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Airports welcome swift Commission response to volcanic ash shock

For immediate release

27 April 2010

Brussels, 27 April 2010: Responding to European Commission Vice President Kallas' statement today on the impact of the volcanic ash crisis, European airport trade body ACI EUROPE called on Member States to take stock of the Commission's assessment and proposed emergency measures.

ACI EUROPE has estimated that European airports lost over EUR250 million during the air space shutdown period from 15 to 21 April.

Olivier Jankovec, Director General ACI EUROPE said *"The European Commission has come forward with proposals that could constitute a feasible European Aviation Relief Plan. We are pleased to see that their assessment takes into account the impact on the entire air transport industry, including airports and their commercial partners."*

With most of the proposed measures ultimately in the hands of Member States, including adequate compensation for the losses suffered under these exceptional circumstances, Jankovec added *"The past 18 months have seen governments bailing out banks and financial institutions from a situation that is increasingly being revealed to be of their own making. Last week's shutdown of European air space was entirely outside of our control. Coming in the wake of the global economic crisis, from which aviation has not even recovered, this latest shock is the dictionary definition of being kicked when we're already down. We urge national governments to grasp the gravity of the situation and to respond appropriately."*

Echoing the remarks of Vice-President Kallas on the critical role of the aviation industry, Jankovec concluded *"The volcanic ash crisis highlighted just how much Europe counts on aviation – there is simply no substitute for the 150,000 air routes across the 440 airports connecting every region of Europe."*

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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.

Press release