



PRESS RELEASE

EUROPEAN TRANSPORT WORKERS' FEDERATION

FEDERATION EUROPEENNE DES TRAVAILLEURS DES TRANSPORTS

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“PACK LESS” ACTION IN AIRPORTS OF 9 EUROPEAN COUNTRIES

ETF asks European Commission to limit luggage weight

The European Transport Workers' Federation (ETF) and the International Transport Workers' Federation (ITF) organize today, Friday 12 February 2010, a European “pack less” action day to raise public awareness for the injuries that baggage handlers in airports suffer from carrying heavy luggage. Airport staff in nine European countries will be handing out leaflets and luggage stickers to air passengers and ask them to pack less when they fly. ETF asks the EU Commission to incorporate a mandatory standard for hold baggage weights. A reduction to 23kg per item is the first minimum step to prevent luggage handlers from back and other strain injuries.

The European Commission is currently drafting a Provisional Framework Directive on Manual Handling and Musculoskeletal Diseases. According to the ETF, the incorporation of a mandatory standard for hold baggage is absolutely necessary. **François Ballestero, the Political Secretary of Civil Aviation** said: *“Luggage by air is exempt from the health and safety weight limits laid down in other industries and often exceed all recognised safe limits. Thereby baggage handlers are more likely to suffer injuries that can last a lifetime. Only a European wide regulation can reduce these all too real hazards.”* The ETF calls for an immediate top limit of 23kg per item, as a first step, to decrease the musculoskeletal injuries that baggage handlers risk by taking care of the passengers' baggage.

Awareness campaign focuses at London Heathrow

Air passengers are often not aware of the fact that luggage has to be handled in restricted areas such as aircraft holds where mechanical aids and recommended lifting positions are impossible. To draw the public attention to this issue, ETF representatives in airports in Spain, Italy, France, Belgium, Germany, Bulgaria, the UK, Denmark and Sweden will carry out the “pack less” action simultaneously.

Heathrow will be the main focus of the event. Luggage with destination London Heathrow and coming from the 9 aforementioned European countries will enter the airport with “pack less” luggage stickers. Representatives from at least 13 different European countries have confirmed their attendance. The ETF Political Secretary François Ballestero, UNITE National Officer Steve Turner, British MP Alan Keen and Belgian MP Hans Bonte will present their views on this issue during the press conference at Heathrow Airport.

For further information, please contact François Ballestero (Tel: +32 2 285 46 65; f.ballestero@etf-europe.org)

The ETF represents more than 2.5 million transport workers from 225 transport unions and 41 European countries, in the following sectors: railways, road transport and logistics, maritime transport, inland waterways, civil aviation, ports & docks, tourism and fisheries.