



AIRSAN – Coordinated action in the aviation sector to control public health threats

Work package 2 Press information

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In the recent years, there has been a rapid increase in number of people travelling by air in Europe, resulting in a growing risk of cross-border public health threats. A coordinated reaction among multiple stakeholders involved is vital in order to ensure implementation of appropriate control measures without interfering with travel and trade. The aim of the AIRSAN Project (“Coordinated action in the aviation sector to control public health threats”) was to support EU Member States in establishing a well-organised and coherent response of various organisations representing public health and aviation sectors to public health threats in air transport.

The major results of the AIRSAN Project are the following:

- **AIRSAN Network:** The AIRSAN Network brings together national public health and civil aviation authorities, local public health authorities as well as management and medical services of airports and airlines across Member States of the European Union to facilitate greater mutual understanding of the management of public health threats in air transport.
- **AIRSAN Website:** The AIRSAN Website (www.airsan.eu) serves for the dissemination of project information to a wider audience of stakeholders and contains general information about the AIRSAN Project (e.g. objectives, partnership, work packages). The major products of the project such as guidance materials or training tools as well as dissemination material (flyer, publications, newsletters) can be freely downloaded. The AIRSAN Website provides an opportunity to register for the AIRSAN Network.
- **AIRSAN Communication Platform:** The password-protected AIRSAN Communication Platform which is linked to the AIRSAN Website can be used by registered AIRSAN Network Members to informally discuss topics concerning public health in the aviation sector.
- **AIRSAN Bibliography:** The AIRSAN Bibliography comprises a list of guidance material that cover public health threats in air transport on international level. These documents were reviewed and systematically presented in form of an annotated searchable bibliography. The AIRSAN Bibliography supports relevant stakeholders in their efforts to develop, revise or harmonise contingency plans by providing an easy access to relevant documents.
- **AIRSAN Guidance Documents:** Two Guidance Documents supporting the response to public health threats in air transport were developed by the AIRSAN Project partners: an AIRSAN Guidance Document on remote risk assessment and management of communicable disease events on board an aircraft and an AIRSAN Guidance Document on contact tracing, with a focus on the collaboration between the public health and the aviation sector.
- **AIRSAN Training Tool:** The AIRSAN Training Tool offers authorities and companies a framework to test the existing preparedness and response plans as well as coordination between the public health and the aviation sector in case of cross-border public health emergencies. Additionally it supports complete or partial implementation of the AIRSAN Guidance Documents into the existing procedures. The developed framework is designed as a table-top exercise based on different scenarios around a potential transmission of infectious diseases via air travel. The AIRSAN Training Tool was tested in five pilot exercises at different airports; it offers a standard tool for trainings of relevant stakeholders.

The key outcomes of the AIRSAN Project are the following:

AIRSAN provides scientifically developed products and supports the collaboration between private companies, such as airports and airlines, and the public sector, such as public health and civil aviation authorities. With its focus on the collaboration between public health and the aviation sector, the AIRSAN Project supports the implementation of the International Health Regulations (2005) and the Decision No 1082/2013/EU.

In order to ensure a coherent and efficient response to public health threats in air transport, the harmonisation of existing procedures, for example of contingency plans, is important. This can be supported by an inter-sectoral network of relevant stakeholders.

The target groups of the AIRSAN Project benefit from the established and enhanced collaboration that enables access to the knowledge and expertise from colleagues from different sectors thus improving mutual understanding of existing regulations, modalities and needs.

EU citizens who travel by air benefit from the AIRSAN Project as once a more coherent approach to the issue of possible public health threats between the officials in the public health and the aviation sector is achieved it will result in increased safety in air transport improving the comfort of travel and preventing unnecessary delays occurring.

The AIRSAN Project which was funded by the EU Health Programme was conducted between April 2013 and December 2015. The AIRSAN Project has brought together 24 partners representing national public health authorities, national civil aviation authorities, airlines and airports across EU Member States as well as from Turkey and Israel; other partners represent relevant international organisations, such as the World Health Organization (WHO), European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (ECDC), International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO), International Air Transport Association (IATA) and European Aviation Safety Agency (EASA). The Robert Koch Institute, the national public health institute of Germany, coordinated the AIRSAN Project.