

ACI EUROPE

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Europe's airports welcome Bulc's new aviation strategy

For immediate release

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Brussels, 7 December 2015: The airport industry welcomes the adoption today by the European Commission of a new strategy for European aviation. This strategy is based on a long-term vision for the air transport sector, with a primary focus on improved connectivity, enhanced competitiveness and effective sustainability. It includes a set of actions aimed at opening up access to key external markets and addressing capacity problems in the air and at airports, all while maintaining the highest levels of safety and security.

Olivier Jankovec, Director General of ACI EUROPE said *"The Commission has gotten it right – taking stock of the increasing strategic relevance of air connectivity for our economy. What it has put on the table today is a commendably pragmatic approach – one that recognises aviation growth as a key enabler of the EU's wider growth and jobs agenda."*

CONSUMERS & OPEN SKIES

With this new aviation strategy, the Commission is also moving towards a less airline-centric and more consumer-centric aviation policy. In this regard, ACI EUROPE fully supports the ambitious plan to negotiate aviation agreements* with the EU's main trading partners to secure additional market access opportunities under conditions ensuring fair competition.

Jankovec commented *"We need more open skies agreements beyond Europe. This is essential for airports to attract more air services, develop their route network and improve the connectivity of the communities they serve. Ultimately, this is also about avoiding the marginalisation of Europe and supporting its global hub positioning. Closing markets and resisting change has never been a successful business strategy - and it rarely does any good for consumers."*

AIRPORT CAPACITY & SES

While Europe's airports support the on-going efforts of the Commission to tackle congestion and capacity constraints both in the air and on the ground, ACI EUROPE noted that decisive action on these issues rests with Member States.

In this regard, Europe's airports share the frustrations of their airline partners over the lack of progress in the implementation of the Single European Sky. They are also deeply concerned by the lack of proper long-term national strategies to address the looming airport capacity crunch. While Europe's airports are still waiting for the adoption by the Council of Transport Ministers of a revised Slot Regulation, this can only be a short-term fix - as it is about managing congestion, not addressing it.

Therefore, ACI EUROPE calls on the Commission to develop a more ambitious EU strategy on airport capacity - including the adoption of airport capacity targets for Europe aligned with the Single European Sky.

AIRPORT CHARGES & COMPETITION

ACI EUROPE also notes that the Commission has resisted calls by some airlines^o for even tighter regulation of airport charges. The Commission will rather focus on the implementation of the current EU Directive on airport charges and will assess at a later stage whether a review is needed.

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ACI EUROPE stands ready to assist the Commission in this task. Changing market conditions, in particular increasing airport competition, may require a lighter and more tailored regulatory approach.

Jankovec said *"The EU Directive on airport charges is essentially based on the unquestioned premise that airports are monopolies. That is no longer the case. The Commission has already acknowledged that airports compete in the State aid guidelines it adopted last year¹ - which actually restrict the public financing of airports because of effective and growing competition among them. It will have to acknowledge the same for airport charges. This is about coherent policy alignment."*

SAFETY & SECURITY

Finally, ACI EUROPE also stresses the need for keeping regulatory driven costs in check – especially as regards safety and security. This is an essential part of improving European aviation's competitive position. Accordingly, Europe's airports support the move of EASA towards a performance-based approach to aviation safety, as well as increased efficiency through better integration between the agency and Member States. But ACI EUROPE reaffirms its opposition for now, to EASA's extension of competences in the fields of security and the environment.

Jankovec added *"On security, the Commission needs to push for real progress towards a truly risk-based system across the board. We need to move from systematic and undifferentiated security checks at airports towards more targeted security checks that focus our resources where the risk is. This means not relying only on technology – which will take time to develop – but increasingly on effective sharing of intelligence and data. This is the only way to deliver both security and cost efficiencies. We urge the Commission to look at how we could introduce in Europe a pre-check system similar to the one successfully deployed by the US TSA at more than 150 airports."*

ENDS

* The joint position paper of ACI EUROPE and the European Travel Commission entitled *European Airports & Tourism Organisation – Together on Open Skies* can be downloaded here: <https://www.aci-europe.org/component/downloads/downloads/4332.html>

° For more information on the Top 5 EU Airlines' call for additional airport charges regulation, ACI EUROPE's first reaction release can be read here: <https://www.aci-europe.org/component/downloads/downloads/4327.html>

¹EC Competition Policy Brief (Issue 2, 2014) - New State aid rules for a competitive aviation industry: *"Now, there is effective and growing competition among European airports, brought about by route liberalisation and airport privatization. The major European airports compete with each other for point-to-point and transfer traffic in order to expand both their route/airline portfolio and reduce their dependence on the established hub carriers"*

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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 close to **500 airports** in 45 European countries. In 2014, our member airports handled over 90% of commercial air traffic in Europe, welcoming more than **1.8 billion passengers, 18.4 million tonnes of freight** and **21.2 million aircraft movements**. These airports contribute to the employment of **12.3 million people**, generating **€675 billion each year (4.1%) of GDP** in Europe.*

EVERY FLIGHT BEGINS AT THE AIRPORT.