

On Friday 9th of July the Hermes Air Transport Organisation carried out the “Hermes AGM & Leaders Forum – Resilience and Efficiency Through Leadership and Cooperation” by hosting some of the most executive members of the global aviation industry.

The event began with a welcome by Dr. Kostas Iatrou, Director General of Hermes – Air Transport Organisation, who summarised the three recent major industry events held by the Organisation. Next, Angela Gittens, 2021 Hermes Recommendation Committee Member & Hermes Board Member, referred to the great impact of COVID-19 on the global aviation industry. She stressed that a single voice for the industry is vital for its viability in the future and pointed out that the leading role of industry associations on the post COVID-19 era. Angela Gittens identified ICAO guidelines for safety and security as important for the establishment of a secure aviation environment for the future, together with all stakeholders presenting a credible profile towards decision making parties as well as people, to regain their trust.

Jeff Poole, President of Hermes – Air Transport Organisation welcomed all participants and presented the values and priorities of the Organisation as an association of prominent leaders in air transport. He referred to 2020 as the “worst year for aviation” and highlighted the strategies needed to restore the confidence of governments and passengers to enable a quick recovery of the industry. He identified the present crisis as a great opportunity for aviation companies to cooperate in order to build a better and more sustainable future through new technologies and business processes. He addressed that resilience could be obtained through efficiency and common visions as well as that this Leaders Forum should present clear, deliverable recommendations to ensure the future of the aviation sector.

Next, Luis Felipe de Oliveira, Director General of ACI & Hermes VP and Treasurer, presented the great impact of the COVID-19 crisis on airlines and airports. He spoke about the financial struggle of the airports as well as the new phase of the pandemic after vaccinations became widespread and effective. He identified that the main target for the industry should be a safe and secure environment for the passengers which will play an important role on the full recovery of aviation. Luis Felipe de Oliveira pointed out that collaboration of the bodies within the industry is vital. He recognised that the ICAO CART guidelines are important for the establishment of a secure and safe environment, so ACI is committed to follow the CART programme. Moreover, ACI recognises that strong sustainability policies and measures are key to reach the industry’s goal of carbon neutrality.

His Excellency Harry Theoharis, the Greek Minister of Tourism, emphasised the importance of tourism and aviation for Greece as well as how COVID-19 has impacted the Greek tourism market. He addressed the role of the EU on the development of common strategies and decisions in order to face the pandemic, and he identified that at the moment all governments should force their strategies towards an e-certificate policy and digital transformation. He pointed out that mechanisms and knowhow are now available to successfully address another pandemic wave. Finally, he identified that the aviation brand has to be preserved when at the same time the issue of sustainability should be a high-priority on any decision-making process.

Hermes - Air Transport Organisation signed a Memorandum of Cooperation with the University of the Aegean and a Memorandum of Understanding with Airlines for America (A4A). From the counterparts’ side, the former was signed by Professor Andreas Papatheodorou and the latter by the President and CEO of Airlines for America (A4A) Nick Calio.

Next, Professor Papatheodorou moderated a two-part round table discussion with the participation of:

- Henrik Hololei, Director-General-DG MOVE, European Commission & Hermes Board Member
- Nick Calio, President and CEO of A4A
- Monserrat Barriga, Director General of ERA
- Dr Rafael Echevarne, Director General of ACI LAC

- Jose Ricardo Botelho, Executive Director & CEO of ALTA

In the first part, the participants expressed their opinions on the need for true leadership when the air transport industry enters to its recovery mode.

Henrik Hololei, Director-General-DG MOVE, European Commission & Hermes Board Member, pointed out the fact that the demand for flying remains high. However, he believes the aviation sector needs to regain travellers' confidence by ensuring a safe and secure environment. He added that the COVID-19 pandemic is an opportunity for the air transport sector to establish protocols and cooperative initiatives. He focused on the EU market and the need for the opening of the EU-US market and expressed his confidence that through cooperation the future of European aviation market will be better. Finally, he emphasised the importance of emerging sustainability strategies. Sustainable aviation fuels and technology could assist the aviation industry to achieve its carbon emission targets.

Nick Calio, President and CEO of Airlines for America (A4A), talked about the competitive advantage of the Greek tourism market as well as the importance of the establishing common airline and passenger protocols for the safe and health flight operations. Nick Calio introduced the idea of a consortium for independent assessment of the risk management which airlines need to implement in such times. He emphasised the complexity of mitigating all the layers of risks for the airlines, especially when the US market is open for many international flights. Nick Calio also identified the fragility of the aviation industry but acknowledged that the implementation of new and emerging technologies remains a great opportunity.

Monserrat Barriga, Director General of ERA introduced the main concerns of Europe's Regional Airlines during and after the pandemic. She summarised them as:

1. Survival of the company/organisation
2. Recovery of the aviation sector
3. Protection of revenues
4. Removal of travel restrictions
5. Effective restart of operations
6. Grow through sustainability
7. Debt management

She spoke about the impact of the COVID-19 crisis on the regional aviation market and the need to introduce new rules and regulations to face future challenges. However, she believes that regional airlines will continue to operate with the necessary investments and provide efficient intra-European air connectivity through new routes.

Dr. Rafael Echevarne, Director General of ACI in the LAC, mostly focused on the Latin American region, presenting the importance of aviation as well as the fact that several countries have not opened their borders yet. He referred to the lack of cooperation between airlines and health authorities and to the major impact of the political decisions on the operations of both airlines and airports. Moreover, he referred to the importance of ACI in Latin America and the great potential for aviation in the region. Dr. Rafael Echevarne identified sustainability as one of the top priorities for the ACI LAC and the fact that Latin American airports should invest in sustainability strategies. Finally, he emphasised that technology is the key for the future viability and evolution of the industry.

Jose Ricardo Botelho, Executive Director and CEO of ALTA, pointed out the fact that leadership demands responsibility. He identified the fact that standardised measures will bring stability to air transport operations, while recognising that the different needs of each country need to be addressed individually. Vaccination certificates as well as passport information are only a few of the tools available. He added that the industry has the knowledge and the mechanisms to regain the confidence of the travellers and it needs a single, coordinat-

ed voice to the world. Jose Ricardo Botelho addressed the upcoming issue of the electric airplanes and expressed his thoughts over the operations of such aircraft in long distances.

In the second part of the discussion, all participants addressed the issue of realising the potential of new business models and stronger collaboration in the recovery of the air transport industry.

Henrik Hololei highlighted that air transport is one of the most affected sectors by COVID-19 and should be considered holistically along with others closely related. He mentioned the need for a change for both ICAO and IATA and he promoted a cooperation model. He addressed other risks that the aviation industry is facing and pointed out that the industry should be ready for the next crisis. He presented five main pillars for the recovery of the industry at a European level, i.e.:

1. Further consolidation
2. More investment in infrastructure
3. Sustainability
4. New, smart solutions
5. Digitalisation

Nick Calio spoke about the economic and jobs contribution of airlines, while he identified technology as the way to make travels better. He added that airlines' prime objective is the construction of a survival plan and now more than ever airlines need to send a unified message to governments.

Jose Ricardo Botelho, once again highlighted the necessity of air connectivity for the Latin American Region while he also pointed out that the industry needs to approach the decision makers as well as to influence the international organisations.

Last, Jeff Poole, President of Hermes, provided a brief summary of the discussions and conclusions of the Leaders Forum.

Subsequently, the Hermes – Air Transport Organisation held its Annual General Meeting. Jeff Poole, President of Hermes, introduced and declared Dr. Fang Liu as Honorary Member. Dr. Kostas Iatrou presented the annual report of Hermes and all of Organisation's actions during the last year while Luis Felipe de Oliveira presented the financial statements for the fiscal year of 2021. The meeting continued with the election of the new Board of Members, with Eamonn Brennan replacing Robert Deillon. Finally, Dr. Kostas Iatrou and Jeff Poole presented certificates to three new members of Hermes (in alphabetical order):

1. Jeff Peet
2. Ioannis Stavlas
3. Patricia Vercelli