

Restoring air connectivity: the way forward

ACI EUROPE calls upon Transport Ministers for full EU coordination and alignment: "Our sector cannot afford to exit this crisis the way we entered it" says President

ACI EUROPE

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Brussels, 28 April 2020: With European States now working on the progressive lifting of confinement measures, ACI EUROPE has today called for full EU coordination and alignment on how current restrictions to air travel should be lifted. The call came ahead of the EU Transport Ministerial meeting of 29 April, which will address the challenge of restoring transport services, connectivity and free movement of people and goods.

Jost Lammers, President of ACI EUROPE, said: *"Air connectivity has essentially collapsed and with it not just tourism, but scores of other businesses relying on the physical flow of people and goods - both across the Single Market and globally. Protecting livelihoods now requires planning for how we can reconnect our communities, and that must be fully and effectively coordinated at EU level. We cannot afford to exit this crisis the way we got into it."*

Airports stand ready to assist and cooperate with health and aviation authorities to restart operations in the safest way for passengers and staff. As ACI EUROPE has sent detailed contributions to that effect, Lammers urged for airports to be effectively consulted ahead of new measures being designed and adopted. He also highlighted a series of key principles: *"Air connectivity will be restored gradually, based on the convergence of the epidemiological situations between different countries and regions. But there must be alignment as to how such convergence will be assessed and the related implications on travel. There must also be coherence when it comes to the operational measures that both airports and airlines will need to comply with. This is going to be essential if we want these measures to be not only effective - but also to secure public confidence. This means that these measures must be the same or at the very least equivalent not just for the whole air transport network, but also between transport modes and across other tourism industries."*

COVID-19 related operational measures at airports will also need to be risk-based, implementable, flexible (scalable both up and down), cost effective and temporary. They should be publicly financed since protecting health falls within the public remit. Against that background, there is no doubt that full and effective coordination at EU level and with industry will be the single most crucial factor in the restoration of air connectivity.

The airport sector continues to suffer devastating losses as a result of the pandemic, with Europe's airports losing 235 million passengers between 1 March and 19 April alone. Along with its call to EU Transport Ministers, ACI EUROPE revealed its latest estimate of a loss of **1.4 billion passengers** in 2020 (-57%) for Europe's airports, along with a loss of **€32 billion passengers** in revenues (-61%). This means that, for now, the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic is set to be **14 times** that of the Global financial crisis.

ACI EUROPE has also:

- Called for a new framework to allow EU States to establish short-term 'air connectivity restoration schemes' to provide airlines with operating aid to restart routes considered strategic for the economic recovery

- Pointed once more to the issue of slot allocation as one where improvements could still be made². Airlines should be required to notify airports – at both ends of a route – of flight cancellations and return slots to the co-ordinators with a minimum of four weeks' notice. This will allow airports to match their operations to actual traffic levels and also to attract other carriers to restore connectivity during the recovery phase.

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¹ Find the latest European airport traffic data covering the period 1 March -19 April [here](#).

² Access the OFF THE GROUND Working Paper: Report on the WS1 - Market Access - Slot Returns [here](#).

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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 **500 airports** in 45 European countries. Our members facilitate over 90% of commercial air traffic in Europe: **2.3 billion passengers, 21.2 million tonnes of freight** and **25.7 million aircraft movements** in 2018. In response to the Climate Emergency, in June 2019 our members committed to achieve net zero carbon emissions for operations under their control by 2050, without offsetting.*

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