



#### ACI EUROPE

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# Airports urge swift implementation of EC aviation strategy

For immediate release

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**Amsterdam, 21 January 2016:** On the occasion of the European Aviation Summit organised by the Dutch Presidency of the EU and taking place in Amsterdam today, Europe's airports urged EU Member States to move forward with the Aviation Strategy adopted by the European Commission last month.

## SEIZE THE OPPORTUNITIES & OPEN UP THE SKIES

Speaking at the Summit, along with other airport CEOs, **Augustin de Romanet, President of ACI EUROPE** and President & CEO of Aéroports de Paris stated *"Aviation markets are moving quickly, on the back of the rise of the 'Global Middle Class' and support for air connectivity from many Governments outside Europe. This is very challenging for European aviation, as these developments bring new competitors. But these developments also bring tremendous new opportunities, especially if we choose to embrace change and focus on developing our connectivity with these massive new markets. That is why the new Aviation Strategy is so important – by targeting growth markets and going for more Open Skies beyond Europe, we have the ability to position Europe for the future and avoid becoming marginalised."*

Transport Ministers are expected to start reviewing the Commission's request for mandates to negotiate comprehensive aviation agreements. Europe's airports are calling for them to follow - without delay - a multi-priority approach initially focused on the ASEAN countries, the Gulf and Turkey – under conditions ensuring reciprocity and fair competition.

## COMPETITIVENESS STARTS AT HOME

However, airport CEOs also warned that the Commission's Aviation Strategy needs to be beefed-up when it comes to addressing homegrown obstacles to competitiveness. In this regard, the ACI EUROPE President said *"Competitiveness starts at home, and it requires the same focus from both industry and policy makers."* He stressed the need to address regulatory driven costs and other growth limiting factors that are often unique to Europe - and that ultimately handicap the global competitive position of its aviation sector: *"If Europe is serious about competitiveness, then aviation taxes in the UK, Germany, France, Austria and Italy should be abolished. We also need to turn the Single European Sky into a reality and look at how we can stop talking about risk-based security and actually start delivering it. Last but not least, States need to come to terms with airport capacity and start looking again at the longer-term."*

## NEW AIRLINE ASSOCIATION, OLD MESSAGE

Reacting to the launch of a new airline association – Airlines 4 Europe – which yesterday issued remarks highly critical of airports, **ACI EUROPE Director General, Olivier Jankovec** said *"These airlines are building their unity on our back - as they are unable to come together on major strategic policy issues such as Open Skies, let alone foster wider aviation industry alignment. For them, airports are just scapegoats. Their tired call for even more regulation of airports is just about boosting their profits - or supporting their own lack of competitiveness. There is absolutely nothing for the consumer with this agenda - let alone for Europe's connectivity. The airlines are wilfully ignoring today's market reality of ever-increasing airport competition."*

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With extensive regulation at individual national level, an EU-wide Directive based on ICAO principles and now an active Forum where all 28 EU

regulators formulate additional policy, one thing Europe does not have a shortage of is airport charges regulation. After both an in depth study of the current Directive and the creation of new State Aid rules which explicitly acknowledge the reality of airport competition, the EC has already concluded in its recently launched Aviation Strategy that the challenge is now to tailor existing regulation to the reality of increasing airport competition. Attempts to drag the debate backwards should be strongly resisted.

ACI EUROPE is studying A4E's new report in detail, but our members are simply not seeing the aeronautical revenues suggested by the various figures that have been produced.

Airlines have an unfortunate tendency to forget that they pay **below-cost prices** for the airport facilities and services they use – and A4E appears to be no different. Even at the largest airports, charges levied on airlines and passengers do not cover the full cost of operating and developing the airport infrastructure – leading to a **de facto subsidisation of the airline industry by European airports**.

**ENDS**

\* Other airport CEOs speaking at the EU Aviation Summit include Jose Manuel Vargas, Chairman & CEO of Aena and Thomas Woldbye, CEO, Copenhagen Airports.

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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.**