

ACI EUROPE

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Europe's airports address their future at the European Parliament

For immediate release

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Brussels, 25 January 2012: European airport trade body ACI EUROPE last night met with Members of the European Parliament during an evening reception at the European Parliament in Brussels, hosted by Ines Ayala Sender MEP and Jim Higgins MEP.

The event was attended by airport CEOs from 12 European countries as well as by officials from several European institutions including the European Commission and EUROCONTROL, as well as representatives from Member States and the aviation industry.

Addressing the gathering, **ACI EUROPE President & CEO of Dublin Airport Authority (DAA plc)** said that he regretted that Europe was not capitalising on the unique role played by airports in shaping local economic development. He stressed airports' strategic relevance in the context of both the present crisis affecting Europe and its ever-increasing dependence on global trade – which relies on effective connectivity.

"Airports fuel trade, investment and jobs to every corner of our continent. More than ever, Europe needs to develop the airport capacity required to meet future demand and create a more supportive regulatory framework for aviation – this is what is happening in competing regions like the Gulf and Asia" he said.

Collier commended the European Commission's recently announced Airport Package¹ for sending strong messages to Member States on the airport capacity crunch² and the need to optimise the slot allocation system at congested airports. There is a burning need to align capacity on the ground with capacity in the air, as repeatedly asserted by the Single European Sky project. He regretted however, the unnecessary further deregulation of ground handling proposed by the Commission, noting its potential impact on service quality and social conditions.

Underlining the need for aviation – and airports in particular, to be recognized as growth enablers, he concluded *"We need a visible change of mindset from policy makers across the board. If economic growth is the real priority, then this means not adding administrative burdens and operational costs, help us get new business opportunities through liberalization with emerging countries and give us our license to operate and grow."*

Jim Higgins MEP, Ireland (EPP) commented *"Trading conditions for Europe's airports are getting tough, with traffic set to decline and financing getting very tight on the back of the Sovereign debt crisis. I am deeply concerned about the plight of small regional airports, in the face of disappearing State support, tremendous airline route volatility and national aviation taxes. As the lifeline of our communities, these airports need a more supportive regulatory framework."*

Ines Ayala Sender MEP, Spain (S&D) said *"Europe needs the airport capacity to match its ambitions – and to ensure the success of the Single European Sky. We should stop putting our heads in the sand. There is simply no use in tripling airspace capacity, if we do not have the courage to develop airport capacity. I come from a country whose development and cohesion has, for decades, relied on airports and the accessibility they provide. Airport capacity needs to be on the agenda as one of the key determinants of Europe's future"*.

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Press release

Notes for Editors:

¹ For the details of the European Commission's proposed 'Airport Package', go to http://ec.europa.eu/transport/air/airports/airports_en.htm

² 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>

For the **ACI EUROPE press releases reacting to the EC's Airport Package**, go to:
<http://www.aci-europe.org/component/downloads/downloads/3092.html>
<http://www.aci-europe.org/component/downloads/downloads/3094.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.