



Terms of Reference

for rulemaking task (RMT).0728

Development of requirements for groundhandling

ISSUE 1

Issue/rationale

With Regulation (EU) 2018/1139 (the 'Basic Regulation'), groundhandling (GH) services are now included among the aviation domains with a significant safety relevance that are regulated at European Union (EU) level. Annex VII to the Basic Regulation establishes the essential requirements for groundhandling service providers (GHSPs). EASA, in order to address the requirements stemming from the Basic Regulation, has established a roadmap that consists of three phases: fact-finding, definition of the scope of the roadmap, and implementation of actions.

The provision of GH services is an area where a number of occurrences take place, which result to damage to aircraft and equipment, injuries or even death and have a significant cost impact on aircraft operators, aerodrome operators and GHSPs. Furthermore, undetected or unreported errors and damages during the provision of GH services can affect the aircraft's load and balance, aerodynamics, airworthiness and performance, having thus a direct impact on flight safety.

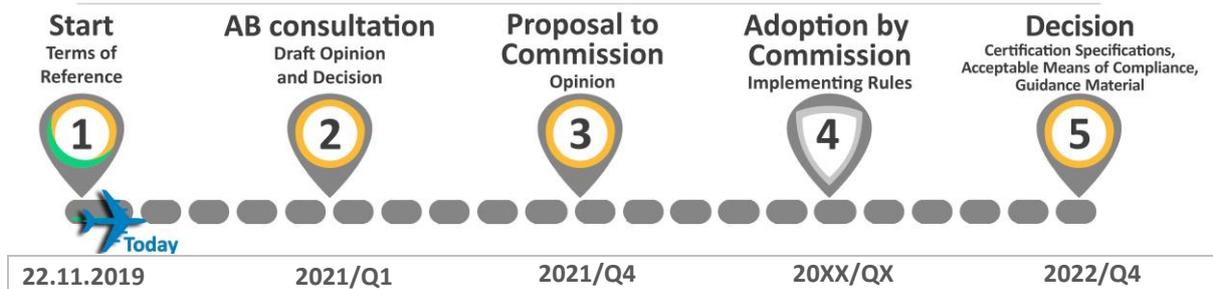
So far, the provision of GH services has been subject either to national regulations or to voluntary compliance with industry standards and indirectly regulated through Regulation (EU) No 965/2012. This situation has led to an inconsistent and not harmonised approach throughout the EU.

The objective of this task is to maintain a high level of safety, ensure a level playing field and support the free movement of persons and services in the EU, by establishing a regulatory framework for the provision of GH services, but also by identifying the necessary safety promotion actions and research activities to support implementation.

In addition, this rulemaking task (RMT) will incorporate RMT.0705 'Addition of a new requirement for the handling of dangerous goods at aerodromes' to establish requirements for the aerodrome operators for developing methods for the delivery, storage, dispensing, and handling of dangerous goods at the aerodrome, which has been discontinued as a stand-alone RMT and is considered relevant to this task.

Action area:	Ground safety		
Affected rules:	Regulation (EU) No 139/2014; Regulation (EU) No 965/2012		
Affected stakeholders:	GHSPs, aerodrome operators, aircraft operators, groundhandling personnel, competent authorities		
Driver:	Safety; Level playing field	Rulemaking group:	No
Impact assessment:	Full	Rulemaking Procedure:	Focused consultation

EASA special rulemaking procedure milestones



1. Why we need to introduce new rules — issue/rationale

Related safety issues

Occurrences take place during the provision of GH services. They result in damage to the aircraft and the equipment, and injuries or even fatalities. In addition, undetected or unreported errors or damages during the provision of GH services can affect the aircraft's load and balance, aerodynamics, airworthiness, or performance. These events have a direct impact on flight safety. Until recently, GHSPs have been the only major safety-critical stakeholder not being directly subject to a European aviation safety regulation.

The two latest issues of the EASA Annual Safety Review (2018¹ and 2019²) contain a list of those occurrences recorded between 2014 and 2018 in the European Common Repository (ECR) in the domains of aerodromes and GH, where the provision of GH services showed a significant number of occurrences in the following areas:

- Baggage and cargo loading in passenger aircraft;
- Human performance;
- 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 ground support equipment (GSE));
- Pushback operations;
- Load sheets and other documentation/systems;
- Operation of air bridges/passenger boarding bridges, passenger steps;
- Experience, training and competence of individuals;
- Positioning and securing of ground equipment;
- Aircraft towing;
- Ground operations in adverse weather conditions; and
- Cargo loading in cargo aircraft.

GH is a complex activity involving multiple actors. Often GHSPs offer a wide range of services to the aircraft operators in various areas of an aerodrome or even outside the aerodrome premises. Moreover, different GHSPs may provide services on the same aircraft during turnaround. It is worth highlighting that GH is an industry branch with a key function in the aviation value chain, subjected to competition and commercial pressure.

For these reasons, the European Union (EU), acknowledging the need to ensure a safe end-to-end process in the air transportation, included in the Basic Regulation³ the provision of GH services to

¹ [EASA Annual Safety Review 2018](#).

² [EASA Annual Safety Review 2019](#).

³ Regulation (EU) 2018/1139 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 4 July 2018 on common rules in the field of civil aviation and establishing a European Union Aviation Safety Agency, and amending Regulations (EC) No 2111/2005, (EC) No 1008/2008, (EU) No 996/2010, (EU) No 376/2014 and Directives 2014/30/EU and 2014/53/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council, and repealing Regulations (EC) No 552/2004 and (EC) No 216/2008 of the European

establish a proper regulatory framework supported by other actions such as safety promotion and research, to achieve this objective.

Relation between the future GH Commission regulation and the GH Directive 96/67/EC

Currently, the provision of GH services at European aerodromes is regulated at national level through the transposition of EC Directive 96/67/EC⁴ into the national regulatory frameworks of the Member States. This directive deals mainly with the access to the GH market at Community airports and does not address management, operational, and training issues for the GHSPs.

Council Directive 96/67/EC of 15 October 1996 on access to the GH market at Community airports has an economic scope and does not have an impact on the rights and obligations of Member States concerning safety and security at aerodromes. As stated in its Article 17, 'the provisions of this Directive in no way affect the rights and obligations of Member States in respect of law and order, safety and security at airports'.

EASA is responsible for ensuring a high level of safety in civil aviation in the EU. Market regulation does not fall within its remit. For this reason, the EC Directive on groundhandling continues to apply independently from the future delegated or implementing act prepared by EASA and published by the European Commission on GH until the Commission decides otherwise.

The future GH regulation will address those elements of GH operations that have a critical impact on safety.

Comparison between the list of GH services in the Basic Regulation and the GH Directive:

Regulation (EU) 2018/1139	EC Directive 96/67/EC
Ground supervision	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Ground administration and supervision, comprising: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1.1 representation and liaison services with local authorities or any other entity, disbursements on behalf of the airport user and provision of office space for its representatives; 1.2 load control, messaging and telecommunications; 1.3 handling, storage and administration of unit load devices; 1.4 any other supervision services before, during or after the flight and any other administrative service requested by the airport user.
Flight dispatch and load control	<p>See 1.2 Load control above; and</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 9. Flight operations and crew administration comprising: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 9.1 preparation of the flight at the departure airport or at any other point; 9.2 in-flight assistance, including re-dispatching if needed; 9.3 post-flight activities; 9.4 crew administration.

Parliament and of the Council and Council Regulation (EEC) No 3922/91 (OJ L 212, 22.8.2018, p. 1) (<https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?qid=1535612134845&uri=CELEX:32018R1139>).

⁴ Council Directive 96/67/EC of 15 October 1996 on access to the groundhandling market at Community airports (OJ L 272, 25.10.1996, p. 36) (<https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A31996L0067>).



Passenger handling	2. Passenger handling
Baggage handling	3. Baggage handling
Freight and mail handling	<p>4. Freight and mail handling comprising:</p> <p>4.1 for freight: physical handling of export, transfer and import freight, handling of related documents, customs procedures and implementation of any security procedure agreed between the parties or required by the circumstances;</p> <p>4.2 for mail: physical handling of incoming and outgoing mail, handling of related documents and implementation of any security procedure agreed between the parties or required by the circumstances.</p>
Apron handling of aircraft	<p>5. Ramp handling comprising:</p> <p>5.1 marshalling the aircraft on the ground at arrival and departure (*);</p> <p>5.2 assistance to aircraft parking and provision of suitable devices (*);</p> <p>5.3 communication between the aircraft and the air-side supplier of services (*);</p> <p>5.4 the loading and unloading of the aircraft, including the provision and operation of suitable means, as well as the transport of crew and passengers between the aircraft and the terminal, and baggage transport between the aircraft and the terminal;</p> <p>5.5 the provision and operation of appropriate units for engine starting;</p> <p>5.6 the moving of the aircraft at arrival and departure, as well as the provision and operation of suitable devices;</p> <p>5.7 the transport, loading on to and unloading from the aircraft of food and beverages.</p> <p>-----</p> <p>(*): provided that these services are not provided by the air traffic service.</p>
Aircraft services	<p>6. Aircraft services, comprising</p> <p>6.1 external and internal cleaning of the aircraft, and the toilet and water services;</p> <p>6.2 cooling and heating of the cabin, removal of snow and ice, de-icing of the aircraft;</p> <p>6.3 rearrangement of cabin with suitable cabin equipment, the storage of this equipment.</p>
Fuel and oil handling	7. Fuel and oil handling
Loading of catering	5.7 The transport, loading on to and unloading from the aircraft of food and beverages.
-	<p>8. Aircraft maintenance, comprising</p> <p>8.1 routine services performed before flight;</p>



	<p>8.2 non-routine services requested by the airport user;</p> <p>8.3 the provision and administration of spare parts and suitable equipment;</p> <p>8.4 the request for or reservation of a suitable parking and/or hangar space.</p>
-	<p>10. Surface transport comprising</p> <p>10.1 the organization and execution of crew, passenger, baggage, freight and mail transport between different terminals of the same airport, but excluding the same transport between the aircraft and any other point within the perimeter of the same airport;</p> <p>10.2 any special transport requested by the airport user.</p>
-	<p>11. Catering services comprising:</p> <p>11.1 liaison with suppliers and administrative management;</p> <p>11.2 storage of food and beverages and of the equipment needed for their preparation;</p> <p>11.3 cleaning of this equipment;</p> <p>11.4 preparation and delivery of equipment as well as of bar and food supplies.</p>

In order to implement the actions required by the Basic Regulation, EASA established a GH Roadmap. The first phase for the establishment of the GH Roadmap was to collect information on strengths and weaknesses of the current system through interviews with a number of national aviation authorities (NAAs), aerodrome operators, GHSPs, aircraft operators, and airline and aerodrome associations.

In the second phase of the GH Strategy, concept papers were developed on the six areas listed below and a GH Roadmap was published. Feedback from stakeholders on the concept papers and the presented GH Roadmap was received in a conference that was organised in March 2019. The expert group that contributed to the concept papers and the GH Roadmap⁵ confirmed the analysis of the feedback obtained via interviews with the stakeholders and it revealed consensus amongst stakeholders and the expert group that EASA should develop concrete actions in the following six areas:

1. Management system, including elements of safety management system (SMS);
2. Operational standards;
3. Training;
4. Ground Support Equipment (GSE);
5. Oversight;
6. Staff turnover.

Management system

EU legislation requires aerodrome operators and aircraft operators to develop a management system (SMS elements included). This management system framework requires that the contracted services

⁵ From December 2018 to March 2019, EASA worked with a group of groundhandling experts from NAAs, GHSPs, aircraft operators, aerodromes, and associations, to develop detailed concept papers on each of the key topics mentioned in the text.

that are used by these operators must comply with the requirements that are applicable in the respective domains. While some European Member States have developed robust SMS requirements for GHSPs and an implementation programme, some other Member States have adopted industry standards as soft law or have adopted a mixed approach.

Some GHSPs apply an SMS on a voluntary basis. Aircraft operators, including those providing self-handling, must include the GH activities under their management system as per Commission Regulation (EU) No 965/2012⁶. The audits of NAAs indicate that many GHSPs have processes in place to manage safety-related issues. The effectiveness and efficiency of the implementation of these SMSs vary substantially.

In many cases, NAAs do not oversee the management system of the GHSP directly; therefore, there is no assessment of its effectiveness through State oversight. The lack of a defined responsibility for NAAs to oversee GHSPs makes it difficult to implement improvements, even when shortcomings have been observed. In addition, any promotion of a good management system or best practices is hindered by this uncoordinated oversight.

Stakeholders emphasised the lack of an overarching system to regulate the interfaces of management systems between the parties involved in GH activities, SMS-related interfaces included. The oversight requirements are not coordinated between various stakeholders (GHSP's own compliance monitoring function — where it exists, aircraft operators, aerodrome operators). This leads to multiple audits being performed on a single GHSP by all these stakeholders that result in multiple verifications of the same GH processes or tasks and sometimes lead to contradictory corrective actions and unsafe situations. At the same time, other processes may remain outside the auditing scope, as they are not always audited end-to-end, but are limited to the auditor's scope, although GHSPs have to deliver an end-to-end service. Undetected shortcomings could become a serious unobserved safety hazard.

Moreover, there is no requirement to ensure that the results of audits and inspections that are performed partially by different organisations are commonly shared in order for all actors involved in GH activities to have the same safety information. For example, the aerodrome operator has control over certain elements with a direct impact on the delivery of GH services (e.g. apron design, driving procedures, vehicle licensing, provision of fixed GSE, real-estate rental, conditions to grant an operating licence to the GHSP, etc.). However, for a number of other services (e.g. operational GH procedures, flight dispatch, performance levels set out in a service level agreement (SLA) between the GHSP and the aircraft operator), the aerodrome operator might not have direct access to the information, especially when audits are done by another organisation such as the aircraft operator, NAAs, or other industry-based programmes.

Occurrence reporting is mandatory for all actors involved in GH activities through Regulation (EU) 376/2014⁷. However, the uncoordinated sharing of safety-relevant information between the affected

⁶ Commission Regulation (EU) No 965/2012 of 5 October 2012 laying down technical requirements and administrative procedures related to air operations pursuant to Regulation (EC) No 216/2008 of the European Parliament and of the Council, (OJ L 296, 25.10.2012, p. 1) (<https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?qid=1568369634394&uri=CELEX:32012R0965>) (See: the ORO.GEN.200 series).

⁷ Regulation (EU) No 376/2014 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 3 April 2014 on the reporting, analysis and follow-up of occurrences in civil aviation, amending Regulation (EU) No 996/2010 of the European Parliament and of the Council and repealing Directive 2003/42/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council and Commission Regulations (EC) No 1321/2007 and (EC) No 1330/2007 (OJ L 122, 24.4.2014, p. 18) (<https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?qid=1568369744001&uri=CELEX:32014R0376>).



stakeholders results in transmission of data from occurrence reports or best practices being either duplicated or fragmented between the aircraft operator, the GHSP, the aerodrome operator, and the NAA.

Some contractual clauses (mostly those related to operations such as on-time performance), that have a direct impact on the GHSPs revenues, might generate unintended consequences on safety performance. The safety performance indicators established by an aircraft operator may not be compatible with those that are established by the GHSP for the same task. Aircraft operators are focused on damage to the aircraft and the operational impact of such damage, while GHSPs are focused on the severity of the damage (without operational impact), injuries to persons and damage to GSEs. Several aircraft operators may establish different safety performance indicators for the same GH task delivered by the same GHSP to the turnaround procedures for the same type of aircraft. This could lead to a hazardous situation, especially in the context of high time pressure, which is not evenly addressed today with the current national legislations.

Training

As required by the Basic Regulation, GHSPs shall ‘use only adequately trained and qualified personnel and shall ensure the implementation and maintenance of training and checking programmes to ensure the continuing competence of all relevant personnel’⁸.

ICAO requires that aircraft operators that are engaged in commercial air transport (CAT) demonstrate ‘ground handling (...) arrangements consistent with the nature and extent of the operations specified’⁹ and that ‘ground handling arrangements and procedures’ are included in the operations manual. The ICAO standard is transposed to Commission Regulation (EC) No 965/2012 and mandatory for all CAT, NCC and SPO operators¹⁰. This means that each aircraft operator must develop its own groundhandling instructions and procedures. For GHSPs and their personnel, this may lead to different operating requirements for the same tasks. Consequently, there are training elements that are adjusted to the different operating requirements of aircraft operators¹¹. GHSPs must comply with the procedures contained in the aerodrome manual or the operations manual of the aircraft operator. When different operator procedures result in repetitive training on the same operational task, this becomes a challenge for GHSPs and is not only costly, time consuming, inefficient, and stressful, but also hazardous, as it creates additional possibilities to make mistakes by applying the wrong procedure. Moreover, national legislations of Member States, as well as different operating procedures established for the same type of equipment by various aerodrome operators may unnecessarily increase the diversity of training elements.

A common and properly documented training standard can help to reduce the number of incidents and accidents caused by GH activities. Such a common training standard should focus on the competencies that are necessary to carry out a specific task. Aircraft and aerodrome operator-specific training elements should then only be an add-on with a focus on operator-specific differences. These should be kept to a minimum and be duly justified by demonstrable safety benefits.

⁸ See point (e) of point 4.1 of Annex VII to the Basic Regulation.

⁹ Point 4.2.1.3 of ICAO Annex 6 Part I.

¹⁰ See ORO.GEN.205.

¹¹ Feedback from stakeholders provided the example of a GHSP serving 15 different aircraft operators on the same aerodrome. This GHSP would have to adjust its training to ensure that staff are familiar with 15 slightly different operator procedures for the same or similar service (e.g. placing of the safety cones).



Oversight

Today the access of GHSPs to perform their services on a certain aerodrome is granted differently in each Member State. Some States require a certificate or a licence of the GHSP that can be based on the approval defined in Council Directive 96/67/EC of 15 October 1996, some States accept declarations, and some rely on the acceptance of the GHSP by the aerodrome operator.

Furthermore, there are different methods for overseeing GHSPs in the Member States. Therefore, there is a need to establish a common system to grant GHSPs permission to provide their services on certain aerodromes, as well as a common oversight scheme for GHSPs.

The information available to authorities on GHSPs safety performance originates from the following sources:

- safety and compliance monitoring by aircraft operators as per Commission Regulation (EU) No 965/2012, themselves subject to oversight by competent authorities;
- aerodrome operators as per Commission Regulation (EU) No 139/2014¹², themselves subject to oversight by competent authorities;
- direct link between GHSPs and their competent authority;
- industry-based audit programmes; and
- oversight by non-aviation authorities, such as organisations responsible for occupational health and safety.

Where authorities obtain information about GHSPs via audits and assessments of aircraft operators (as per ORO.GEN.205 Contracted activities of Regulation (EU) No 965/2012,), it might not capture the whole spectrum of the GHSP activities and safety risks.

Without a regulatory framework for oversight of GHSPs, there is a risk that GH staff training and skills could deteriorate, which could lead to a general degradation of safety in GH, since many occurrences are linked to human factors.

Competent authority linked to the aerodrome where the GH activity takes place

The competent authority of the GHSP is the competent authority of the aerodrome at which the GHSP provides its services¹³. This means that a GHSP with activities at several aerodromes that are located in different Member States or even outside the EU will have to declare its activities to more than one competent authority and will be under the oversight of different competent authorities.

In addition, oversight has to take into account the different types, complexity, and size of the GH activity. Different company structure models also need to be accounted for: some GHSPs with several independent subsidiaries operating at a single airport may or may not use a common management

¹² Commission Regulation (EU) No 139/2014 of 12 February 2014 laying down requirements and administrative procedures related to aerodromes pursuant to Regulation (EC) No 216/2008 of the European Parliament and of the Council (OJ L 44, 14.2.2014, p. 1) (<https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?qid=1568371841957&uri=CELEX:32014R0139>).

¹³ See point 4 of Article 62 of the Basic Regulation: ‘... The national competent authority of the Member State where the aerodrome is located shall be responsible for those tasks with respect to the aerodrome certificate referred to in Article 34(1) and the certificate for an aerodrome operator referred to in Article 37(1). That national competent authority shall also be responsible for the oversight and enforcement tasks with respect to organisations responsible for the provision of groundhandling services or AMS at that aerodrome...’

system, while other GHSPs that are owned by a single company might operate based on a common management system, but with slightly different business models for each station.

The future framework should also address the question whether oversight should cover GHSPs and their services when a branch of the GHSP is located outside the EU territory, but the services are provided to, or on behalf of, an EU aircraft operator (e.g., the EU-registered GHSP with a branch located in Asia provides load control services to an EU operator).

Cooperative oversight

Specific and systematic cooperative oversight requirements are necessary. These requirements would enable an effective risk-based oversight of GHSPs. At the same time, the intended effect would be to avoid that those GHSPs that are active in several Member States are subject to contradictory or multiple oversight.

Operational standards

Both ICAO Annex 6 and Commission Regulation (EU) No 965/2012 require aircraft operators to develop policies and procedures for third parties that perform work on their behalf. This typically includes procedures that are necessary for the safe provision of GH, including aircraft type-specific requirements. These procedures are normally included in a GH agreement between the aircraft operator and the GHSP.

For non-commercial operations (general aviation including corporate aviation operations, as per ICAO terminology¹⁴), the responsibility rests either with the aircraft operator or with the pilot-in-command. Such operations occur in an environment with variable and more versatile operational and on-demand business requirements, and therefore a single solution for ensuring the safety and timely provision of GH services is not always possible. An agreement for GH services offered to air operator certificate (AOC) holders performing CAT operations may not be equally suitable for general and business aviation operators¹⁵, which normally request GH services on short notice or even ad-hoc, specific to their business model.

In an attempt to minimise the groundhandling safety risks, some organisations have already developed harmonised operational standards and recommended practices. The wider application of these industry standards and practices is expected to improve the aviation safety.

Furthermore, aerodrome operators are responsible for the safe and efficient operation of the aerodrome. For many issues, the aerodrome operator takes a leading role, for example in the emergency response planning, winter operations, low-visibility procedures, etc. For other areas, the aerodrome operator has a coordinating role, e.g. for the activities related to the ground operation of the aircraft, such as stand and gate allocation, provision of ground infrastructure, allocation of space, refuelling, access to the apron, handling of passengers with reduced mobility, etc. Additionally, the ICAO Aerodrome Certification Manual (ICAO Doc 9774) foresees the designation of areas for the storage of inflammable liquids and other hazardous (dangerous) materials, as well as the establishment of methods for the delivery, storage, dispensing, and handling of hazardous materials. This needs to be included in the aerodrome manual. Under the current provisions of Regulation (EU) No 139/2014, (ADR.OR.D.020), aerodrome operators are required to designate appropriate areas for

¹⁴ See ICAO Annex 6, Operation of aircraft, Part II – International General Aviation – Aeroplanes, Tenth Edition, July 2018.

¹⁵ Commercial non-scheduled flights operators and non-commercial operators flying with complex aircraft.



the storage of dangerous goods, however, the regulation does not contain requirements for the establishment of methods for the delivery, storage, dispensing, and handling of dangerous goods at the aerodrome.

GHSPs must follow the operational requirements of the aircraft operator and of the aerodrome operator. In doing so, they face challenges arising from the different operational practices required for the same activity and the need to account for local specificities but also to establish a balance between safety and commercial pressure (cost savings, shorter turnarounds, etc.).

The application of different operational requirements for the same task by the GHSP can have detrimental effects by:

- increasing the risk of human error that could lead to aircraft damages and endanger flight safety;
- generating the need for customised training to address the individual requirements of each aircraft operator;
- reducing the effectiveness and impact of safety oversight when GHSPs are getting different audit results by air operators or aerodromes for the same process; and
- increasing training cost and reducing staff availability.

Ground support equipment (GSE)

Servicing of aircraft on the ground involves the use of different types of equipment, motorised and non-motorised, which either operate in close proximity to persons or the aircraft or in direct contact with it. Incident reports involving aircraft damages and staff injuries mention aspects such as:

- poor maintenance of the equipment;
- the use of equipment that is not fit for the purpose;
- the use of equipment that is outside the scope of the tasks it is designed for; and
- non-compliance with the user instructions and specifications for the GSE.

Hence, a programme to ensure proper functioning and maintenance of GSE is important to avoid staff injuries and damage to the aircraft. Such programme should also enable the use of both innovative technologies and technologies with less impact on the environment.

Staff turnover

High staff turnover is an issue that has been raised by many stakeholders. There are many reasons for this including, but not limited to, seasonality, benefits, just culture, human factors, business pressure, etc.

Due to this fact, GHSPs are often unable to attract staff for longer periods, leading to a high staff turnover. This leads them to constant hiring and re-training of new and often unexperienced staff, which is costly, creates an additional strain on the more experienced staff, and ultimately has a negative impact on safety.

2. What we want to achieve — objective

The overall objectives of the EASA system are defined in Article 1 of the Basic Regulation. This project will contribute to the achievement of the overall objectives by addressing the issues outlined in Chapter 1.



The specific objectives of this proposal are to:

- improve the level of safety in the groundhandling operations, by ensuring, to the extent possible, the standardised application of operational procedures for the provision of ground services;
- build confidence in the capacity of GHSPs to mitigate the safety risks in GH operations effectively;
- develop a framework for effective interfaces between the parties involved in GH operations, including the exchange of safety-relevant information;
- improve and harmonise the training level of GH personnel;
- develop a framework for an effective maintenance of the GSE;
- develop a framework to ensure a common approach for granting acceptance of GHSPs to operate on certain aerodromes and a performance-based oversight;
- develop a framework for oversight of GHSPs and their operations;
- develop a framework for cooperative oversight of GHSPs and their operations; and
- identify the best strategy to address the oversight of GHSPs located outside the territory of the EU and which provide services to or on behalf of EU aircraft operators.

While the main driver for any action in this context remains the desired increase of safety, we should not forget that also efficiency gains would be advantageous. In a risk-based oversight environment, measurable safety improvements are automatically followed by a reduction of oversight pressure. An increase of trust in the other organisations' management system would bring efficiency gains that will benefit all organisations involved in GH activities.

3. How we want to achieve it

According to the Basic Regulation, groundhandling services include '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)'.

The proposed regulatory framework for the provision of the groundhandling services mentioned above will apply to aerodromes that are open to public use, serve CAT operators, have a paved instrument runway of 800 metres or more, or exclusively serve helicopters using instrument approach or departure procedures. Nevertheless, the proposed regulatory framework will not apply to:

- aerodromes or parts thereof, that are controlled and operated by the military; or
- an aerodrome that is exempted because it handles no more than 10 000 CAT passengers per year and no more than 850 movements related to cargo operations per year, and provided that the Member State concerned ensures that such exemption does not endanger compliance with the essential requirements referred to in Article 33 of the Basic Regulation.

This RMT will address the areas of management system, training, operational standards, GSE, and oversight. The possible safety consequences resulting from a high staff turnover will be addressed via the management system and staff competence (training).



The development of an impact assessment is also envisaged for this rulemaking task. The socio-economic factors will be considered during the drafting of the rules, as mandated in Article 89 of Regulation (EU) 2018/1139.

Safety promotion activities will also be deployed to support the results of the rulemaking activity and enhance other actions that do not require a regulatory action. The highest-level objective of this RMT is to establish measures to enable GHSPs to discharge their responsibilities that are associated with the GH services provided in compliance with the essential requirements listed in Annex VII to the Basic Regulation.

Below is a list of high-level objectives and activities to be considered during the drafting of the rules, impact assessment, and safety promotion activities.

	High-level objectives	Actions
	<i>Management system</i>	
1.	Establish an integrated and scalable management system for GHSPs.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Develop requirements for the establishment and implementation of an integrated and scalable management system for GHSPs. b. For organisations holding multiple certificates and/or declarations that are in the scope of the Basic Regulation, enable integration of several management systems into a single management system. c. Address outsourcing of GH services and clarify their scope. d. Propose ways to determine the complexity of operations of GHSPs.
2.	Develop an effective interface management between the parties involved in GH activities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Identify the elements of such interface, i.e. the safety responsibilities, and address overlapping SMS aspects. b. Establish requirements for oversight and data exchange as part of the interfaces. c. Enable access to a common database with occurrence reporting for all involved stakeholders at aerodrome level.
3.	Foster an organisational culture for effective safety management.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Establish clear and appropriate organisation-wide safety policies, occurrence reporting, and an effective communication for safety-relevant information. b. Enable swift exchange of safety-relevant information and data from occurrence reports and good practices between the parties involved in GH activities at aerodrome level.
4.	Ensure smooth transition to the new EU requirements on GH.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Develop non-binding material on implementation of a management system for inexperienced GH organisations.
	<i>Operational standards</i>	
5.	Establish operational standards to be applied by GHSPs to allow significant improvements in performance and operational safety.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Identify and/or design performance-based and technology-neutral operational standards that are applicable across all stations and locations.



		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> b. Enable stakeholders to apply commonly agreed operational procedures developed for a specific aerodrome. c. Enable standard application of existing industry standards, internationally recognised standards, and good practices.
	<i>GSE</i>	
6.	Ensure that the GHSP shall have a maintenance programme for GSE.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Establish high-level maintenance requirements for GSE. b. Enable implementation of programmes such as equipment pooling at aerodromes. c. Ensure maintenance governance is provided by an appropriate maintenance programme that is implemented and assessed for effectiveness through periodic compliance checks. d. Establish technology-neutral requirements that should also not prevent the use of latest technology in GSE design and production. e. Safety promotion: support the development of industry standards that promote innovation and environmentally friendly solutions.
	<i>Training</i>	
7.	Establish common European training standards in the GH domain.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Link training requirements to the GHSP's management system. b. Establish training requirements for each key function in GH in line with the Basic Regulation. c. Ensure that all persons responsible for GSE maintenance are trained and competent to execute their tasks. d. Propose competency-based and outcome-oriented training programmes, including competences for the trainer and methods to maintain them. e. Highlight the importance of human factors in GH. f. Identify best means to avoid redundant training delivered by aircraft operators to GHSP personnel. g. Enable recognition and crediting for completed training modules. h. Use existing industry standards and best practices available.
	<i>Oversight</i>	
8.	Establish the conditions for a risk-based oversight of GHSPs, based on a declaration system.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Establish a common and harmonised declaration system. b. Adjust the requirements for the oversight of aircraft operators and aerodrome operators accordingly.
9.	Establish a framework for oversight and, later on, expand the framework to cooperative oversight to enable mutual exchange of information and	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Within the competent authority, ensure coordination between different oversight activities to exchange information on audits performed by aircraft operators and aerodromes on GHSPs.



	address oversight and sharing tasks of oversight in case of multinational GHSPs.	b. Enable the use of industry standard audit programmes to reduce the audit burden on GHSPs.
10.	Develop a common framework of high-level and basic GH inspector competencies and qualifications/skills.	a. Define requirements for a training programme including initial theoretical, practical, on-the-job, and recurrent training.

4. What are the deliverables

- An Opinion with draft delegated and implementing acts;
- A Decision with draft AMC and GM related to these acts;
- Safety promotion material.

5. How we consult

This RMT will consult with the stakeholders on the draft deliverables following Article 16 of the EASA Management Board Decision 18-2015¹⁶. This procedure was selected because it enables an increased quality of stakeholder input and effectiveness and efficiency of the consultation process. Stakeholder consultation will be channelled through the Advisory Bodies as the entry points for comments coming from their member organisations. The final purpose of the focused consultation is to produce high-quality rules.

Consultation through the Advisory Bodies does not mean a reduced consultation or reaching out to fewer stakeholders. It rather means that the Advisory Bodies should collect and consolidate opinions and suggestions from their member organisations and convey them to EASA, including controversial positions amongst their members. Thus, the Advisory Bodies representatives will express with one voice the multitude of opinions and suggestions of their member organisations, eliminating in this way the repetitive or even contradicting opinions coming from the same stakeholder group.

The draft rules, together with an Explanatory Note and an impact assessment, will be published and consulted through at least one workshop and other focused consultation means, where the input from stakeholders will be collected. EASA will take into account this input to improve the final version of the rules. In addition to the workshops and other focused consultation means, a written consultation with the Advisory Bodies will also be ensured before the publication of the Opinion, AMC and GM.

To ensure visibility of the consultation process, several methods and activities are envisaged:

- focused consultations (teleconferences and written consultation) with GH experts representing the affected stakeholders throughout the entire rulemaking process;
- technical workshops with stakeholders to consult on the draft rules;
- focused consultations with GHSP stakeholders and EASA Advisory Bodies (including representatives of different sizes and types of aircraft operators, aerodrome operators and GHSPs); and
- a final written Advisory Body consultation.

¹⁶ Article 16 of the [EASA Management Board Decision 18-2015](#) (the 'Rulemaking Procedure')



6. Interface issues

This RMT may have a potential interface with the RMTs providing regular updates to Commission Regulations (EU) No 965/2012 (Air Operations) and (EU) No 139/2014 (Aerodromes).

7. Reference documents

7.1. Affected regulations

The following two existing Regulations may need to be amended and aligned with the new requirements for groundhandling:

- Commission Regulation (EU) No 139/2014 of 12 February 2014 laying down requirements and administrative procedures related to aerodromes pursuant to Regulation (EC) No 216/2008 of the European Parliament and of the Council.
- Commission Regulation (EU) No 965/2012 of 5 October 2012 laying down technical requirements and administrative procedures related to air operations pursuant to Regulation (EC) No 216/2008 of the European Parliament and of the Council.
- Any other Regulation that will be affected by the future GH regulation will be identified and the list of affected regulations.

7.2. Affected decisions

AMC and GM associated with the Regulations listed in Section 7.1 above.

7.3. Reference documents

- Commission Implementing Regulation (EU) 2017/373 of 1 March 2017 laying down common requirements for providers of air traffic management/air navigation services and other air traffic management network functions and their oversight, repealing Regulation (EC) No 482/2008, Implementing Regulations (EU) No 1034/2011, (EU) No 1035/2011 and (EU) 2016/1377 and amending Regulation (EU) No 677/2011.
- Commission Implementing Regulation (EU) No 923/2012 of 26 September 2012 laying down the common rules of the air and operational provisions regarding services and procedures in air navigation and amending Implementing Regulation (EU) No 1035/2011 and Regulations (EC) No 1265/2007, (EC) No 1794/2006, (EC) No 730/2006, (EC) No 1033/2006 and (EU) No 255/2010.
- Council Directive 96/67/EC of 15 October 1996 on access to the groundhandling market at Community Airports.
- Commission Implementing Regulation (EU) 2015/1018 of 29 June 2015 laying down a list classifying occurrences in civil aviation to be mandatorily reported according to Regulation (EU) No 376/2014 of the European Parliament and of the Council.
- Regulation (EU) No 376/2014 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 3 April 2014 on the reporting, analysis and follow-up of occurrences in civil aviation, amending Regulation (EU) No 996/2010 of the European Parliament and of the Council and repealing Directive 2003/42/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council and Commission Regulations (EC) No 1321/2007 and (EC) No 1330/2007.
- Commission Regulation (EU) No 1321/2014 of 26 November 2014 on the continuing airworthiness of aircraft and aeronautical products, parts and appliances, and on the approval of organisations and personnel involved in these tasks.



- Regulation (EC) No 1107/2006 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 5 July 2006 concerning the rights of disabled persons and persons with reduced mobility when travelling by air.
- ICAO Annex 18 – The safe transport of dangerous goods by air.
- ICAO Doc 9284 – Technical instructions for the safe transport of dangerous goods by air.
- ICAO Annex 19 – Safety Management, Second Edition, July 2016.
- ICAO Ground Handling Taskforce – Manual on Ground Handling [currently draft version 2, revision 12, to be published in 2019].
- Existing industry standards currently used by industry and NAAs.

