FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

ACI Airports Innovate 2026 kicks off in Barcelona with focus on AI, Net-Zero, and operational efficiency

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Barcelona, 23 November 2026: Airport operators, aviation partners, service providers and technology leaders are meeting in Barcelona from 23-25 November 2026 for ACI Airports Innovate 2026, the global platform for innovation across the airport ecosystem. Over three days, the conference will explore how new technologies and process innovation are being put into practice, and how collaboration between aviation stakeholders can help deliver them at scale.

Jointly organised by ACI EUROPE, ACI Asia-Pacific & Middle East and ACI World, and hosted by Aena, the conference comes at a critical time for aviation. Rising passenger demand is putting pressure on airport infrastructure and operational capacity, while expanding capacity is increasingly constrained by land, investment and environmental considerations. Airports must therefore make better use of existing infrastructure, improve efficiency and accelerate decarbonisation. Technologies such as AI, automation, robotics and smart data integration, alongside more efficient processes, will be key to addressing these challenges and enabling sustainable growth. ACI Airports Innovate 2026 examines that shift from experimental concept to operational capability.

More than 50 high-level speakers from airport operators, technology and service providers as well as cross-industry innovators will share that experience across keynotes, panels, presentations and showcases.

Key Topics:

- How airport leaders can make innovation part of everyday operations and long-term strategy.
- Improving coordination between airport ecosystem stakeholders through Total Airport Management.
- How robots and automated systems are transforming airport and ground operations.
- Using AI and real-time data to improve decision-making and airport efficiency.
- Making airport journeys simpler, more accessible and more convenient for everyone.
- Adopting cleaner technologies to reduce emissions and move towards net-zero operations.
- Rethinking airport retail to improve the passenger experience and strengthen airport revenues.
- How innovation in sectors such as postal services and logistics can inspire new approaches in aviation.

Recognising the innovators

Airports Innovate is also where the industry recognises the airports and partners already turning ideas into everyday operations.

Now in their sixth year, the ACI World Airport Innovation Awards, in partnership with ADB SAFEGATE, celebrate the airports leading the way in innovation across four categories: best innovation in airport passenger-related processes; best innovation in airport operations and installations management; best airport innovation leader; and Airport on the Rise, for airports handling five million passengers or fewer a year. Winners will be announced at the Awards Ceremony on 24 November and will present their innovations in a dedicated conference session.

Alongside the awards, the World Business Partner Innovation Showcase, now in its second edition, highlights the best airport innovations from ACI's business partners. Jointly organised by ACI Asia-Pacific & Middle East, ACI EUROPE and ACI World, the competition gives ten finalists a global stage to pitch their solutions directly to international airport leaders and decision-makers.

Olivier Jankovec, Director General of ACI EUROPE said: *"Aviation is undergoing a profound transformation involving increasingly complex operational, environmental, geopolitical and societal challenges. As the places where passenger expectations, airline needs, operational realities and community interests meet, airports are at the very heart of this transformation. Innovation is therefore no longer just about doing things better – it is about rethinking how airports develop and operate to deliver sustainable and resilient connectivity for the communities they serve. Airports are already championing this transformation, and Airports Innovate is not only the opportunity to take stock of that progress but also to take a deep dive into what lies ahead and how we can accelerate it. We are delighted to welcome close to 500 delegates to Barcelona, alongside our host Aena, one of the world's most forward-thinking airport operators, to turn this collective ambition into action."*

Airports Innovate will continue to bring the industry together in an effort to make airports more efficient, resilient, economically and environmentally sustainable.

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Find out more about the event: Airports Innovate 2026

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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 55 countries. Our members facilitate over 90% 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.