

## Licensed Aircraft Engineers pointing at post COVID-19 safety problems

The AEI affiliated Dutch Aircraft Maintenance Engineers Association – NVLT welcomed delegates from different continents to Amsterdam for the 49<sup>th</sup> AEI Annual Congress on 13 – 15<sup>th</sup> of October. Unlike the last event the 49<sup>th</sup> Congress was conducted hybrid; in addition to a physical delegation there was an online delegation of engineers from all over the world. AEI also thanks the distinguished guests from the aerospace industry, the academic world and rulemaking authorities who participated in the event and submitted their presentations.

The main discussions revolved around the general state of aviation during the pandemic and the dynamics of recovery. The ramp-up in aviation is a positive sign but the President of AEI, Ola Blomqvist, mentioned the problematic side of it in his opening speech.

- *“We get reports from members all over the world about an urgent lack of qualified staff. We get reports about an alarming situation during the ramp-up of air traffic. When the market grows, we see the same problems as before with cost cuts and creative business models in order to by-pass collective agreements. But this time it’s worse than ever! Social responsibility and aviation safety is not really on the agenda in these enterprises,” he said.*

The pandemic has taught all humanity that nothing is more important than people’s lives, and risks should be reduced wherever possible. Despite this, AEI had shown on many occasions the commercial aviation industry keeps trying to reduce aviation safety by removing licenced engineers out of entire flight operations. Nowadays they think they have a strong argument, “due to the global health crisis the aviation industry is in difficulty”. On the other hand, many engineers have experienced:

- Unemployment or furlough.
- Significant cuts to benefits and wages.
- Reduced number of engineers working under pressure to keep aircraft airworthy or in preservation.
- Dangerous tasks such as work on HEPA Filters.
- Converting passenger planes into cargo versions as demanded by airlines.
- All levels to efforts to recover from COVID-19.
- Not only passenger or cargo transport but also various other operations like offshore work, patrol, search and rescue, etc.

Despite our most sincere efforts and professional attitude, the aviation industry has, on occasion, gone to extraordinary lengths to ignore those of us tasked with completing essential aircraft maintenance, the Licensed Aircraft Maintenance Engineer (LAME).

Despite these obstacles AEI has been very active during the pandemic. A lot of work has been invested in meetings with authorities, regulators, and political bodies as well as our participation in rulemaking working groups.

AEI will keep defending flight safety and have no intention to even take a step back. As the 2009 Amsterdam crash, the 2018 Lion Air, and 2019 Ethiopian accidents have showed us, commercial airlines and the aviation industry can easily turn in a wrong direction and move away from flight safety. AEI’s motto is to defend aircraft safety on behalf of the flying public globally. The AEI 49<sup>th</sup> Annual Congress declares its strongest standing against all attacks, no matter from where it comes. The AEI President, Ola Blomqvist, closed the congress on a positive note. – *“We have made a difference and with teamwork and cooperation, we will continue our mission in the name of aviation safety!”*

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