

ACI EUROPE

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Supportive & fully aligned EU policy required for regional airports

For immediate release

17 April 2013

17 April 2013: This year's 6th annual ACI EUROPE Regional Airports Conference & Exhibition^o opened yesterday and continues today in Lyon. The event, hosted by Aéroports de Lyon, provides an opportunity to take stock of the achievements, challenges & prospects of the European regional airport industry. As usual, it was preceded by a plenary meeting of ACI EUROPE's Regional Airports Forum*.

ESSENTIAL PUBLIC TRANSPORT INFRASTRUCTURE

Over the last 15 years, regional airports have been the most dynamic segment of the European airport industry in terms of passenger growth. In particular the sustained growth of international traffic (**+79%** over 10 years for airports with less than 5 million passengers and **+135%** for airports with less than 1 million passengers) means that these airports went from being predominantly spokes feeding hub airports to building a diverse network of air routes providing direct connections to, from and between Europe's regions.

Olivier Jankovec, Director General ACI EUROPE commented "*Regional airports have been the primary enabler of European connectivity, with more than 70 of them now hosting single or even multi-airline bases. With most of Europe mired in recession, their role as essential public transport infrastructure driving local economic capabilities is coming to the fore. More than ever, communities across Europe are relying on their airports to support inward investments, exports, tourism and wider economic regeneration.*"

He added "*The fact that on-site jobs keep growing at many regional airports just shows how important they are in supporting the EU's Growth and Jobs agenda*"

STRUCTURAL FRAGILITY

Yet, regional airports are more fragile than bigger airports. The recovery in air traffic since 2009 has been less dynamic for them, as airlines have tended to refocus on primary and larger markets. This is especially the case for smaller regional airports (less than 5 million passengers), which have seen passenger traffic falling by **-5.4%** since the beginning of the year, compared to an industry average of **-0.9%**.

With airports being mainly fixed cost and capital-intensive businesses, economic sustainability is largely dependent on achieving a viable critical mass of air traffic – in other words, size matters. This is reflected in the fact that **51%** of airports with less 5 million passengers and **65%** of those with less than 1 million passengers are loss-making.

COMPETITIVE AGENDA

For the past 3 years, ACI EUROPE has been championing a competitive agenda for Europe's regional airports. This agenda focuses on the development of more tailor-made policies and regulations adequately reflecting the constraints inherent to these airports and the increasing market dominance of airlines. It also calls for facilitating the growth of these airports and safeguarding their contribution to local economies.

Jankovec commented *"Regional airports have gained more visibility in the EU context, notably thanks to last year's European Parliament report which addressed their future. We have also seen EU regulations occasionally becoming more considerate of smaller airports in the fields of safety and security. Lastly, the European Commission's efforts to open market access across the Mediterranean and to the East will bring new business opportunities for these airports, given the proximity of these markets. However, we are still missing a consistent and proactive EU policy supporting regional airports."*

KEY ISSUES: STATE AID & ONE BAG RULE

The forthcoming revision by the European Commission of its State Aid Guidelines on aviation is particularly relevant in this context.

Jankovec warned *"The stricter rules on the public funding of airport infrastructure, currently being contemplated by the European Commission, risk having a detrimental impact on small regional airports - decreasing connectivity with understandably damaging consequences for surrounding communities and economies. This would fly entirely in the face of the EU's much talked about Growth & Jobs agenda. Given what's at stake, we need full policy alignment."*

Regional airports also need the issue of the One-Bag Rule to be decisively addressed, by the recently proposed revisions to the EU Regulations on air passenger rights.

Commenting on this issue, **Philip Bradbourn MEP** said *"The European Parliament has been clear about the need to ban the abusive 'one bag rule' applied by certain low cost airlines. This practice is hurting air passengers in many places across Europe and also reflects dominant market position. My colleagues in the European Parliament and I have great concerns that these practices are detrimental to the consumer and we will be looking carefully at the new legislative proposal from the European Commission on passenger rights to see that it addresses this issue once and for all. Airport retail purchases need to be treated as essential items that passengers should be allowed to take on board, in addition to the cabin baggage allowances set by airlines."*

ENDS

Notes for Editors:

°This year's event comprises 6 sessions, covering the full spectrum of issues affecting regional airports and brings together more than 200 delegates from regional airports, local and national authorities the European Commission, airlines and ACI EUROPE World Business Partners.

***Regional Airports' Forum** is the dedicated ACI EUROPE group for regional airports. It currently comprises more than 350 airports. The newly elected Chairman is **Thomas Langeland**, Director of Avinor, Kristiansand Airport in Norway, succeeding Tonci Peovic of Zagreb Airport in Croatia. The new Vice-Chair is **Alberto Martin**, Director of Aena - Gran Canaria Airport.

In 2012, ACI EUROPE released a Regional Airports' Forum Analysis publication that can be downloaded directly [here](#).

A video of Mr Bradbourn presenting his Parliamentary report on Regional Airports last year is available [here](#).

A special keynote Prezi presentation on the State of Europe's Regional Airports, given by ACI EUROPE's Olivier Jankovec at the event, is also viewable [here](#).

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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 400 airports in 44 European countries. Member airports handle 90% of commercial air traffic in Europe, welcoming more than 1.5 billion passengers each year.

EVERY FLIGHT BEGINS AT THE AIRPORT.