



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

ACI EUROPE strongly condemns UK Government decision to proceed with airport slot waiver for Summer and Winter 2026

ACI EUROPE

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Brussels, 20 May 2026: Europe's airports today strongly condemned the UK Government's decision to introduce airport slots usage alleviation for Summer and Winter 2026, despite the absence of any demonstrated jet fuel shortage and in the face of continued strong demand for air travel this Summer season.

By concluding that the existing Justified Non-Use of Slots (JNUS) provisions are insufficient to address the current situation, the UK Government has chosen to disregard the Recommendation issued by the European Airport Coordinators Association (EUACA), the body responsible for ensuring consistent application of slot regulations. The EUACA Guidance – supported by ACI EUROPE – already allows airlines to derogate from the 80% airport slot usage requirement on an individual case-by-case basis where flight cancellations are directly caused by verified jet fuel shortages at airports – with such circumstances qualifying as JNUS.

Olivier Jankovec, Director General of ACI EUROPE said: *"We support targeted airport slot usage alleviation, where there is clear and documented jet fuel shortage. But no such evidence currently exists – neither in the UK nor elsewhere in Europe. The UK Government is effectively handing airlines a carte blanche to cut services and not deliver their schedules, leaving passengers, communities and airports to bear the full brunt."*

With this decision, the UK Government allegedly seeks to minimise disruption for passengers, whilst in reality they are providing airlines with significant commercial flexibility to cancel flights at will – with the costs fully to be borne by passengers and other industry stakeholders, including airports. Regional airports are likely to be the most exposed. As routes feeding into hubs are generally less lucrative for airlines, these airports and their communities risk being hardest hit, without enjoying any comparable protection or compensation for their own connectivity and commercial interest.

It is furthermore incredible that this alleviation is already being enacted now for the Winter 26 season – allowing it to be in place until March 2027.

"This is extraordinary" added Jankovec, *"The UK Government is granting airlines an extended forward-looking slot usage waiver for purely commercial reasons, simply because they need to legislate before their powers to do so expire at the end of June. This is not evidenced-based policy making – it is policy-making driven by administrative convenience."*

The fact that the draft legislation permits returned slots to be reallocated is a welcome – albeit revealing – concession. If other airlines are willing to operate these slots, this clearly demonstrates that demand exists and that the measure is not about operational necessity, but rather about shielding incumbent carriers from commercial risks while transferring that risk onto others.

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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 600 airports in 55 countries. Our members facilitate over 95% of commercial air traffic in Europe. Airports and air connectivity support 14 million jobs, generating €851 billion in European economic activity (5% of GDP). In response to the Climate Emergency, in June 2019 our members committed to achieving Net Zero carbon emissions for operations under their control by 2050, without offsetting.