

Passengers deserve airport capacity & effective measures for ground operations

For immediate release

1 December 2011

Brussels, 1 December 2011: The European Commission announced today an **Airport Package** involving a comprehensive review of European airport policy including new regulatory initiatives on **airport slots, aviation noise and ground handling**. Reacting to the package, European airport trade body ACI EUROPE was positive about the Commission's focus on airport capacity but regretted it did not fully deliver the necessary tools for better quality in ground operations.

CAPACITY

Both capacity and quality are vital to the strategic role of airports for the European economy, given Europe's increasing dependence on connectivity and trade with the new economic powerhouses of Asia and Latin America. Airport capacity and performance in ground operations are also fundamental to the success of the Single European Sky – Europe's flagship project for reforming Air Traffic Management. In this regard, the European Commission is correctly looking at a better alignment of its policy as regards aviation infrastructure.

Olivier Jankovec, Director General ACI EUROPE said *"The Commission has come to terms with the reality and impact of the airport capacity crunch. The discrepancy between the priority given to developing capacity in the air and the lack of attention to developing matching capacity on the ground is simply not sustainable. This is genuinely hurting the passenger experience, constraining the performance of aviation and jeopardising Europe's competitiveness."*

While ACI EUROPE supports most of the measures listed by the Commission to optimise the use of existing airport facilities - in particular the proposed improvements of the slot allocation system and the deployment of SESAR, it also reiterates that these will not be enough to address the looming airport capacity crunch*. The indisputable need for additional airport infrastructure means that Governments must face up to their role in maintaining Europe's global relevance. ACI EUROPE fully supports the European Commission asking Member States to develop and provide national strategies on airport capacity, taking into account network implications - in particular the need to ensure the success of the Single European Sky.

Olivier Jankovec, Director General ACI EUROPE commented *"Given what is at stake for Europe in relation to airport capacity and the paralysis which has struck many governments on this issue, there is no doubt that the European level needs to play a greater role"*.

AIRPORT SLOTS

Looking specifically at airport slots¹ he added *"Let's face it, improving the system is overdue, in particular to make it more efficient as regards the use of scarce airport capacity. The present rules were developed by incumbent airlines for incumbent airlines – they must become fully transparent and airports need to be more involved, notably through local rules. This is a legitimate request, since the way airport slots are allocated dictates the way our facilities are used, with consequences on our operations and ultimately, our business"*.

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ACI EUROPE is urging the forthcoming Danish Presidency of the EU to make both airport capacity and the new Slot Regulation a priority of its agenda.

AVIATION NOISE

On the issue of aviation noise², the EC proposal provides useful clarifications on the introduction of operating restrictions and the implementation of the balanced approach in Europe. However, ACI EUROPE is adamant that any new stringency level must be reasonable and still allow airlines to make the most of the economic life of their assets.

GROUND HANDLING

As regards quality at airports, the Package acknowledges the need for airport operators to be able to control and coordinate the different actors using their facilities, in particular ground handlers³. This is not the case today and needs to be adequately addressed - as it is essential to driving increased performance in ground operations to the benefit of passengers and effectively contributing to the Single European Sky.

However, in a joint statement issued today together with ASA, the Independent handlers' association and ETF, the European Trade Unions, ACI EUROPE rejected the uncontrolled deregulation proposed by the Commission.

ENDS

NOTES FOR EDITORS

* For more information on the airport capacity crunch and the expected growth in air traffic in Europe, between now and 2030, **EUROCONTROL's Long Term Forecast** is accessible here: <http://www.eurocontrol.int/press-releases/169-million-flights-expected-2030>

¹ For the detailed **ACI EUROPE reaction to** the independent recommendations of **the SGC report on Airport Slot Regulation 95-93**, the download is here: <http://www.aci-europe.org/component/downloads/downloads/3044.html>

² For the **ACI EUROPE Position on the Revision of the EU Directive on Noise**, go to: <http://www.aci-europe.org/component/downloads/downloads/3043.html>

³ For the **ACI EUROPE Position on the Ground Handling**, the download is here: <http://www.aci-europe.org/component/downloads/downloads/3071.html>

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ACI EUROPE is the European region of Airports Council International (ACI), the only worldwide professional association of airport operators. ACI EUROPE represents over 400 airports in 46 European countries. Member airports handle 90% of commercial air traffic in Europe, welcoming more than 1.5 billion passengers each year.