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EU Airport Package: Time to re-focus on Quality & Capacity

For immediate release

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Brussels, 12 December 2012: Taking stock of today's vote of the European Parliament on the 'Airport Package' proposed by the European Commission, Europe's airports expressed concerns that the original purpose of improving quality and capacity at airports had been overlooked and now needs to be brought back into focus by EU legislators.

Ground Handling

The fact that the European Parliament refused to endorse the proposed Regulation on Ground Handling and sent it back to the EP's Transport Committee is a strong signal. This means that a new approach is required to make progress with this proposal. With the market already largely liberalised across Europe, competition is fierce with price pressures already affecting service levels and working conditions. The focus now really needs to be on delivering effective improvements to the quality of ground handling activities - in the interest of passengers.

Olivier Jankovec, Director General ACI EUROPE said *"Now is the time to draw the lessons from what has happened in the Parliament. The existing Directive has served its purpose - with Europe's airports generally open to at least 4 ground handling operators*. As rightly stressed by many Members of the Parliament, the real issue at European level today is the quality that the travelling public should be entitled to."*

This means that airports should be able to coordinate ground handling operators and steer the overall performance of ground operations, in line with the objectives of the Single European Sky. This also means improved social conditions - including minimum training requirements. In addition, airports should not lose existing rights, such as the right to subcontract ground handling activities - a key issue for regional airports.

Airport Slots

ACI EUROPE regrets that the key provisions put forward by the European Commission have been watered down by the European Parliament. This is a missed opportunity, as it will prevent a more meaningful optimisation of scarce airport capacity and genuine benefits for the travelling public and the economy. However, ACI EUROPE would like to thank the Rapporteur of the European Parliamentary Report, Mr Giommaria Uggias MEP, for making the airport slot allocation process more transparent and more efficient - allowing airports to be more involved in the way their capacity is being used by airlines.

Aviation Noise

Finally, as regards the proposal for a new Regulation on noise, the proposed legislation should ensure a more transparent and rigorous process for Member States when adopting operating restrictions at Europe's airports - potentially allowing to avoid purely politically-motivated decisions.

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Notes to Editors

*The current EU Directive on Ground Handling requires a minimum of 2 third party handlers and 2 self handlers (for airports with more than 2 million passengers per annum).

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.

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