

# #FlyInclusive Taking Accessibility to the Next Level

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Good day everyone from Geneva

- Provide an overview of the status of air travel accessibility and the progress made over this year.

## Before we start...

- Accessibility is important to the air transport sector
- Our members want to provide safe and dignified travel to persons with disabilities
- Collaboration between government, passengers and industry is the way to make air travel fully inclusive
- Aviation is taking actions on specific areas

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**Before we start, let me remind you on some important messages:**

- Air travel today is an integral part of the lifestyle of much of society. It carries significant weight in the economies of many countries, is one of the leading elements of international trade and plays an increasing role in connectivity, communication and in knowledge exchange.
- Given its nature and its positive impact, air travel must be accessible to all passengers and therefore needs to guarantee the elimination of barriers to enable an enjoyable and safe travel experience.
- Accessibility is the right thing to do; no one should be left behind for the barriers that we are able to eliminate.
- But making air travel accessible requires coordination between governments, airlines and associations.

# Why accessibility matters

Accessible and inclusive aviation is not just about people with disabilities or older people, **it is about everyone. We want to bring the freedom to travel to more people.**

## Why accessibility matters



15%

of worldwide population (1 billion people) lives with some form of disability

Only US+EU represent a **\$70 bln market**

20%+

of the global population will be over 65 by 2050



50%+

will be likely to have some form of disability



Baby boomer generation in US controls

60%

of the net wealth

40%

of the spending



Aviation is the business of freedom, and this must be for everyone independently from the different ability of passengers.

Let's start with a reminder of some basic and important facts...

- Persons with disabilities and with special needs are an *increasingly* important segment of air travel demand for the industry's business, and a factor for diversifying destinations and products in travel development strategies.
- They represent more than 1 billion people worldwide - 15 per cent of the global population (This is 1 in 5)
- If we think about disability not all are visible; almost 70% are invisible
- According to the UN World Population Ageing report, globally, there were 727 million persons aged 65 years or over in 2020. Over the next three decades, the number of older persons worldwide is projected to more than double, reaching over 1.5 billion in 2050.
- As the process of population ageing continues to advance in both developed and developing countries it is important to ensure continued and equitable access to leisure and travel for this segment of passengers, during all stages.
- When we looked at this, we realized that we need to think about our industry within this context.

# Accessibility makes business sense.

*US Census American Community Survey (ACS) & Open Doors  
Organization (ODO) – Years 2018/2019*

In the US on an average adult population  
of 15.4%

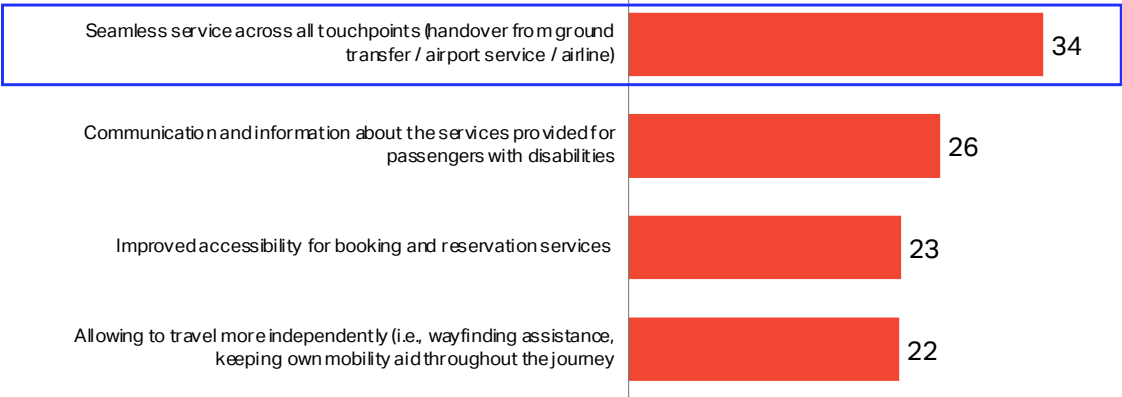
- 38% have taken at least a flight
- 15 million air travelers taking 29.6 million air trips
- \$11 billion in spending



- Not only it is the right thing to do to make air travel accessible to every person, but it makes good business sense: it's decency and return of investment as well.

# Special Service Assistance

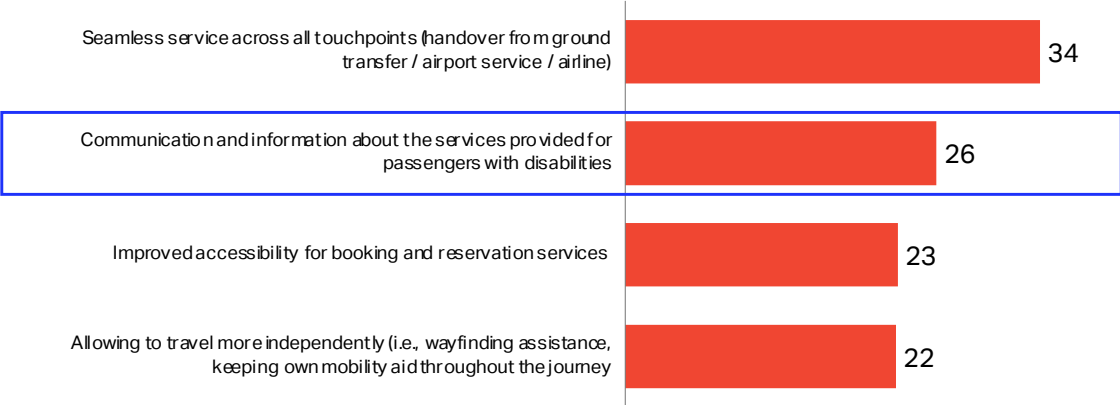
## Improvements to the special service assistance



QUESTION: E.2\_2 IN WHICH AREAS DO YOU FEEL THE HIGHEST NEED FOR IMPROVEMENT IN THE TRAVEL JOURNEY?

# Special Service Assistance

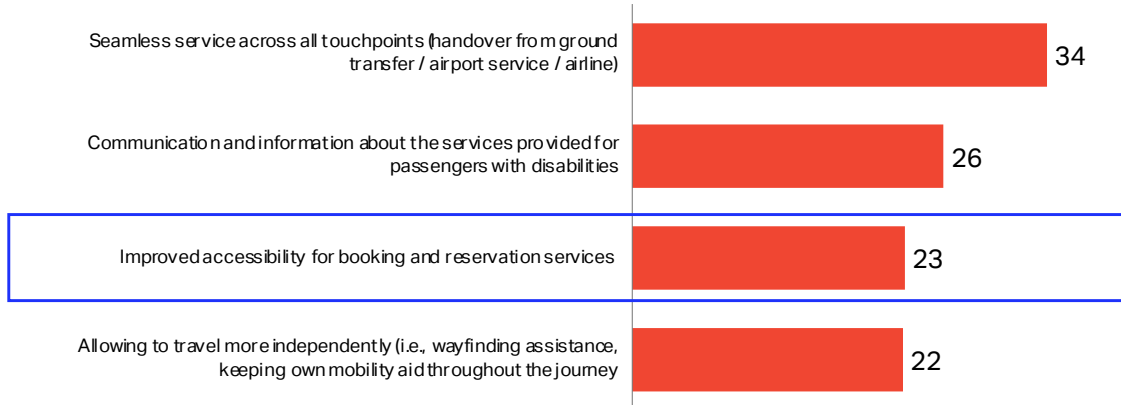
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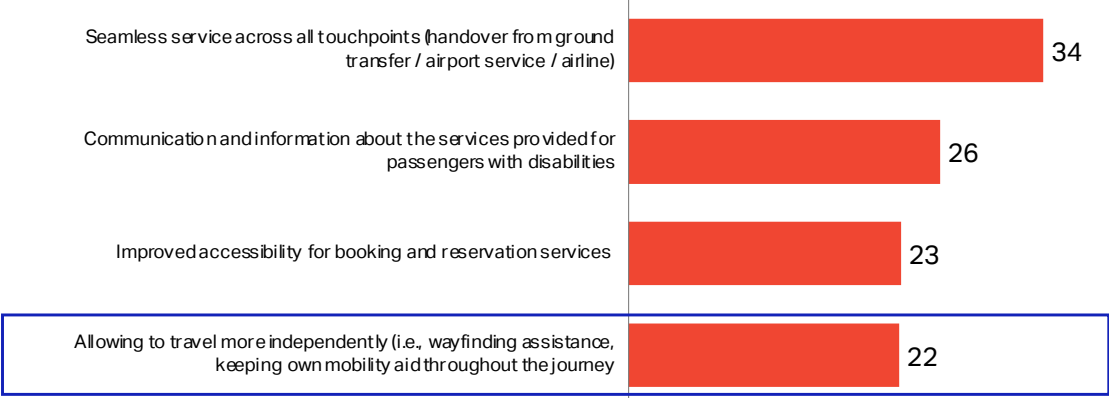
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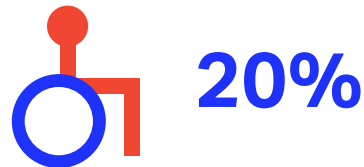
## Improvements to the special service assistance



QUESTION: E.2\_2 IN WHICH AREAS DO YOU FEEL THE HIGHEST NEED FOR IMPROVEMENT IN THE TRAVEL JOURNEY?



## Growing assistance requests on the horizon



30%



Africa

19%



Asia Pacific

11%



Europe

19%



Latin America

24%



Middle East

28%



North America

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- 20% of passengers sought assistance for self or someone else. This is 8pp above 2021. Those who requested special assistance either for themselves or for someone else, evaluated their experience rather positively (80%).
- However, statements such as Requests that were addressed according to expectations (76%) and Being well-informed about the particular services (75%) were evaluated as the least agreeable.
- When carrying a mobility aid, 77% of passengers expect to complete their airport process (from the time of arrival to the airport up until the boarding gate) under an hour.

# Special Service Assistance

Woman stranded on plane at Gatwick for 90 minutes 'frustrated' at treatment of disabled passengers

MERIDIAN TRAVEL TRANSPORT GATWICK AIRPORT Sunday 5 June 2022, 6:10pm



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Long delays to boarding, disembark and waiting times at airports :

- Misuse of wheelchair assistance
- Disabled passengers sit in airport wheelchairs not adapted to their needs
- Impact to safety during boarding, transfer and deplaning
- Personal Oxygen Concentrators battery-life issues during extended delays

- This growing number of wheelchair assistance requests that is not sustainable in the long term. We are looking at ways of differentiating the service for those passengers who are not disabled but need wayfinding assistance at the airport
- The European Regulation EU 1107/2006 recognizes that airports should provide prompt and appropriate assistance to passengers with disabilities. The Regulation does not mandate the use of wheelchairs as the sole methodology to support passengers in need.
- IATA has urged state regulators to encourage European airports and assistance services providers to look at more sustainable solutions to support passengers with disabilities and those passengers who need to use a wheelchair as a way to navigate potentially busy and confusing airports. Such assistance should be proportionate to the need whilst allowing persons with disabilities and persons with reduced mobility to move at the airport with the peace of mind to take their flight on time.
- Asking passengers **to pre-notify the airline of any assistance** requirements at the time of the booking would be very useful in ensuring the industry can provide a good service, especially during summer or other high-demand periods or resource challenges. However, the managing body of the airport is ultimately responsible for the provision of the assistance service and should therefore make all reasonable efforts to provide the assistance in such a way that the person concerned is able to take the flight for which he or she holds a reservation and without undue delay.
- It is IATA's view that the accessibility challenges faced at some of the European airports require a far more coordinated approach in the long term, in addition to closer engagement from the national and European regulators with airports and airlines.
- An IATA survey conducted with airline members earlier this year showed that the increase in assistance requests is significant and continuing to grow. However, many assistance requests come from passengers who do not have disabilities but need support at the airport (e.g. elderly passengers who do not feel confident navigating their way through a busy airport). We are using the results of the survey to target our advocacy at specific markets and make recommendations about how to offer better service to our customers and cater to the needs of those passengers who are not disabled but still request assistance.

Workshops have been held in Heathrow, Delhi and New York in 2019 with representatives from regulators, airlines, disability organizations, airports and other regional stakeholders to assess current realities, challenges and opportunities. Avenues to promote dialogue between disability associations, policy makers and industry were also discussed at these workshops to help facilitate a regulatory framework that reduces operational complexity and increases accessibility.

# Advancing accessibility

## More inclusive and innovative approach to policy and best practices

- One click away project

## Sharing global best practices: Mobility Aids Action Group

- Addresses issues related to mishandling of mobility aids and scooters
- Mobility Aids Guidance Material



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- ENAC, IATA, ITA Airways, Air Dolomiti and Neos together to simplify and ensure the assistance booking systems at the airport and on board the aircrafts and useful information are fully accessible to people with disabilities and with reduced mobility: this is the concept of the One Click Away project which will be operational from 3 December, on the occasion of the International Day of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.
- For the first time, a network made up of various institutions, national airlines and industry associations (FISH, FIABA, FAND, ANGLAT and ASSOFLY) has been created with the common goal of breaking down barriers and making air travel easy and completely accessible to all passengers, without distinction, without exception.
- The participating airlines have created immediate and intuitive paths on their websites, expressly dedicated to the assistance of passengers with disabilities and with reduced mobility in order to allow a direct and unequivocal access to information on the organization of air travel and concerning their rights.
- With a single click from the home page of the three websites of the carriers which have joined the initiative, a path begins consisting of uniform and clear contents, characterized by the same layout and the same order of the topics covered. The icons, images and texts have been shared with and approved by the ANGLAT/FAND trade associations for the Italian version and by Open Doors Organization for the English one, to operate in respect of everyone's sensitivity and needs. The simplification therefore begins with the use of the wheelchair icon, positioned at the top right of the institutional home pages, to make the first click to be pressed to begin the search for the information of interest immediately identifiable.
- Once the dedicated page has been opened, the user has immediate access to the essential information for booking the assistance with the air carrier. In the same section it will be possible to access a list of topics useful to the passenger. The launch of the **One Click Away** project precisely on the world day dedicated to the rights of persons with disabilities, highlights the objective and primary interest of all the players involved: to come together to create a system to improve the quality and experience of air travel for everyone.



## Mobility Aids Findings

- Battery-powered wheelchairs and scooters not designed for air travel
- Travelers don't know the dimensions of their wheelchairs
- Dimensions of the cargo doors and wheelchair may not fit
- Lack of equipment at airport results in injury to handlers and damage to wheelchairs



- The safe transport of checked wheelchairs and mobility devices is a complex and collaborative process that involves many stakeholders.
  - We recognize that when damage or loss events occur, it can be devastating to passenger as these devices are extensions of their body and crucial to their independence. It also represents a huge reputational issue for the airline.
- The creation of the Mobility Aids Action Group was announced in July, 2021. This is the first IATA action group aimed at tackling issues around the safe and secure transport of mobility aids from the perspective of the passenger.
- A range of stakeholders impacted by this issue, including accessibility organizations (representing travelers with disabilities), airlines, ground service providers, airports and mobility aids manufacturers. The group combined available research, operational expertise and direct experience from passengers.

### What was found by the group?

- Battery-powered wheelchairs and scooters are not specially designed by wheelchair manufacturers for transport in aircraft cargo compartments and may not even fit in certain aircraft cargo compartments.
- Passengers with disabilities may not be aware that the dimension of some mobility aids can create significant operational challenges during the process of loading and off-loading. In addition, passengers may not be aware that lithium batteries that provide power to mobility aids, can cause severe safety issues if not properly disassembled or disconnected. Aircraft operators cannot be expected to have the required expertise to properly assemble and disassemble mobility aids, without the proper instructions and tools provided by the passenger.
- Missing relevant information can result in severe injuries to operational staff due to the heavy weight and dimensions of the mobility aid itself, as well as safety issues during the flight.
- Persons who use a wheelchair do not know the dimensions of their wheelchairs and the dimensions of the cargo doors on certain types of single-aisle aircraft can be problematic for the transport of battery-powered wheelchairs and scooters, as the cargo doors are too small to permit a battery-powered wheelchair to be maintained upright while loaded into the cargo compartment.
- Damage to the device can result if it must be laid on its side to fit through the cargo door opening, or may result in the device not being able to be transported if it does not fit. Such problems also may occur for wide-body aircraft, but are not as prevalent on such aircraft because they usually have larger cargo doors.
- Transit tie-down and securement points, in cargo compartments, in unit load devices (ULDs) and on battery-powered wheelchairs and scooters, are not standard features on all aircraft types, especially older aircraft models.
- Advance notice to airlines by passengers with disabilities who will be travelling with a battery-powered wheelchair or scooter provides airlines with the time necessary for logistical planning to ensure that such devices can be accommodated.
- There is no harmonization in the requirements for advance notice to airlines.
- Some airlines currently ask passengers traveling with battery-powered wheelchairs or scooters to complete a mobility aid device handling form prior to a flight to ensure that an assistive device is properly handled during transport. Airlines tailor these forms to fit their operational needs, but there is not a common practice in this regard.
- There are no standards or recommendations for the securement of wheelchairs in the cargo hold during air transport which establishes minimum wheelchair design and performance requirements.
- There is lack of consistent training for device handlers, whether airline personnel or contractors, serves as an important foundation for proper assistive device handling and stowage, reducing injury to device handlers and mitigating cases of damage to assistive devices during air travel.

# ICAO 41<sup>st</sup> Assembly

- ICAO leadership on social sustainability, inclusion and accessibility
- Accessibility strategy and work program
- Essential nature of accessible services in standards and best practices



# Milestone resolution



Accessibility is about social inclusion and freedom to fly; the United Nations Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities (CRPD) came into force in May 2008.

This is the most ratified convention of all times with 187 states and is human rights instrument

## The future

- Prioritizing disability inclusion as part of the sustainable agenda
- Supporting ICAO to deploy their accessibility priorities
- Prioritize work on assistance services

If we get this right,  
everyone benefits



- The range of disabilities is very broad and difficult to categorize. Persons with disabilities include individuals with hearing, visual, cognitive and motor impairments. Indeed, each of these categories includes a much broader range of conditions. Visual impairments, for example, include limited vision, color blindness and blindness.
- Since the adoption of the UNPDR, there has been a positive increase in the level of awareness and policy actions surrounding disability in air transport; many regulators, for instance, have implemented or are implementing domestic rules regarding accessible air travel.
- This has resulted in some positive movement but has also slowly created a landscape of differing national regulations across the globe.
- This regulatory patchwork creates challenges for travellers, airports and airlines alike. By its very nature, international air transport operates across multiple national jurisdictions and relies on global standards. For passengers with disabilities, different accessibility regimes in different jurisdictions can result in differing expectations and frustration. For airlines and airports, this fragmentation increases compliance complexity and costs.
- It is important to build globally enacted principles and a harmonized regulatory framework for the mutual benefit of people with disabilities and the aviation community.
- This is where IATA is looking to bring the key players together to develop and encourage global approaches and solutions that don't leave anyone behind.
- Air passengers with disabilities may require services and assistance to facilitate their travel experience.. Today, airlines and travel agents take requests from passengers with disabilities for special accommodation and transmit those requests in the form of international standardized codes (SSRs) both at the time of booking and thereafter until the passenger's travel with the airline is completed. The IATA Resolution that governs this process is Resolution 700 "Acceptance and Carriage of Passengers Requiring Special Assistance," a globally and universally agreed standard used in millions of transactions between and among airlines and travel agencies
- Passengers with disabilities may not be aware of the different types and levels of accommodations and services that airlines and airports offer and provide to passengers with disabilities and codes won't help. That's why we need to communicate the assistance services available for them in plain language that is easy to understand.