentieth day following that of its publication in the *Official Journal of the European Union*.
2. It shall apply from [*3 years from the date of entry into force*].
3. However, point ORGH.MGM.201 of Annex I to this Regulation shall apply from [*6 years from the date of entry into force*].

This Regulation shall be binding in its entirety and directly applicable in all Member States.

Done at Brussels, 19.12.2024

*For the Commission*  
*The President*  
*Ursula VON DER LEYEN*