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No end to Schengen EES disruption unless the Commission and Member States fix structural issues

ACI EUROPE and Airlines for Europe (A4E) table a 6-point plan for a fully efficient and performant Schengen EES as passenger waiting times remain excessive – hitting up to 5 hours at peak traffic times.

Brussels, 12 October 2026: European airport trade body, ACI EUROPE and Europe's largest airline body, Airlines for Europe (A4E) today called for immediate operational and regulatory changes to the Entry/Exit System (EES), warning that excessive waiting times at border control continue to cause significant disruption for passengers, airports and airlines across the Schengen area.

Nearly six months after the full implementation of the EES waiting times remain unacceptably high – **reaching up to five hours at peak traffic times in the most extreme cases – and still routinely exceeding two hours.** This is despite considerable efforts from border control authorities to address the situation with the full support of airports.

The resulting queues keep exposing passengers to unnecessary hardship – including missing flights and connections – creating severe congestion across terminals and putting exceptional pressure on border guards, airport and airline staff.

These problems persist because of structural shortcomings that ACI EUROPE and A4E have warned about for months, but which remain largely unaddressed. These include inadequate border control staffing, instability affecting the IT systems underpinning EES, the still-limited deployment and use of Self-Service Kiosks and Automated Border Control gates, and the limited functionalities and deployment of the Travel to Europe pre-registration app.

Olivier Jankovec, ACI EUROPE Director General and Ourania Georgoutsakou, A4E Managing Director said: *"The EES has strengthened the security of Europe's external borders – that is a clear achievement. But six months into its full rollout, the system is not delivering on efficient border crossings and the promise of faster, more seamless travel remains unmet."*

"This is no longer a teething problem, nor can passengers, airports and airlines keep paying the price for avoidable disruption. The time for simply managing the symptoms is over. We need decisive action to fix the structural problems in the EES, streamline its processes and secure efficient border crossings."

6-point plan to make EES work

ACI EUROPE and A4E have therefore put forward a package of six concrete proposals specifically aimed at reducing operational constraints, streamlining biometric and data processes, increasing the use of remote pre-enrolment and automated border control, and providing operational flexibility during periods of exceptional or sustained congestion.

The plan calls for:

1. Eliminating "double verification".
2. Optimising biometric verification.
3. Preventing duplicate EES profiles.
4. Rethinking and upgrading the "Travel to Europe" app and web portal.
5. Accelerating and harmonising Automated Border Control for third-country nationals.
6. Restoring the possibility to partially suspend the EES (no registration of biometrics) in case of excessive waiting times as a permanent flexibility mechanism.

Jankovec and Georgoutsakou concluded: *"Europe needs a border management system that is both secure and operationally effective – not one that achieves one objective at the expense of the other. Our six proposals offer a practical pathway towards that outcome. We are urging the European Commission and Member States to implement them at the earliest, in full cooperation with the industry."*

ENDS

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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.

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Airlines for Europe (A4E) is Europe's largest airline association. Based in Brussels, A4E works with policymakers to ensure aviation policy continues to connect Europeans with the world in a safe, competitive and sustainable manner. With a modern fleet of over 3,800 aircraft, A4E airlines carried over 798 million passengers in 2025 and served over 2,700 destinations across Europe and the wider world. Each year, A4E members transport around 4 million tonnes of vital goods and equipment either by freighters or passenger aircraft.