

Airports commend EC's proactive plan to open more aviation markets

For immediate release

27 September 2012

Brussels, 27 September 2012: European airport trade body ACI EUROPE welcomed the adoption today by the European Commission of proposals to reshape its External Aviation Policy through increased aviation liberalisation at EU level.

Europe's airports have for long considered¹ that the system of restrictive bilateral agreements regulating aviation relations between individual EU Member States and the rest of the world is anti-competitive and hinders the ability of the sector to deliver increased consumer benefits and economic growth. For airports, bilateral agreements still too often obstruct their ability to attract new air services, diversify their traffic mix and improve the connectivity of their communities.

The Commission has developed a strategic approach, taking stock that aviation is a key enabler of growth. It also warns that the shift in the world economy towards Asia and Latin America is challenging the primary positioning of the European aviation market. On this basis, the Commission is making the case for negotiating new aviation agreements with the EU's major trading partners so as to secure market access opportunities under fair competitive conditions. The Commission is also looking at the timely completion of an *Open Aviation Area* with the EU's neighboring countries by 2015 – a high priority for Europe's regional airports given the underlying potential for traffic growth.

ACI EUROPE Director General Olivier Jankovec said *"There is no question that we need to speed-up the pace of aviation liberalisation. If we want to attract and develop air traffic flows and improve connectivity with our external markets, the only effective way to do it is through EU-led negotiations. This is about maintaining our global relevance. This is crucial not just for European aviation but for our economies at large."*

The Commission rightly points to the need for more liberalisation to go hand in hand with a focus on increasing the competitive position of European aviation both internally and externally. This requires more alignment of aviation policy at all levels, with a particular focus on addressing damaging aviation taxes and giving airports their license to grow given the looming airport capacity crunch.

Jankovec further commented *"Ensuring a fair level playing field is paramount to protecting the hub positioning of Europe. But we also need to be realistic and strike the right balance between fair competition and market access. In other words, this cannot be an excuse for systematically blocking negotiations and holding back the ripple effect of wider liberalisation benefits²."*

ENDS

Note to editors:

¹In 2011, ACI EUROPE released an Analysis paper calling for more aviation liberalisation entitled ***Expanding Europe's Aviation Market – Prerequisite for Global Relevance***. Click here to download: www.aci-europe.org/component/downloads/downloads/2655.html

²The European Commission estimates the total economic benefits stemming from liberalisation proposal released today, to total a staggering €12 billion a year.

For more information, please contact
Robert O'Meara, Communications Manager, ACI EUROPE
mobile: +32 (0)486 54 14 71 or tel: +32 (0)2 552 09 82.
Email: robert.omeara@aci-europe.org

ACI EUROPE is the European region of Airports Council International, 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 over 1.5 billion passengers, 18 million tonnes of freight and more than 20 million aircraft movements each year.

EVERY FLIGHT BEGINS AT THE AIRPORT.