

Italian inaction over airport investment damaging national economy

For immediate release

14 December 2012

Brussels, 14 December 2012: The European airport trade body ACI EUROPE today called for swift action from the Italian authorities to finally resolve a 10 year policy paralysis over airport charges, which has delayed much needed modernisation and development at Italian airports.

Since 2001, airport charges in Italy have remained frozen due to a combination of ineffective regulation and political interference by vested interests - aimed at artificially protecting national airlines. This situation has prevented Italian airports from responding to inflationary pressures in a timely manner and from investing to upgrade operational processes, improving the passenger experience and providing more capacity where required.

While SEA Milan Airports has recently obtained the approval of a new charges structure, the situation remains stalled for the vast majority of Italian airports, including ADR's Rome airports and SAVE Venice airport. This is threatening their financial viability and hurting their competitive position in the long-term, especially given that demand for air transport in Europe is still expected to double by 2035.

This is also preventing Italian airports from contributing to the national economic recovery. Airports in Europe are key drivers of local economic development and job creation, with 2,100 indirect jobs supported nationally for every 1,000 airport jobs. In times of acute economic crisis, airport investment becomes extremely relevant, due to its ability to deliver both immediate and longer-term job-based growth.

Last month, ACI EUROPE called on the Italian Government to address this situation as a matter of urgency. In a letter sent to Mr Corrado Passera, Transport Minister and Mr Vittorio Grilli, Economy & Finance Minister, on 21 November, ACI EUROPE asked for the immediate adoption of the Decrees allowing for the implementation of new tariff structures at the Rome and Venice airports, as well as for the timely adjustment of tariffs at other Italian airports - to reflect at a minimum 2012 inflationary pressures and mounting security costs. ACI EUROPE also urged the Italian Government to establish the long awaited new independent National Transport Authority so as to improve and simplify the procedure for the approval of airport charges.

Olivier Jankovec, Director General ACI EUROPE said *"The Italian situation on airport charges remains a truly unique anomaly in Europe. The mix of bad regulation and vested interests is toxic not just for the Italian airports themselves, but for the Italian economy and Italian citizens. Preventing Italian airports from investing in their future is like cutting the wings of Italy - it affects the country's attractiveness as a place to do business as well as a prime tourist destination. Given their strategic importance, the courageous path of economic reform followed by Italy over the last year must also be extended to airports."*

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.

Press release