



## JOINT PRESS RELEASE

### **Ground Handling Services in the EU - European Airports, Trade Unions and Independent Handlers reject uncontrolled deregulation**

**Brussels, 1 December 2011:** Three of the four European Social Partners in the ground handling sector, Airports Council International Europe (ACI EUROPE), the European Transport Workers' Federation (ETF) and the Airport Services Association (ASA) representing the independent handlers have expressed strong concerns on a new Proposal for a Regulation on Ground Handling services, adopted today by the European Commission.

The market for ground handling services at European airports has been largely liberalized through the current Directive, adopted in 1996. Prices for ground handling services have decreased significantly since the opening of the market, leading to a strong pressure on staff working conditions and the quality of service provided at European airports.

According to the three organizations, the uncontrolled deregulation of ground handling services now being proposed by the European Commission will negatively impact the efficient provision of quality Ground Handling services at European airports, put at risk jobs and employment and jeopardize fair competition not only in the sector - but also in the wider aviation market. In addition, it fails to tackle important shortcomings of the current Directive to improve the passenger experience as well as safety and security at European airports.

The three organizations deeply regret that the Commission has ignored in large parts their joint recommendations on the revision of the Directive as per the Common Statement issued in April 2011<sup>1</sup>.

**Enrique Carmona, ETF Ground Staff Committee Chairman** said *"The current situation is not acceptable. The new proposal for a Regulation does not address key issues faced by ground-handling workers, with a continuous reduction in terms and conditions and job stability. These workers deserve a social clause that includes transfer of staff and must adhere to existing representative collective agreements. This in the end is a miss opportunity to deliver a consistent piece of legislation that reaffirms the social Europe citizens demand."*

The **ASA Europe Chairman, Carlos Navas** commented *"The proposal is a step backwards for the independent handling companies, which have been the main contributor to the success of the current Directive - delivering price reduction while maintaining good quality, as recognised by the European Commission. The unlimited right of airlines to self-handle will further reduce the contestable market, while the current absence of a level playing field between the different players will be exacerbated by the new Commission proposal."*

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**Olivier Jankovec, Director General ACI EUROPE** said *"The ground handling proposal is a huge disappointment. While the Commission has put the emphasis on the need to improve the performance of all actors using airport facilities, it has failed to reflect that properly in its proposal. Airport operators need to be truly empowered to enforce minimum quality standards and coordinate ground handlers. This is about allowing airport operations to become more aligned with the Single European Sky. What's more, any further deregulation at this stage will bring unintended consequences – not only reduced operational efficiency, but also dominant positions by larger incumbent airlines to the detriment of a truly competitive market"*.

**ENDS**

<sup>1</sup> See attached 'Statement on the Revision of the Ground Handling Directive', adopted on 7 April 2011 by ACI EUROPE, ETF and IAHA (now ASA), also downloadable here: <http://www.aci-europe.org/component/downloads/downloads/3091.html>

**Note to Editors:**

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