


<b>SAFETY INFORMATION AND ADVISORY NOTICE (SIAN)</b>		 Transport Malta Civil Aviation Directorate Safety and Compliance Unit Transport Malta Centre Triq Pantar Lija LJA 2021 Malta aviationsafety.tm@transport.gov.mt
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Subject: <b>COVID-19 Aviation Health Safety Protocol – Revised Issue</b>		

## 1.04.0 INTRODUCTION

On May 20, 2020, the **European Union Aviation Safety Agency (EASA)** and the **European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (ECDC)** under the auspices of the EU published the “**COVID-19 Aviation Health Safety Protocol**” providing operational guidelines to assist aeroplane operators, airport operators and national aviation authorities in protecting the health and safety of passengers, crews and staff whilst maintaining safe and secure operations.

This evidence-based protocol is the product of a pan-European endeavour to address the public as well as the staff and crew who serve them health and safety issues, by maintaining safe and secure operations whilst minimising the risk of virus transmission related throughout the progressive return to normal of public transport in a standardised and systematic manner. The protocol is addressed to the National aviation authorities, airport operators, aeroplane operators and other aviation stakeholders to implement safety management principles in identifying the risks and implementing the necessary mitigation measures and ensure compliance with national public health requirements.

### 1.1 Changes in this issue

Since its first issue, the COVID-19 Aviation Health Safety Protocol has been revised in reaction to the changing dynamics of the COVID-19 pandemic, new scientific evidence and medicinal progress.

The initial SIAN published in June 2020 encouraged all relevant stakeholders to be signatories to the Charter and also serve as data gathering sources on the implementation of the Aviation Health Safety Protocol. The SIAN (01/20 Rev 1) has been amended to omit the ‘Implementation Status Tool’ and to advise all stakeholders about the revised Aviation Health Safety Protocol.

The revision of this SIAN (01/20 Rev 2) refers to the recently published ‘Addendum to the Protocol’, in response to the worsening epidemiological situation in China, defines measures that can be taken in response to a localised worsening of the epidemiological situation, so as to reduce the risk of geographical spread of a potential new variant as well as the likelihood of transmission during air travel.

The guidelines place paramount importance on health safety at every stage of the end-to-end passenger journey. Recognising that airports, airlines and aircraft are different, it takes a pragmatic

approach in implementation – highlighting and giving guidance on the ways in which individual locations and situations can best be re-engineered to meet the new health safety standards.

TM-CAD strongly encourages the relevant stakeholders (airport operators, aeroplane operators and other aviation stakeholders) to assess and implement the guidelines.

## **2.0 IMPLEMENTATION OF THE PROTOCOL**

The implementation of the aviation health safety protocol will provide a source of best practice on how airport operators, aeroplane operators conducting commercial and non-commercial passenger transport operations and national aviation authorities can ensure the health and safety of passengers, as well as the staff and crew who serve them, by maintaining safe and secure operations whilst minimising the risk of virus transmission.

Although in Malta there is no legal requirement to enforce or implement such measures, some countries are mandating these measures through their respective national legislation. This may mean that operators electing not to implement the Protocol recommendations be barred from operating into such countries.

### **2.1 Management of Change**

The scope for management of change has been mandated by the operational environment in which most operators have been operating in since the outbreak of COVID-19. Implementation (or not) of the Health Protocol necessitates operators to manage such changes through their management system. Several operators provided feedback to TM-CAD as required by OAN 05/20 and 07/20 which related to management of passengers and Return to Normal Operations and SIAN 01/20 related to the specific implementation of the Health Protocol.

## **3.0 COVID-19 AVIATION HEALTH SAFETY PROTOCOL**

### **3.1 Guidelines Issue No. 4 (Summary - 11/05/2022)**

The COVID-19 Aviation Health Safety Protocol (Issue No. 4) incorporates recent evidence regarding the effectiveness of COVID-19 vaccination as well as the implementation experience of the recommended nonpharmaceutical interventions (NPIs) for air travel, and aims to make recommendations for the transition/ de-escalation process with a harmonised and coordinated approach. These operational guidelines and proposed measures will continue to be regularly evaluated and updated in line with better knowledge about the risks of transmission and the evolution of the pandemic.

The ECDC and EASA experts advise for cautious de-escalation of measures considering that a substantial proportion of the European population is not vaccinated, immunity wanes following vaccination or infection, and that new VOCs able to escape the vaccine-derived immunity are likely to appear. To mitigate the likelihood of new infection 'waves', it is essential that countries reduce their COVID-19-related measures gradually and in a coordinated manner. At the time of drafting this update, five SARS-CoV-2 vaccines have been assessed by the European Medicines Agency (EMA) and

approved for emergency use in Europe and four more are currently under rolling review. A vaccination strategy has been implemented in all EU/EEA countries, including a strategy for supplementary doses (so-called 'booster' doses). In other parts of the world, other SARS-CoV-2 vaccines have been approved by regional or national authorities. Consequently, passengers traveling into Europe from other areas may have been vaccinated with other types of vaccines. As currently available vaccines do not provide full protection against infection and transmission, the NPIs proposed in this document for implementation in airports and on-board aircrafts should still be observed to minimise any residual risk of virus transmission during travel.

#### ***Addendum to the AHSP – Issue no. 01 (10/01/2023)***

The Addendum provides operational recommendations regarding the implementation of a set of measures that has been agreed by the Member States in the context of a precautionary approach to potential severe worsening of the COVID-19 epidemiological situation as described in the Council Recommendation (EU) 2022/2548 and are further outlined in this addendum.

The measures as per the IPCR decision of 4 January 2023 are as follows:

- Airports and operators to recommend the wearing of medical masks or respirators to passengers and crew on flights to and from areas with severe worsening of the epidemiological situation such as it is currently the case in China
- Airports and operators to recommend the implementation of enhanced personal hygiene and health measures for both travellers and aircraft and airport personnel
- Following the decision of the Member States, aircraft operators to introduce, for all passengers departing from areas with severe worsening of the epidemiological situation such as it is currently the case in China to Member States, the requirement for a negative COVID-19 test taken not more than 48 hours (RADTs) or 72 hours (NAATs) prior to departure from such areas, and in line with ICAO standards for testing (operators having the responsibility to check pre-departure testing before onboarding)
- Guidance to facilitate the random testing of passengers arriving from areas with severe worsening of the epidemiological situation such as it is currently the case in China in the Member States, as appropriate, and recommending liaising with the health authorities for sequencing of all positive results
- Airport operators and ground handling agents operating at airports with international flights to support local health authorities in sampling wastewater from airports and aircraft with a particular focus on the direct flights arriving from areas with severe worsening of the epidemiological situation such as it is currently the case in China.

Ground handling service providers, and aircraft and airport operators should give proper consideration to the recommendations of the latest version of the EASA/ECDC Aviation Health Safety Protocol.

#### **4.0 CANCELLATION**

This Notice is being withdrawn on 30/06/2023 following the notification that the EASA and the ECDC have decided to formally retire the EASA-ECDC joint AHSP.

**Safety and Compliance Unit**