



Varieties of Industrial Relations in Aviation Lockdown



VS/2021/0188

VIRAL PROJECT FINAL MEETING BRUSSELS 7-9 JUNE 2023

Present: Fausta Guarriello (Viral Coordinator, University of Chieti-Pescara), Antonella Di Giorgio (Viral Secretary, University Chieti-Pescara); Hanna Kinowska, Izabela Buchowicz, Lukasz Sienkiewicz (SGH Warsaw School of Economics); Izabela Florczak, Marta Otto (University of Lodz); Piera Campanella, Marco Tufo (University of Urbino Carlo Bo); Davide Dazzi (Ires-ER); Magdalena Nogueira Guastavino (UAM Madrid); Steen Navrbjerg (University of Copenhagen FAOS); Michael Whittall (University of Erlangen); Michael Doherty, David Mangan (National University of Ireland); Jesus Cruz-Villalòn, Patrocinio Rodriguez-Ramos (University of Seville); Rafael Gomez Gordillo (University Pablo de Olavide, Seville); Marco Rocca (University of Strasbourg).

Wednesday, 7th June 2023, 14.30-18.00 (meeting room Hotel Le Châtelain)

After the reception and registration of the participants, the meeting focused on the Organisation of the final conference and the coordination of the panels. The idea of considering the event not as an academic conference, but as a round table for social partners, an occasion to give them the opportunity to present their experiences and ideas is shared by the partners.

Then the conference program is discussed. In particular, the background of each speaker is presented and the role of each participant is explained for each panel. The non-speaker conference participants are also encouraged to participate in the discussion, time permitting. The Viral partners discuss how to reorganise panels 1 and 2 due to the notice of absence of two invited stakeholders, Sven Bergelin (Ver.di) and Fabrizio Cuscito (FILT-CGIL). Moreover, the importance of the role of Nicola Countouris (ETUI, UCL) as a discussant of the final panel is stressed. Furthermore, the presence of EU social partners offer the opportunity to ask them about the initial results of the ILO technical meeting in April 2023, also in the perspective of stimulating the debate on the air transport sector at EU level, and about the EU social dialogue on the sectoral agreement for ground staff. Of course, according to the Viral partners, these aspects could be developed during the conference in the context of showing the results of the project. In particular, the conclusive remarks by Michael Doherty were thought to be pivotal to integrating the main issues of the research with the information that emerged from the debate. Finally, the Viral partners speak about the final dissemination and communication strategies, considering the papers and articles already published and to be published in the near future.

Thursday 8th JUNE, 9.30 a.m.-5.30 p.m. (EESC Building, 99 rue Belliard)

The conference is opened with the presentation of the Viral project and the Conference Agenda by Davide Dazzi (IRES Emilia Romagna). He highlights the fact that Covid-19 has been the temporal reference for the project and during its development some changes occurred in air transport also due to the pandemic.



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After the presentation of the panels, the floor is given to Pierre-Jean Coulon (former president of the section TEN- EESC) for institutional greetings. In particular, he observes that aviation has been badly affected by Covid-19 and he stresses the importance of the aviation value-chain as a key element for the recovery of the sector. In this sense, the EU social dialogue should continue to be promoted towards the recovery of aviation. He therefore recommends using the EESC as the home of social dialogue, and asks that the EESC be kept informed of the outcomes of the project.

Then, a general overview of the project is provided by the VIRAL partners Hanna Kinowska (SGH Warsaw School of Economics) and Steen Navrbjerg (FAOS-University of Copenhagen). Hanna Kinowska describes the economic effects of Covid-19 on the air transport sector, passenger volumes included, underlining in particular how Low Cost Carriers (LCCs) grew strongly in the EU market after the pandemic, while legacy carriers survived mainly thanks to public aid. Steen Navrbjerg focuses his presentation on the different models of industrial relations in aviation by country, airline (legacy, LCCs or ultra-LCCs), Air Traffic Management (ATM), airports and category of workers.

PANEL 1, dedicated to “Actors and strategies of the social partners in the aviation sector”, is chaired by Michael Whittall (University of Erlangen). At the round table, where Peer Laier (Confederation of Danish Industry DI) and Daniela Modonesi (Ground Staff Committee Chair ETF) are present, the Italian, Danish and German Industrial Relations systems of the air transport sector are explained, especially with reference to collective bargaining and the impact of liberalisation on IR.

In general, aviation is quite different from the general national IR systems. On the one hand, Germany tends towards an “IR light” model but there are significant similarities between company level Collective Labour Agreements (CLAs) and national/sectoral agreements in terms of securing a floor for working conditions. The German system has been ‘flexibilised’; for instance, while a lot of the airports are publicly owned, there is a lot of outsourcing of activities, and third-party actors, which means the further workers are down the value chain, the more precarious their positions are. On the other hand, in Denmark there is local Collective Bargaining (CB) in airlines, as opposed to a national model, while in Italy the liberalisation of the industry has thrown things into chaos. Here there have been attempts to get a sectoral CLA in place, but it is not legally enforceable against all, and not signed by many employers. Italian social partners have built on the idea of a sectoral agreement, which has proven difficult to enforce for the whole value chain.

Another issue discussed in the panel is the role of social partners in improving working conditions in aviation and relaunching the industry and the attractiveness of the sector, also through the tripartite social dialogue, as well as the issue of the skill-shortage. In particular, participants discuss the ways employers can rebuild trust with employees in the sector. In Italy the theme is to increase wages and reduce worker anxiety finding ways to reach a better work-life balance. In Denmark, during Covid there was good cooperation between employers and workers and building on this is necessary. But higher wages are not the only answer here as there is the need to find a balance between shift-work, etc., which is a feature of the industry, and finding the skills required for the work. Another topic discussed is the competitiveness of some carriers’ business models, such as Lufthansa. About the national perspective, speakers highlight

the need to change the mindset of the Danish “flag carrier” (SAS), which is very “civil service” orientated (e.g. job for life) to ensure more flow of staff between companies. In other words, it is considered necessary to adjust business models to fit with the market (especially international market competition) as happened in manufacturing: a key factor is a better use of technology and non-labour cost savings.

In the panel the issue of passenger behaviour, exacerbated during the pandemic, is also discussed, with special reference to the measures taken through social dialogue to cope with aggressive passengers. A good example of social dialogue is the Italian anti-aggression Protocol signed in the Bologna airport to deal with aggressive/unruly passengers. As many of the frontline staff are women, this is also a very gendered issue. In general, the speakers observed that ticket prices will have to increase as a condition for rebuilding the sector.

The intervention of Herman Carpentier (European Network Airline Association- ENAA) underlines the need for EU level social dialogue in aviation. If competition is vital for the industry, this must be done in the correct way. Aviation is a very high profile sector and competition is intense. He observes that, following the challenges of Covid (and before), the whole spectrum of work has changed and these challenges require a response from all actors. Modernising work practices is pivotal (e.g. in 40 years the manner in which baggage is handled has not really changed!). Tom Laursen (Danish Air Traffic Controllers Association) intervenes to say that the problem is to build on top of the old model, but he points out the issue of how to cope with the next possible crisis. According to him, the aviation industry needs to learn lessons and reassess how it does things (e.g. letting Air Traffic Controllers (ATCs) go is always a bad move, because they are still needed in the future). Aline Hoffman (ETUI) intervenes in the debate suggesting that one good thing during Covid was that all EU Member States introduced short term work/job retention schemes: in previous crises not all Member States did so, therefore this could be considered a good practice.

PANEL 2 (chaired by Magda Nogueira, Universidad Autonoma Madrid, and with the speakers Pier Paolo Settembri from the European Commission DG Mobility and Transport, Marco Vergara from the Marconi Airport Bologna and Brendan O’Hanlon from the Dublin Airport Authority) is focused on “The role of public actors in industrial relations in the air transport sector”.

Professor Nogueira introduced the panel recalling that up to the 1990’s aviation was a protected market with an important role of the State, been regarded as a vital infrastructure for each country (especially for countries that are/have islands). States have been quite reluctant to privatize such an important infrastructure. The aviation sector was considered “the business of (national) freedom” according to the Convention on International Civil Aviation (Chicago Convention 1944). In 1987 the European Union began a process of liberalization of the air transport sector that allowed other airlines to access routes that were formerly reserved to legacy airlines. Public involvement has been much reduced through privatization processes that led to the current composite situation, where there are no flag carriers (except LOT in Poland), some public-private constellations such as SAS and Air France-KLM, and many private groups such as Lufthansa, IAG,

Ryanair. Airports and air traffic control also are important infrastructures for which States (or regional governments) have tended to promote a public-private arrangements.

The impact of Covid-19 brought the resurgence of the State role through huge financial measures aimed to support businesses and employees whose activity has been reduced or suspended, to protect health and safety of population and to recover the economy. The emergency legislation on labour market focused on maintaining employment through the financing of partial unemployment benefits or direct wage subsidies (Spain, France, Denmark, Ireland, Germany, Italy), often adopted through tripartite agreements and sometimes with conditionality attached of temporary prohibition of dismissal (Italy, Spain, Denmark). Tripartite social dialogue and consultation was the method used to adopt economic and social measures at EU, national and local level during the pandemic with the large consensus of social partners. Covid-19 crisis has shown that social dialogue is an essential tool for balanced crisis management and for finding effective mitigation and recovery policies.

The lesson learnt by the Covid crisis risk being soon forgotten with the withdrawal of the active role of the state in industrial relations with the fictitious separation between technical and social matters, agencies and ministries (the case of regulation of the Single European Sky is emblematic). Now the proposal of the Council Recommendation on strengthening social dialogue in the European Union stresses the need to involve social partners in the design and implementation of policies and reforms. How strengthen and improve the role of tripartite dialogue in managing future crises?

The participants in panel 2 discuss the response of the EU to the crisis. Three issues are worth underlining: health and safety, the human cost and the economic cost. The EU Commission stood firm in terms of protecting consumer rights. As EU law was not made to cope with Covid-19, the pandemic should be considered as an occasion for the EU legislator to be prepared the next unexpected crisis (such as the the Ukrainian war), even considering the fragmented national responses given by each Member State to the crisis. In this sense, some results linked to the pandemic crisis must be considered a success, such as the vaccination certificates and the health and safety measures for aviation workers. In particular, a number of protocols were agreed upon between public actors and social partners, such as those signed by the Bologna Airport with trade unions and the Municipality of Bologna since 2019 (e.g. the anti-aggression protocol already mentioned). Another relevant aspect has been the ability of the EU Commission to ensure a quick exchange of information between Member States, in order to ensure consistency across the EU.

Another issue addressed in the panel is the sustainability and attractiveness of the sector, the role of social shock absorbers, the importance of the Single European Sky policy, and social dialogue. At the end of the panel Nerea Cañas (for the Spanish pilots union SEPLA) as discussant presents the legal issues of aviation, especially related to the applicable law in transnational relationships and the revision of EU regulation no. 1008/2008, as well as the battle against false self-employment. This in the context of the past, present and future social initiatives in the EU, specifically relating to flight crew. The key words of the panel are: information, communication, consultation and coordination.

After the lunch break, the topic of **PANEL 3** is devoted to “How industrial relations addressed the pandemic crisis in the air transport value chain”. Here the participants (chair Marco Rocca, CNRS – University of Strasbourg; speakers Liam Berney from Irish TUC, Anna Glaubicz-Garwolińska from the Polish Air Traffic Controllers Trade Union and Tom Laursen from the Danish Air Traffic Controllers Association; discussant Darragh Golden, University College Dublin) discuss the challenges which the ATCs had to face during the pandemic and those they will face in the future, such as the shortage of workers.

In Poland the Government cannot be considered a partner and the biggest issue connected with labour shortages in the aviation value chain is the lack of specialists at the management level. What is more, from the point of view of air traffic controllers, a weakness of collective bargain is the B2B (self-employment) reality. This issue has been solved by creating a separate entity, which received the proxy from air traffic controllers to act on their behalf. Here the employers paused training ATCs during Covid, and this was a big error. In Denmark ATCs were made redundant (especially through early retirement programs) during Covid and the reduction of working hours was put in place to reduce costs. For this reason nowadays there are delays in Copenhagen constantly. About Ireland today, after COVID, the situation in the value chain is stable. Still – labour shortages can be observed in the whole economy. There is also a correlation between the sector and climate change, which soon will be the big issue. One positive experience during Covid was the social dialogue on the national level. From the financial point of view, the lack of funds was not a real issue. Moreover, the difficulty in training ATCs in Denmark is highlighted, which makes it difficult to hire new workers. Also in Ireland the Dublin airport made a big error in making people redundant. Now, in the post-COVID age, employers have had to pay more and re-adjust the pay scales (although this is cyclical) of ATCs. Then, the topic of ATCs’ working conditions is debated, specifically in Poland and Denmark. The difference in wages, working time and legal qualification of air traffic controllers between the two countries emerges. In Denmark ATCs have excellent terms and conditions. The problem for employers now is that ATC workers would prefer better work-life balance to more money.

A more general problem is the legal qualification of ATCs and flight crews. In Poland there is a high use of B2B relationships in ATCs. Moreover, 80% of pilots are employed on a B2B basis. This results in pilots being paid only for hours spent in the air. Thus, they are not paid for being ready to work and not being able to do so, for example due to atmospheric obstacles. In Ireland bogus self-employment is an issue related especially to Ryanair. The company gave pilots a choice - to stay on B2B or move to employment contracts. Half opted to stay on as B2B. In this context, unions are not focused too much on this problem as there are bigger issues for them. The only way to deal with this could be via collective bargaining (not litigation).

About conflict, the importance of air traffic controllers to the whole system is highlighted, making their strikes are very effective, even if in Denmark this does not happen due to the existence of a collective agreement with a cooling-off mechanism, and to the fact that they have no right to strike as public servants. A simple non-strike procedure, but one that disrupts the work process, is to refuse to work overtime. In Poland, according to Ms. Garwolinska, the root of conflict related to air traffic controllers

was the ineptitude and incompetence of management. In this regard, it turned out that the safety of controllers was violated many times, including in a very blatant manner (e.g., by handing out terminations to controllers while on duty).

Even in this panel the problems of sustainability and climate change are discussed as well as the role of the social dialogue at the national and plant level, and the possible perspective of a sectoral collective agreement. For example, sectoral negotiations are not very common in Ireland. But it would be important to prepare the aviation sector for the next crisis. A program for just transition in aviation is also needed.

It is also observed that LCCs, like Ryanair, received State support (wage subsidies) but did not participate in any social dialogue. For the future it is suggested public aid be made conditional on specific social rights.

PANEL 4, titled “Strengthening collective bargaining and social dialogue as an inclusive tool to manage future challenges” (chair Fausta Guarriello, University of Chieti-Pescara, Viral project coordinator; speakers: Eoin Coates, ETF; Bastiaan de Bruijne, ACI Europe; Daniela Modonesi, FILT-Cgil; Herman Carpentier ENAA; discussant Nicola Countouris, ETUI – UCL) focuses on emerging trends, uncovered during the course of the VIRAL project and investigated in particular in some case-studies, **towards the centralisation and greater coordination of collective bargaining** in the air transport sector as a response to the pandemic crisis and the fragmentation of collective bargaining, which still remains predominantly at the company level.

The chair recalls how, as mentioned in the previous panels, the impact of the crisis was different according to the safety nets, whether legal or negotiated, present in the different systems and the ability of the actors -including the public actor- to adopt solutions to carry the sector beyond the pandemic in a medium- to long-term perspective. The social and employment crisis brought about by the pandemic, one of the recurring crises in the air transport sector, seems to be pushing the social partners to seek greater resilience through a recomposition of negotiations in the sector, or at least in its large aggregates (large airports, handling, group airlines) through new trade union alliances or the definition of umbrella agreements or simple guidelines, aimed at coordinating collective bargaining that would otherwise be dispersed and not supportive of the smooth functioning of the entire value chain. Obstacles to this possible recomposition seem to be: -the excessive fragmentation of actors on the side of both workers (professional and general unions) and employers (airlines, handling, airports, air traffic management); - the challenge brought by the LCCs' organisational model to national IR systems; -the withdrawal of the role of the public actor from labour relations, left to the dynamics of the market, even in the presence of substantial packages of state aid to airlines and airports; -the ability of the social partners at the EU level to work together before the common enemy, the pandemic, no longer realised in the recovery, where the social partners seem to be pursuing different and conflicting goals; -substantial job losses in countries and in parts of the value chain not covered by adequate legal or contractual crisis protection mechanisms; -a significant skills shortage in the recovery phase due to mass layoffs and deteriorating working and wage conditions during Covid that make the sector less attractive in terms of employment; -the exposure of a very sensitive sector to the transformations prompted by the twin transition and the need for these

processes to be driven in a balanced manner.

However, from the VIRAL national reports and the in-depth analysis carried out in the case studies, some trends emerge aimed at coordinating and strengthening IR and social dialogue, in line with what the European Commission requested in its Communication of January 2023 and in its proposal for a Council Recommendation to the Member States. In particular:

-the need for coordination of collective bargaining in multi-employer bargaining units, at the sector or branch level, in order to overcome the fragmentation of the value chain and establish a common floor of decent wage and working conditions against social dumping practices (attempts to make collective bargaining more inclusive are present in some national contexts, where the proposal of sector or sub-sector (e.g. handling) contracts is being discussed as a means to halt the race to the bottom in wages and working conditions for workers in air transport and its value chain).

- supporting collective bargaining, in particular at the sectoral level to raise the coverage rate of collective agreements in national systems at least at 80% (as required by the adequate minimum wage directive)

- strengthening the European sectoral social dialogue to respond to the challenges of climate change and the green and digital transition through agreements, common guidelines and frameworks for action, the implementation of which should be closely monitored, underlying the necessary complementarity between EU and national levels

- focusing on the global dimension of aviation and compliance with ILO core conventions by MS (see ICAO-ILO cooperation agreement for application of the decent work agenda to the aviation sector and the first review of issues discussed in tripartite dialogue at ILO April 2023, in view of a possible Aviation Labour Convention).

Social partners are given the floor, where it is highlighted that the ILO organised in late April an expert meeting to tackle safety issues, sustainability, as well as gender biases that the sector still experiences. The commitments undertaken are considered important by Daniela Modonesi, who attended the Geneva meeting for ETF, because they were put “on paper” and not simply stated orally. The route will be long, but the involvement of governments is seen as very positive and ITF and ETF attach great importance to this very promising path.

The social dialogue between airports and trade unions (e.g. in Amsterdam), especially of ground staff, has been considered pivotal in order to improve the working conditions, specifically concerning wage support and the prohibition of subcontracting. Indeed, although the EU Commission was always very focused on competition as a goal, now there is a feeling that this should be rebalanced with social issues, sustainability, and resilience. Airports have to look into possibilities for collective agreements, looking for instance at the experience of the London living wage. For this reason, ACI has been encouraging airports (its members) to engage more with social dialogue, also to explore their roles in defining minimum standards when outsourcing and “policing” their contractors. Moreover, ACI is working together with the ground handling association (ASA) for this purpose.

Stakeholders registered a shift in mentality after the Covid-19 crisis. Indeed, there is better communication between trade unions and employers. However, if we look at the air transport value chain, the competitive pressures are transferred downwards at every step (airlines, ATC charges) until the lowest end of the chain (ground handling) which experiences the worse working conditions, precariousness and therefore lack of attractiveness. We can see a shift towards a US system with a handful of “mega airlines”. This has changed the model of collective bargaining in Europe. So better coordination of collective bargaining is needed to better compete with “mega airlines”. The challenge at the employer side at the European level is that there is no negotiation with a single employers’ association (Airlines for Europe has no mandate for social dialogue), but with 4 groups of airlines. Ground handling has been more successful in European sectoral social dialogue. This is not the case with airline groups, as some of these are very happy with the status quo, others want to reduce precariousness, outsourcing etc., and others want to increase these phenomena.

About the Italian situation, the difficulties encountered by the Italian social partners in the decomposition of collective bargaining is described. Here, there is a sectoral agreement which is not generally binding, it is only applicable to companies which have signed it (or are members of an employers’ association which has signed it). Trade unions have struggled since the 2000s to conclude a sectoral collective agreement. There are parts of the chain where trade unions are very strong (ATCs, airlines) but others where they are weak (catering, handling). A sectoral agreement helps with the stability of the sector itself. Negotiations are tough, so this explains the number of industrial conflicts. During COVID there was a shared interest in creating the conditions to retain the workforce. The sector has a fund that supports salaries in case of partial unemployment (*Cassa integrazione* and *Fondo di solidarietà per il trasporto aereo*), guaranteeing 80% of wages. However, the recovery was so quick in the spring-summer of 2022 that, even if most of the workforce was retained, labour shortages were experienced.

Another issue the panel covers was how to make social dialogue at the European and national level fruitful, and if the Communication of the EU Commission on Social Dialogue could help actors. Some participants considered it as a failure as the company level collective bargaining is too strong and due to the lack of real efforts by the EU. It is observed that the Commission will cease logistical support for ESSC, leaving it entirely in the hands of social partners. This raises several practical questions: who takes the minutes in the absence of a neutral party? There was a mobility package for road transport because of the specific difficulties of a “high mobility” sector. But air transport is even more mobile than that. Social rights are still not regulated at the European level, and national trade unions are probably not in favour of European-level collective bargaining on working conditions, but the idea could be to create a “European floor of rights”. The example of wet leasing shows the need for these minimum standards. Posting regulations are not really adapted to the high mobility in the sector, so the floor of rights is even more relevant. Indeed, with a high mobility sector it is almost impossible to identify the applicable legislation. The individual focus of posting makes it harder: the single worker might only be there for a week, it is the company that is however there for a longer time. A seasonal model is proposed: if you are in a place for more than one season you should be covered by the full provisions of the country.

It is also reported that IATA (International Air Transport Association) seems “allergic” to mentioning social dialogue as an element to improve resilience. Trade unions should adapt their messaging in broader discussions on resilience in order to influence the debate more.

The discussant (Nicola Countouris) observes in closing that aviation is in a constant process of restructuring and even more so in a transition perspective. Many of the lessons arising from the project might be transferable to other sectors, in his opinion. Austerity remains an important phenomenon. For this reason it is important to highlight the presence of public measures to support wages and to allow partial unemployment during Covid crisis. However, the risk is that now that the crisis is forgotten, austerity policies and debt reduction will come back. Politics are also changing, with the European elections coming and the renewal of the European Parliament and Commission, plus of course national elections and some countries already shifting to a more right wing/Eurosceptic government. The role of the EU minimum wage Directive is also relevant. Its effect still has to be seen but it should not be underestimated, in particular the goal of 80% coverage by collective agreements. The discussant claimed that aviation is shaped by crises, as well as by competition (fair and unfair), business models and processes of amalgamation. A “crisis” is of course ongoing, and that’s the just transition discussion.

Reacting to these remarks, the speakers add that State aid went prevalently to airlines during Covid-19, with very little to airports or ground handling companies. European countries did not use enough conditionalities (as opposed to the first US aid package) and those should have been adopted more to preserve employment levels. Good temporary unemployment schemes have clearly shown their effectiveness in Southern Europe countries which managed to welcome very high levels of passengers without delays, unlike the case in northern Europe. On the transition: the full decarbonisation of the sector is supported, however the increase in regulatory cost risks are putting more pressure on labour costs, and this is a concern. But airlines have record profits so maybe a part of that should be shared. Furthermore, social dialogue could be used to cope with these challenges. The constant dialogue can start by working on shared issues (mental health, shortages) and lead to solutions. This is a moment for improvements more than growth. There are high regulatory costs coming, but the question is whether this will have an impact on demand and hence lead to less flights. This might have an important impact on smaller regional airports. Other speakers state that maybe the national focus could be convenient, because the centralisation at European negotiation/regulation might amplify problems, for instance by exacerbating the pro-cyclical elements (cutting ATCs during the crisis). Decentralised decisions might better take local conditions into consideration.

The **Conclusive remarks**, “lessons learned for the future”, by Michael Doherty from Maynooth University Dublin, focuses on the necessity for aviation to learn from the lessons of the pandemic crisis. The role of the State is fundamental, in particular concerning wage subsidies and support schemes, but it has to be observed that many of these aids were directed to support carriers without conditionality and this is no longer appropriate in this moment. Another point is the necessity to support social dialogue for the future, as a factor able to produce results in aviation. There is also the fact that the recovery of the sector was especially strong in tourism but not in business and this seems a long term trend. This has implications for legacy airlines such as SAS and for airports, as we consider that secondary airports –

which serve tourism and where LCCs are important players - are growing. This proves the importance of the different typologies of airports in recovering from the crisis. Airports are public entities and are crucial, as they are “ecosystems” that interconnect the value chain of the air transport sector. But a lot of airport workers are low in the value chain and experience poor working conditions. Here the sectoral approach could work. However, we have to cope with the competition between airports and carriers for the shortage of workers and with inter-union competition. For this reason, the coordination of unions is pivotal, at least facing the legacy airlines’ low-cost subsidiaries. We have also to note the evolution of Ryanair’s IR system from the “waste land” model of 2017 to a different model where some trade unions are recognised, collective bargaining is present, workers are directly hired by the company and the national law (different from the Irish) is applied to the employment relationship, due to legal and union pressures. There should be more conditionality relating to State aid, even considering the appropriateness of such aid e.g. towards Greece by the EU in 2008. But we have also to consider that today we have the minimum wage Directive as well as the Guidelines on collective agreements by solo self-employed people and we have to use these tools. Finally, we have even to think how to cope with the environmental crisis, something that has to be faced at the sectoral level. The implementation could be decentralised, with objectives, the aims and the overall purposes centralised.

Friday, 9th June 2023, 9.30 a.m.-1.00 p.m. (meeting room Hotel Le Chatelain, 17 rue du Chatelain)

Initially, the discussion among Viral partners focuses on the main outcomes of the conference. The Viral partners share the positive outcomes of the event but they also underline the aspects that did not emerge in that occasion. In particular, participants did not treat deeply the issue of pilots’ working conditions, especially relating to wages (although it is quite difficult to have a clear framework on this topic, due to the different calculating systems of wages in legacy and LCCs). Moreover, according to some Viral partners, the conference was a good platform for allowing the social partners to talk with each other. For this reason, it was not possible to fully show the richness of the research, especially at national level.

Undoubtedly, the Viral partners agreed that the project and the final conference have been characterised by close collaboration with social partners. On the contrary, it appeared that the largest airlines have not really been interested in participating in the events that took place during the project.

Another aspect that emerged from the final conference is related to the concept of sustainability in the air transport sector, from an environmental, social and economical point of view. And in this context one could ask how social dialogue is sustainable at the present time and for the future. Furthermore, the conference showed the importance of connecting public transport, especially train and plane. This aspect was discussed by social partners but the employers seemed to give much attention to it, as epitomised by the sentence by an employers’ representative: “trains are trains, planes are planes”. The conference discussion highlighted the crisis factor as well. As the air transport sector is characterised by cycles of crisis, it is important to understand what can be learned from this.

After this initial discussion, the Viral partners discuss the necessity of integrating the case studies with the information collected during the final conference, according to the project deadlines.

Subsequently, the partners speak about the structure, the main contents and the timetable of the book to be published by Kluwer. In particular, as already planned before, the book will have a more general part, aimed at offering a general framework, also from a methodological point of view, on the industrial relations in the air transport sector, in an EU and comparative perspective, and a more specific part devoted to the national chapters and case studies.

Then, the Viral partners discuss other planned publications, especially at the national level, including the research already published or in draft. Further, they talk about the dissemination and communication strategies with respect to the general report to the EU Commission. In particular, it is worth reporting that the Labour Law Research Network conference will be held in Warsaw, Poland from 25-27 June 2023. In this occasion, a panel will be fully dedicated to the results of the Viral project presented and discussed by some VIRAL partners: Michael Doherty, Steen Navrbjerg, Izabela Florczak, Marco Rocca, Hanna Kinowska and David Mangan.

After distributing the final tasks in view of the official project closure on 30 June, the meeting ends at 1 p.m.

