

He's One of Us Now

Ever since its integration into SEV, the aviation sector has been growing by several hundred new members. Most recently, on 1 July 2017, the former union Push has been incorporated. This is a great opportunity for us to dive into this world, which many of us do not know well, by means of this reportage from Zurich airport. Additionally, we try to find out what SEV needs to do in order to establish itself in this delicate area – especially in Geneva, where SEV has started being active at Cointrin airport.

More than 26'000 people work at Zurich airport, roughly 2500 of which are Swissport employees. One of them is Alexandros Fokas, a man of Greek origin who grew up in the Canton of Zurich. He calls himself Alex. Visiting him at his workplace is not that easy: In fact, without prior notice, a visitor's pass issued by airport police and a passport or ID, it is simply impossible. The entrance to the "inner areas" of the airport is heavily protected and those who do not have a badge and a PIN number are only allowed inside after the police have checked the documents. Next, there's security, where weapons or other forbidden items would be eliminated. This part looks exactly the same as the security check area for air passengers. The inspection is a necessary evil since airports are still highly sensitive places.

Job and Family Are Compatible

However, meeting Alex makes me forget this uncomfortable atmosphere immediately: He is open-minded, friendly, attentive and approachable. These are excellent prerequisites for a "Shift Leader" who is also active in the Peko of Swissport. Before having taken his position at the airport, Alex tried a few different jobs. The main reason why he started looking for a job as "Supervisor Ramp" was his wish to start a family because the shifts are predictable and easy to plan. The supervisor's job is to oversee loading and unloading of airplanes and give respective instructions. Candidates receive modular on-the-job training for this job. Later on, Alex has been trained as a managing clerk at Blue Collar Disposition (BluCoDi), which is responsible for making sure the right people are present on the ramp for loading and unloading. BluCoDi is at the centre of all activity on the ramp. In the meantime, Alex Fokas was promoted to shift leader and is now shift supervisor at BluCoDi. When he is on duty as the shift leader, he works in a room with six workplaces and 22 monitors which help him to keep track of all employees on the ramp and their daily dispositions. His second workplace is outside by the airplanes, which offers him a welcome change. He even masters the de-icing of airplanes.

Shifts at the Airport

Activities at the airport run in shifts all around the clock, which is why Alex needs a car even though he lives within ten kilometers from the airport. But when he goes on holiday, he still prefers airplanes: "I don't like driving several hundred kilometers", he says. And explains: "My family has always been what you might call an airline-family."

Peter Anliker / kt

Geneva Airport

Cointrin: Working With Perseverance

SEV will soon take up activity at Geneva airport! After the integration of the former members of Push into SEV, union secretary SEV Tony Mainolfi puts his focus on networking in Cointrin.

When Tony Mainolfi met Claude-Alain Aymon, who is the SEV delegate at Swissport, their focus was thus the same. Swissport is one of three companies with which SEV has signed a CLA. “In the aviation industry, companies which offer support services like we do are under intense pressure. It all comes down to this question: When a travel company sells a ticket for 100 Francs, how much of it will go to the service company? In an environment like this, a strong CLA is indispensable.”

Up until April 2018, Henri-Pierre Mullner – also known as “Monsieur Push” of Geneva – will support Tony Mainolfi and Claude-Alain in their quest to become more active at Swissport in Cointrin. The time with him shall be used to gain a better understanding of Geneva airport and all of its complicated mechanisms: the vast number of employees, the combination of private and public enterprises and the consequently complex mixture of unions involved. To gain a foothold in this low-wage sector with its high fluctuation and low degree of union membership will be a tough but interesting challenge. In other sectors of public transport, SEV is used to a much higher degree of membership, sometimes over 50%. In comparison, the starting point in the aviation sector is thus considerably worse, which is precisely what Tony Mainolfi emphasized towards Claude-Alain Aymon: “We will build union presence, but it will take time and perseverance. To show his presence, Mainolfi will rely on Aymon, who is crucial to Swissport. The two men decided to have regular consultation hours and are striving to better inform employees. They will implement their measures step-by-step, but as soon as possible. Tony Mainolfi knows that the close contact with its members is a basic and most important cornerstone of SEV. “I want to go and visit the employees of Swissport, ISS, and Priora, with all of whom we have signed a CLA, hear about their concerns and receive clear mandates. We also need delegates at ISS and Priora, not only at Swissport. I rely on the employees and am willing to support them.”

vbo/kt

Philipp Hadorn Explains

“Our field of activity has expanded”

Union secretary Philipp Hadorn is responsible for the aviation industry and presides SEV-GATA. We have asked him three questions concerning the current situation after the integration of the former Push members as of 1 July 2017.

Philipp Hadorn, SEV-GATA has seen a significant increase in members thanks to the integration of all former Push members. How will you affiliate these several hundred new members to the section?

The integration of our colleagues from Swissport, SBS, Priora, ISS, and Cargologic has led to our field of activity being expanded. We are now trying to translate the expectations of our new members into union activities.

Which challenges does the section face as a result of this change?

The section welcomes the further expansion of our activities. We have accepted our new colleagues with open arms and are in an intensive exchange with them. For SEV-GATA, it is a sign of appreciation for long-term commitment.

What are the most important current activities in the aviation sector?

In 2017 we have been able to enter into new CLAs with Swiss and ISS Geneva. The focus of 2018 is to sign a CLA with Swissport and negotiate the wage system with Swiss.

Questions: vbo