

## ***New Year's greetings from the AEI President and Executive Board***

### **Dear affiliates and members of Aircraft Engineers International**

**The year 2020 is over!! It will be remembered by most of us for many years but missed by few. The consequences of the pandemic have hit us on so many levels. First, my thoughts go to those who have lost family members and friends and those who have suffered from the disease themselves.**

#### **Industrial relations infected by Corona Virus:**

Another level of consequence, as a result of all the measures taken to limit the spread of the Corona Virus, is that the airline industry is in deep crisis with total losses in 2020 of approximately \$118 billion and passenger demand down by more than 60 percent. However, the airline industry was not really working that well even before the pandemic. For different reasons, sound and sustainable competition did not really work in aviation. This has led to weak finances, cost cutting, and anorectic organisations. So, when the lockdowns around the world grounded a big part of the fleet, we immediately started to get reports about lay-offs, furloughs and other means to cut costs. Often the message to the unions from management has been to agree on pay-cuts or other ways to by-pass contracts and collective bargaining agreements. If labour would not agree to the revised terms, then we should expect layoffs.

In September, AEI published a joint statement with associations representing pilots, air traffic controllers, cabin crew and other groups. The headline was "Time to Rethink". One of the statements in the document was that *"The crisis revealed deep structural weaknesses in our industry, created by years of cost-cutting, a generation of industry leaders fond of fueling a 'race to the bottom' and authorities struggling to catch up. Returning to 'business as usual' after COVID is not an option."*

#### **Airworthiness infected by Corona Virus:**

At an early stage of the COVID crisis AEI reported about problems with the airworthiness of aircraft during and after a period of parking and storage. We have seen incidents and technical problems as a result of the extended parking period. Many airlines have been given exemptions from normal parking procedures as stated in the Aircraft Maintenance Manual. Was it a wise decision by the manufacturers to grant these exemptions? Did the aviation safety authorities know about it, and did they follow up on it? Did anyone care about the fact that airlines and maintenance organisations got rid of too many licensed engineers/technicians while, at the same time, the same companies were allowed to cut corners when performing safety critical maintenance?

The COVID pandemic has been used as an excuse to put pressure on licensed aircraft engineers, pilots, air traffic controllers and other staff. Commercial pressure and safety do not go well together. AEI has also experienced increasing pressure from the aviation industry seeking more

flexible regulations. This is not a successful path to follow. We must remind everyone involved that we are dealing with the safety of the flying public!

## **Looking back at AEI's internal operation for the year 2020:**

I conclude that we have done a tremendous job, even when the obstacles have been huge. We have been participating on two rulemaking groups at EASA dealing with maintenance training regulations. You will be receiving a report on that later. And you will also be invited by our technical affairs committee chairman to a follow up meeting to discuss the outcome of the work and what the next steps will be. Some of the outcome of this work stems from ICAO projects that we have not been involved in, which is a pity. We see room for improvement on some parts of the international arena. Even if these rule making tasks took place at EASA, you can be sure some of the results will be followed by other regulators as well. EASA, the FAA, and other National Aviation Authorities have an ongoing dialogue and quite an extensive cooperation system. I am really looking forward to working more closely with our affiliates around the world to strengthen the position we have as a truly international organisation.

We held our first web-based annual congress ever. Hopefully, it was also the last all-digital annual congress if you ask me. Nevertheless, we did it and it worked very well!

The EB has taken steps to improve communications by appointing Mustafa Bucan Çolak as PR Chairman. We have also encouraged affiliates to invite the EB to their national conferences and annual assemblies. I attended a conference in Lisbon after the invitation from our Portuguese affiliate, SITEMA. I also attended (web-based) our American affiliate AMFA's Joint Advisory Council meeting.

It was with great sadness the EB received the information in November from Robert Alway that he had decided to step down from the position as Secretary General. We will never be able to fill that position with a copy of Robert. His knowledge, experience, professionalism and personality are unique! All licensed aircraft engineers of the world have a lot to thank Robert for. The last word has not been said about Robert's contributions, so stay tuned for the next congress invitation!

Of course, we need to continue our operations whatever happens. Knowing that we have an EB with a lot of knowledge and experience, I am confident we will continue our successful journey. We also know that there are colleagues out there, around the world, that could contribute to our future success story by stepping in as a new member of the executive board. Until the elections at the next annual congress, our executive administrator Fred Bruggeman has been appointed to the Secretary General position.

## **2021 is taking off!**

I am really looking forward to working with all of you in 2021!

Despite all the difficulties we are experiencing, we will continue fighting for aviation safety and for the status of the licensed aircraft engineer. One of the most valuable and highly appreciated things we do, is to arrange the Annual Congress together with an affiliated association. It is a



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Engineering excellence to keep them flying safely

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great chance to get together to share experiences and to gather information about AEI and our affiliates. I cannot emphasise enough how much I am looking forward to meeting with you all at the next Annual Congress. Preliminary location is scheduled for Amsterdam, Netherlands, and it will most likely take place in September or October. More information will be shared as we get closer to the date.

On behalf of the AEI Executive Board, I am wishing you a very Happy New Year, 2021!

Ola Blomqvist  
President