



European Union Aviation Safety Agency

Groundhandling¹ roadmap (draft)

Overview of Actions of the Groundhandling Roadmap

¹ For a list of activities included in the groundhandling (GH) concept, see the Annex to the Council Directive 96/67/EC and the definition of ‘groundhandling service’ in [Regulation \(EU\) 2018/1139 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 4 July 2018](#).

A definition of groundhandling is provided in the draft ICAO Manual on Ground Handling (version 2 rev. 12): ‘Services necessary for an aircraft’s arrival at, and departure from, an airport, other than air traffic services’.



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

With the entry into force of the “New Basic Regulation” (NBR) (EU) 2018/1139, the scope of EASA has been extended to groundhandling². As a consequence, EASA has developed a roadmap to include aviation safety-related elements of groundhandling into EASA’s remit.

From December 2018 to March 2019, EASA worked with a group of groundhandling experts from authorities, GHSPs, aircraft operators, aerodromes, and associations, to develop detailed concept papers on each of the identified key topics listed below. This paper presents a comprehensive overview of the identified proposed actions contained in each concept paper.

The expert group confirmed the analysis of feedback obtained via interviews with stakeholders held in autumn 2018. It revealed a consensus amongst stakeholders and the expert group that EASA’s Groundhandling Roadmap should develop concrete actions in the following six areas:

1. Management system, including SMS elements
2. Operational standards
3. Training
4. Ground support equipment (GSE)
5. Oversight
6. Staff turnover

This paper also classifies the identified actions into three different categories to better define future actions by EASA to implement the roadmap:

1. rulemaking actions
2. safety promotion actions
3. actions based on existing industry standards or ICAO documents

This overview paper, together with the six concept papers, will be shared with stakeholders prior to the EASA Groundhandling conference on 7th March 2019. The conference is expected to provide valuable feedback to EASA on the next steps in implementing the proposed actions.

It is important to note that the six key areas presented in this overview paper are interrelated and equally important. They are presented in this overview paper in the same order in which they will be addressed during the EASA groundhandling conference of 7th March. Therefore, the order of their presentation neither implies ranking of importance nor prioritisation.

² ‘Groundhandling service’ means any service provided at aerodromes comprising safety -related activities in the areas of ground supervision, flight dispatch and load control, passenger handling, baggage handling, freight and mail handling, apron handling of aircraft, aircraft services, fuel and oil handling, and loading of catering; including the case where aircraft operators provide those groundhandling services to themselves (self-handling);



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1 Background

With the entry into force of the “New Basic Regulation” (NBR) (EU) 2018/1139 the scope of EASA has been extended to groundhandling³. Annex VII to the NBR establishes the essential requirements for Groundhandling service providers (GHSP). They will be required to declare their capability and the availability of the means to discharge the responsibilities associated with the services provided.

To determine the optimal way to discharge its new responsibilities in the groundhandling domain, EASA devised a plan to define a European Groundhandling Roadmap with the support of Member States (MS) and affected stakeholders. The plan consists of three phases: fact finding, definition of scope of the roadmap and implementation of roadmap actions.

At the time of writing this overview paper, phase 1 (fact finding) has been concluded, while phase 2 (definition of the scope) is in progress.

The analysis of ECR occurrences revealed the following top ten categories of occurrences related to groundhandling:

- Baggage and cargo loading in passenger aircraft
- Coordination and control of turnarounds
- Dangerous goods handling and lithium batteries
- Control of passenger movement on the apron
- Parking and positioning of aircraft
- Fuelling operations
- Operation of vehicles (and other motorised GSE)
- Pushback operations
- Load sheets and other documentation/systems
- Operation of air bridges/passenger boarding bridges (PBB)

In addition, data from GHSP and insurers revealed a higher-than-average level of injuries and accidents of groundhandling personnel.

During autumn 2018, EASA conducted phone interviews with Member States and affected stakeholders to collect information on strengths and weaknesses of the current system to support the development of the Groundhandling Roadmap. To that end, EASA sent e-mail invitations and a questionnaire⁴ to Member States and organisations representing affected stakeholders. They were asked to nominate GH experts for the interviews. EASA interviewed 47 GH experts from 19 civil aviation authorities, ten aerodrome operators, five GHSP, three aircraft operators and ten associations.

From December 2018 to March 2019 EASA worked with a group of groundhandling experts from authorities, GHSPs, aerodrome operators, aircraft operators, and associations to develop detailed concept papers on the key topics listed below.

The expert group confirmed the analysis of phase 1 based on interviews and revealed a consensus on the

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⁴ See Annex1



following six top areas that should be included in the Groundhandling Roadmap:

- **Management system, including SMS elements**
- **Operational standards**
- **Training**
- **Ground support equipment (GSE)**
- **Oversight**
- **Staff turnover**

The concept papers on each key topic include a list of proposed actions. This paper presents a comprehensive overview of all the actions that have been identified for each of the six key topics.

This overview paper also classifies the identified actions into four different categories to better define future actions by EASA to implement the roadmap:

- a) **rulemaking action,**
- b) **safety promotion action,**
- c) **industry standards-based actions, and**
- d) **ICAO documents-based actions**

The overview paper, together with the six concept papers, will be shared with stakeholders prior to the EASA Groundhandling conference on 7th March 2019. EASA is expecting valuable feedback on the proposed actions and the next steps.

It is important to note that the six key topics presented in this overview paper are equally important. They are presented here in the same order in which they will be addressed during the GH conference of 7th March. This does not imply that, for example, actions related to the management system of a GHSP are more important than actions related to oversight of GHSPs.

2 High-level description of the main focus areas proposed by the GH roadmap

2.1 Management System

The concept paper describes the elements of a management system. A management system or at least a safety management system (SMS) is already mandatory under national legislation in a number of Member States. The concept paper proposes a proportionate but mandatory implementation of a management system for GHSPs. The paper also defines the necessary interfaces system for a swift exchange of safety information between the GHSP, the aerodrome and the aircraft operator.

2.1 Operational Standards

The concept paper proposes to develop a framework on-safety related operational standards. The proposal builds on the use of globally recognised industry standards, notably those issued by IATA and IBAC and on the ICAO GH Manual⁵. The concept paper stresses the need for flexibility and the possibility to deviate from the standards.

⁵ The publication is foreseen for Q2 2019.



2.2 Training

The concept paper proposes the development of standard minimum training elements that should:

- be based on industry standards;
- be task-related rather than procedure-related;
- include practical training and examinations on the equipment in use; and
- cover SMS and safety reporting.

Common training standards should promote establishing a career path for GH staff and introduce individual training records as an attestation of competence.

The link between the training programme and the management system and safety promotion on training is crucial to demonstrate the efficiency of the training system.

2.3 Ground support equipment (GSE)

The concept paper recommends high-level requirements on equipment management and equipment maintenance based on the recommendations of the equipment manufacturers. Some stakeholders explained how equipment pooling can be beneficial for their operations/services. They highlighted that the possibility for equipment pooling depends on the context of the aerodrome. They further emphasised the need to establish rules defining the responsibilities of each stakeholder for equipment pooling.

A future framework on GSE should be technology neutral, but promote the use of innovative technology and automation at the same time.

2.4 Oversight

The new Basic Regulation (EU) 2018/1139 establishes a **declaration system** for GHSPs on European aerodromes⁶. Therefore, the oversight requirements for those GHSPs need to be based on the principles applying to a declaration system.

Stakeholders identified the need to develop **specific oversight requirements** to oversee GHSPs. A cooperative oversight framework should ensure a swift exchange of safety information to enable an efficient oversight system. Such a system should consider **industry standards** when determining the oversight programme. Finally, the oversight system should rely on common, high-level GH **inspector competencies and qualifications**.

2.5 Staff turnover

This concept paper acknowledges the various challenges of the GH job market with its seasonal fluctuation, hard physical work, limited career perspective and low wages as some of the reasons for staff shortage. The concept paper proposes actions to:

- invest in the modernisation of GSE to make physical work less demanding;
- propose defining career paths to attract workers; and

⁶ See Article 2.1.(e), which defines the aerodromes within the scope of European safety rules: 'This Regulation shall apply to <...> the design, maintenance and operation of aerodromes, including the safety-related equipment used at those aerodromes, located in the territory to which the Treaties apply, which: (i) are open to public use; (ii) serve commercial air transport; and (iii) have a paved instrument runway of 800 metres or more, or exclusively serve helicopters using instrument approach or departure procedures'. EASA has published a list of European aerodromes to whom the Regulation applies under this link: <https://www.easa.europa.eu/easa-and-you/aerodromes#group-easa-downloads>



- issue training attestations to encourage workers to pursue a career in groundhandling and facilitate staff mobility between different GHSPs and from one MS to another.

3 Detailed overview of proposed actions by type of action

The following overview presents a combined view of all actions from the six concept papers and identifies the type of actions foreseen to implement them.

The table differentiates between the following four types of actions:

Rulemaking means drafting implementing rules, which will be adopted by European Commission as regulations, and Acceptable Means of Compliance (AMC) and Guidance Material (GM), which will be adopted by EASA.

Safety promotion means:

- developing and publishing various materials, e.g. manuals, guidelines, checklists, leaflets;
- organising and attending events, conferences, workshops to promote best practices, safety related information and to clarify new regulations and support their implementation.

Based on industry standards and best practices means:

- using existing industry standards (ISAGO, IS-BAH) and
- using and promoting best practices from various aerodromes and Member States.

Based on ICAO documents means using the existing ICAO Manuals, DOCs and Annexes to develop future requirements in GH.



Overview of proposed actions

#	Description of action	Rulemaking hard & soft	Safety promotion	Based on Industry Standards and best practices	Based on ICAO documents
	ACTIONS ON THE MANAGEMENT SYSTEM				
1.	Develop a framework for an integrated management system for GHSP	X	X	X	X
2.	Framework for outsourcing GH services (with distribution of responsibilities)	X	X		
3.	Develop interface between organisations involved in GH activities	X	X	X	X
4.	Establish common taxonomy with the Management System in other EU regulations	X	X	X	
5.	Identify existing guidance on the management system, interfaces and management of outsourcing of GH services by GHSP and aircraft operators to third parties		X	X	X
6.	Propose ways to determine and assess the complexity of operation of GHSPs	X	X	X	
7.	Develop guidance on how the management system for a GHSP should be integrated within the management system of an AOC holder in case of self-service		X	X	X
8.	Develop guidance on implementation of a management system for unexperienced organisations		X	X	X
9.	Enable sharing of safety-relevant information and data between the organisations concerned	X	X	X	



#	Description of action	Rulemaking hard & soft	Safety promotion	Based on Industry Standards and best practices	Based on ICAO documents
ACTIONS ON OPERATIONAL STANDARDS					
10.	Identify minimum, performance-based and technology-neutral operational standards which can be applied by GHSPs across all stations and locations to allow significant improvements in performance as well as operational safety. Design a regulatory framework for the efficient coordination between air operators, aerodrome operators and GHSPs with a view to further develop, implement and apply of these operational standards.	X		X	
11.	Identify ways to recognize and promote internationally accepted industry practices.	X	X	X	
12.	Ensure that operational standards are communicated to the staff concerned by means of training, safety promotion, etc.		X		
13.	Define where the accountabilities of each stakeholder start and end with a view to identify overlaps and describe mechanisms to address conflicting positions and contradictory performance indicators between all parties involved in GH.	X	X		
14.	Empower GHSP to control certain operational risks as part of their management system. That means, allow GHSPs to apply more stringent safety procedures than the aircraft operator if this is based on the GHSP's risk management process.	X		X	
15.	Propose ways to give access to safety relevant information that is specific to the aircraft model to all stakeholders.	X	X		



#	Description of action	Rulemaking hard & soft	Safety promotion	Based on Industry Standards and best practices	Based on ICAO documents
	ACTIONS ON STAFF TRAINING				
16.	Establish a high-level regulatory framework for a common European training standard in the GH domain	X		X	X
17.	Map the training elements from existing Member States requirements	X		X	
18.	Identify the key functions involved in the GH activities	X		X	X
19.	Establish requirements for training delivery (types, content and methodology)	X		X	X
20.	Establish requirements for training management	X		X	X
21.	Identify best means to avoid redundant training delivered by aircraft operators to GHSP employees	X	X	X	
22.	Include flight operations officer function among the groundhandling functions	X	X		X
23.	Ensure recognition and crediting of completed training modules	X	X	X	
24.	Propose competency-based and outcome-focused training programmes including competencies for the trainer		X	X	X
25.	Propose methods to maintain competencies		X	X	X



#	Description of action	Rulemaking hard & soft	Safety promotion	Based on Industry Standards and best practices	Based on ICAO documents
	ACTIONS ON GROUND SUPPORT EQUIPMENT				
26.	Require a GSE maintenance programme	X		X	
27.	Recommend to use manufacturers' instructions and industry standards to ensure that GSE is fit-for-purpose and used within the scope of tasks it is designed for		X	X	
28.	Ensure that staff responsible for GSE maintenance are trained and competent to execute their tasks	X	X	X	
29.	Support development of industry standards that promote innovation and are environmentally friendly, by promoting technology neutral rules.		X	X	
30.	Enable implementation of cost and space efficiency programmes such as equipment pooling at aerodromes.	X	X	X	



#	Description of action	Rulemaking hard & soft	Safety promotion	Based on Industry Standards and best practices	Based on ICAO documents
	ACTIONS ON OVERSIGHT				
31.	Extend the scope of authority requirements to include GH with GHSP specific oversight requirements based on a declaration system for GHSP.	X			
32.	Define elements of management of change for the competent authority		X	X	X
33.	Establish clear framework for cooperative oversight that enables an efficient and systematic mutual exchange of information on findings raised and inspections/audits made & addresses oversight and sharing of oversight tasks in case of multi-national GHSPs.	X	X		
34.	Explore possibility to establish a common and harmonised declaration system	X	X	X	
35.	Take industry standards into consideration when determining the oversight programme	X		X	
36.	Develop a common framework of high-level and basic GH inspector competencies and qualifications	X			X
37.	Within the competent authority ensure coordination between different oversight activities to exchange information on audits performed by air operators and aerodromes on GHSPs.	X	X		
38.	Include oversight of training	X			



#	Description of action	Rulemaking hard & soft	Safety promotion	Based on Industry Standards and best practices	Based on ICAO documents
ACTIONS ON STAFF TURNOVER					
39.	Develop rostering systems that allow more precise planning. GHSPs should be encouraged to assess their operational risks emanating from the need for new employees, potential excesses in the workload, an uneven work distribution and work pressure.		X		
40.	GHSPs should be encouraged to assess impact of outdated GSE that make the work on the ramp at times more physically demanding than necessary.		X		
41.	Coordinated high level communication strategy to enhance the perception of the GH sector as a crucial element of the aviation safety chain.		X		
42.	Create a system of training recognition throughout the sector via common training methodologies and standards that build on existing industry standards and best practices.	X		X	

Indirect or enabling rules: Need to amend/add a rule in another domain (air ops, aerodrome) or optional rules xyz **may**



3 Conclusion

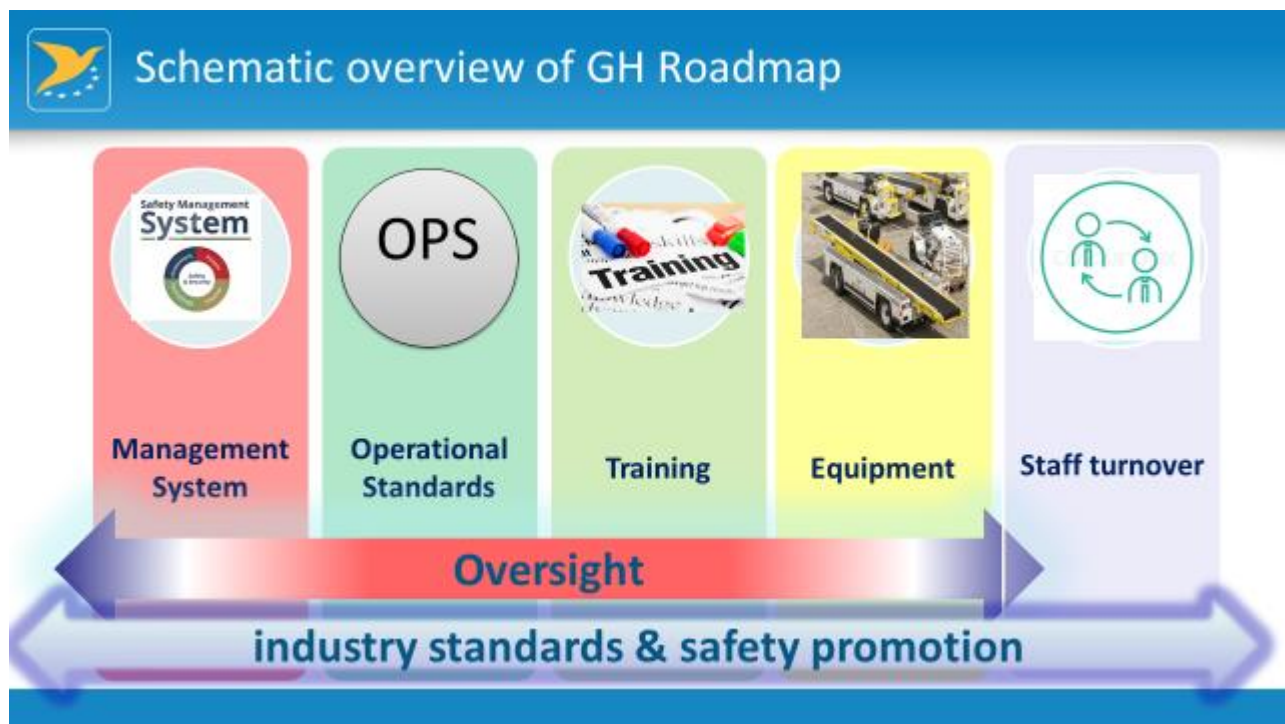
The groundhandling roadmap proposes actions in the following six key areas:

1. Management system, including SMS elements
2. Operational standards
3. Training
4. Ground support equipment (GSE)
5. Oversight
6. Staff turnover

The proposed actions on each of the focus areas will be presented during the groundhandling conference of 7th March 2019. This paper presents an overview of all the actions proposed by the expert group and EASA and identifies the means to address those actions.

The proposed actions are a mix of rulemaking actions (Implementing rules, AMC and GM) and safety promotion activities. Where possible, actions shall be based on industry standards or on ICAO documents.

Below is a schematic overview of the action areas of the groundhandling roadmap. The overview shows how the proposed actions of the six focus areas are interlinked and that all the six focus areas will rely on industry standards and best practice examples that will be promoted via safety promotion actions.



4 References

4.1 Groundhandling Roadmap overview of Phases 1, 2 and 3



The Plan – Phase 1

1.	Fact finding	2018
1.1	Safety analysis report – Incidents and accidents related to GH activities	Request for data from stakeholders
1.2	Scoping out of stakeholders' expectations - What works with the current system? What are the shortcomings?	Mtg with Social Partners (Social Dialogue)
1.3	Scoping out of stakeholders' expectations - What works with the current system? What are the shortcomings?	Interviews with GH operators and airlines
1.4	Scoping out of Member States' expectations – What works with the current system? What are the shortcomings?	Mtg with MS
1.5	Meeting with Advisory Bodies	Agenda item on MAB & SAB agenda
1.6	Assemble GH task force to support EASA with phase 2	

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The Plan – Phase 2

2.	Definition of scope	2019
2.1	Description of the issue – critical summary of the outcome of 1.	Supported by experts
2.2	Definition of objectives and performance indicators – What do we want to achieve? How do we assess if our course of action delivers?	Supported by experts
2.3	Design of GH roadmap - What are the right tools and actions to achieve our objectives with the highest possible efficiency?	Supported by experts
2.4	Presentation of GH roadmap	Conference with MS and stakeholders
2.5	Summary of conclusions from GH roadmap presentation – improve GH roadmap with MS and stakeholder input	Supported by experts

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The Plan – Phase 3

3.	Implementation <i>Pending outcome of 2.5</i>	2019 - 2020
3.1	Implementation of roadmap actions – step 1 e.g. rulemaking, safety promotion, actions for MS	Supported by experts
3.2	Implementation of roadmap actions – step 2 communication and implementation support, support to EC for IR adoption	

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