

The AIRSAN Project - Efficient, coherent EU level response to public health threats in air transport

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The Ebola virus disease epidemic in West Africa since spring 2014 illustrates once again the need to be well prepared for cross-border public health threats. One challenge is to contain the spread of the disease by a coordinated international response which should entail sound cooperation between the public health and the aviation sector. The AIRSAN Project, funded by the European Commission, aims to ensure an efficient, coherent response at EU-level to public health threats in air transport. Project partners are public health authorities, airlines, airport managements and international organisations, e.g. the World Health Organization (WHO), the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) and the International Air Transport Association (IATA).

The AIRSAN Project provides the AIRSAN website; an open-access website for dissemination of information for public health and civil aviation authorities, airlines and airports: <http://www.airsan.eu/>

The AIRSAN Project website also provides access to:

- **AIRSAN Guidance Documents:** The AIRSAN Project develops guidance documents that focus on managing public health threats in air transport which will be made available on the AIRSAN website. As an interim result, the AIRSAN bibliography has been created and is available online. The bibliography makes public health action-orientated information in the aviation sector quickly accessible: <http://www.airsan.eu/Resources/Bibliography/Search.aspx> In the current Ebola outbreak situation the following example illustrates the benefit of the AIRSAN bibliography: a competent public health authority wants to know how to manage a flight-passenger with suspected Ebola virus disease at an airport. The keyword-search “Management of suspect or affected travellers (at-airport)” reveals 14 documents with information about the specific topic. In case the flight-passenger is confirmed with Ebola virus disease the keyword “Contact tracing” can be searched and results include documents like the Risk Assessment Guidelines for Infectious Diseases Transmitted on Aircraft

(RAGIDA) [1] which gives specific advice on the definition of close contacts in cases of viral haemorrhagic fevers.

- **The AIRSAN Network:** The AIRSAN Project brings together competent public health authorities, civil aviation authorities, airport management and airlines across EU Member States in form of a network. Interested authorities are invited to register here for the AIRSAN Network: <http://www.airsan.eu/ContactUs/RegistertotheAirsanNetwork.aspx>. Registered members can use the password-protected AIRSAN Communication Platform to exchange information, e.g. on airport exercises or developed information material and to discuss topics concerning public health in the aviation sector.
- **The AIRSAN Training Tool:** The AIRSAN Project is developing a training tool that will support authorities and companies with the implementation of the AIRSAN Guidance Documents. The AIRSAN Training Tool will also be made available on the AIRSAN website.

In summary, the AIRSAN Project facilitates the implementation of the International Health Regulations (2005) [2] and the Decision 1082/2013 [3] in EU Member States.

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