

ACI EUROPE

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Regional airports call for concerted effort to bring down 'visiting costs'

For immediate release

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Brussels, 16 March 2010: The 3rd Annual ACI EUROPE SMAG (Small and Medium Sized Airports Action Group) Conference takes place under the patronage of the Spanish Presidency of the EU, today and tomorrow in Dubrovnik, Croatia. The theme of this year's event is 'REGIONAL AIRPORTS: Engines for Economic Recovery' and it brings together 200 delegates from regional airports, local and national authorities as well as ACI EUROPE World Business Partners.

Europe's regional airports play a vital and unique role in connecting the continent and fostering economic and social cohesion. Proximity to an airport continues to be one of the key deciders for businesses looking to invest in a region.

Emerging from the global crisis, during which the European airport industry lost close to 100 million passengers - the equivalent of 2.8 years of growth - regional airports are now in a prime position to contribute to the economic regeneration and development of the communities they serve. With the low cost carrier business model becoming dominant on intra-European routes and the prospect of further aviation liberalisation across the Mediterranean and to the East of Europe, the potential for further growth is clearly there.

Olle Sundin, Chairman of SMAG and Managing Director, Gothenburg Airport, LFV commented "*To unleash the potential of Europe's regional airports, we need to move on from regulatory and operational frameworks that tend to be based on 'one-size fits all' - and which too often result in disproportionate costs for these airports. Every region of Europe is different and every airport is different too. More tailor-made regulatory and operational frameworks are required to put regional airports in a condition to boost their competitiveness.*"

Olivier Jankovec, Director General ACI EUROPE commented "*For all regional airports, keeping what we call 'visiting costs' - the overall costs of using the airport - at competitive levels is a matter of do or die. This requires a holistic approach and the cooperation of all actors involved - airlines and air traffic control (ATC), but also regulators at all levels. It is of course primarily about airport charges and the kind of incentives that we can offer to airlines. But it is equally about avoiding increases in ATC charges at airports, as well as costs induced by security and safety regulations.*"

He added "*Apart from these regulatory issues, some low cost carriers seem to ignore that our own ability to offer competitive charges is fundamentally linked to our ability to generate commercial revenues. This means that overtly restrictive one-cabin bag rules* which depress retail activities at airports must be eliminated.*"

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Notes to Editors:

SMAG was created by ACI EUROPE in 2006 as a dedicated forum for regional airports. It currently comprises more than 130 airports. The **Chairman of SMAG** is **Olle Sundin**, Managing Director, Gothenburg Airport, Sweden. The **Vice-Chair** is **Tonci Peovic**, Managing Director of Zagreb Airport in Croatia.

* See ACI EUROPE's press release on one-bag rule from 4 February 2009, available to download in the archive of the Media Room on www.aci-europe.org

Press release

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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.